



Vidya Prasarak Mandal's
**K. G. Joshi College of Arts &
 N. G. Bedekar College of Commerce**

Re-Accredited with A Grade by NAAC
 Best College Award (University of Mumbai)
 Community College (University of Mumbai)

Women Development Cell

Women's Quest For Equality



UGC Sponsored Two Day National Conference
 Women's Quest For Equality In India :
 Promises, Problems and Prospects
 on 9th and 10th January 2015

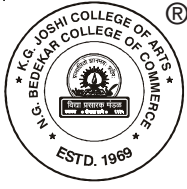
“
 WE'VE COME A LONG WAY,
**BUT THERE'S STILL
 WORK TO DO**
 *STAND WITH
 WOMEN*
 ”

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NATIONAL CONFERENCE

ON

**Women's Quest for Equality in India
Promises, Problems & Prospects**

9th and 10th January 2015

Venue

Kattayan

**Commerce Building, Third Floor,
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Chendani Bunder Road,
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Organized by

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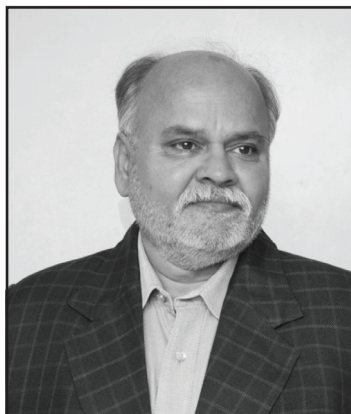
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Chairman's Message



I have great pleasure in presenting this volume of papers presented in the Conference on 'Women's Quest for Equality in India- Promises, Problem and Prospects' under the auspices of VPM's Arts and Commerce College on 9th and 10th January 2015.

Vidya Prasarak Mandal has a tradition of organising various conferences, seminars and workshops at National and International level. Recently we had organised an International Conference on 900th Anniversary of Bhaskaracharya.

One of our institutes K.G. Joshi College of Arts and N.G.Bedekar College of Commerce is organising A Two Day National Conference on 'Women's Quest for Equality in India- Promises, Problem and Prospects'.

Such programmes provide platform to researchers to express their opinions and share their research findings with likeminded people, scholars and students. It is through such conferences that we get an opportunity to know, exchange and expand our universe of ideas, concepts and understanding of the subject. In a way intellectual churning is the motive behind such programmes.

The male and female social reformers of the 19th century India played an important role in emancipating women and created awareness in them. As a result women entered the public domain. Some of them even joined the National Independence Movement. After independence, constitutional and legal safeguards were provided to women. Rather the first fundamental right guaranteed to the citizens of India is Right to Equality. But is this right translated into reality?

The subject of this conference is indeed critical to the current times for our country. Women are yet to achieve equal status. They are deprived of life expectancy, access to health and medical services, inheritance and educational opportunities. They are underrepresented in political and economic fields. Atrocities like dowry harassment; eve teasing, wife beating, and rape are inflicted upon them.

This conference will raise a number of such problems and issues faced by women and deliberate to find solutions to some of them. It will seek to address issues about how women can overcome barriers of society and empower themselves.

I wish them success in this objective.

Dr. Vijay V. Bedekar

Chairman

Vidya Prasarak Mandal, Thane, Maharashtra, India.

From the Principal's desk



I am delighted that a National Conference on Women's Issues called, "Women's Quest for Equality in India- Promises, Problems and Prospects" is being conducted under the aegis of our Institution, VPM's K. G. Joshi College of Arts and N. G. Bedekar College of Commerce, Thane.

At an Age and Time when gender equality and women's empowerment have been set firmly on course by activists, thinkers and feminists, it is right and proper for us to deliberate on the course they have followed till date and the direction they need to pursue in the future. While a number of issues have been successfully tackled, a great many of them still stare us in the face. We need activism as much as we need reflection. Therefore, the need for such a Conference, where both activists intimately involved with furthering the cause, and thinkers whose enlightened vision can show the way, meet and share experiences and ideas to shape current and future strategies.

I also look forward very keenly to the deliberation of this Conference and the direction it projects for the future, since, as a woman and an administrator, I am respectively both a participant and a potential propellant in this direction.

I wish the Conference all success.

Dr. Shakuntala A. Singh
Principal

Convener's Message

I am indeed delighted and privileged to be the Convener of the Two Day National Conference on 'Women's Quest for Equality in India-Promises, Problems and Prospects'.

Women Development Cell of our College was established in the year 2003. The primary responsibility of the Cell is to operate as the redressal mechanism against sexual discrimination at college level. The Cell is playing a positive role by inculcating a sense of gender equality among the students of the college. In the last decade, the Cell has organised a number of programmes towards this objective. This Two-Day National Conference is being organised by the Cell to address issues related to women.

Indian society is essentially a male-dominated society, in which the ascribed status has been low. While the Constitution provides safeguards and legal measures, women are yet to achieve equal status. The Two Day Conference will raise a number of problems faced by women and find answers to some of these problems. It will also seek to address how women can overcome barriers of society and empower themselves.

As a Pre-Conference activity, various inter-collegiate competitions such as Street Play, Documentary or Short Film, Powerpoint Presentation, Slogan and Poster Competitions were organised, that received good response. The winners in all these competitions will be given an opportunity to present in the upcoming National Conference.

We received an overwhelming response in the form of research papers, from all over the country. Therefore, we will have parallel technical sessions in which, these papers will be presented. Along with the Technical Sessions, two Plenary Sessions, two Panel Discussions and an interaction with the Activists titled 'Towards Equality' will be conducted. Thus, different avenues of expression will be used to address the issues related to women.

We had conducted a Cover Page Design Competition for the book of the Proceedings of the Conference. Our student, Kumuduni Kudalkar of T.Y.B.M.M. (Advertising) bagged the first prize, which broadly enlightens the theme of the Conference. Our student Samidha Ghag of T.Y.B.M.M. (Advertising) has creatively and thematically designed the back cover page.

I thank all the members of the Advisory Board for their guidance. I place on record, my sincere thanks to the Principal for her timely support and for giving me this opportunity. I thank Co- Convener Dr. Mrs. Suja Roy Abraham and all the Members of Women Development Cell, without whose help it would not have been possible to organise this Conference.

Asst. Prof. Mrs. Priyamvada Tokekar
Convener, WDC

Special Article

My Close Friends Lurk All Around the House, and He knows Not!

Dr. Shakuntala A. Singh

Principal and Head of the Department of Philosophy, Joshi-Bedekar College, Thane
Deputy Editor, Mens Sana Monographs

Introduction

As a working woman, I have to balance many activities: home, work and again home. Three shifts against a man's one. I have to do it all with a smile, with little, if any, help from the "gentlemen" at home, who prefers to lounge around, in "switched off work mode." And I balance all their demands with the guilt-ridden intensity of most Indian working women, who want to prove their superhuman status as great workers and equally good home makers (Why do that at all is another story)

While I move around the house, unknown to the others, I converse with, smile and wink at, and even caress, a number of my close friends lurking in certain areas. One is in the kitchen, another in the bathroom, a third in the dining area. Scandalised? The prim and proper Professor with the proverbial skeletons in the cupboard?

Wait a moment.

Mock Interview

Probably because of my academic position, some people thought it fit to call me to conduct mock interviews for prospective IAS candidates (IAS stands for Indian Administrative Service). The well-read interviewers and the intense candidates were a threat to watch as the former posed intelligent questions and the latter fielded bright answers.

Finally, the men on the panel thought it fit to allow me to sneak in a question for a woman candidate. I asked a graceful question.

(Below is an excerpt of the interview as it went later. I quote from memory, so it may not be verbatim):

Q. Do you think today's woman is free, liberated?

A. Yes [pause] she is [pause] free . [Perplexed voice]. She can do [pause] what she wants to. [Question mark on face, trying to figure out where is the catch.]

Q Are you free?

A. Yes, [pause] I am free. [still perplexed]

Q. Who gave you this freedom?

A [Pause] Father, Husband. They gave me the freedom to do what I wanted. [Pause] It was my father's wish I do something special. And after marriage, husband helped.

Q. But what exactly helped you to do what you did?

A. ??? [Question mark on face, trying to decipher what I meant.]

Q. Ok, let me put it this way; what helps women do what they are doing?

A. [Relief on face] IT, Computer, Internet... Great source of information, job opportunities.

Q Anything else?

A. [Again talks of IT in different words]

Q. What else?

A. [Brightens up] Newspapers, Magazines, Television; with the help of all these, I know about the whole world. The world is shrinking into a global village, liberalization and globalization and opening up of the economy are helping people come closer.... [And on and on and on]

Q Yes, but how do you reach your work place. What allows you to reach there?

A. Ah yes. Train, Vehicles, Transport. That also helps.

Q. Indeed, but that helps not only women, but also men. What's special about it? What helps you to come out of the house? Who is helping you? Not your husband or parents, but something else helps you?

A. [Long pause] ????? [Quizzical look on face. Shakes head.]

[The other panelists are quizzically silent too.]

What about your mixie, your cooker, your microwave? And your fridge, your vacuum cleaner, your washing machine? Don't they help you in coming out of your house? They help you manage household chores more than your parents or your husband. Is it not?

A. [Face lights up] Yes, indeed. [And then elaborates on all the technological devices that lightens a woman's burden]

Q. And? What else?

A. [Continues with some more devices and repeats earlier answer in different words]

Q. And?

A. [Pause. Again the quizzical look]

Q. There is one more important thing. Try to remember, what has helped us women a lot to get to where we are?

A. [Long pause.] Cannot think of it. What is it? [Silence all around. Even the men panelists crave to hear an answer.]

Q. What about family planning, contraception? Has it not helped us?

A. [Sigh of relief. All the men panelists also echo the sigh.] O yes, indeed.

Q. When to have children, the number of children, and the gap between children? Has it not helped a woman immensely to plan her family, decide about her career, job, structure of her family, and overall, the structure of her life?

Coming Home

I come home and ask this question to my husband: psychiatrist, thinker, editor. He replies almost identically what the interviewer said. The same pauses, the same searching of my face for the elusive answer, the same "ah" of realization when told answers.

Men, after all are from Mars. How can he think Venus when Venus herself doesn't?

Of course, I enjoyed the admiration that followed, a rarity, as all women should know. Men admiring for beauty is common, but for brains, well...

Try asking these questions to any man, and you will probably get similar answers. and to most women, busy as they are, thinking and acting like men. As a reader, you must have also found it difficult to guess where all this was leading.

It is not that men do not understand the importance of science and technology. They very well do. It is only that they do not realize the importance of such technologies for women in their day-to-day lives.

The only difference, as a good editor, he said, why don't you write about it.

So here it is.

Science and Technology:

We can go on and on about the benefits of science and technology.

For me, it is enough that my mixer lightens my grinding, my fridge stores eatables ready to cook/eat when the hungry raise a ruckus, my microwave warms food in a jiffy to serve the not so "gentlemen" when hungry, the vacuum cleaner is of great help when the maid takes a leave and the washing machine gets clothes ready when needed early morning, or in a hurry.

I pat them all, smile at them, wink at my favourite, the ever-reliable washing machine and gently caress the ever obliging microwave.

I also blush as I remember the Copper T and the pill, which helped me raise three sons and manage one satisfied husband. And also, I could complete my Ph.D. and Postdoctoral Research, attend Seminars/Conferences, read and write articles, while managing to teach graduate and postgraduate students.

Concluding Remarks

Husbands are needed (may be?). Children are wonderful. Great. But technology and its gadgets are the greatest support in women's emancipation.

If ever I have to make a thanksgiving speech – you know like the "lifetime achievement award" speeches aside from parents and husband and teachers etc. I will not forget to thank these gadgets that made it all possible. And the great souls, who worked to produce and refine them down the decades.

These gadgets are my great friends, lurking in every corner of the house. They are real friends, in need, waiting to help, ever reliable, ever dependable. And the spouse is blissfully unaware. Alas, if only men could be as reliable, dependable.

Well, that also is the difference between men and machines.

Take Home Message

Science and technology are a working woman's best friends.

Take them home. That is the greatest take home message for this three-shift working species of humankind.

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Health - Related Issues of Women in India

Dr. Mrs. Alaka P. Kulkarni

Associate Professor, Mulund College of Commerce

Abstract : This article discusses various issues related to the health of women in India. Health - related issues of women in India have socio-economic as well as cultural background. Poverty, ignorance, lack of education and gender bias have given rise to many health problems among women in India. India has very high rate of malnutrition among women and deaths resulting due to it. In a male-dominated Indian society daughters are viewed as an economic burden and a liability. This is precisely why we hear cases of female foeticide.

Many women, especially in the rural areas, still die during the delivery due to the unsafe practices and lack of hygiene.

In India, large number of women leads extremely stressful life because of the dowry related issues. Gender discrimination has severely affected the psychological well-being and physical health of Indian women. Domestic violence is one of the most important reasons, which leads to several cases of rapes, assaults, murders and suicide.

Cases of breast cancer and cardiovascular problems are on rise. A large percentage (around 40%) of Indian women suffer from deadly disease like HIV/AIDS. As the government is not spending adequate funds on healthcare and basic amenities, there is tremendous shortage of sanitation facilities for women. This leads to many health problems.

Last but not the least, the Indian women are extremely stressed, as they have to juggle multiple roles at home and work. The traditional Indian values expect a woman to be 'ideal daughter', 'ideal wife' and 'ideal daughter-in-law' which itself creates tremendous stress.

Constitutional and legal measures only cannot help in giving women an equal status. It requires a change in the mindset of people to alter the traditional, religious and social structure. Wrong beliefs and superstitions can be controlled only with the spread of education and scientific outlook. It is important to spread awareness through different channels to address the issues related to the gender equality, health, education and empowerment among women.

This article gives valuable suggestions to deal with various health related issues of women.

Introduction

Though India has advanced in several areas, especially in the last few decades, there are many fields which are still in a backward state. One such area is women's health. While discussing women's health in India, we normally tend to think about only the middle class; however we need to discuss across all the sections of the society, regardless of their class, caste, creed and religion and their economic status. India has around 19% of the world's population. Seventy percent of this population resides in rural areas. With the prevailing healthcare system in India, the mortality rate of women is very high, especially during the childhood and reproductive years. Indian society is essentially a male-dominated society, in which the status of women has always been low. While the Constitution provides safeguards and legal measures, women are yet to achieve equal status.

In India, large numbers of people live with chronic hunger due to severe poverty. What they lack is the opportunity to change their economic status and develop self-sufficiency. This is especially true in case of women. Women, along with their children, are the main victims of hunger. There is a strong correlation between illiteracy, poverty and women's health. Because of the poverty and lack of education, superstitions are rampant. Many unscientific beliefs adversely affect the health of the large population of India, especially of women and children. Rural people in India in general and tribal population in particular,

have their own beliefs and practices regarding the origin and cure of diseases. Some tribal groups still believe that a disease is always caused by hostile spirits. These superstitions will reduce only with the spread of education and development of scientific outlook.

It has been found that children of illiterate mothers are twice undernourished as compared to children of literate mothers. Due to the lack of education and ignorance in the rural areas, most of the women do not know the importance of cleanliness, personal hygiene and sanitation. The literacy level and place of residence also has a direct impact on morbidity and mortality of women.

It has been observed that very few women have an access to balanced diet that includes plenty of fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains. This causes severe anaemia. The basic practice of washing hands is often neglected by the women and children in the rural areas. Unfortunately, large population in India does not get uncontaminated drinking water. These basic hygienic factors expose women as well as their family members to various diseases. Most of the women in India consume tobacco in different forms ('bidis'/cigarettes/'Gutka') thereby endangering their life.

Gender Bias and Access to Healthcare

In Indian families, sons get far more importance and attention than daughters. The Indian constitution grants women equal rights with men, but such legal protection has little effect in the presence of prevailing patriarchal tradition.

In most of the Indian families, a daughter is viewed as a liability, and she is conditioned to believe that she is inferior and subordinate to men. Sons are idolized and celebrated. This gender bias (differential treatment given to daughters compared to sons) denies many facilities and rights to women.

As per the findings of the 'World Economic Forum', India ranks far below in the world with respect to the gender equality. There are various reasons for this discrimination. Women are often seen as less valuable to a family due to marriage obligations and the need to pay high amount of dowry. An impression that women are not capable of taking care of parents in their old age results in pampering of sons and mistreating the daughters. This encourages the tendency to abort female sex in India. Women are viewed as economic burdens and their contributions to the family are always overlooked or undermined.

Indian women (poor and rich) are given secondary or substandard treatment in all spheres of life. Although efforts are being made to improve the status of women, the dream of gender equality is miles away from becoming a reality, even today. Life has been extremely strenuous for women in India. A few decades ago, the family size used to be large and family always meant 'joint family'. There has been a standard division of labour in almost all the families in India. Traditionally, women bear primary responsibility for the well-being of their families. Men go out to work, whereas women are expected to rear children and look after household work, including various strenuous activities. Even today, women have to bring water from rivers (especially in villages), cook food for the entire family in a room full of smoke, deliver children one after another, rear them and also work to earn money. Despite putting in hard work, women always get secondary importance in the family. They are systematically denied access to the education and other resources, such as job training, access to healthcare systems and freedom to use family planning services.

Access to Healthcare

Differential treatment given to women in terms of feeding practices and access to healthcare is an important factor responsible for higher female mortality. Women in India have little autonomy as they have to live under the control of their father, husband or their sons. This adversely affects their physical and psychological health. Men use gender privilege and superior rights to create an unequal society that leaves women with little or no power. It is found that for some reason, Indian women under-report their illnesses. Females do not have sufficient freedom to move around in the society. Less mobility at public places creates further difficulties in accessing healthcare services. The suppressed women are always diffident and are unable to make decisions about healthcare.

Healthcare system in India is highly concentrated in urban areas. While framing Health policy in India for women, it becomes difficult to create a balance between target driven population control goals on one hand and issue of individual productive rights and general well-being on the other hand. Today, India's healthcare system is strained because of the insufficient number of doctors and nurses. This especially affects the population living in the rural areas (where doctors are not willing to work) increasing the mortality rate of women. In India, healthcare sector also suffers from underfunding and bad governance. With 6% of GDP expenditure on healthcare, India ranks among the bottom five countries with the lowest public health spending globally.

Malnutrition and Morbidity

Morbidity refers to the state of being diseased or unhealthy. India currently has one of the highest rates of malnourished women among developing countries. Indian tradition expects the woman to eat last and least than her male counterpart throughout her life, even when she is pregnant and lactating. This results in missing out on vital dietary requirements. Malnourished women give birth to malnourished children, and thus the vicious circle goes on. Low birth weights, spontaneous abortions and illness are the results of anaemia and malnourishment. Study conducted in 2000 shows that nearly 70% of non-pregnant and 75% of pregnant women were anaemic in terms of iron deficiency. One of the main causes of malnutrition is gender specific selection of the distribution of food resources. Maternal malnutrition has been associated with an increased risk of maternal mortality and child birth defects. Most of the Indians prefer vegetarian diet, which acts as one more important reason for not fulfilling many of their nutritional requirements.

Thus malnutrition acts as a serious health concern which increases susceptibility to illness and high mortality. Women activists are creating awareness about women rights and are fighting to get those rights; however changes in social, religious and traditional structures are not possible overnight.

Let us review some important health related issues prevailing among Indian women.

Female Reproductive System

Female reproductive system require special consideration as it plays an important role throughout the life of a woman. Due to the complexity of reproductive system and poor personal health care a woman experiences a number of problems ranging from vaginal infections, fibroids of the uterus, Ovarian cysts, thyroid disorders etc. According to NFHS (National Family Health) Survey majority of births in India take place at home under non hygienic conditions and in the absence of trained medical

personnel, also 37% of Indian pregnant women receive no prenatal care during their pregnancy. Severe anaemia among majority of women increases the chance of dying from a haemorrhage during labour. Over one lakh Indian women die each year from pregnancy related reasons. The first birth at an early age and multiple pregnancies also affect women's health.

Breast Cancer

A recent study conducted by Tata Memorial Hospital (a twenty year analysis of breast cancer rate between 1976 and 2005) shows that the rate of breast cancer is definitely increasing among Indian women due to growing urbanization. In the year 2008, almost 1, 15,000 new cases of breast cancer were reported in India, and about 53,000 deaths due to the breast cancer. It calls for an urgent action to create awareness amongst women.

Cardiovascular Disease

Cardiovascular disease is one of the major factors causing female mortality in India. A study reveals that three out of every five women out of around 52,000 urban Indian female respondents are at cardiovascular disease risk. Differential access to healthcare between the sexes due to social and cultural norms, sedentary lifestyles, stressful work conditions, compromised diet, lack of exercise are the contributory factors. Instead of giving the necessary medical treatment, families also show the tendency to hide health related problems due to the fear of not getting a suitable match for their daughter.

Mental Health

The mental health of women is a serious issue indeed. As per the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates, depression is expected to be the second largest health problem by 2020. The psychological health has a close relation with the individual's socio-economic relationships. Due to the inferior treatment received all the time, gender-bias at every stage of their lives, family pressures to deliver male children, strenuous work at home, domestic responsibilities and pregnancy related problems add to the stress level of women. All these factors adversely affect the mental and physical well-being of women.

Suicide

More than one lakh lives are lost every year due to suicide in our country. Suicides of women have multiple dimensions. Mental disorder, gender disadvantage, domestic violence, rape, financial loss, chronic pain, divorce, dowry, failed love affairs, inability to get married, illegitimate pregnancy, extra-marital affairs, conflicts in marital life, lack of warmth and care mainly from family members are some of the major reasons that encourage women to commit suicide.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence includes psychological, physical and sexual violence against women. This happens due to the cultural norms of patriarchy and hierarchical system in Indian families. In recent years, there has been an alarming rise in atrocities against women in India, in terms of rapes, assaults and dowry-related issues. As stated by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), India has the highest number of dowry related deaths in the world. The NCRB report states that 8233 dowry deaths took place in India in 2012. Fear of violence suppresses the aspirations of all women. Female foeticide is still prevalent in India. It shows the devaluation of women in the Indian society. As per the 1995 report published by NCRB, majority of the rapes are committed by family members. Women suffering from domestic violence have limited resources to fight it out. Also, women do not get adequate support from their parents due to the socio-economic reasons.

HIV/AIDS

The National AIDS Control Organisation estimated that 2.39 million people lived with HIV/AIDS in India in 2008–09. India is the third-largest population suffering from HIV/AIDS in the world. The causes responsible for AIDS include poverty, ignorance, lack of access to contraceptives, non availability of free HIV testing etc.

Other Health Related Problems

The other diseases found among Indian women include gallstones, irritable bowel syndrome, urinary tract infections, kidney infections, and migraine headache. Osteoporosis is a major health concern for women. Menopause symptoms include hot flashes, mood swings etc. Hearing loss, eye problems, arthritis, insomnia, memory loss are the post menopausal problems seen in women.

Suggestions

The following suggestions may help to improve the overall health and well-being of Indian women :

1. The issues like severe poverty and lack of education need to be addressed at the national level. Eradication of poverty and spread of education will address the problem of malnutrition
2. Awareness must be spread to reduce the discrimination of women in the families and the in the society.
3. Women need to be empowered in different walks of life. Empowerment will enable them to realise their full potential and power and will offer them liberty from subordination, ignorance, inequality and injustice.
2. There is an urgent need to create awareness about the healthy food habits, exercise and ill effects of smoking.

4. Women need to be educated about the importance of healthcare for ensuring healthy pregnancies and safe child-birth.
5. Need to develop a strong healthcare system in rural areas, which is affordable to even poor people. There is a rising need to include gender dimensions in the healthcare policies and programmes by the State. Existing healthcare policies should be viewed in the light of the International standards.
6. Need to increase community support programmes for women suffering from domestic violence.
7. Creating awareness and access to family planning.
8. Need to have concern towards disabled women who are doubly vulnerable to discrimination due to their gender and disability.
9. Need to strengthen HIV/AIDS education programme. There is a need to understand the social stigma related to HIV-positive women in India with respect to marriage, child bearing and shrinking social status.

Great social reformers like Mahatma Jyotiba Phule and Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade had visualised more than

a century back that no society can progress socially, politically economically and culturally without the active participation of women. In order to fulfil the dreams of these visionaries, empowering women and showing concern toward their health becomes extremely important. Now it's high time to consider women's health on priority basis. In order to make India a superpower in a true sense, we need healthy, educated and empowered women who will be as strong as their male counterpart.

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Gender Budgeting (GB) in Local Body Government: A Case study of Budgetary Provision of Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM)

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Abstract : Women discrimination still is in the world, Equality between women and men, seen as fundamental human right. The gender budget is not separate budget for women or for men. It is an attempt to break down or disaggregate the government's mainstream budget according to its impact on women and men. This research paper takes a literature overview of about gender budgeting with reference to world and Indian scenario. It studies the gender budgetary provisions (Budgetary Estimates) of Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM), for the financial year 2010-11, 2011-12 and 2013-14 prepared by the MCGM which includes schemes broadly four categories such as Economic and Social Upliftment, Educational Upliftment, Health and Sanitation and Development of children parks, recreation with modern equipments.

Keywords : Gender Budgeting, Revenue, Capital Account Expenditure, Municipal Corporation.

Introduction

Women discrimination still is in the world, the council of Europe¹ in its final report highlighted if women have obtained equality and equal status with men in the majority of European countries, they are still discriminated against in many areas and also emphasized that Equality between women and men, seen as fundamental human right. Gender² is the culturally and socially constructed roles, responsibilities, privileges, relations and expectations of women and men, boys and girls. While preparing policy government has to think about needs of women and men and has to allocate budgets to implement the policy. To bring gender equality, we need new policies, new strategies, new methods and new approaches. Gender mainstreaming is one of these strategies.

According to the council of Europe³ gender mainstreaming is defined as, "*Gender mainstreaming is the reorganization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy making.*"

Council of Europe has brought gender mainstreaming through various meetings and emphasized as well as adopted gender equality issues at local and regional levels; gender mainstreaming in municipalities and regions. To bring down gender discrimination and focus on gender in mainstreaming gender budgeting is one of the strategies.

Objectives of study

The objectives of this research paper are of two fold:

1. Various definitions and meaning of Gender Budgeting in world and Indian scenarios.

2. To study gender budgetary provisions of Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM).

Data and Methodology

This research paper collects secondary data from Annual Gender Budget of Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM). Except financial year 2012-13 other secondary data of financial year 2010-11, 2011-12 and 2013-14 were available and retrieved from the official website of MCGM.

Gender Budgeting (GB)⁴

Budlender and Sharp (1998), clearly highlight that the gender budget is not separate budget for women or for men. It is an attempt to break down or disaggregate the government's mainstream budget according to its impact on women and men. Similarly Ministry of Finance, Government of India in its report of Classification of Government Transaction (2004), highlights that "Gender Budgeting refers to presentation of budgetary data in a manner so that the gender sensitivities of the budgetary allocations are clearly highlighted. It envisages highlighting the budgetary allocation not only to women-specific programmes but also to quantity pro-women allocations in the composite or gender-neutral programmes under various departments."

Gender Budgeting (GB) is also known from different terms such as Women's Budgets, Gender Sensitive Budgets, Gender Responsive Budgeting or Applied Gender Budget Analysis. The general national budget has impacts on women's lives in various ways. Women's development can be promoted directly when financial resources / funds are allocated through various schemes and programmes. Gender

¹ Gender Budgeting (2005)

² Gender Budgeting Handbook for Government of India, Ministries and Departments (2007) .

³ Gender Budgeting (2005).

⁴ Sable Deepak.P. (2014).

budgeting or gender responsive budgeting is methodology to assist governments to integrate a gender perspective into the budget as the key national plan for public expenditure.

The Council of Europe⁵ defined gender budgeting, “*Gender budgeting is an application of gender mainstreaming in the budgetary process. It means a gender-based assessment of budgets, incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality.*”

Government of India through Ministry of Women and Child Development⁶ explains gender budgeting as “a gender-responsive budget is budget that acknowledges the gender patterns in society and allocates money to implement policies and programmes that will change these patterns in a way that moves towards a more gender equal society.”

Manual for the application of gender budgeting within the Belgian federal administration, (2010) defined the gender budgeting as “*The integration of the gender perspective in all public policies implies that it is also integrated in the budgetary domain. This is what is called gender-sensitive budgeting or gender budgeting.*”

Blickhauser and Barga (2007), express that, Gender budgeting is part of the gender mainstreaming strategy. Gender budgeting focuses on a gender based analysis and equality-oriented evaluation of the distribution of resources. These resources are mainly money, time as well as paid and or unpaid work. Gender budgeting seeks to achieve a gender-equal distribution of resources. Stotsky (2006), gender budgeting refers to the systematic examination of budget programs and policies for their impact on women. International Organization for Migration (2008) states that Gender Sensitive Budgeting (GSB) is budgeting that integrates a gender perspective and tracks how budgets respond to gender equality commitments and targets. Budlender and Sharp (1998), refer gender-sensitive budget as a variety of processes and tools aimed at facilitating an assessment of the gendered impacts of government budgets. Chakraborty (2013), Gender budgeting is an innovation to translate gender commitments into budgetary commitments.

From the above mentioned definition it is clear that to achieve the goals gender equality through gender mainstreaming strategy, government needs to have a vision for women and men, girls and boys, it has to prepare policy design, allocate funds and implement the policies and programmes which would help to achieve the said goals.

Gender Budgeting initiative of India⁷

The Constitution of India guarantees right to equality of all citizens. A Government of India policy document defines Gender budgeting, “A Gender-Responsive Budget is a budget that acknowledges the gender patterns in society and allocates the money to implement policies and programs that will change these patterns in a way that moves towards a more gender equal society. Gender budget initiatives are exercises that aim to move the country in the direction of a gender-responsive budget”, (Ministry of Women and Child Development, GOI). The first Gender Budget Statement appeared in the Union Budget 2005-06 and included 10 demands for grants. This is now increased to over 33 grants under 27 ministries and departments as well as the five Union Territories. With regard to education, employment and political participation—is considered essential for the achievement of gender equality and women’s empowerment. The Gender Budget Statement was introduced leveling the Union Budget in the year 2005-06. Apart from listing those schemes where 100% provisions are meant for women in Part A, the statement in its current form also includes those schemes in which at least 30% provisions are meant for women in Part B.

The Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM)

The Mumbai Metropolis has a historic tradition of strong civic activism dedicated to the cause of a better life for all its citizens. And it’s the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM), the primary agency responsible for urban governance in Greater Mumbai. From the time of its establishment in 1882 as India’s first municipal corporation, numerous non-political groups, NGO’s and organizations of citizens have worked closely with the civic body in the fields of education, public health, creation of urban amenities, art and culture, heritage conservation, etc. MCGM is one of the largest local governments in the Asian continent.⁸

The Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai, hence forth for this paper purpose MCGM acronym, has been starting implementation of gender budgeting from the financial year 2009-2010.

To analyze the Gender budgeting of MCGM, this research paper has considered the budgetary provisions (budget estimate) for the financial year 2010-11, 2011-12 and 2013-14 prepared by the MCGM which includes various schemes and can be broadly grouped into four categories as follows:

A) Economical and Social Empowerment: to achieve the goal of the economical and social empowerment of

⁵ Gender Budgeting (2005).

⁶ Gender Budgeting Hand Book for Government of India Ministries & Departments (2007)

⁷ Sable Deepak.P. (2014)

⁸ MCGM website

women, MCGM has taken initiatives through the following schemes:

- 1) Self employment for eligible women.
- 2) Self Defence /skill development.
- 3) Funds for Self Help Groups (SHGs).
- 4) Subsidy to SHGs for micro enterprise.
- 5) Night shelters for street homeless poor people.
- 6) Schemes for senior citizens.
- 7) Group insurance schemes.
- 8) Babysitting.
- 9) Woman day/senior citizen day celebrations etc.
- 10) Karate for Girls.

B) Educational Empowerment:

- 1) Provision for children's free education.
- 2) Monetary incentives for attending schools to seventh standard girl students of MCGM schools
- 3) Special support to girls students of MCGM schools for higher education.
- 4) Budgetary Provision for educational materials.
- 5) Budgetary Provision for Schools materials.

C) Health and Hygiene:

- 1) To provide artificial limbs to handicapped women and children below age 14.
- 2) To improve the standard, change the structure and other major changes of maternity hospitals of MCGM.
- 3) To improve the standard with the purchase of

equipments for maternity hospitals of MCGM.

- 4) Improve the standard of suburban hospitals and expanding infant unit.

- 5) To construct toilets for women in crowded places of Mumbai city.

- D) Developing children parks or garden with Modern equipments.

Gender Budget Estimates of MCGM

Table no.1 shows that the Gender Budget (GB) of Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) for the financial year 2010-11, 2011-12 and 2013-14. These budget documents retrieved from the official website of MCGM. Gender Budget for the financial year 2012-13 could not find on the same website. MCGM has prepared separate gender budget but that is also only estimates of revenue and capital account provisions made by it, but the same budget did not shows exact expenditure incurred in the respective financial year. It might be shown in general budget of corporation. Table no.1 also shows the budget estimates of revenue and capital account. Actually, as per the literature survey there is no separate Gender Budget (GB) prepared, but since MCGM has done it separately, hence the budget should show the actual expenditure too.

Table no.2 shows the revenue account, as per the budget estimates for the economic and social upliftment of women for which overall 3.21, 4.14 and 3.75 percent shares are for the financial year 2010-11, 2011-12 and 2013-14 respectively. That shows the budget estimate does not go beyond 4.14 per cent.

Primary education expenditure accounted 50.60, 50.16 and 40.56 per cent which show the good sign of achieving the educational equality among the boys and girls students. Whereas in secondary educational budget estimates shows alarming situation. On the other hand health and sanitation MCGM budget estimates considerably doing satisfactory work.

**Table No.1: Gender Budget of MCGM.
(Rupees in Thousands)**

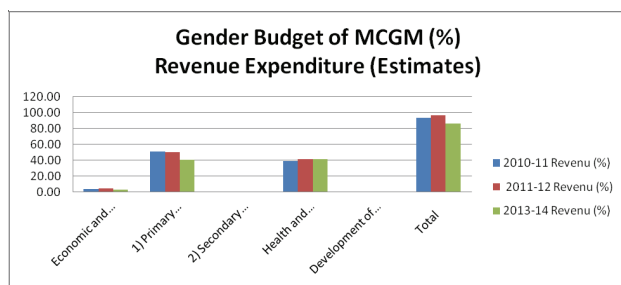
Activities	Budget Estimates (Rupees in Thousand)					
	2010-11		2011-12		2013-14	
	Revenue	Capital	Revenue	Capital	Revenue	Capital
Economic and Social Upliftment	119500	0	150000	0	192980	18500
Educational Upliftment						
1) Primary Education	1881789	0	1818716	0	2086588	0
2) Secondary Education	14697	0	16681	0	16877	0
Health and Sanitation	1437983	215313	1495341	123908	2141200	648835
Development of Children Parks with Modern equipments & Recreation Facilities	0	50000	0	21000	0	40010
	3453969	265313	3480738	144908	4437645	707345
Total Budget		371,92,82		362,56,46		514,49,90

Table No.2: Gender Budget of MCGM (Percentage)

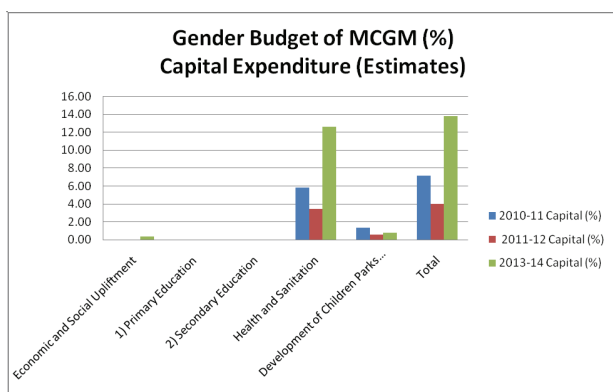
Activities	Budget Estimates (in Percentage)					
	2010-11		2011-12		2013-14	
	Revenue (%)	Capital (%)	Revenue (%)	Capital (%)	Revenue (%)	Capital (%)
Economic and Social Upliftment	3.21	0.00	4.14	0.00	3.75	0.36
Educational Upliftment						
1) Primary Education	50.60	0.00	50.16	0.00	40.56	0.00
2) Secondary Education	0.40	0.00	0.46	0.00	0.33	0.00
Health and Sanitation	38.66	5.79	41.24	3.42	41.62	12.61
Development of Children Parks with Modern equipments & Recreation Facilities		1.34		0.58		0.78
	92.87	7.13	96.00	4.00	86.25	13.75
		100		100		100

Table no.2 shows a capital account budget estimate of MCGM. There is great need to look at good infrastructural spending on economic, social and educational areas. Though MCGM budget estimates shows some provision on health and sanitation, and development of parks and recreation with modern equipment, but whose share should increase satisfactorily.

Graph No.1: Gender Budget Revenue Expenditure (%)



Graph No.2: Gender Budget Capital Expenditure (%)



Conclusion

It is observed from the literature that women discrimination still is in the world, the council of Europe⁹ in its final report highlighted if women have obtained equality and equal status with men in the majority of European countries, they are still discriminated against in many areas and also emphasized that Equality between women and men, seen as fundamental human right. It is also observed that the gender budget is not separate budget for women or for men. It is an attempt to break down or disaggregate the government's mainstream budget according to its impact on women and men.

Gender Budget of Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) has been prepared separately. This research paper has considered the budgetary provisions (budget estimates) for the financial year 2010-11, 2011-12 and 2013-14 prepared by the MCGM which includes schemes broadly four categories such as economic and social upliftment, Educational Upliftment, Health & Sanitation and Development of children parks, recreation with modern equipments. For the economic and social upliftment of women overall that shows the budget estimate does not go beyond 4.14 per cent. Primary education expenditure shows the good sign of achieving the educational equality among the boys and girls students. Where as in secondary educational budget estimates shows alarming situation. Health and sanitation MCGM budget estimates doing satisfactory work. A capital account budget estimates of MCGM there need to invest on infrastructural spending in economic and social, educational areas. For Health and Sanitation, and development of parks and recreation with modern equipment, budgetary share should increase.

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Study of Sector wise Work Force Participation Rate of Female : A Case Study of Thane District of Maharashtra

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Abstract : Study of sector wise work force participation rate of female plays an important role in understanding participation of females in the process of economic development. It shows the distribution of women workforce among different sectors of the economy. In the era of modernization, urbanization and industrial development Labor Force Participation of women remains woefully low in India, and this could be a major drag, not just on the empowerment of women but on the India growth story as well. The socio-economic development of any region depends on the number of persons who are economically active in different sectors. The workforce participation rate of women is changing with economic development and study of such changes in the same can be one such tool to judge the gender related economic equality.

Thus, this paper attempts to study the changing female work participation and also economic profile of female workforce in Maharashtra with special reference to Thane District.

Keywords : Female Labor Force Participation Rate, Economic Growth, Structural Change, Economic Activities, Maharashtra, Thane.

Introduction

India is among the fast growing economies in the world. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), in 2010, India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew at 10.6% compared to 10.4% for China, an average growth rate of 9.7% in developing countries within Asia and 7.5% average growth rate in emerging and developing economies. Structural shifts in the economy show an increase in educational attainment levels and rapid urbanisation in the last twenty five years. In the same period there has been a 23% decline in the female labor force participation rate. The persistent decline in female labor force participation rate (LFPR) in India in the face of consistent economic growth is a puzzling phenomenon. According to a gender gap report released recently by the World Economic Forum, India has the highest difference between women and men on the average minutes spent per day on unpaid work – a difference is of 300 minutes. It is also among the countries with the highest difference in the female and male percentage of total R&D personnel, and one of the lowest percentages of firms with female participation in ownership.

Sector wise female workforce participation rate shows the distribution of female workers among the different sectors or occupations in the country. Various occupations in economic theory are classified as-

1. Primary: agriculture, forestry and logging, fishing, mining and quarrying.
2. Secondary: manufacturing, electricity,-gas and water supply, construction.
3. Tertiary: Wholesale and Retail Trade, Hotels and Restaurants, Transport Services, Communication

Services, Financial Services, Real Estate and Renting Services, Business Services, Public Administration, Education Services Health Services.

The following changes in work force participation rate are expected along with the economic development of the country:

1. Decline in the percentage of female population dependent on agriculture.
2. Increase in the percentage of female population dependent on industry.
3. Sharper increase in the percentage of female population dependent on services.

Objectives

Study of sector wise work participation rate of female plays an important role in understanding participation of females in the process of economic development. It shows the distribution of women workforce among different sectors of the economy. This paper would also highlight the following features-

1. Sectoral composition of national income in India
2. Changes in occupational structure in India
3. Overview of Thane district
4. Workforce Participation Rate of males & females
5. Main & marginal male & female workers
6. Distribution of male & female workers according to economic activities

Research Methodology

The research paper is arranged in two sections.

The first section talks about the changes in the work participation in sectors viz; primary, secondary and tertiary sectors in National Income along with the changes in occupational structure in India. In second section, occupational change is studied considering changes in female work force participation rates in Thane district.

Various Economic Surveys of Govt. of India, Census of India, Economic Survey of Maharashtra-1998 and 2005, Socio-Economic Statistics of Thane district, District Census Handbook-Thane, Tata Statistical Outline are used for data analysis.

A. Sectoral composition of India's national income

The sectoral composition of GDP in India has changed substantially on account of the growth of the economy. The share of GDP originating from agriculture and allied activities has steadily declined, while that originating from industry and services sector has increased. These changes show that Indian economy has transformed from the production structure of a backward economy to that of a developing economy. This is shown in the following table-

Table-1: Estimates of GDP in India (%)

Industry	1990-1991	2010-11
Primary	34.0	16.7
Secondary	23.3	25.9
Tertiary	42.2	57.4
Total	100	100

Source: Economic Surveys 1991 & 2011, Govt. of India.

B. Changes in occupational structure in India

Occupational structure in the Indian economy has changed with the economic development but at a slow pace. The following table helps us see the shift taking place from agricultural sector to secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy in terms of employment.

Table-2: Occupational distribution of working population in India (%)

Sector	1991	2009-10
Primary	67.5	53.2
Secondary	11.7	21.5
Tertiary	20.4	25.3
Total	100	100

Source: Tata Services Limited: Statistical outline of India 2010-11 & NSSO report of 2009-10

We observe the following changes in the occupational structure of India.

1. Agriculture even today is the main occupation of the people in India. It employs a very large proportion of working population.
2. As the industrialisation spreads during the growth process, the share of secondary sector rises. The process of transition from an agricultural economy to an industrialised one is taking place in India, but at a slow pace.
3. The process of growth takes place with an improvement in the share of service sector. There has been an increase in the share of tertiary sector in the employment in the above activities.

After studying the scenario of occupational structural change at the national level, we were quite interested to know the changes which taken place in occupational structure in our own Thane district.

C. Overview of Thane District

Thane district of Maharashtra is adjacent to Mumbai megacity. Thane is one of the largest districts of India (population-wise). According to Census 2011, population of Thane stood at 1.10 corers with literacy rate of 84.53% and sex ratio of 886 females per 1000 males. Thane comprises of fifteen talukas with seven municipal corporations. Per Capita District income was Rs.1.05 lacks in 2009-10 (at current prices).

Nearness to Mumbai has led to rapid industrialisation of Thane district. The scarcity of land in Mumbai and comparatively lower cost of land in Thane has made people to migrate to the district. This has further led to rapid infrastructural development. The industrialisation in the district is due to numerous industrial projects by MIDC, MMRDA and so on. Under the impact of globalisation there is FDI flow in different sectors of the district. All the above factors have contributed in the process of change occupational structure of the district.

D. Work Force Participation Rate (WFPR):-

The Work Force Participation Rate (WFPR) in a country shows the proportion of working population to total population in a country. Let us analyse FWPR of males & females in urban and rural areas from the following table-

Table-3: Work Force Participation Rate (WPR)(in %)

		Person		Male		Female	
		1991	2001	1991	2001	1991	2001
India	Total	37.46	39.1	51.55	51.7	22.25	25.6
	Rural	39.99	41.7	52.48	52.1	26.67	30.8
	Urban	30.17	32.3	48.94	50.6	9.17	11.9
Thane	Total	39.85	39.1	54.90	55.8	22.73	19.6
	Rural	49.62	48	55.18	55.7	43.81	39.9
	Urban	34.50	35.7	54.76	55.9	10.40	11.4

Source: *Census of India-1991 & 2001*

From the above table:

- The total female workforce participation rate at all India level has increased. However, total female WFPR in Thane district is decreasing.
- The female work force participation rate in rural areas at India level has increased. However, the female work force participation rate in Thane is decreasing. This is mainly due to the nature of rural work, which is largely agricultural where both males and females participate. Further lack of educational facilities and unavailability of other alternative job opportunities in rural areas force people to join family work in the fields/crafts at an early age. But, there is an increase in total FWPR in Urban areas. This pinpoints at rapid urbanisation and its impact on Thane.
- The female work force participation rate is lower than that of males. This is mainly due to the fact that most of the women are housewives, whose work is not counted as a part of productive work. This also reflects the low status of women in Indian society.

E. Analysis of Total, Main and Marginal Workers

Labour is a primary factor of production. Therefore, the size of labour force is of great importance for the level of economic activity in a country. Labour force includes the number of working persons in the age group of 16-60 years. The number of working persons constitutes the working population i.e. work force of a country.

The census of India has classified total workers into Main and Marginal female workers. The main female workers are those who have worked for 183 days or more in a year. The marginal female workers are those who have worked less than 183 days in a year.

We analyse changes in the occupational structure on the basis of Main workers and Marginal workers with the help of following tables-

Table-4: Main Workers (%)

	India		Thane	
	1991	2001	1991	2001
Total	34.10	30.55	37.37	34.2
Male	50.93	45.35	54.16	51.6
Female	15.93	14.68	18.28	14

Source: *Census of India-1991 & 2001*

Table-5: Marginal Workers (%)

	India		Thane	
	1991	2001	1991	2001
Total	3.36	8.71	2.47	4.9
Male	0.62	6.59	0.74	4.3
Female	6.32	10.99	4.44	5.6

Source: *Census of India-1991 & 2001*

It is clear from the above tables that-

- Percentage of main workers in India and Thane has declined both for male and female workers.
- In case of marginal workers it is seen that there has been a drastic increase in the percentage for both male and female workers in India and Thane.

- C. However in case of main workers the proportion of female workers are less than males & in case of marginal workers the proportion of females are more than males.

The decline in the percentage of main female workers and increase in marginal female workers in India & in Thane district is due to number of factors like-

- Slow growth of industrial development and low growth rate of employment in the organised sector.
- Decay of small scale and cottage industries.
- Replacement of labour by capital i.e. more use of capital intensive technology.
- Insufficient infrastructure reducing productive efficiency.
- Underutilisation of resources.
- Industrial sickness.
- Deceleration in the public sector employment.
- Feminisation of labour in low-wage jobs.

E. Distribution of workers according to Economic activities:-

In 1991 census, workers were categorized into nine industrial categories, viz. i) cultivators, ii) agricultural labourers iii) livestock, forestry, fishing, hunting, plantation, orchards and allied activities, iv) mining and quarrying, v) manufacturing and repairs- (a) household industries (b) other than household industries, vi) construction, vii) trade and commerce, viii) transport, storage and communication, ix) services.

But, the 2001 census provided information on four categories of workers only i.e. cultivators, agricultural labourers, household industries and other workers. The first two are related to agricultural activities while the rest are treated as non-agricultural workforce.

The distribution of workers according to economic activities in India & in Thane district is shown in the following tables-

Table-6: Distribution of workers according to economic activities in India (in %)

Industrial category	1991		2001	
	M	F	M	F
Cultivators	39.63	34.22	31.3	32.5
Agricultural labourers	21.05	44.93	20.08	39.4
Household industrial workers	2.09	3.53	3.1	6.4
Other workers (construction, trade and commerce, transport, storage and communication, services.)	37.2	17.3	44.8	21.7

Source: Census of India-1991 & 2001

Above table shows that the percentage of cultivators and agricultural labourers are declining. There has been marginal increase of in the percentage of male household industrial workers but the percentage females working as household industrial workers has increased.

In case of other workers, percentage of males and females both has increased significantly.

Table-7: The distribution of workers according to economic activities in Thane (in %)

Category	Thane					
	1991			2001		
	P	M	F	P	M	F
Cultivators	20.54	15.19	38.57	12.2	8.1	25.9
Agricultural Labourers	10.21	6.86	21.49	9.6	5.9	22
Workers In Household Industries	1.19	1.04	1.72	2.5	1.7	5.6
Other Workers (construction, trade and commerce, transport, storage and communication, services.)	68.06	76.91	38.22	75.6	84.2	47.1

Source: Census of India-1991 & 2001

It can be stated from the above data-

- A. The percentage of people engaged in primary sector both for male and female (combining categories 1 and 2) in Thane district has declined at a faster rate.
- B. The percentage of people engaged in household industries has increased but it is observed that there is a greater increase in the percentage of people as other workers i.e. in service sector over a period of 10 years from 1991-2001.
- C. The percentage of female workers in service sector is greater than other sectors but still they are very less as compared to male workers. Following are the main reasons of increasing percentage of female workers in service sector of Thane district:-
 - Number of small services like animal husbandry, dairy farming, poultry farming etc. comes under service sector
 - Low wage rate in agriculture
 - Declining rate of agricultural female workers due to the sale of agricultural lands to the industrialists.
 - Increase in literacy rate
 - Manufacturing sector has always been a little hesitant to employ women. So the female workforce from agriculture gravitates more to service sector
 - With economic development, increase in job opportunities in service sector
 - As compared to primary & secondary sector, physical exertion in service sector is less
 - Service sector even offered work from home
 - Safety & Security i.e. conducive environment for work as compared to other sectors
- D. However as compared to male work force participation rate the proportion of female work force participation rate is less in service sector of India as well as of Thane district. It is mainly because of male dominant society, low sex ratio, low literacy rate, dual responsibility on females etc. it reveals that still there is gender inequality in case of employment opportunities in India as well as in Thane district of Maharashtra.

Conclusion

The present analysis discusses changes in the workforce participation rate of females at the national level as well as in Thane district.

With economic development there has been a positive change/shift in occupational structure in India from primary to secondary and to tertiary sector. There has been a decline in the percentage of female population dependent on agriculture, increase in the percentage of female population dependent on industry & services. The picture of Thane district is very much similar to the all India situation at the broader level.

In the era of globalization various factors have contributed to the declining importance of agricultural activities in the district viz; migration of agricultural workers, literacy among youth and their dislike for the agricultural activities, educational policy supporting growth of secondary and tertiary sectors, conversion of fertile agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes, use of inappropriate and outdated technology in farm activities and others.

However though there a positive change in occupational structure towards service sector, the female workforce participation rate is still only 50% of male workforce participation rate which shows still gender inequality is the major challenge faced by Indian economy.

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Women Empowerment through Political Reservations : A Study of Select Women Corporators of MCGM

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Abstract : The Seventy-Third and Seventy-Fourth Amendments gave constitutional status to rural and urban local governments in India. Among the important provisions brought in by these amendments is the provision to give minimum one-third reservation to women in Local Self Governments (LSGs). Although, the 110th and 112th Constitutional Amendment Bills (2009) seeking to increase the women reservation to 50% in Panchayats and Municipalities respectively lapsed with the expiry of the term of 15th Lok Sabha. However, a number of states including Maharashtra have already increased women reservation in LSGs to 50%. The 2012 elections became the first elections of LSGs (Panchayats and Municipalities) to provide 50% reservation to women in Maharashtra. Presently, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has more than half of its corporators as women.

One essential logic behind women reservation is that it would bring about a change in the masculine model of politics by giving priority to women-centric issues. The women representatives would bring in the feminist perspective in dealing with critical socio-political and economic concerns, thereby initiating the process of women empowerment. The present paper aspires to study the co-relation between political reservation and empowerment of women, in the specific context of women corporators elected to B.M.C.

The paper intends to explore and examine views of woman corporators with regard to the issue of women empowerment and the efficacy of reservation in the attainment of this objective. It also seeks to study 'if' and 'what' are the problems faced by the woman corporators in participating in the deliberative process and functioning of the Corporation.

Keywords: Empowerment, reservations, masculine model of politics.

Introduction

Empowerment is a process that aims at changing the direction of systemic forces marginalizing underprivileged groups in a society. It is a deliberately initiated and externally induced process. There are two dimensions of women's reservation; first to open the male-dominated political space for women and second, to trigger the empowerment of womenfolk in general through the women representatives. Women's reservations would be a means to end masculine model of politics. It is expected to bring with it a feminist perspective in dealing with socio-political and economic concerns.

The rationale for feminizing politics emerges from a number of positions such as those of justice, pragmatism (women being half the population) and representation (presence is important) (Lovenduski, 2005). Indian constitution provided for equal civil and political rights to women. Yet it has been observed that the right to political equality has not enabled women to play their roles as partners and constituents in the political process. On this background, the idea of political reservations for women came, forth. The Local Self Governments became the first level to get 33% reservation by 73rd and 74th amendments in 1993.

In Maharashtra 33% women reservations in local bodies were introduced in 1990. In 2011, Maharashtra

implemented 50% reservations for women in local bodies though the Constitutional Amendment Bills (110th and 112th CA Bills, 2009) lapsed with the expiry of 15th Lok Sabha. Thus, 2012 LSG elections gave 50% reservations to women in Maharashtra.

Need for the Study

There have been only a limited number of studies regarding women's representatives in Urban Local Bodies in India especially in Maharashtra. Rambhau Mhalgi Prabodhini (1996) published a report of a study-team led by Dr. Medha Nanivdekar. This was the study of Western Maharashtra region immediately after actual implementation of 33%. A second study was by Archana Ghosh and Tawa Rawal (2001) in 4 mega cities of India. It underlined limitations of women's representation in municipal bodies. All India Institute of Local Self Government (2007-08) conducted a questionnaire-based study of women Corporators in 4 states. Praja Foundation in Mumbai is undertaking a number of quantitative studies. For instance, Councilor's Report Card (2014) is published based on the field surveys and Corporators are given ranks. Purnima Thapar (2014) has a questionnaire-based study of women councilors in Himachal Pradesh. These studies are mostly quantitative and not exclusively focused on Mumbai. Hence, the present paper intends to explore and examine views of women

Corporators selected for the first time to Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) with respect to women empowerment and the efficacy of reservation in its attainment. It also seeks to study 'if' and 'what' are the problems faced by the first time elected women Corporators.

Hypothesis

Political Reservations for women is a key to women empowerment in various wards in Mumbai.

Methodology

The study is primarily qualitative in nature. It is based on frank opinions expressed informally by a number of women Corporators to the researchers. Besides, secondary sources and web resources in the form of reports, books and relevant websites have been referred.

About MCGM

The Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) constituted under the Mumbai Municipal Corporation Act, 1888, as modified from time to time, consists of 227 councilors directly elected at ward elections & 5 nominated councilors having special knowledge or experience in municipal administration. The tenure is of 5 years from the date of first meeting. The Corporation at its special Meeting after general elections appoints amongst the councilors its Mayor & Deputy Mayor. Their tenure is 2.5 yrs. Corporation members are nominated on its various committees like statutory, standing, special, consultative, sub-committees and Ward Committees. At present, 114 seats are reserved for women and actual number of elected women Corporators is 121.¹

Political Scenario at the time of implementation of women reservations and political background of women candidates

Maharashtra increased the reservation quota for women to 50% from 33% in 2011. It was just a few months before the announcement of municipal elections in the state. This decision was not much in response to demands from the feminist movement. Sudden increase in this political space for women did not correlate with the required broadening of socio-economic horizons for women. In other words, social and economic status of women had not changed significantly but sudden space was created in political arena. Naturally, the choice of candidates often was limited to the women belonging to families of male office-bearers/leaders of varied political parties. It was thus found that about 80 % of elected women Corporators have at least 1 male member (mostly, husband or brother) actively involved either in party – level politics or was elected from the constituency that later became reserved for women.

Some of the women Corporators on one hand humbly accepted the fact that the main reason of getting the ticket and winning the seat was their respective male family members. While others argue their previous work in a number of socio-cultural organizations before they were offered party ticket played a role. Moreover it was thought to be necessary to take ahead the work initiated by the male members of family in the constituency.

The woman Corporators, who had been associated with women's – rights organization for a long time, mentioned an interesting aspect. As an activist, she was actively involved in demanding 50% women reservation in politics. She was part of demonstrations for the same held at Delhi. Now when reservations were actually offered was it not her moral obligation to accept it as an opportunity. It was the question of accepting the reality coming out of the safe world of idealism. If she had not accepted this opportunity only because her husband was the sitting Corporator, it would have been an insult of values she fought for.

There is also a small category where women choose to contest on women reserved seat who did not have presence of any family member in politics. They were given tickets because the sitting male corporation wanted to keep their hold on the ward intact. Hence less assertive elderly women party workers were the natural choice.

Achieving a Goal of Empowerment

Following are some of the programmes and initiatives being undertaken by women Corporators in their constituencies:

• Women Self Help Groups (SHGs) particularly Bachat Gats

Many women Corporators are making sincere attempts to initiate formation of women SHGs i.e. *bachatgats*. Number of schemes launched by BMC and state government are taken to women who are below Poverty Line (BPL) or those holding orange/yellow ration cards. The women Corporators are helping these women with the documentation work, opening their Bank Accounts, getting loans sanctioned etc.

• Self – Employment

A number of women Corporators are taking interest in making women in their constituencies financially independent. A number of training courses are being organized such as beautician courses, photography, sewing and stitching courses, Computer training etc. Women Corporators are making efforts to acquire funds from BMC for these courses.

• Dealing with Women Issues

Interestingly, a number of women Corporators

¹ Situation before State Legislative Assembly elections, 2014

mentioned the rise in the number of women visitors to their office than before (i.e. where male Corporators used to sit in the office). A woman Corporator (Jyoti Alawani) has not only taken an initiative in the formation of Family Counseling Centre in her constituency but also completed one year diploma in counseling & now pursuing M.A. in counseling from IGNOU. Another Corporator (Hemangi Worlikar) has done a remarkable work in ensuring safety of women in her slum-dominated constituency. It includes imposition of wall – mounting electric light poles, building more number of toilets etc.

• *Significant Issues*

Issues like *Right to Pee*, which are significant for women are being brought out by women corporators. A women corporator has made suggestion to allow women SHGs to run public toilets. Training is to be given to these SHGs to make sanitary napkins which can be made available at the women public toilets at reasonable prices.

Economic and Educational Backgrounds

Many of the first time women corporators have humble economic status. 37 out of 121 are post graduates and professionals (doctors, artists, lawyers). Some have job experience of reasonable number of years either in government or private sectors. In fact exposure due to their jobs has helped them significantly to be influential in politics. For others, having financial stability within family has been a crucial factor for their political career.

Problems

• *Lack of Training*

After getting elected there were very few training programs for women corporators. Having absolutely no political experience, most of the women corporators found it very difficult to discharge their functions. Most of these corporators spent about 2 years to settle down & grasp the political-administrative system due to lack of genuine, rigorous training. In this process, most of the aid and advice came from their male – family members and sometimes from experienced male party leaders.

• *Dealing with bureaucracy*

Corporators mostly deal with day-to-day needs and issues of citizens. Most of the complaints they receive are of drainage lines, sewerage pipes, water supply, electricity supply, footpath, garbage collection etc. To deal with such complaints the Corporators have to get in touch with administration mostly at ward office level. The bureaucracy has its own way of functioning. Firstly it has the habit of unduly emphasizing rules and procedures. Newly elected women Corporators have found it difficult initially to grasp these complex rules & procedures. It took months for some

to understand difference between drainage and sewage line for instance. What are exact functions of multiple departments, whom to approach for a particular type of complaint, were some of the initial barriers. Slowly, they have learnt strategies to get work done from bureaucracy especially at ward level. At times, they speak softly and appease the officer or take help of their family or party male members and also get aggressive if required.

But certainly they are learning to deal with bureaucracy. Taking a lady Junior Engineer on two-wheeler ride in constituency to show the problems, organizing field visits of higher-level officers are some innovative ways being used by women Corporators.

• *Stereotypical Images*

There is a strong perception among party workers to look upon women Corporators as “Vahini” (sister-in-law). Women workers as well as people in constituency identify her with husband’s/ father’s identity. Despite doing significant work, many women Corporators are not treated as an individual but only a shadow of their politically active husbands.

• *Highly demanding job- Corporator-24 X 7*

The masculine model of politics is based on the values of extreme competition, manipulations, and informal settlements of issues and work for twenty-four hours. In fact for this model the real politics begins when the daytime deliberative or consultative politics is over. Many women Corporators who were never active in politics find it difficult to spend so much time away from their families especially kids. They are expected to be available to the people of constituency round the clock. So a power cut or an accident or a fight between party activists, a case of domestic violence in a slum locality happening at late hours of night requires their presence. At times, the incident is really negligible or minor and can be dealt with a telephonic call. But people expect their Corporators to be physically present. This has really put a lot of pressure on newly elected women Corporators whose private sphere is completely encroached upon by their expected role in the public domain. A woman corporator was at work day & night though her child was hospitalized. Unfortunately the child couldn’t recover and died. The relatives taunted her for neglect of the child’s health.

• *Poor Performance*

There are other women Corporators whose sorry performance makes us rethink of the policy of women reservation. Out of bottom 10 Corporators who have not asked any question in general body meeting and those not utilized corporator funds, respectively 7 are women. (Praja Foundation, 2014). They are regularly bunking off various meetings of the Corporation.

Conclusion

1. Most of the first time elected women Corporators have presence of one politically active male member in their family.
2. Most of them have reluctantly entered the political arena.
3. It took significant time for them to learn the political and administrative system. Lack of formal training was a major reason given their inexperience.
4. Having learnt things on-job, many women Corporators are now zealously working for financial and social empowerment of women in their constituencies.
5. Reservations have provided women with opportunity to lead – as mayor, chairpersons of varied committee etc.
6. Number of women approaching women Corporators for resolution of their problems has gone up.
7. Women Corporators are willing to keep aside party distinctions to show sensitivity to women's issues.
8. Informal communication networks between women Corporators of various parties are getting developed. These are serving as means of problem sharing and discussions and source of mental-emotional strength.
9. They do reflect a feminine perspective in dealing with various problems.
10. The bureaucratic non-cooperation, systemic delays, issues related to male colleagues within party, lottery system of reservation, attitude of common people to look at them as servants, emotional pressure coming from giving negligible time for families are some reasons for some of them to show unwillingness to continue in politics after present term.
11. Some however have developed ambitions to move in the higher echelons of power.
12. Despite doing significant work, they find it difficult to break the Stereotype of being 'Vahini'.
13. Reservation is an opportunity for those women who really want to learn and act. Unfortunately all Corporators are not so willing to learn. Some still prefer to be shadows of their male family member or leader. They are absent Corporators or mere puppets in the hands of male leaders.

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Elimination of Sexual Harassment and Making Public Places Safe for Women in India - A Critical Examination of Legislative Action

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Abstract : Where sexual harassment exists gender inequality exists. Rampant all over the world, it takes many physical and verbal forms as exhibiting, gesturing, staring, stalking, talking, singing, groping, molesting, assaulting, etc. Shamelessly this goes on in public places – educational institutions, offices, buses, trains, crowded places and almost every possible place. The public streets, parks, railway stations and other places have become very unsafe for women. Media reports in this respect are disturbing. In many cities harassment zones have been identified and women cautioned. But public places like railway stations and bus stations cannot be avoided and they are the places women feel insecure.

Vishaka guidelines were laid down by the Supreme Court of India in 1997 to deal with sexual harassment of women in work places. In 2013, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act has been passed by the Parliament. But there appears a gap in respect of safety of women in public places. The importance of effective legal safeguards to rid the public places of sexual harassment needs no substantiation. The purpose of this paper is to examine the legislative action in India to deal with the menace of sexual harassment that derides gender equality in public places.

Keywords : *sexual harassment, public place, groping, molesting, eve teasing.*

Rape, sexual assault, eve-teasing and stalking are matters of serious concern- not only because of the physical, emotional and psychological trauma which they engender in the victim, but also because these are practices which are being tolerated by a society ostensibly wedded to the rule of law.

-Verma Committee Report – 2013: paragraph 1

Equality principle forms the bedrock of Indian Constitution with the opening promise of equality in the Preamble. It is a basic feature of the Constitution and an essential feature of democracy and rule of law.¹ The right of the women to be protected against sexual harassment and sexual assault flows from their right to dignity and equality. Sexual harassment results in violation of the fundamental rights of a woman to equality under articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution of India and her right to life and right to live with dignity under article 21 of the Constitution of India.²

Sexual Harassment takes many physical and verbal forms as exhibiting, gesturing, staring, facial expressions, indecent exposure, stalking, talking (comments, cat calls), singing, groping, molesting, taking photos, showing porn, lewd phone calls, assaulting, etc. Shamelessly this goes on in public places – educational institutions, offices, buses, trains, crowded places and almost every possible place. The

public streets, parks, railway stations and other places have become very unsafe for women. Media reports in this respect are disturbing. In many cities harassment zones have been identified and women cautioned. But public places like railway stations and bus stations cannot be avoided and they are the places women feel insecure³. Access to violence free and safe public spaces is a basic right of a woman. Every 51 minutes a woman is harassed in public place.⁴

The news report⁵ about the recent suicide of two teenage girls in Rohtak who could not come out of fear and shame because they were being stalked and harassed by young men, leaves us shocked and shamed. In their suicide note of six and four pages they have expressed that the local guys used to chase them, stalk, make lewd remarks and offer phone numbers; due to the harassment they feared disrepute also they could not concentrate in their studies. They urged the police to crack down on the men who harass women.

The issues of safety are not just about fear; they exclude women from public places; restrain them and impact on their lives.⁶ Unless the public places are safe, human rights of women will become a farce. Effective legal safeguards to make the public places rid of sexual harassment are indispensable. After the dastardly gang rape and murder of a medical student in Delhi in a moving bus

¹ Indira Nehru Gandhi v Raj Narain, AIR 1975 SC 2299

² See, Vishaka v State of Rajasthan, AIR 1997 SC ; Inspector General of Police v S. Samuthiram, (2013) 1 SCC 598; the long title of Sexual Harassment of Women at Work place (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013

³ Women feel most unsafe at railway stations and other crowded spots, TOI 19-08-14 p2; 70% women in Guwahati feel unsafe: Survey, Indian Express, 16 Nov 2013

⁴ Dr Rituparna Bhattacharyya, Crl. Law Amendment Act 2013, www.atimysore.gov.in (10/11/14)

⁵ Stalked and harassed Rotak teens end lives, and American dreams, Indian Express 27 August 2014 p1&2.

⁶ Kalpana Viswanath, Swati Tandon Mehtrotra, Shall we go out? - women's safety in public spaces in Delhi, Vol XLII, 2007, Economic & Political Weekly 1542 at 1545

which saw nationwide protests, the Government of India appointed Justice Verma Committee to review the laws on sexual offences against women and propose reforms. The Government also announced Nirbhaya fund of Rs 10 billion in 2013-14 budget to enhance women's safety and security in public spaces. Maharashtra government appointed Justice Dharmadikari Committee in 2010 to study and suggest measures to curb crimes against women. The committee is yet to table its final report.⁷

The purpose of this paper is to examine the legislative action in India to deal with the menace of sexual harassment excluding rape that derides gender equality in public places. Appreciably the Constitution of India recognizes equality rights as fundamental rights⁸ and the State has been empowered to make special provision for women⁹. Citizens have the fundamental duty to denounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women¹⁰, to abjure violence¹¹ and to develop scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of enquiry and reform¹². Sexual harassment flouts dignity of women; it is a form of violence; it is inhuman.

Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Eve Teasing Act, 1998 (PETA)

PETA, the only special statute in India applies to Tamil Nadu. PETA prohibits eve teasing in any place¹³. Eve teasing means any indecent conduct or act by a man which causes or is likely to cause intimidation, fear, shame or embarrassment to a woman, including abusing or causing hurt or nuisance to, or assault, use of force on a woman.¹⁴ PETA punishes the person who commits or participates in or abets eve teasing in or within the precincts of any educational institution, temple or other place of worship, bus stop, road, railway station, cinema theatre, park beach, place of festival, public service vehicle or any other place with imprisonment for a term upto one year or fine upto ten thousand rupees. It is the responsibility of the

management of any precinct to prevent eve teasing within the precinct and to inform the police in case of any complaint.¹⁵ PETA goes a long way to educate and warn the people and thereby to instill a sense of security in women.

Indian Penal Code, 1860 (IPC)

2013 Criminal law amendment, the outcome of the Verma Committee recommendations, has equipped IPC to deal with cases of sexual harassment; earlier there were only Ss. 354, 509 and 294. S.354 punishes whoever assaults or uses criminal force to any woman intending to outrage her modesty or knowing it likely that he will thereby outrage her modesty with simple or rigorous imprisonment for a minimum one year term but which may extend to five years and with fine. Prior to amendment, the punishment under this section was only imprisonment upto two years and /or fine. S.509 punishes with simple imprisonment for a term upto three years and fine whoever intending to insult the modesty of any woman, utters any word, makes any sound or gesture, or exhibits any object, intending that such word or sound shall be heard, or such gesture or object shall be seen, by such woman, or intrudes upon the privacy of such woman. Amendment has increased the imprisonment from one year and has also made fine compulsory. Rejecting the contention that a baby of 7 1/2 months is not capable of possessing modesty, the Supreme Court said: *the essence of a women's modesty is her sex. The modesty of an adult female is writ large on her body. Young or old, intelligent or imbecile, awake or sleeping, the woman possesses modesty capable of being outraged.*¹⁶ S. 294 punishes with simple imprisonment for 3 months and or fine any obscene act, song, recitation or uttering in a public place.

In 2013, Sections 354A-354D have been inserted into IPC to define and punish the following acts when committed by a man-

Offence	Punishment
S.354A- Sexual Harassment (i) physical contact & advances involving unwelcome and explicit sexual overtures (ii) a demand or request for sexual favours (iii) showing pornography against the will of a woman (iv) making sexually coloured remarks	For (i), (ii) & (iii) rigorous imprisonment for a term upto 3 years or fine or both For (iv) simple or rigorous imprisonment upto 1 year or fine or both

⁷timesofindia.indiatimes.com (2 /11/14)

⁸Articles 14-18

⁹Articles 15(3)

¹⁰Art 51A (e)

¹¹Art 51A (i)

¹²Art 51A(h)

¹³S.3

¹⁴S. 2(a)

¹⁵S.5

¹⁶State of Punjab v Major Singh, AIR 1967 SC 63 at p68.

<p>S. 354 B- Disrobing Assault or criminal force with intention to disrobe a woman or abetment of such act (no requirement of public place)</p>	<p>Minimum sentence of 3 years simple or rigorous imprisonment that may extend to 7 years and fine</p>
<p>S. 354C- Voyeurism Watching or capturing (without consent of the woman) the image of her engaging in a private act in circumstances where she would usually expect of not being observed or disseminating such image</p>	
<p>S. 354 D- Stalking (i) Following a woman and contacting or attempting to contact such woman to foster personal interaction repeatedly despite a clear indication of disinterest by such woman</p>	<p>Minimum sentence of 1 year simple or rigorous imprisonment that may extend upto 3 years and fine <u>Second or subsequent conviction-</u> minimum sentence of 3 years simple or rigorous imprisonment that may extend upto 7 years and fine For (i) & (ii) <u>First conviction-</u> simple or rigorous imprisonment upto 3 years and fine <u>Second or subsequent conviction-</u> Simple or rigorous imprisonment upto 5 years and fine</p>
<p>(ii) monitoring the use by a woman of the internet, e-mail or any other form of electronic communication</p> <p>Exceptions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Pursuit by the authority of state for crime prevention or crime detection 2) pursuit under any law 3) reasonable and justified in the particular circumstances 	

Criminal Procedure Code by 2013 amendment ensures the following in respect of offences under Ss 354, 354A-D and 509 of IPC- 1. Information and statements given by a woman as to offences committed or attempted against her shall be recorded by a woman police officer or any woman officer¹⁷ 2. When any public servant is alleged to have committed any offence no previous sanction of the government is required for taking cognizance.¹⁸ 3. Statements of the victim shall be recorded by magistrate as soon as the commission of the offence is brought to the notice of the police.¹⁹ No police officer shall require any woman to attend at any place other than her residence for investigation.²⁰

In 2012, Supreme Court of India expressed grief over lack of uniform law to deal with sexual harassment of women in public places and laid down the following guidelines to ensure protection²¹-

- 1) All the State Governments and Union Territories shall
 - a) depute plain clothed female police officers in public

places so as to monitor and supervise incidents of eve-teasing b) shall install CCTV in strategic positions which itself would be a deterrent and if detected, the offender could be caught c) shall establish women help lines within three months d) shall instruct authorities to take effective measures to curb eve teasing

- 2) Persons in-charge shall take steps as they deem fit to prevent eve-teasing, within their precincts and, on a complaint being made, they must pass on the information to the nearest police station or the Women's Help Centre.
- 3) Where any incident of eve-teasing is committed in a public service vehicle, the crew of such vehicle shall, on a complaint made by the aggrieved person, take such vehicle to the nearest police station and give information to the police. Failure to do so should lead to cancellation of the permit to ply.

¹⁷ S. 154, 161

¹⁸ S.197

¹⁹ S.164(5A)

²⁰ S. 160

²¹ Supra N 2 Inspector General of Police at p 612

- 4) Suitable boards cautioning such act of eve-teasing shall be exhibited in all public places
- 5) Passers-by on noticing such incident should report the same to the nearest police station or to Women Helpline to save the victims.

The law reform is unquestionably a step forward in eliminating sexual harassment of women in public places.

Yet increased legal awareness, women friendly public spaces,²² simple, speedy and effective legal processes are indispensable. Education and outlook change are crucial. Furthermore, if the new generation women stepping out of homes are trained to face and fight the odds better, the quest for gender equality in public places will be triumphant.

²² Proper lighting, monitoring etc See Verma Committee Report, Chapter 10

Financial Literacy and Women Empowerment

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Abstract : The 'Quest for Equality' is a tool of women empowerment. The availability of opportunity to provide education in every field to women can be a step towards achieving gender equality. The knowledge about availability of banking facilities to women and transactions to be done by them can be one such tool to achieve the same.

Financial literacy is very important for bringing economic equality. As in the modern world, women cannot afford to turn a blind eye towards their financial security. Having knowledge and awareness of banking facilities and basic transactions make women very strong, confident and self-reliant.

In this context, a research study is undertaken to evaluate the basic banking literacy among women as compared to men. The present study is an attempt to find out knowledge related to banking among women and the problems they face while having transactions with banks by taking a case study of women in Thane District of Maharashtra, with reference to Urban Cooperative Banks.

Keywords : Financial Literacy, Quest for Equality, Banking

Financial Literacy and Women Empowerment

1. Introduction

One of the tools to empower the cause of woman, in lines with that of man is literacy. Sociologists and researchers have stressed on higher literacy among females to achieve the goal of equality among genders. Many remarkable works have been done by the social reformers not only at international levels but also in India. To spread literacy among women and to promote education in the country Indian Government in past has made many policies and launched many programmes. Even today, there are various schemes and programmes which are run by the Government of India for the cause of women's literacy. Thus, spreading literacy among women has been given a very important place in the direction of achievement of quest for equality for women.

Literacy is of various types and sub-types eg. Functional literacy is required to get along successfully on a day-to-day basis, Cultural literacy is about customs, values, and beliefs of one's own culture and the cultures of others, Information literacy is related to identifying, locating, evaluating and effectively using information for the issue or problem, Media literacy is about critical understanding of the mass media, Computer literacy is the ability to use a computer and its software to accomplish practical tasks, Mathematical literacy is a mastery of the basic symbols and processes of arithmetic, Technology literacy is about the ability to use new media such as the Internet, to access and communicate information effectively, Global literacy is understanding the interdependence among people and nations and having the ability to interact and collaborate successfully across cultures and so on.

The present paper is an attempt to understand the importance of Financial literacy and the availability of such a tool for literacy among women. Financial literacy is considered in the context of economic inequality and is important in modern times as financial strength can be considered as one of the area where still inequality among genders is found. Some of the forms of financial inequality are- paying lower wages to women for the equal work compared to males, denial of certain jobs and promotions, incentives etc. Thus, financial literacy in short, refers to:

1. The ability to understand how money works and why it is important?
2. How someone manages to earn or make money and how that is managed or how person invests it to turn it into more?
3. It also refers to the set of skills and knowledge that allows an individual to make informed and effective decisions with all of their financial resources.

Today, the participation rate of women in the workforce is quite impressive. In India in particular and in the world in general, many areas are getting opened up for women. Along with educational equality, women are also becoming financially stronger. This is a good sign towards women's quest for equality. Among such multi-facet financial literacy, the literacy among women about banking transactions, banking services and products is important. The better knowledge of such banking activities can reduce dependency of women on men. There are various schemes for the women offered by banks such as higher rate of interest on deposits, availability of housing and educational loans, credit provisions to begin an enterprise at special interest

rates. Knowledge of such schemes can further strengthen the move to bring about economic equality among genders. There are various new techniques and facilities made available to the customers by the banks like ATM, Debit-Credit Cards, Internet Banking, RTGS-NEFT facilities and so on.

Thus, the present paper is an attempt to find out such banking activity and facility related literacy among females.

2. Research Methodology and Data Collection

The present research paper has used a questionnaire method of data collection and is based on the primary data as collected through the questionnaire prepared for the females. To make research manageable, a sample size of hundred working females from Thane and those having bank accounts with any of the six scheduled cooperative banks in Thane viz; The Bassein Catholic Cooperative Bank Ltd., The Dombivali Nagrik Sahakari Bank Ltd., The Kalyan Janata Sahakari Bank Ltd., The Parsik Janata Sahakari Bank Ltd., The Thane Bharat Sahakari Bank Ltd. and The Thane Janata Sahakari Bank Ltd. have been taken.

The various aspects involved in this research paper, regarding the financial literacy about the basic banking activities and services are: General information about the respondent, Bank account management related information, loan facility availed by women, knowledge regarding availability of services by bank etc.

3. Description of Sample

By using random sampling and purposive sampling method, sample of hundred bank customers of the above banks were selected and the required data was collected from the customers of the bank using a simple questionnaire, observation and interviews for various variables of the study. Following were the criteria for the data collection.

3.1 Educational Qualification

The questionnaire included six categories of the educational qualification and the distribution of the respondents is shown in the table given below:

Educational Qualification	Number of respondents
Primary Education	07
Secondary Education	12
Higher Secondary Education	13
Graduation	43
Post-graduation	17
Professional Degree	08

3.2 Occupation

The study also tried to find out occupational status of

the respondents and the table given below shows distribution of respondents on the basis of occupational status:

Educational Qualification	Number of respondents
Students	07
Unemployed	12
Business / Self Employed	13
Salaried	43
Professional / Technical	17
Retired / House wife	08
Total	100

3.3 Account holding:

As stated before, following are the six banks and random sample of bank account holders of the selected banks.

Bank	Number of customers
Basin Catholic Cooperative Bank Ltd.	9
Parsik Janata Sahakari Bank Ltd.	23
Thane Bharat Sahakari Bank Ltd.	13
Dombivali Nagrik Sahakari Bank Ltd.	16
Kalyan Janata Sahakari Bank Ltd.	10
Thane Janata Sahakari Bank Ltd.	29
Total	100

4. Purpose of banking relationship:

The table given below shows the type of banking transactions with banks by the customers of the banks keeping in mind their primary objective of maintaining relationship with the selected banks.

Purpose	Number of respondents
Savings A/C	46
Current A/C	23
Fixed Deposit A/C	9
Loan A/C	12
Locker	6
Recurring A/C	4
Total	100

5. Frequency of visit

Through this variable we tried to find out the number of times the customers of the banks visited their respective

banks for the purpose of completing various banking transactions. The distribution of the respondents on the basis of this variable is shown in the table below:

Frequency	No. of visits in a month
1 or less times	22
2-4 times	65
5-7 times	8
8-10 times	2
More than 10 times	3
Total	100

6. Awareness about banking facilities

Banks provide various facilities and services to their customers to satisfy variety of needs. By including these varied services into the questionnaire, we tried to find out the awareness about the availability of such services to the selected respondents i.e. customers of the selected banks and following responses were noted:

Facilities	No. of customers
Credit card	75
ATM	79
Core Banking Service	57
Internet Banking	71
Mobile Banking	70
Electronic Fund Transfer	64
DEMAT	46
None of the above	02

As per above table it becomes clear that almost sixty percent of the customers were aware of availability of such services irrespective of their actual use by the respondents.

7. Findings

By correlating above variables with the awareness about the availability of the services, among the sampled respondents i.e. customers of the selected banks, following observations were made:

- ✓ It was observed that maximum number of customers visited banks in frequency of two to four times in a month.
- ✓ Almost Fifty percent of respondents preferred their banks for the purpose of Savings Accounts and almost twenty five percents for Current Accounts.
- ✓ Almost sixty percent of the customers were aware of the availability of various services made available by

their respective or irrespective of their actual use by the respondents. This is because the strength of respondent having educational qualification equivalent to graduation is more in the sample. Thus, educational qualification and awareness about the availability of banking services are directly correlated.

- ✓ In awareness about the availability of services among the respondents it was also observed that the majority of respondents who were aware of the above mentioned services, fell into the salaried category.
- ✓ However, it was not clearly observed that the account holding in particular bank affected the awareness about availability of such facilities to the respondents of the respective banks. This shows that awareness about the above mentioned services is irrespective of the bank in which the account is being maintained.
- ✓ In the data collected above it was found that since maximum number of the respondents were holding savings account they were more aware of those services which are linked with their savings account like Credit Card, Automated Telling Machine Card, Internet Banking and mobile banking services. Thus, it becomes clear that the awareness about the availability of above mentioned services is closely linked with the type of account holding a customer has with his/her bank.
- ✓ Frequency of visit to the branches has also close correlation with the awareness about the availability of various services because it was observed that those customers who visited the bank branch or offices often were more aware about the available facilities than those who visited once or less than once in a month. On an average those respondents who visited the bank branch in frequency of two to four times were found more aware about such availability of services.

8. Suggestions

On the basis of above observations following suggestions can be given regarding spreading financial literacy among people in general and among the women in particular:

- The provision for increase in overall literacy rate to be made in order to spread awareness has a positive correlation with the educational qualifications.
- There is a need to link various target groups with the banks by including some of the target services to target groups. E.g. students can be given access to banking services by providing for Students Account with Zero balance facility or minimum balance facility. Even they can be provided with ATM cards. so that they can be aware of availability of such services.

- There is a need to link different types of services with maximum possible kinds of accounts rather than restricting some of the availability of services with particular accounts. E.g. DEMAT facility which is available for the current account holders can be extended to savings account holders and other types of account holders too.
- There is need to develop constructive programmes at branch level to make people visit bank branches for more number of times as frequency of visit has direct positive relationship with the awareness about the banking facilities and services. However, the programme should be targeted to those customers who visit bank seldom i.e. once or less than once and they can be explained with the availability of such services through workshops and practical demonstrations. This

will further help banks in fulfilling KYC (Know Your Customer) norms effectively.

- Use of electronic media like Television, Emails, SMSs etc. should also be made to make people aware about availability of facilities and encourage them to use the same.

9. Conclusion

The financial literacy among women is need of the time to make women responsible, independent and self reliant as far as financial matters are concerned as such financial literacy is one of the effective tools of empowering women and bringing about equality between genders. This will also help in enhancing respect for women in society as in era of globalisation, the gender bias is disappearing at rapid pace.

Constitutional and Legal Perspective on Immoral Trafficking

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Abstract : The Constitutional mandate under Article 23 is prohibition of trafficking and all forms of exploitations. This was aimed at putting an end to all forms of trafficking in human beings including prostitution and beggary. India being a signatory to the International Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in persons and exploitation, 1950 passed a central law to implement the provisions of the convention.

Prostitution is the practice which can lead to serious psychological and often physical long term effects for the prostitutes. They are 'forced' to sell sex, either by somebody else or by the unfortunate circumstances of their lives, such as poverty, lack of opportunity, drug addiction, a history of childhood abuse or neglect etc.

The prostitute has always been an object and was never seen as a complete human being with dignity of person; as if she had no needs and aspiration of her own, individually or collectively. Their problems are compounded by coercion laid around them and torturous treatment meted out to them. When they make attempts either to resist the prostitution or to relieve them from the trap, they succumb to the violent treatment and resultantly many settle for prostitution. They are victim of circumstances and hence should be treated as human beings like others so as to bring them into the mainstream of the social order without any attached stigma.

The present paper is to analyze the constitutional and other legal provisions and to recounts about the legal and social status of women affected by prostitution

Introduction

In ordinary parlance the word 'Prostitute' means a woman, who offers her body to indiscriminate sexual intercourse, especially for hire (Oxford dictionary). According to UN protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children, 2000, Immoral Trafficking is: "the recruitment, transportation, transfer or receipt of persons by means of threat, use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of the power, or of position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation..."

International initiative

Prostitution and the evil of traffic in human beings for the purposes of prostitution acquired such monstrous proportions that the international community responded to it by signing various conventions like the International Agreement for the Suppression of White Slave Traffic¹, International Convention for the suppression of Traffic in Women and Children² and the International Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in persons and of the Exploitation of Prostitution."

Factors leading to prostitution

A survey of women prostitutes in India reveals their reasons for staying in prostitution is poverty,

unemployment, lack of proper reintegration services, lack of options, stigma and adverse social attitudes, devdasi system, family expectations and pressure. Majority of sex workers in India work as prostitute due to lack of resources to support themselves or their children. Most do not choose this profession out of preference, but out of necessity, often after breakup of a marriage or after being disowned and thrown out of their homes by their families. The children of sex workers are much more likely to get involved in this kind of work as well as contributors.

Statutory provisions

The constitutional mandate under Article 23 is prohibition of trafficking and all forms of exploitation. This was aimed at putting an end to all forms of trafficking in human beings including prostitution and beggary. India being a signatory to the International convention for the suppression of traffic in persons and exploitation, 1950, passed a central law to implement the provisions of the convention.

The 64th Law Commission Report stated that prostitution could not be banned totally, "Law in every country has tried to regulate it so that it may be kept within its legitimate bounds without unduly encroaching upon the institution of marriage and family."

Though there were a number of local Acts in force in the country they were neither effective nor uniform. The current laws in India that legislate sex workers are fairly ambiguous. It is a system where prostitution is legally allowed to thrive, but which attempts to hide it from the

¹Dated 18th May, 1904 as amended by General Assembly of UN on 3rd December 1948.

²Dated 30th Sept. 1921 as amended by General Assembly of UN on 20th October, 1949.

public. The primary law dealing with the status of sex workers is the 1956 law referred to as the Immoral Traffic (Suppression) Act (SITA). According to this law, sex work in India is neither legal nor illegal; it is tolerated since prostitutes can practice their trade privately but cannot legally solicit customers in public. In particular, the law forbids a sex worker to carry on her profession within 200 yards of public place. Unlike as is the with other professions, however, sex workers are not protected under normal workers laws, and are not entitled to minimum wage benefits, compensation for injury and other benefits that are common in other types of work. They do however, possess the right to rescue and rehabilitation if they desire and possess all rights of other citizens. In practice this is not common. Recently the old law has been amended as The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act or PITA. The Indian Penal Code (IPC) which predates the SITA is often used to charge sex workers with vague crimes such as “public indecency” or being a “public nuisance” without explicitly defining what these consist of. Section 366A and section 366B of Indian Penal Code, are intended to punish the export and import of girls for prostitution. Section 366A deals with procuring minor girls from one part of India to another, section 366B makes it an offence to import into India from any country outside India girls below the age of twenty-one (21) years for the purpose of prostitution. Section 6 of the Immoral Traffic Prevention Act, 1986 provides punishment not less than seven years for detaining a person in premises where prostitution is carried out.

Judgments on Trafficking

*Vishal Jeet vs. Union of India*³- This was a public interest litigation wherein the Supreme Court issued directions that all state governments must direct their law-enforcing authorities to take appropriate speedy steps against the evil and directed to set up advisory committees with experts from all fields to make suggestions regarding measures for eradicating child prostitution, for care and rehabilitation of rescued girls, for setting up of rehabilitative homes, and for a survey of the *devdasi* and *jogin* traditions.

*The Public at Large vs. State of Maharashtra and Others*⁴ This petition arose due to *suomotu* notice taken by the court of a newspaper article which indicated that minor girls were illegally confined and forced to be sex workers. The respondents were directed by the court to show cause as to why action had not been taken under section 336 and 366 of the Indian Penal Code, and section 5 and 6 of the Suppression of Immoral Traffic in Women and Girls Act, 1956. The court passed directions as under:

- To frame a proper scheme so that the women including minors who are produced for sexual slavery are released from the confinement of their procurers.
- For implementing this scheme, a proper cell, also involving social workers, be created so that by regular checking, minors and others can be released and rehabilitated in the society; and
- Considering the spread of the dreaded disease of AIDS, the state of Maharashtra shall frame a proper scheme with the active assistance of the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai for carrying out HIV tests for the willing sex workers so that the disease may not spread like wildfire in the city.
- On the basis of the directions passed by the court, raids were carried out and about 473 girls and child sex workers were rescued by the police and kept in the custody of juvenile homes, etc. The respondents pointed out in their affidavit that a majority of the girls had come to Mumbai from the neighboring states of Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and the North- eastern states of Assam, etc., and also from countries like Nepal and Bangladesh. The court constituted a committee for the rehabilitation of the rescued girls. The court gave the following directions:
- The respondents, State Government, to see that strict vigilance is maintained in the areas where sex workers normally operate and to rescue the child sex workers. Further, adequate steps should be taken to see that those who indulge in trafficking of women should be suitably punished. For this purpose, appropriate directions should be issued to the investigating agencies to take immediate steps. Sometimes, it is noticed that a police officer who detects this type of activity does not take immediate action on the ground that such duty is assigned to some other officer. In the view of the court, this was not the proper approach because all police officers are bound to take immediate action in those cases where cognizable offences are committed. They may not investigate those cases but they can certainly report them to the proper officer and during such time take preventive measures.
- It is high time that the state governments take serious steps to prevent forcible pushing of women and young girls into prostitution and to prevent the trafficking in women. i.e. buying and selling of young girls. These girls may be victims of kidnapping, they may be victims of various deprivations, and they may be victim of circumstances beyond their control. For this purpose, regular raids should be carried out in the area where sex workers operate. On numerous occasions, it is reported in newspapers that persons from social organizations who dare to rescue these girls are manhandled, beaten or threatened. To prevent such

³ AIR 1990 SC 1412

⁴ 1997(4) Bom CP171

situations, for the time being the government must have a squad of police officers who can take immediate action.

- The state government shall set up an advisory committee and to further take step to implement the suggestions made by the advisory committee.
- The state is to set up homes for rehabilitation of rescued sex workers including children so as to enable these rescued sex workers to acquire alternative skills in order to enable them to have alternative source of employment. In a civilized state, it is the duty of the state to take preventive measures to eradicate child prostitution without giving room for any complaint of culpable indifference. One should not forget that these rescued girls are also fellow human beings who require some support and treatment for getting out of the immoral activities.
- To regularly carry out AIDS awareness programmes in the areas where sex workers normally operate.
- The state government is to submit periodic reports, by taking out notice of motion, either through the learned advocate-general or the learned government pleader, stating what steps are taken pursuant to the aforesaid directions and how many girls are rescued from the clutches of middlemen, whether medical treatment is given, and whether rehabilitation facilities are made available to them. Even recent news paper reports indicate that pimps or middlemen are raising their muscle strength to prevent NGOs from receiving illegally confined girls.

Criticism: - An in-depth study of the red light areas and the pattern of functioning reflect the dehumanizing situation that the commercially sexually exploited women face every day. They are pushed into the trade at a young age, at times even before they attain puberty and thus are not aware of the trap they are falling into. Once in the trade, there is no escape till the brothel keeper has earned well enough through her. Here she is subjected to physical and mental torture if she refuses to abide by the wishes of keepers. As most women have no formal education, they have no knowledge of how much they earn. When she is allowed to leave the set-up, she is most probably a victim of life threatening diseases like HIV/AIDS and STDs, without any place to go to. Thus in all probability, she will continue in the area and start soliciting and earn for her partner. Once trapped in the trade, women get pulled into a vicious circle from which escape is difficult. The Laws regarding trafficking are not properly implemented. There is a nexus among pimps, police and politicians. The young and minor girls are easily falling into the hands of the pimps. Poverty is a primary reason for trafficking in girls and women. The community is not that much sensitized about the problems and issues of prostitution.

Section 7(i) and section 8(b) of Immoral Traffic Prevention Act, 1986 prohibit prostitution in public places. These sections criminalize the prostitute, forcing to live in inhuman conditions in so-called red light areas. The customers who are the primary culprits and who create a market for the exploitation of women in the form of prostitution are easily escape from the criminal liability, because of no strict provisions in the law. Section 20 of ITPA also requires change. Under this the magistrate is given discretionary powers to ask a sex worker to vacate her premises if there is a complaint against her. This provision is almost always used as a tool to harass the woman.

Conclusion and Suggestions - Prostitution is one of the oldest professions of the world practiced since the birth of the organized society. Prostitution is practiced in almost all the countries and every type of society. Prostitution in India is a serious social problem and its solution has been rendered difficult by the problem of poverty. Following are some suggestions for protecting the rights of women and children who are concerned with the flesh trade-

- The govt. should strictly enforce the laws regarding trafficking and the help of voluntary organizations should be taken in this regard if the nexus among police, pimps and politicians is to be broken.
- As poverty is one of the primary reasons for trafficking in girls and women the govt. should speed up and implement its poverty alleviation programmes.
- Sensitizing of the community to act as watch dog is necessary in order to prevent entry of children into prostitution and to identify and inform police about traffickers and take follow up action.
- Under the Immoral Traffic Prevention Act, 1986, 75 percent of those arrested are females. It is evident that the spirit of the Act has not been followed as the victims are being harassed.
- That the ITPA Act needs to be amended- changes have to be made in section 7(i) and section 8(b) that prohibit prostitution in public places.
- Section 20 of the ITPA also requires changing.
- Questioning should be done mostly by women police officers.
- Primary and reproductive health care for sex workers are required.
- Free and compulsory education for children of prostitutes in mainstream schools.
- Strict action must be taken to eradicate child prostitution.

Biocultural Community and Role of Tribal Women in Hilly Tracks of Maharashtra

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Abstract : Communities establish a firm foundation upon which they develop the future management of their natural resources by setting out their values and customary procedures that govern the management of their natural resources as well as their procedural and substantive rights. Biocultural community is a response to the challenges and opportunities with reference to above context. It involves community based natural resource management systems and community conserved areas, their territorial sovereignty.

Biocultural Community conveys the deep symbolic relationship between biological and cultural diversity. It describes the diverse culture expressed by them from language to music, food to governance. All of these expressions are reflections of the ecosystems in which cultures are embedded in indigenous cultures and they have developed more sustainable lifestyles and act as stewards of biodiversity.

A number of tribal communities like Thakur MahadevKoli, KatkariWarli, Koknaetc.who live in Sahyadri range are socio-economically marginalized. Their livelihoods are totally dependent on agriculture, livestock and forest. Forest provides a wide range of uncultivated food for consumption and marketable products.

In the hilly tracks of Maharashtra, especially inSahyadri range women play less public roles than men; but they often play an equal or greater role in passing along both cultural traditions and genetic resources. Women are in direct contact with natural resources such as forests, water, land and wildlife. They utilize and conserve these resources to supply basic needs for their families. They are only appreciated as invisible land managers, and kept alienated from relevant incentives in their cultural roles.

This paper enlightens the base of Biocultural Community and the role of tribal females in the development and conservation of the same in the hilly tracks of Sahyadri range.

Keywords : Biocultural community, Ecosystem, Sahyadri.

Introduction

Communities who conserve and sustainably use natural resources are eligible for a particular type of rights. Indigenous people , local and mobile communities that are collectively held and inextricably linked to traditional resources and territories, local economies , the diversity of genes, varieties, species and ecosystems, cultural and spiritual values and customary laws are shaped within the socio-ecological context of communities.

Traditional knowledge also referred to as indigenous, local or cultural knowledge has evolved over centuries in specific ecological and linguistic contexts. Completely inter connected with and interdependent with their natural surroundings, indigenous communities have developed deeply complex understanding of the properties of plants and animals; the dynamics of ecosystems and how to manage them; and the nurturing and cultivation of both wild and domesticated sources of food and medicine. Revitalizing, sharing values and applying their wisdom, both locally and globally is the aim of traditional knowledge transfer. It is estimated that indigenous territories contain 80 % of the earth's remaining healthy ecosystems and

biodiversity hotspots. Traditional knowledge has evolved in parallel with these ecosystems.

Music, dance, cuisine, art, language,storytelling, theater and poetry all play a key role in the maintenance of biocultural diversity around the world.Abioculturalright means a bundle of basic rights that includes human and cultural rights, the right to self determination and territorial rights that recognize the right of indigenous people and local communities to control the use of plant, animal and other resources and associated traditional knowledge and technologies.

Agro biodiversity is the diversity of livestock and crop species created in these processes. Thus food sovereignty is tied directly to the protection and enhancement of the precious genetic resources that make up agro biodiversity. Food is one of the central point at which people connect with and shape their environment and it is central to the economic and cultural lives of indigenous and local communities.

Indigenous and local communities around the world struggle to maintain their traditional agricultural systems and food self-sufficiency at the cost of land loss and erosion

of traditional knowledge. This in turn threatens the world's rich store of wild and traditional food crop varieties.

Gender roles and the power relations between them have profound effect on the management of natural resources and consequently on the intergenerational transfer of biocultural diversity.

Women are responsible for the majority of the world agricultural production, they own less than 1% of the world's land property. At the same time changes in rural, agrarian communities are leading to the displacement of young men, leaving women, in some cases, in more dominant positions in rural society.

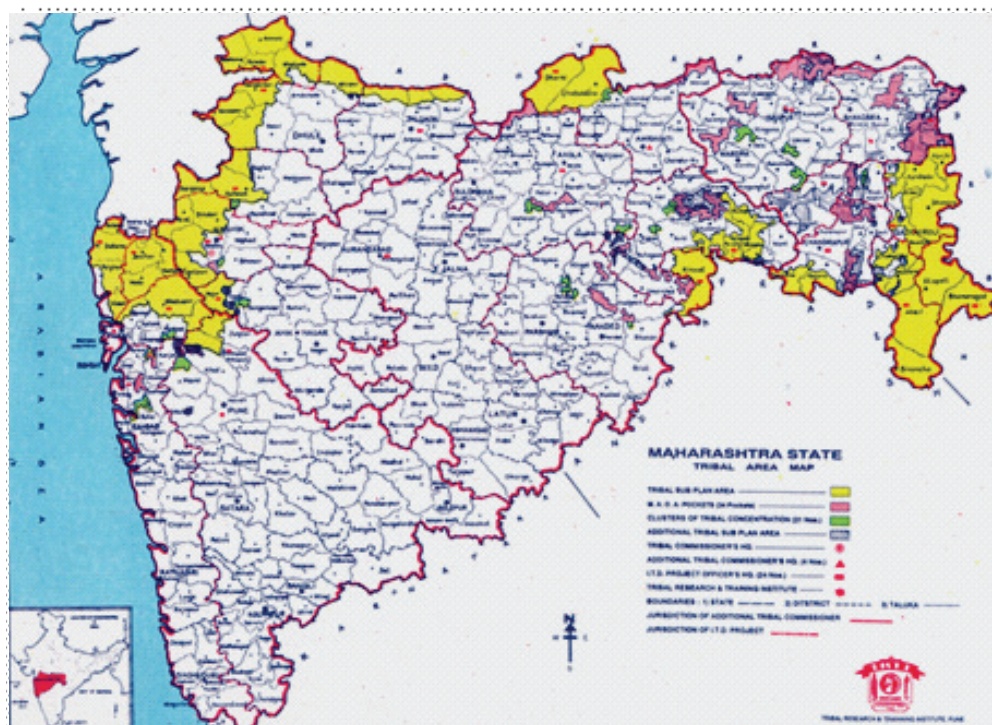
Women in Sahyadri regions often play less public role than men, even though they have an equal or greater role in passing along both cultural traditions and the genetic resources of indigenous crops. But from few decades tribal societies are also marching towards patriarchy in the era of globalization keeping tribal females in isolation.

Western Ghats region of Maharashtra i.e. Sahyadri is characterized by undulating terrain, sparse human population, small and fragmented land holdings of marginal farmers, rain fed subsistence farming, low input-low output production system, poor means of transport and communication, women centered agriculture, migration of males in search of off-farm employment, fragile ecosystem, low risk bearing capacity of farmers yet rich in plant and animal diversity. The local hill people have maintained this fragile hill ecosystem without disturbing it. These people depend chiefly on forest, livestock and traditional agriculture yields to meet their basic requirements. But from last few decades this ecological balance has been disturbed. This may have its root in growing unequal status of women in tribal society.

The area under the Tribal region in Maharashtra is 50,757 sq. km. as against the total Geographical area of 3,07,313 sq. km. of the state. This works out to about 16.5 percent of the geographical area of the State. The comparative figures of the State's population and the tribal population in the last four decades census are given below:

Census Year	States's Total Population (Lakh)	Tribal Population	Percentage
1971	504.12	38.41	7.62
1981	627.84	57.72	9.19
1991	789.37	73.18	9.27
2001	968.79	85.77	8.85

Source: Tribal Research Training Institution, Pune.



Objectives and Research Methodology

The research paper aims to develop understanding about the role of tribal women in biocultural community and their relationship within agro biodiversity system. It locates spatial distribution, concentration of tribal population in the hilly tracks of Maharashtra.

It also assesses the governance, management and conservation of natural resources by tribal females. This paper also highlights issues of tribal females in biocultural community of hilly tracks in Maharashtra.

Several field visits were arranged in tribal areas of Western Ghat regions of Maharashtra, mainly Karjat region, Paliregion, Bhandardara region, Palghar region, Malshej Ghat. At each time different seasons were chosen to collect the information and the data.

Observation method is used to collect information. In some cases interview method is used to collect traditional knowledge of tribal people i.e. with several tribal persons, village head, elder women and other local informants.

Visit to weekly market was also done especially at Pali in Raigad district, Manor and Khodala in Palghar district and Thane station road market.

Secondary data is also used to study distribution and concentration of tribals in hilly regions of Maharashtra. UNEP's Bio-Cultural Community Protocols are also referred for this research paper. Reports of tribal research training institution, Pune are also referred.

Observations and Findings

The indigenous and local farmers of the world are the descendants of original domesticators of food crops. They are the farmers most active in moving genes between wild and domesticated varieties of the world's most important staple foods.

Many of the plants conserved by ethnic people are used as antidotes for snake bites and scorpion stings, for setting bone fractures by traditional healers, for curing wounds or arthritis, or as abortifacient and as cures for menstrual problems, etc. Plants are conserved in abandoned sites of shifting agriculture by tribals and also in sacred groves as in situ conservation of biodiversity and ecological restoration.

These ethnic people, mostly the indigenous tribals live close in the vicinity of forest and have managed and conserved the biodiversity of their localities since long time. These tribals take shelter from forest and utilize wild edible plants both raw and cooked. The flower and fruits are generally eaten raw and tubers, leaves and seeds are cooked. Tribals utilize forest produce, forest timber as fuel wood.

Women as Farmers

The ethnic and indigenous people have conserved several endangered plants and cultivated agricultural crops such as rice, maize, millets, grains, legumes, fruits and vegetables which have originated under diverse agro-ecological climates in hilly tracks of Western Ghats. These crops are genetically superior than existing cultivated rice varieties in characters like aroma, grain quality, protein content, digestibility and also found resistant to insects, pests and diseases. Plants are conserved by these ethnic and indigenous people that serve as a source of wild edible food in the form of roots, tubers, rhizomes, seeds, fruits and as agricultural and horticultural plants.

Tribal women in study area are mainly engaged in agricultural work during monsoon season. Upland paddy is the main crop. Women are involved in harvesting, drying, and dehusking paddy. The percentage of women who have the accessibility of handling the land ownership are indigenous but the group of migrant women is limited. Women in these areas depend on their husbands or other male relatives for access to land, but do not own or control such land and cannot pass it on to their children. They may also obtain land from owners through share cropping arrangements. Lack of access and control over land affects women's freedom and choice to practice land conservation and to employ varied management strategies.

Women as Land Managers

These tribal women use traditional methods of management such as mulching with cleared weeds and stamps of crops after harvesting to conserve soil moisture, fallow period ranges from 3-6 month after a complete cycle. Tribals believe that continuous cereal or millet cropping without legumes could reduce the abundance of micro organisms. Cow dung is used by many tribal women as inexpensive fertilizer. Women farmers have a high level of awareness in environmental management. Their direct contact with the natural environment as providers of water, fuel, food and fodder need to be noticed.

Sr.no.	Agricultural activities	Gender
1	Manuring	W
2	Ploughing	M
3	Sowing	W
4	Weeding	W
5	Harvesting	M/W
6	Transportation	W
7	Storing	W
W-Work mainly done by women M-Work mainly done by men.		

Women as Livestock Rearers

Veterinary knowledge of tribal women: Tribal women from centuries treated their animals for diseases and other ailments using traditional knowledge. Especially breeding practices are commonly found in hilly regions of Maharashtra. In the Sahyadri range Dangi cow is a special breed found. Its skin is oily to survive in the heavy monsoon. Sheep, goats are also reared by tribal women to raise household income.

Women as Hunters

Tribal women catch and hunt snails, fish to be sold at Thane or Kalyan. These are picked up on the hill especially in monsoon season.

Women as House Managers

There seems to be a fairly firmly defined and gender based division of house maintenance tasks. Men repair the roof, but women are incharge of wall maintenance. Wall is plastered with mud and Rice or Karvi straw twice year. After every five to seven years women demolish part of house and rebuild it with new walls.

The walls and floors of the house are coated with cow dung and mud paste. The diluted cow dung is also a natural antiseptic used by tribal women. Dried cow dung cakes are used as a source of fuel for cooking and heating. Various materials collected by family members are displayed in well manner in selected sections of house. This depicts visual picture of tribal material, their life styles and needs.

Women go in a group to collect forest products especially fire wood. It is mainly practiced before the arrival of monsoon and stocks of firewood made available lasts for 5 to 6 months.

Women as Conservists

Worshipped trees: Many plants are conserved in their natural habitat by tribals due to magico-religious belief that they are habitat of the God and Goddess. Many tribals worship trees and flowers as they believe that the God and Goddesses reside in them.

Protecting the forest against fires by regulating the grass growth is practiced by tribal women. They are also responsible for forest growth through the customary manuring of the forest from the dung of their livestock.

Wild crops: The ethnic and indigenous people depend on several wild species for fruits, seeds, bulbs, roots and tubers which are used for edible purposes. They follow conservation rule in harvesting edible plants which establishes ecological prudence. Example: Tribal people from Jawhar region consuming wild fruit resources like Bhokar, Kakad, Aliv, and Pendhra. They have their own processing methods for preservation like salting, drying, picklemaking.

Selected species of plan used by Tribals

Sr.No.	Local name	Parts used	Purpose of use
1	Hirda	Fruits	Medicinal, Edible
2	Aavla	Fruits	Medicinal, Edible
3	Sindi	Fruits	Barroom making, Edible.
4	Ghoti	Fruits	Edible
5	Gunda	Fruits	Edible
6	Mahur, Palas, Jack fruit	Leaves	Plate making
7	Bamboo	Stem	Basket making
8	Ber	Fruits	Edible
9	Suran	Tuber	Edible, Medicinal
10	Musali	Tuber	Edible, Medicinal

Medicinal Herbs:

Tribal communities have little money for paying medical bills. Many tribals are primary health care providers to the villagers. They treat a range of seasonal common and chronic ailments including coughs and colds, diarrhea, broken bones, skin diseases, jaundice, snakebites, scorpion stings etc. Many of tribal women assist with child birth and pre-and-post natal care.

The primitive and indigenous people have been using several plants for combating disease from centuries and have wide acceptance in traditional medicinal use. Tribes of Mokhada admitted that harvesting of medical plants is guided by spiritual values and is regulated by customary laws that promote the sustainability of natural resources. They collect only strips of bark or selected leaves of stems of plants and always show respect to the forest. These women collect medicinal plants on selected days. i.e. Tuesday, Friday and Sunday or on the full moon day.

Shrimati Kamlabai Kama Pujari Katkari tribal woman from Suryamal village in Mokhada tehsil is known for her medicines on broken bones and gaps in bones. People from Thane, Bhiwandi regularly visit Suryamal to take medicines from her. On an average daily 10 to 15 patients come to her. The charge for these medicine is also nominal.

Arts and Crafts Knowledge of Tribal Women

Warli art is a beautiful folk art of Maharashtra, traditionally created by the tribal women. Tribals like the Warli, Malhar Koli, Kathodi, Kokana, Dhodi tribes are found on the northern outskirts of Sahyadri in Western India. Tribal people express themselves in vivid styles through paintings which they execute on the walls of their house. Warli paintings are mainly done by the women folk. The most

important aspect of the painting is that it does not depict mythological characters or images of deities, but depict social life. Pictures of human beings and animals, along with scenes from daily life are created in a loose rhythmic pattern. Warli paintings are painted with white colour on mud walls, usually depict scenes of human figures engaged in activities like hunting, dancing, sowing and harvesting. They are spread out in the tehsils named Dahanu, Talasari, Mokhada, Wada, Palghar and several other parts of the district as well. Since at that time rice was most easily accessible, they used flour to paint designs in white colour.

Issues and Recommendations

There are many issues and problems noted in the study area related to socio-economic-environmental status of tribal women.

Where forest and common lands are degraded enormous additional burdens are placed on women and children. There is positive relationship between the levels of forest degradation and the amount of time and labour expended by women and children in collecting forest produce. Women will still continue to rely on forest resources, but the absence of their rights and responsibilities to control and use these resources will make them vulnerable and leave them without options against competing claims.

Construction of dams in the hilly track of Maharashtra, to fulfill the demand of water of urban area is also a major area of concern. Major area of forest submerging under water has led to a loss of suitable paddy fields. Further local tribals are not getting even drinking water from these dams. Struggle to collect water from far distance in dry season still continues.

Modern medical science and treatments have still not reached the tribal regions of Maharashtra. Women and children constitute a marginalized section within tribal communities. Low literacy rate and early marriages are other issues which need to be addressed.

Involvement of tribal community in conservation programmes needs to be focused. Their rights regarding access to forest need attention of society and government.

There is a need to strengthen traditional medicines of folk practitioners and to explore its application for addressing health problems of tribal women and children. Issues like drinking water, sanitation, education, social customs, nutrition etc. also need to be given serious consideration. Women should be empowered to take care of common health problems at the village or community level. There is a need to encourage women to set up nurseries and backyard gardens of medicinal plants in villages. This will improve the availability of herbal medicines at village level.

Biocultural community protocol needs to be introduced in tribal region of Maharashtra, especially in inaccessible hilly regions of Sahyadri to conserve rich agro-cultural biodiversity. Traditional knowledge and position of tribal women needs a proper attention to conserve natural resources and to maintain the equal status of women in tribal society.

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वेदकालीन, प्राचीनकालीन स्त्रिया : कालच्या व आजच्या स्त्रीचे समाज जीवन

सौ. स्वाती महेश भालेराव

संस्कृत विभाग, जोशी- बेडेकर कला वाणिज्य महाविद्यालय, ठाणे.

आजच्या वैज्ञानिक युगात स्त्रियांनी मुक्त स्वतंत्र तसेच जागरूक असणे आवश्यक आहे. रूढी, परंपरा तिच्या विकासात बाधक होणे योग्य नाही परंतु समाज रचनेत काही बाबतीत असंतुलन असल्यामुळे अवांछनीय बंधनात अडकलेली दिसते आहे. प्रस्तुत निबंधात वेदकालीन, महाभारत कालीन, रामायणकालीन, बौद्धकालीन स्त्रिया त्यांचे शिक्षण १९, २०, व २१ व्या शतकातील स्त्रियांचं मागोवा घेण्याच प्रयत्न केला आहे. तसेच स्त्री पूर्वी पासूनच किती सक्षम होती हे दाखविणारा प्रस्तुत शोध निबंध आहे.

वेदकाळात स्त्रियांचा दर्जा उच्च होता हे वैदिक आर्यांच्या देव विषयक कल्पनेवरून कळून येते. आर्यांच्या दैवक समूहात अनेक स्त्रीदेवता आढळून येतात. उषेसारख्या देवतेचे सुक्त यात आहे. त्याकाळी स्त्रियांना मान होता त्यांना पुरुषांप्रमाणेच बौद्धिक तसेच अध्यात्मिक स्वातंत्र्य-जीवन होते. या जीवनाला आवश्यक असे शिक्षण होते. मुलांप्रमाणे मुर्लीचेही उपनयन संस्कार होते असे. पुरुषांप्रमाणेच त्या सकाळ-संध्याकाळ संध्या करीत.

‘ब्रह्मवादिनी’ व ‘साध्योद्वाहाः’ असे विद्यार्थिनींचे प्रकार होते. स्त्रिया आजन्म ब्रह्मचर्य पाळून वेद-विद्येचा अभ्यास करीत. पठणाशिवाय स्वतंत्र लेखनही त्या करीत असे. पुरुषांप्रमाणेच त्या अध्यापन व्यवसाय करीत असे. त्यांना उपाध्याय किंवा आचार्या अशी संज्ञा होती.

साध्योद्वाहाः विद्यार्थिनींनी सोळाव्या वर्षापर्यंत शिक्षण घेऊन मग अनुरूप पतीशी विवाहित होत असे. विवाहानंतर पत्नी म्हणून तिचे स्थान फार उच्च असे. गृहस्थाला पत्नी वाचून यज्ञाचा अधिकार नसे. यज्ञात पत्नीचा फार मोठा वाटा असे. सनपूर्व ५०० वर्षापर्यंत पती परगावी गेला तर पत्नीला यज्ञकर्म करण्याची परवानगी होती. सीतायाग, रुद्रयाग यासारखे याग फक्त स्त्रियांनीच करायचे असत. ह्याचा अर्थ स्त्री शिवाय गृहस्थाला गृहस्थपण येत नसे. ऋग्वेद विवाह सूक्तांचा बारकाईने अभ्यास करता असे दिसून येत की विवाह संस्थांचे पावित्र्य समाजाने मान्य केले होते. विवाहाची बंधने आर्युष्यभर पाळावी लागत असे. पती-पत्नीचा एकोपा असण्यासाठी ऋग्वेदातील अनेक सुक्तात देवतेची स्तुती केली आहे, अनेक स्त्रियांनी मंत्र रचना केली आहे. गार्गी, मैत्रेयी, कात्यायनी, लोपामुद्रा आदि स्त्रियांचा वैदिक तसेच आध्यात्मिक वादविवादात सहभाग असे.

विश्व दण्डो भवेत्तस्य नापराधो भवेत् स्त्रियः ॥

सामाजिक समस्यांचे निदान केवळ नियम कायदे बनवून होऊ शकत नाही तर त्या दृष्टीने समाजाने महिलांना संयमाने, समान

व सन्मानपूर्वक वागणूक देऊन त्यांच्या विकासाला प्रोत्साहन देणे, सर्वत्र त्यांना महत्त्व देणे, याचे पालन केले तरच समाज प्रभावशाली बनेल.

स्त्रियांचे अपहरण बलात्कार इत्यादी मानवतेला काळिमा फासणाऱ्या कितीतरी पूर्वीपासून चालत येणाऱ्या समस्या पुरुषांच्या पाश्विक प्रवृत्तीला अंकुश लावण्यासाठी काहीतरी मोठे पाऊल उचलले पाहिजे, अशा अपराध्याला शिरच्छेदाची शिक्षा व्हावी, असे बंडपूर्ण उद्गार कोण्या २१ व्या शतकातील स्त्रीचे नसून वेदकालीन स्त्री ‘जुहू’ हिचे आहेत.

जुहू चे अपहरण राजा सोमाने केले परंतु तिचा पती बृहस्पती याने तिला सोडविण्याचे कुठलेही प्रयत्न केले नाहीत, उलट तिचा त्याग केला. हे बघून इंद्र आदि देवतांनी त्याला समजाविले व स्त्रियांचे महत्त्व सांगितले.

“न दुताय प्रहये तस्य एषा, तथा राष्ट्रं गुपितं क्षत्रियस्य भीमा जाया ब्राह्मणस्योपानिता दुर्गा दधाति परमे व्योमान्”

स्त्री अबला, दुर्बल नाही ती भीमा दुर्गा आहे तिच्या क्रोधामुळे प्रलय होऊ शकतो तिचे उग्र रूप पुरुषांच्या पापी प्रवृत्तीसोबतच त्याचाही नाश करू शकते. स्त्री शक्ती जागृत झाली तर अपहरण बलात्कार सारख्या अत्याचारांचा नामशेष होईल. या भाषेत इंद्राने बृहस्पतीची कान उघाडणी केल्यावर बृहस्पतीने तिला राजा सोमाच्या पाशातून सोडविले व आदरपूर्वक पत्नी म्हणून तिचा स्वीकार केला.

वेद काळातील ‘इंद्राणी’ म्हणजे इंद्रपत्नी जिने त्याकाळात स्त्रियांच्या समस्यांना वाचा फोडली. तिचे विचार म्हणजे ‘स्त्री’ स्वभावतः च सहनशील आहे, परंतु याचा अर्थ असा नव्हे की ती दुर्बल आहे.

‘गृहनामि सौभाग्यात्वाय ते हस्तं’ तुझा हात माझ्या हाती घेतल्याने मी सौभाग्यवान झालो आहे. असा एक मंत्र विवाहाच्या

वेळी वराला म्हणायला सांगतात . याच विचारावर इंद्रायणीने वेदकाळात स्पष्टीकरण दिले आहे की विवाहानंतर पुरुष सौभाग्यवान होतो म्हणून पत्नीच्या निधनानंतर पतीला विधवा म्हणायला हवे, स्त्री चे वैधव्य धर्मप्रणित नाही आणि म्हणून हे सांगताना आम्ही स्त्रियांनी घाबरायला नको आपल्या या विचारांचा प्रसार इंद्रायणीने त्याकाळात न घाबरता केला. इंद्रायणी स्त्रियांना धैर्य साहस प्राप्त व्हावे म्हणून सांगते की 'उद्सौ सूर्यो अभ्युदयम् मामेको भगः' नारीच्या भाग्याचा अरुणोदय होतो आहे, उठा चला लढा!

कन्येच महत्त्व सांगताना इंद्रायणीने ऋग्वेदात उल्लेख केला आहे की, 'मम पुत्र शत्रून्मथ म दुहिता विराट' कन्या कुळाचे दूषण नाही तर भूषण आहे.

“सम्राज्ञी श्वशुरे भव भवसम्राज्ञी श्वश्र्वांभव ।
नन्दादरि सम्राज्ञी भव सम्राज्ञी अधिदेवृषी ॥

सर्वांवर शासन करा. दबावाला घाबरू नका नीडर बना. हेच इंद्रायणी या श्लोकातून सांगते आहे.

शरीर म्हटले की रोग, आजार आलेच पण स्त्रीला जर कुठलेही रोग झाल्यावर तिची समाज कशी अवहेलना करतो हे सर्वांना माहीतच आहे. ऋग्वेदकालीन ऋषी अत्री यांची कन्या 'अपाला' हिला विवाहानंतर कुष्ठरोग झाला. पतीने तिचा त्याग केला. समाज तिरस्कार करू लागला. पित्याने जवळ केले म्हणून समाजानेही त्यांना वाळीत टाकले या सर्व परिस्थितीला सडेटोड उत्तर दिलेय अपालाने. रोगी स्त्री ची काळजी घेण्याची जबाबदारी तिच्या पतीचीच आहे हे तिने ठासून समाजाला सांगितले व पतीला तिचा स्वीकार करण्यास भाग पाडले .

विवाहाला उशीर झाल्यास समाजाच्या विविध प्रश्नांमुळे त्रासलेली विवाहयोग्य कन्येच्या समस्येला वाचा फोडण्याचे काम सूर्या या वेदकालीन स्त्री ने केले.

'विशपला' या स्त्री ने कोरडा दुष्काळ , पाणी समस्या इत्यादी प्रश्नांवर त्याकाळी बरेच कार्य केल्याचा उल्लेख ऋग्वेदात आढळतो. अशिक्षित स्त्रियांना शिक्षण देण्याचे कार्य 'इतरा' या स्त्री ने केले.

वेदविद्या पारंगत गर्गकुलोत्पन्ना कन्या गार्गी अतिशय बुद्धिमती होती, त्याकाळी स्त्रियांचे देखील उपनयन संस्कार होत असे. गार्गीचा देखील हा संस्कार पार पडला होता. याज्ञवल्क्यासारख्या सर्वज्ञाला ब्रह्मवादी सभेत गार्गीने हरविले होते. तिच्या प्रश्नामुळे खुद्द याज्ञवल्क्य त्रस्त झाले होते. उपनिषदात याचा दाखला सापडतो.

याज्ञवल्क्याला कात्यायनी व मैत्रेयी अशा दोन पत्नी होत्या

संसाराचा त्याग करून संन्यास घेण्याची इच्छा आपल्या पत्नीजवळ बोलून दाखविली व त्यांना जे हवे असेल ते देण्याचे वचन दिले. मैत्रेयीने याज्ञवल्क्याला ब्रह्मज्ञान मागितले व कात्यायनीने संसार मागितला व सानन्दम् गृहस्थाश्रमाचे महत्त्व सांगितले.

'सानन्दं सदनं सुताश्च सुधियः कांता न दुर्भाषिणी'

कात्यायनीच्या काही सुक्तातून हे स्पष्ट होते की, वेदकालीन समाजात स्त्रिया कामाचाराच्या बाबतीत मुक्त संवाद करत होत्या.

**“न वा अरे पत्युः कामाय पतिः प्रियो भवति
आत्मनस्तु कामाय पतिः प्रियो भवति”**

स्त्रियांना वेदादी सर्वप्रकारची शिक्षा ग्रहण कारवीच असा आग्रह धरणारी 'मेधा' अतिशय अग्रणी मानली जाते.

वैदिक काळात सामाजिक जीवन निरोगी व प्रसन्न होते. स्त्रियांमध्ये सुक्ताकार ब्रह्मवादिनी सापडतात. ऋग्वेदात २६ सुक्तांच्या प्रणेत्या स्त्रिया आहेत. ऋग्वेदकालीन कुटुंबसंस्थेत प्रतिष्ठा सारखीच मानली जात असे. त्याकाळी एखाद्या दाम्पत्याला पुत्र नसेल तर मुलीचा अधिकार पुत्रवत मानला जायचा अशा मुलीला 'पुत्रिका' म्हणत असे.

पत्नी या दृष्टीने स्त्रीची प्रतिष्ठा गृह संस्थेत मुख्य मानत असत. विशेषतः क्षत्रिय कुळातील स्त्रियांना युद्धात सारथ्य करण्याचा अधिकार असे. ऋग्वेदाच्या ३ च्या मंडळात सांगितले आहे की पत्नी हेच गृह आहे. “इयं जाया वै गृहं” आपस्तंब धर्म सूत्रात स्त्रीला पुरंधीर्योषा म्हटले आहे. अर्थात् गृहसंस्थेचा भार उचलणारी स्त्री म्हणजे 'पुरंधी' वधू स्वतः आपला वर पसंत करत असे

“भद्रं वधुर्भवति । यत्सुवेशाः स्वयं सा मित्र ब्रूते जनोचित ॥”

'गोधर्म' या नियमाखाली लहान मुलींवर लैंगिक अत्याचार करणे घोर पाप मानीत असत. “मातृवान ए पितृवान् आचार्यवान् पुरुषो वेद” अर्थात मातेला पिता व गुरुपेक्षादेखील अधिक वंदनीय मानले गेले आहे.

लोपामुद्रा, वाघ्रीमती , घोषा, उर्वशी , उषादेवी अदिती, सरस्वती, दासपत्नी, जाबाला, इंद्रसेना, राशीयसी इत्यादी कितीतरी ऋग्वेद कालीन स्त्रियांनी समाज सुधारणेस प्रयत्न केले आहेत.

महाभारतकालीन स्त्रिया

या काळातही मुली शिक्षण घेत होत्या स्वतंत्र शाळा नसली तरी पित्याकडून थोरल्या भावाकडून, घरी येणाऱ्या विद्वानांकडून ती शिक्षण घेत असे. मुलींना नृत्य शिकवण्यासाठी विराटाच्या घरी

स्वतंत्र नृत्यशाळा बांधली होती. मात्र स्त्रियांना शिक्षणाची सक्ती नसे त्यामुळे सामान्य स्थितीतल्या स्त्रिया अशिक्षित असाव्यात. द्रौपदीचे वर्णन 'पण्डिता च पतिव्रता' असे केले आहे. (वनपर्व २६)

महाभारतकाळात विवाह निर्बंध कडक नव्हता स्त्री स्वेच्छेने कोणत्याही पुरुषाकडे जाऊ शकत असे. स्त्रीने एकाच पुरुषाकडे निष्ठेने राहावे असा नियम श्वेतकेतुने काढला. बाल विवाह नव्हता , लग्नाच्या वेळेत त्या प्रौढ असत. सावित्री, कुंती, द्रौपदी, सुभद्रा इत्यादींच्या वर्णनावरून हे कळते.

स्त्रीने पतीबरोबर सती जाण्याचीही चाल असावी. पंडूबरोबर माद्री सती गेल्याचा उल्लेख सापडतो. श्रीकृष्णाच्या कित्तेक स्त्रियांनी त्याचे निर्वाण झाल्यावर इंद्रप्रस्थात अनुगमन केले होते अश्या कथा महाभारतात वाचायला मिळतात.

पडदा पद्धती महाभारतात म्हणजे ३०० च्या सुमारास राजे लोकात रूढ झाली असावी, कारण राजस्त्रियांचे नखही दृष्टीस पडत नाही असे वर्णने सौतीने महाभारतात घातले आहे.

रामायणकालीन स्त्रिया

रामायणातल्या प्रमुख स्त्री पात्रांकडे लक्ष दिल्यावर त्यांना आई-वडिलांच्या घरी योग्य शिक्षण मिळत असे हे समजते. हे शिक्षण धार्मिक नैतिक व व्यावहारिक असे त्रिविध होते. कर्मकांड आचरण्यासाठी श्रुती-स्मृती व पुराणे यांचेही जरूरीपुरते शिक्षण दिले जायचे. रामाच्या यौवराज्याभिषेकाच्या दिवशी कौसल्येने अग्नीला समंत्रक आहुती दिली. तर सीता नित्य संध्योपासना करत असे. तारेला तर मन्त्रवित असेच म्हटले आहे. मुलींना नृत्य, संगीत इ. ललित कलाही शिकवल्या जात. काही महत्त्वाकांक्षी मुलींना युद्धाचेही शिक्षण दिले जाई. एका युद्धात दशरथ मूर्च्छित पडला असता त्याच्याबरोबर रणभूमीवर गेलेल्या कैकयीने त्याला रणभूमी पासून दूर नेऊन त्याचे प्राण वाचविले होते. तिला व्यवस्थित रथ चालविता येत होता. कन्येच्या विवाहप्रसंगी आई-वडील तिला जे धन देत असत ते तिचे स्त्री धन मानले जाई. त्यावर तिचा एकटीचाच अधिकार असे. राज्याभिषेकाच्या प्रसंगी राजाला राणीसह अभिषेक केला जायचा स्त्रीला आपल्या पतीच्या अन्त्यक्रियेत भाग घेण्याच अधिकार असे. दशरथाच्या राण्यांनी त्याच्या प्रज्वलित चितेला प्रदक्षिणा घातल्या होत्या. वालीच्या स्मशान यात्रेत त्याच्या स्त्रियाही सामील झाल्या होत्या. दिवंगत पितरांचे तर्पण करण्याचाही अधिकार त्यांना होता. सती प्रथा एवढी रूढ नव्हती. उत्तर कांडात कुशध्वजाच्या पत्नीने मृत्यूनंतर त्याच्यासह अग्निप्रवेश केला ही

एकमेव घटना सोडल्यास रामायणात सती जाण्याचा प्रसंग आढळत नाही. रामायणातले सर्व विषयांचा उल्लेख एकत्रित केला असता, असे दिसते की त्याकाळी स्त्रियांची एकूण परिस्थिती सुखावह होती.

बौद्धकालीन स्त्री जीवन

सनपूर्व सुमारे ५०० वर्ष बौद्ध धर्माचा उदय झाला कितीतरी ब्राह्मण स्त्रिया त्यांच्या शिष्या होत्या वेदकालानंतर स्त्रियांची समाजिक स्थिती खालावत गेली त्यांच्यावर अनेक बंधने आली. बौद्ध धर्माचा उगम झाल्यानंतर बौद्धानी स्त्रियांच्या सामाजिक समस्या सोडविण्याचा जो प्रयत्न केला तो खरोखरच लक्षणीय आहे. पारतंत्र्याला कंटाळलेल्या हजारो स्त्रिया धार्मिक व व्यावहारिक बंधने झुगारून वेशी फोडून बाहेर पडल्या व बुद्दाला शरण गेल्या. त्यांचे अनेक शिष्य भिक्षुप्रमाणेच लहान मोठे मठ चालवीत. भिक्षुणीच्या मठातील अंतर्गत व्यवहार त्याच स्वतंत्रपणे पाहत. याप्रमाणे बौद्ध धर्माने स्त्रियांना पुरुषांच्या बरोरीने व्यावहारिक व पारमार्थिक हक्क मिळवून दिले. तो काही काळापुरता प्रभावी ठरला पण हा विजय क्षणभंगुर ठरला.

आर्य लोकांना या सुमारास संख्याधीक्यामुळे स्थलांतराची गरज भासू लागली उत्तरेकडील प्रदेशात ते हळूहळू सरकू लागले. या नवीन वातावरणात त्यांची संस्कृती बदलू लागली. दक्षिणेकडील आर्येतर लोकांशी कराव्या लागणाऱ्या झगड्यात त्यांना आर्येतरांकडून काही नवे शिकावे लागले त्यामुळे मुळच्या आर्य संस्कृतीत फरक पडला. जीवन कलह व्यापक झाल्यामुळे या काळात पुरुषवर्गाला जास्त महत्त्व आले आणि स्त्रिया दुय्यम व कमी समजल्या जाऊ लागल्या त्यांचे स्वातंत्र्य लोप पावले. त्यामुळे बहुपत्निकत्व, नियोग सारख्या स्त्रियांचे हीनत्व सिद्ध करणाऱ्या चाली आर्य समाजात निर्माण झाल्या.

सुत्रकालीन स्त्रियांचा दर्जा हीन झाला. याचे एक महत्त्वाचे कारण म्हणजे त्या सुमारास त्यांना वेदपठणाला व यज्ञकर्माला अनाधिकारी ठरवण्यात आले. वेद मंत्रोच्चार करताना लहानशी चूक झाली तरी ती पाठकाचा नाश करते अशी समजूत प्रचलित झाल्यामुळे स्त्रियांना वेदाध्येयनाला मनाई करण्यात आली. यज्ञाच्यावेळी पतीशेजारी तिचे अस्तित्व केवळ औपचारिक स्वरूपाचे होऊन बसले. वेदमंत्राचा अधिकार नसल्यामुळे मुर्लीचे उपनयन करू नये असे याज्ञवल्क्यासारख्या स्मृतीकाराने उघडपणे म्हटले. त्यांचा विवाह संस्कार हाच उपनयनवजा संस्कार मानला जाऊ लागला कारण पतिसेवा हीच गुरुसेवा आहे, व घरकाम हे एक प्रकारचे यज्ञकर्म आहे, असे तिला सांगण्यात येऊ लागले. अशाप्रकारे स्मृतीकालात ती अविद्या ठरली. पद्मपुराणात तिला कमालीची विषयासक्त ठरविली आहे. मनुने पुरुषाला आई, बहिण,

मुलगी यांपासून लांब राहायला सुचविले आहे. मनु म्हणतो-

“पिता रक्षति कौमारे भर्ता रक्षति यौवने ।
रक्षन्ति स्थविरे पुत्र न स्त्री स्वातंत्र्यमर्हति।।”

याप्रमाणे स्मृतीकालात स्त्रियांच्या कपाळी पारतंत्र्याचा शिक्षा कायमचा बसला. बालविवाह इ. रूढी पारतंत्र्याच्या दुःखाच्या जोडीला दुर्दशा आणली. विवाह उपनयनाच्या जागी मानल्या गेल्यामुळे आठवे वर्ष हा विवाहाचा उत्तम काळ ठरला.

सतीची चालही स्त्रियांना बराच काळ जाचक ठरली या एकाच चालीवरून तिचे स्वतंत्र व्यक्तिमत्त्व कसे पूर्ण लोप पावले होते हे दिसून येईल.

परंतु ब्रह्मसूत्राच्या रचनेच्या काळात मात्र स्त्री-पुरुष, उच्च , हीन अशी फारकत निर्माण झाली, स्त्रियांचे वैदिक अधिकार हळूहळू काढण्यात आले. त्यांना मंत्रोच्चारणाचा अधिकार नाही, वेदमंत्र त्यांच्या कानावर पडू नयेत म्हणून काळजी घेण्यात येऊ लागली. स्त्रियांनी संस्कृत भाषा बोलू नये अशाही जबरदस्ती तिच्यावर करण्यात येऊ लागली. तिच्या शिक्षणावर बंधने आली तिच्या इच्छा, आकांक्षा, दाबण्यात येऊ लागल्या. ‘चूल आणि मुल’ अशी तिची अवस्था झाली. अतिशय प्रगल्भ अशी स्त्री घरातच राहू लागली. नंतर सती जाणे, केशवपन इत्यादी रूढींचा घाला स्त्री समाजावर झाला, त्यामुळे ती कोमेजून जात असताना राजा राम मोहन राय, ज्योतिबा फुले, आगरकर, महादेवराव रानडे, धोंडो केशव कर्वे यांसारख्या समाज सुधारकांनी ही परिस्थिती बदलण्याचा विडा उचलला.

१९ व्या शतकात स्त्रियांच्या विकासाच्या सुधारणेच्या दृष्टीने पावले उचलण्यास सुरुवात झाली याच शतकात स्त्रियांवर अन्याय सामाजिक रूढी कमी करून स्त्रियांना कायदेशीर अधिकारणाचा आधार देण्यास सुरुवात झाली.

२० व्या शतकात प्रगतिला आणखी वेग आला शिक्षणाला असणारा विरोध जवळपास संपला. स्त्रिया सार्वजनिक कार्यात सहभागी होवू लागल्या शिक्षण, साहित्य , कला, समाजकरण आणि राजकारण यात पुन्हा एकदा स्त्री ने स्वतःची क्षमता सिद्ध केली.

राजकुमारी अमृता कौर यांचा पहिल्या मंत्रिमंडळात आरोग्यमंत्री म्हणून समावेश आणि विजयालक्ष्मी पंडित यांची रशियामधे भारताच्या वकील म्हणून झालेली नियुक्ती, पोलादी पुरुष म्हणून सर्वश्रुत असलेल्या भारताच्या पहिल्या पंतप्रधान श्रीमती इंदिरा गांधी अशी कितीतरी उदाहरणे देता येतील.

स्त्रियांची राहणी बदलली, वेशभूषा व केशभूषाही बदलली २० व्या शतकाच्या अखेरच्या दशकात भारतीय स्त्रीची प्रतिमा राष्ट्रीय आंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तरावरही विविध संदर्भात बदललेली दिसते. कलावंत, संशोधक, लेखक, विचारवंत, लष्करी अधिकारी, राजकीय नेतृत्व करणारी, विमान-ट्रेन-बस -रिक्षा चालिका, ट्रेकिंग,स्केटिंग असे कुठलेच क्षेत्र नाही जिथे ती पोचली नाही. सौंदर्यवती म्हणूनसुद्धा भारतीय स्त्री जगाच्या पाठीवर उभी राहिलेली दिसतेय.

आज २१व्या शतकात पुन्हा एकदा संक्रमणाची चाहूल लागत आहे संस्कृती नवे वळण घेत आहे. मॉल, मल्टीप्लेक्स संस्कृती येत आहे, सॉफ्टवेअर बरोबर कॉर्पोरेट विश्वात स्त्रिया उतरत आहे. वेद मंत्रही जिने ऐकू नये अशी स्त्री आता खुद्द उत्कृष्ट पौराहित्य करते आहे. कॉल सेंटर इत्यादी मधूनही ती काम करताना दिसत आहे. कामाच्या वेळा बदलत आहेत. घर - कुटुंब मुले, नातेसंबंध घरगुती जबाबदाऱ्या यांमध्ये तणाव निर्माण होते आहे. काळाच्या गरजेनुसार पारंपारिक एकत्र कुटुंब पद्धती बदलून विभक्त कुटुंब पद्धती आली असताना पुन्हा काळाच्या गरजेतून एकत्र कुटुंबाकडे कल वाढताना दिसत आहे. आपल्या संस्कृतीचे नवे वळण सांभाळत नवीन बदल स्वीकारण्याची तारेवरची कसरत करावी लागत आहे. त्यासाठी तिला पुन्हा एकत्र कुटुंब पद्धती महत्त्वाची वाटते आहे.अशा या कर्तृत्ववती स्त्रीला माझ्या लाख लाख शुभेच्छा, तिच्या नारी शक्तीला सलाम.

ऋग्वेदातील १० व्या मंडळात स्त्रियांन समाजाने सन्मानपूर्वक वागणूक कशी द्यावी ह्या अर्थाच्या च्या श्लोकाने सांगता करते.....

“प्रियो स्त्रीयस्य वृषभस्य रेतीनो गृहं गमेनाश्विना तदुशमसि ।
ता मन्दसाना मनुषो दुरोण आ दत्तं रयिं सहवीरं वचस्यवे।।”

संदर्भ ग्रंथ / पुस्तके

- १) इतिहास में स्त्री - सुमन राजे
- २) वुमन अँड सोसायटी - ज्योती मैत्र
- ३) ऋग्वेदाचा मराठी शास्त्रीय अनुवाद - डॉ. श्री. भीमराव सदाशिवकुलकर्णी
- ४) प्राचीन भारत में नारिओं का शोषण डॉ. अनिल राहतोगी
- ५) Woman under Primitve Buddhism - I. B. Hornor
- ६) Woman in Modern India - V. C. Ganeshmurthy
- ७) Hindu Woman - Prabhadevi Mukharjee
- ८) वेदकालीन स्त्रीयायें - डॉ. मधुकर आष्टीकर

Constitutional and Legal Safeguards for Women to Ensure Equality

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Abstract : The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. Within the framework of a democratic polity, our laws, development policies, Plans and programmes have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres. India has also ratified various International Conventions and Human Rights instruments committing to secure equal rights of women. The Constitution of India not only grants equality to women but also empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women for neutralizing the cumulative socio-economic, educational and political disadvantages faced by them. Fundamental Rights, among others ensures equality before the law, equal protection to laws, prohibits discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, and guarantees equality of opportunity to all citizens in matters relating to employment. Articles 14, 15, 15(3), 16, 39(a), 39(b), 39(c) and 42 of the constitution of India are of specific importance in this regard.

The National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. "The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) to the Constitution of India have provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision making at the local levels." In India gender disparity is found everywhere. The declining ratio of the female population, in the last few decades is a proof of this. The stereotypical image of a woman haunts her everywhere. Domestic violence is commonplace. The underlying causes of gender inequality are related to the socio-economic framework of India. As a result, the women belonging to the weaker sections of the society i.e. the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes/ Other backward Classes and minorities, do not have easy access to education, health and other productive resources. Therefore, they remain largely marginalized, poor and socially isolated. This research paper outlines the Constitutional and legal safeguards for women to ensure equality.

Keywords : Gender, Constitution, Inequality, Rights of Women, Legal Safeguards.

Introduction

In India, the Constitution makers while drafting the Constitution were sensitive to the problems faced by women and made specific provisions relating to them. In various articles, not only mandates equality of the sexes but also authorizes benign discrimination in favour of women and children to make up for the backwardness which has been their age-old destiny. But categorical imperatives constitutionally by the Founding Fathers are not self-acting and can acquire socio-legal locomotion only by appropriate State action. The Constitution of India contains various provisions, which provide for equal rights and opportunities for both men and women.

The different Constitutional provisions for Women such as, the State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or equal protection of the laws within the territory of India under article 14. In the article 15 of the Constitution, State should not discriminate any citizen on the grounds of sex, caste, religion, race, etc., in the provision of 15(3) State can make the special provision for Women. Article 16 gives equal opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State. According to Article 23 State should prohibit the traffic in human beings and forced labour of Women. The Constitution secures equal pay for equal work for both men and Women under the Article 39. Even under the article 42,

the State shall make provisions for securing the just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief. In the provision of 44 of the Constitution the State shall guarantee within its economic limits to all citizens, the right to work, right to education and public assistance in certain cases.

In order to prevent the violence against Women, many enactments have been made with a view to protect the rights. These enactments deal with the matters like, marriage, divorce and succession, maternity benefit, prohibition of employment of Women in dangerous activities of work place, to combat the evils of dowry and curb the immoral and other anti-social activities. Enactments such as, The Factories Act 1948, The Employees State Insurance Act 1948, The Mines Act 1952, The Hindu Marriage Act 1955, The Hindu Succession Act 1956, The Suppression Of Immoral Traffic Act 1956, The Maternity Benefit Act 1961, The Dowry Prohibition Act 1961, The Beedi and Cigar Workers Act 1966, The Equal Remuneration Act 1976, The Commission of Sati Prevention Act 1987, The National Commission for Women Act 1990, The Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques Act 1994, The Domestic Violence Act 2005.

Methodology

The present research paper is based on secondary data. Which is collected from the books, Journals, news paper, websites, Internet, etc.

Objectives

To Study the Constitutional and legal safeguards for women.

Review of literature

G.B. Reddy in his book “*Women and Law*” 5th edition, 2006" has attempted to discuss the very important Constitutional provisions on Women, legal provisions which protect the various interests of them.

In the Book “*Marriage, Dowry Practice and Divorce*”, written by S. Gokilavani an attempt has been made to analyze the social evils of Women like dowry death, Women’s status and feminism, divorce Women’s status and feminism, empirical study of dowry System of Practice in Kanyakumari District. She has given the suggestions for eradication of dowry also.

The Book “*Women in Indian Society*”, (2005) written by Neera Desai & Usha Thakkar, they have attempted to highlight the various issues relating to Women like, Women and work, Women and family, Women’s political participation in India, Women and law and other emerging issues in brief.

P. Nagabooshanam in her book “*Social Justice and weaker sections*” (2000) endeavors to secure the social justice to Women under the Constitution law, Women and their position during pre-Constitutional period, Social Justice and the courts, back ward Classes and reports of the commissions. The book deals with the role of judiciary and genesis of protective Discrimination provisions.

Constitutional provisions

The Constitution of India not only grants equality to women but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women for neutralizing the cumulative socio economic, education and political disadvantages faced by them. Fundamental Rights, among others, ensure equality before the law and equal protection of law; prohibits discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, and guarantee equality of opportunity to all citizens in matters relating to employment. Articles 14, 15, 15(3), 16, 39(a), 39(b), 39(c) and 42 of the Constitution are of specific importance in this regard.

Constitutional Privileges

- (1) Equality before law for women (Article 14)
- (2) The State not to discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them (Article 15 (i))
- (3) The State to make any special provision in favour of women and children (Article 15 (3))

- (4) Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State (Article 16)
- (5) The State to direct its policy towards securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood (Article 39(a)); and equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Article 39(d))
- (6) To promote justice, on a basis of equal opportunity and to provide free legal aid by suitable legislation or scheme or in any other way to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities (Article 39 A)
- (7) The State to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief (Article 42)
- (8) The State to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Article 46)
- (9) The State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people (Article 47)
- (10) To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51(A) (e))
- (11) Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat (Article 243 D(3))
- (12) Not less than one- third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level to be reserved for women (Article 243 D (4))
- (13) Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality (Article 243 T (3))
- (14) Reservation of offices of Chairpersons in Municipalities for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women in such manner as the legislature of a State may by law provide (Article 243 T (4)).

Legal provisions

To uphold the Constitutional mandate, the State has enacted various legislative measures intended to ensure equal rights, to counter social discrimination and various forms of violence and atrocities and to provide support services especially to working women.

Although women may be victims of any of the crimes such as 'Murder', 'Robbery', 'Cheating' etc, the crimes, which are directed specifically against women, are characterized as 'Crime against Women'. These are broadly classified under two categories.

(1) The Crimes Identified Under the Indian Penal Code (IPC)

- Rape (Sec. 376 IPC)
- Kidnapping & Abduction for different purposes (Sec. 363-373)
- Homicide for Dowry, Dowry Deaths or their attempts (Sec. 302/304-B IPC)
- Torture, both mental and physical (Sec. 498-A IPC)
- Molestation (Sec. 354 IPC)
- Sexual Harassment (Sec. 509 IPC)
- Importation of girls (up to 21 years of age)

(2) The Crimes identified under the Special Laws (SLL)

Although all laws are not gender specific, the provisions of law affecting women significantly have been reviewed periodically and amendments carried out to keep pace with the emerging requirements. Some acts which have special provisions to safeguard women and their interests are:

- The Employees State Insurance Act, 1948
- The Plantation Labour Act, 1951
- The Family Courts Act, 1954
- The Special Marriage Act, 1954
- The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955
- The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 with amendment in 2005
- Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956
- The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 (Amended in 1995)
- Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
- The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971
- The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1976
- The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976
- The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006

- The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 1983
- The Factories (Amendment) Act, 1986
- Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986
- Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987
- The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

Conclusion

The main aim of incorporating various provisions in the Constitution is to bring peaceful political and socio-economic revolution with a view to balance the conflicting interests in Indian society for securing the satisfaction of maximum of wants with minimum of friction. The Constitution gives the direction to the legislatures to chalk out the various governments policies and programmes to the Women, SCs and STs to get the benefits. The Constitution has ensured equal status to all i.e., not only between men and men, women and women but also between men and women. This Constitutional spirit is found a distinct place and recognition in various legislations passed by the parliament.

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Understanding the Gendered Perspectives, Attitudes and Performance of Young Adults on Pre-Marital Sex

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Abstract : This paper attempts to explore and document the perceptions and experiences of college going students on the issues of pre-marital sex and “virginity-loss”. Sexuality has been treated with immense privacy and secrecy, in Indian patriarchal culture. This value is further reinforced by a chain of institutions such as family, education, marriage, state etc. These institutions play a significant role in maintaining a culture of silence around the issues of sexuality. A strict code of sexual conduct regulates individuals’ behaviour, so that the moral order of the society is maintained. Constant disciplining through rewards and punishments, shape individuals’ “moral behaviour” that guides them to carry themselves sexually so that they seek a respectable status in society. Given this matrix of virtue and sexual morality, any attempts to transgress the ascribed sexual boundaries are therefore, deemed unpleasant and threatening to the honour and integrity of the society. Hence, pre-marital engagements and “virginity-loss” are considered both “deviant” and “pernicious”. In this context, women face more violence than men. The double standards of morality, while on one hand, allow men to be sexually active and adventurous, on the other hand, the same set of value system, refrain women from pre-marital sexual experiments and experiences. Reducing women to their bodies, and valuing them only on the basis of their ability to control their sexuality, imposes an array of restrictions on their sexual expressions and mobility. As a result, upholding the bodily integrity, (by maintaining vaginal intactness and disengaging oneself from sexual acts before marriage) becomes an important goal in a woman’s life. However, men’s pre-marital engagement in sexual activities and “virginity-loss” has never been questioned in Indian culture. Rather, it becomes a marker of virility and power for them. Recognizing this disparity in sexual behaviour becomes important to understand how the patriarchal culture of morality controls men and women differently. Although recent studies have shown that pre-marital sexual engagements have become a common phenomenon among youths, and girls like boys are showing an increased interest in sexual activities prior to marriage. Nevertheless, unpacking the question of pre-marital sex and “virginity-loss”, from a feminist point of view becomes essential in capturing the gendered differences among both the sexes in negotiating their pre-marital sexual behaviour in the contemporary times. For the purpose of the study, I have interviewed ten Bengali (Hindu), middle class, college going girls and boys of Kolkata.

Keywords : Pre-marital sex, Culture and Youth

Human sexuality has been treated with immense secrecy, and a chain of institutions like family, marriage, education, state etc. have played a predominant role in maintaining this line of privacy. It is carefully confined to home, and the conjugal family takes immense interest in regulating the reproductive, sexual behaviour of the individuals to sustain the moral base of society. Sexuality is both a substance of celebration and threat to society. Therefore, a strict code of conduct is maintained for regulating the sexual behaviour of the individuals and for defining the parameters of “good” sex (Hurley, 1987). In this context, hetero-normativity becomes the legitimate precedent of sexual interaction. All other forms of sexual relations that transgress this boundary of moral threshold get categorized as “deviant” and “immoral”. Premarital sex is therefore, considered threatening to the moral organization of the society. It subverts the sexual norms and opens space for sexual experimentation that has been condemned in society.

This particular paper attempts to understand the popular debates/discussions on the discourse of premarital sex, and uncover the gendered patterns in youth’s perception and behaviour on the topic. Premarital sex is an emotive issue. It touches the core of our belief about morality, gender and justice. Although, immense amount of work has been done on the concerned topic but, very few studies

have dealt specifically with the experiences of the youth. To be more specific, there has not been adequate focus on the psycho-sexual behaviour of the youth and its relation with premarital sex. The questions of power, pleasure, danger, violence and eroticism have not been addressed with sufficient rigorousness. Youth are being objectively defined as risk groups, to be subjected under the custody of the patriarchal state, to promote the moral good of society. Thus, the overwhelming attention has always been on the issues of reproductive health and sex-education. The effort has been to control the incidence of HIV pandemic and unplanned pregnancies outside marriage wedlock. This parochial approach has subsumed the manifold manifestations of youth’s sexuality within the broader continuum of premarital sex. It does not look at the diverse dimensions and expressions of sexuality present among young adults. As a result, the knowledge that is available is very limited and androcentric in nature.

For the purpose of the study, I have interviewed twenty young, heterosexual college going boys and girls from Jadavpur University, Kolkata. Although the university is segregated into three specific departments (Arts, Science and Engineering departments), my study remained concentrated to the Arts/Humanities section. This research was a qualitative study and it was based on two step procedure. The first step involved the reading of secondary

data available on the subject of virginity and young people's views and behaviour on the issue pre-marital sex.

The objective of the study was to capture the experiences and perceptions of young people on pre-marital sex. As a result, the interviews primarily centered on understanding the views and the opinions of the respondents, for example, why and what kind of choices they made in relation to the questions of pre-marital sex and virginity-loss, and thereby trace the gendered patterns of behavior prevalent among the youth to see how they locate themselves within the larger context of society while making these choices.

For the selection of the units of study I have used purposive sampling. Age, heterosexuality, class and educational department were some of the inclusive criteria or specific stratum used for selecting both my male and female respondents. Identifying respondents on the basis of the given criteria was not much difficult given my established relationships with most of my respondents. But since purposive sampling is usually prone to researcher's bias I had to be extra careful to alleviate the possible biases. Nonetheless, one of the biggest limitations of my study is that it focused only heterosexual men and women. People belonging to other alternative sexual categories were deliberately kept out keeping in mind the time constraints and my limited access. Therefore, my study concentrates on a very small section of the society and one cannot draw any kind of generalizations on the basis of this study.

Living the Gendered Body

Recent studies of sexuality in India have shown that pre-marital sex is not as rare as generally believed to be (Abraham 2002, Family Planning Association of India n.d., Rakesh 1992; Goparaju 1993; Bhende 1994; Rangaiyan 1995; Sachdev 1997). Sexual attitudes in the recent years appear to be more accepting and predictive of sexual behaviour than what they have been in the past (Joshi 2010). It has been found that men in general hold more permissive attitudes toward pre-marital sex as compared to women (Jeejeebhoy 1994; Abraham & Kumar 1999; Soloman et al. 1999; Gray et al. 1999; Abraham 2002; Ghule et al. 2007; Hindin & Hindin 2009; Joshi 2010; Kumar et al. 2010; Sharma et al. 2012).

The double standards of morality contributed to gendered patterns of behaviour among men and women. While, on one hand, men enjoyed adequate liberty in terms of the sexual choices they exercised, on the other hand, young women were subjected to tremendous control. Young women have reported of the stringent checks and control families have imposed on their sexual behaviour. They were either prohibited from socializing with males outside their families or had restricted access to the outside world in order to preserve the purity of their bodies (Hindin & Hindin,

2009). The perpetual fear was to maintain the chastity of the young girls, until marriage, to maintain the honour of their families. Hence, women have rarely reported of pre-marital sex.

Most of the female respondents were also hesitant to talk about it freely. They expressed how the unshakable association between marriage and intrinsic purity of female body has made sex outside marriage undesirable and sinful. They either held dismissive attitude towards the topic or covertly spoke about it. For example, one of the respondents said that she would not mind if someone chooses to have sex prior to marriage, however, she herself was not okay with the idea as she thought it would violate her dignity. For her, the notion of purity was directly associated with her ability to maintain virginity. The phenomenon of boundary maintenance was related to the building of a "legitimate" model or demeanor of behaviour that helps in upholding the feminine values propagated by patriarchy. The slightest hint of pre-marital sexual activity was therefore perceived as disgraceful to the family's self-esteem and a direct threat to the possibility of "good" marriage for girls (Alexander et al. 2006). Pre-marital sex was considered obnoxious for women in general. So even if they participated in pre-marital sex, getting access to that kind of information was very difficult.

Men, on the other hand, have reported of sufficient sexual mobility and freedom. Of the ten male respondents nine of them held lenient attitudes towards pre-marital sex unlike women. For most men, pre-marital sexual interactions became a medium of expression of male authority and dominance. It was a step towards manhood. Marriage was never seen as an obstacle to their sexual career. Rather, they articulated the significance of pre-marital sex by emphasizing on the pleasure aspect of it. Also, unlike women, most of their first sexual encounters were outside the domain of love and committed relationships. It was with someone whom they did not want to marry.

These attitudinal differences towards pre-marital sex between men and women illustrate how, on one hand, the patriarchal set of morality limited the sexual mobility of women by subjecting them to strict patriarchal control. On the other hand, the same set of patriarchal morality did not enforce any bindings on men. Multi-partner relationships among men were never seen as a problem. They were less likely to feel guilt and shame after the sexual activity as compared to women. Rather, they were encouraged to pursue pre-marital sexual relationships, to assert their masculine identity. Hence, reporting among men on pre-marital sex was extremely high unlike among women. But what was worth appreciating was that some men have questioned the state of female purity and its association with virginity, and how the popular image of manhood makes it compulsory for all men to adhere to the masculine norms to prove their

masculinity. For example, peer-pressure was widely talked about by most of the male respondents to emphasize on the level of pressure and expectations imposed on them by their friends to establish their manhood. Although women also spoke about peer-pressure, but the nature of pressure they underwent was different from the one, men were exposed to. Women had to take care of the fact that their personal decisions and choices were not revealed to the larger circle of friends. Most of them reported that the opinionated nature of female friends often made their decision-making process difficult. Hence, keeping it a secret or revealing it in a clandestine manner was more considerable.

From these differences in men's and women's pattern of sexual reporting, one can construe two things. First, how their understanding and behaviour on pre-marital sex was informed by the patriarchal values and environment, in which they lived and second, how these values rendered to the gendered ways of functioning.

When men expressed their permissive attitude towards pre-marital sex, it was seen as an extension of their biological body. The prevailing assumption was that the male desires and practices were a direct outcome of the male body, over which men had "no" control, hence it was natural. The same logic of biological determinism was also applied to women, to justify their passive, reserved and non-permissive behavior towards pre-marital sex. These female attributes of passivity and benevolence was conceptualized as natural instincts of the female body. The less reporting of pre-marital sexual activities among women was therefore never questioned. It was seen as something that came naturally to women. As a result, a whole lot of other factors that played an important function in manipulating the behaviour of women were completely ignored. These examples not only hold testimony to men's power over women, but also show how male bodies were privileged over women's through a complex relationship of power and sex. Thus, the stringent societal vigilance on women restricted their mobility and choices, and coerced them to submit to the patriarchal value system to avoid negative consequences.

Even if, women reported of engaging in some kind of pre-marital sexual activity, they employed distinct strategies to talk about it, to lessen its harmful consequences.

Discovering the Sexual Self

Women did not mind talking about pre-marital sex from the prism of love and committed relationships (Gray 1999; Abraham & Kumar 1999; Ghule et al. 2007; Joshi 2010). This space of love was not only eulogized as safe and legitimate but was considered to be an indispensable factor in women's articulation of pre-marital sex.

Women, in general, felt that love was essential for sex and, it should happen only when the love has the potential of converting into marriage. Thus, the emphasis was clearly

on commitment and responsibility. Relations of "time-pass" category were strictly avoided to maintain one's status in society. Women reported how girls in such relationships were often referred with derogatory terms such as *maal*, *chalu*, and *samman* to represent them as sexual objects meant for patriarchal consumption (Abraham 2002). Although few women agreed to time-pass relationships of a shorter duration, however, majority of them felt that such casual engagements would reduce their demands in the marriage market. Hence, sexual intimacy was either postponed for marriage or experienced only within the romantic boundaries of love. Unlike men, women emphasized a lot on caressing and emotional involvement. For them love was a cementing factor for initiating a sexual union. For example, a respondent said that she sex is a natural necessity to embrace one's relationship. Nonetheless, one should not indulge in it unless one is sure of her relationship status.

This was in sharp contrast to men's perception of love and pre-marital sex. According to men sex in premarital relationship is a normal thing. Sex was simply seen an expression of sexual desire or physical love towards each other. Although, the role of emotion was not dismissed completely however, it was never glorified. Rather it was discounted to a large extent. Like a respondent said that he has always been fine with pre-marital sex because he always wanted to enjoy every moment to its fullest. Although he mentioned he would not mind an emotional angle to his relationship with a woman, he never looked forward to it as the sole feature deemed necessary for a fruitful sexual relation.

This gender difference in men's and women's articulation of pre-marital sex shows how the sexuality norms govern men and women differently. While, on one hand, there was no social sanction against men who transgressed the sexual norm by having sex outside marriage; on the other hand, women were punished severely for the same contravention.

As a result, those women who engaged in some kind pre-marital sexual activity had to be extra careful while exercising their sexual choices. "Love" was used as an euphemism to give vent to their repressed sexual desires. Although there is not much evidence on whether this female love was just a response to male desire or a mutual recognition of an emotional space between two lovers however, it helped women in acquiring a temporal feeling of security, freedom and enrichment; that were absent in other casual (sexual) relationships. Love was always associated with the auspicious image of marriage, and so it was believed that love would bring good fortune and bliss in their lives. Hence, despite its erotic edge, love was embodied as a state of sexual ascendancy that idealized sexual ideology of heterosexual marriage. The rhetoric to love therefore became vital in negotiating sexual practices. It not only rendered women with a safe-space to discover their "true sexual

potential” but, also enabled them to legitimize their actions by using the metaphor of love (Richardson; 1996). It became a medium of self-preservation for women in a male-dominated society (Douglas 1990).

However, this understanding of love did not rescue women from being accountable to the patriarchal clutches of control. Women had to be cautious of not succumbing to or over-indulge in men’s romantic proposals, to avoid denigration of female virtue. By being objectively emotional women tried to strike a balance between their personal autonomy and patriarchal values to stay celibate until marriage. Hence, the boundaries of love were re-defined to re-construct a space that despite its sexual sides was marked secured and receptive of man-woman relationship outside marriage. This becomes clearer when women constructed a hierarchically structured order between sexual intercourse and “other” forms of sexual acts to explore their sexual self. This segregation of sexual intercourse from “sexual” acts allowed women to re-arrange the course of physical interaction, and simultaneously find a space of transcendence that seemed liberating in its own way. Even when, women sought to some kind of non-permissive attitude towards pre-marital sexual intercourse; sexual activities such as kissing on lips, cuddling, touching of sexual organs of the opposite sex was not absolutely absent. It was a pretty familiar phenomenon.

This segregation of sexual intercourse from other sexual activities not only widened the scope of sexual experimentation, but also, gave women an opportunity to give expression to their desires, without disrupting the sexual naivety and innocence, expected out of them. Women took extra-care of guarding their virginity, as it was seen as a crucial factor in determining the degree of purity among girls. They were under a constant pressure of maintaining an image that was worshipped. Women’s identity was therefore shaped by fear, guilt and dishonor embedded in patriarchal society. Hence, selectively selecting the sexual acts became important part of female identity. And women enacted this identity to seek reverence in society.

However, this extensive evidence of female participation in some kind of sexual activities show that, woman were not at all passive. As independent agents, women negotiated within the available spaces, to exercise their sexual choices tactically. Although, their definitions of pleasure and love manifested patriarchal values, demands and desire; nevertheless, this understanding did not underplay their level of sexual pleasure. The careful construction of the boundaries of sex, within the domain of patriarchal language, context and culture, allowed women to experience pleasure in a manner that was both exploratory and self-discovering in nature. Thus, women were not passive recipients of male desires/advances. As rational, independent beings women strategized their lives and were considerably active in their own ways.

Gender Differences in Psychological Resilience

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Abstract : Psychological Resilience has been considered as an important aspect of an individual's mental health. It is defined as an individual's ability to properly adapt to stress and adversity. Various factors influencing psychological resilience have been studied. The present research has aimed to study the gender differences in Psychological Resilience of teenagers. The sample consisted of 30 boys and 30 girls falling in the age range of 15 to 19 years. To measure psychological resilience the 14-item Resilience Scale (RS- 14) developed by Gail M. Wagnild and Heather M. Young was used. For statistical analysis of collected data t test was used. Implications and limitations of the research have been discussed.

Keywords : Psychological Resilience, Gender Differences, Teenagers.

Gender Differences in Psychological Resilience

Introduction

The term gender difference is typically applied to the differences between men and women that are often specific to a particular culture are result of process of socialization. Children adopt a gender identity early in life and develop gender role preferences as well. Within as well as across the cultures there seems to be great consistency in standards of desirable gender role behaviour. Out of the many presumed differences between the behaviours of males and females, some are real, some are found only inconsistently, and some are wholly mythical.

Girls are more physically and neurologically advanced at birth. Boys have more mature muscular development but are more vulnerable to disease and hereditary anomalies. Girls excel early in verbal skills, but boys excel in visual-spatial and math skills. Boys' superior mathematic abilities, however, reflect only a better grasp of geometry, which depends on visual-spatial abilities. Boys are more aggressive, and girls more nurturing. Boys have more reading, speech, and emotional problems than girls.

More equivocal are gender differences in activity level, dependency, timidity, exploratory activity, and vulnerability to stress. There are no gender differences in sociability, conformity, achievement, self-esteem, or verbal hostility.

Biologically, male fetus is more vulnerable and at greater risk of death and damage from almost all the obstetric catastrophes (Lancet, as cited in Kraemer, 2000). Perinatal brain damage, cerebral palsy, congenital deformities of the genitalia and limbs, premature birth, and stillbirth are commoner in boys (Lavoie, Robaey, Stauder, Glorieux, Lefebvre, 1998; Singer, Westphal, Niswander, 1968; Taylor, 1985, as cited in Karemer, 2000) and newborn boy is on average developmentally some weeks behind a newborn girl (Kraemer, 2000).

If girl and boy premie are born at same gestational stage, the boy is likely to be at higher risk of death and disability. Girls mature more rapidly than boys, even in the

womb. It provides an advantage, because the lungs and other organs are more developed (Boys a bit more likely to be born prematurely, 2013).

It would be interesting to see whether these differences also exist for various psychological variables including resilience.

This ability to cope with problems and setbacks is known in psychological literature as resilience. It is defined as individual's ability to properly adapt to stress and adversity. Resilience is not a rare ability, but rather something which can be found in an average person and also can be learned and developed by virtually everyone. Resilience should be considered as a process rather than a trait to be had (Rutter, M., 2008).

Review of literature

Studies done on children of schizophrenic mothers in 1990 have denoted the importance of resilience and made it a major research topic (Masten, A. S.; Best, K. M.; Garnezy, N., 1990). Masten A. S. (1989) found in his study that children with a schizophrenic parent may not obtain comforting caregiving compared to children with healthy parents, and such situations had an impact on children's development. However, some children of ill parents thrived well and were competent in academic achievement, and therefore led researchers to make efforts to understand such responses to adversity.

The research done on resilience is multifaceted, aiming to find out the factors that build resilience, genetic contribution, outcomes associated with high resilience and techniques to build resilience.

Romer, Ravitch, Tom, Merrell and Wesley (2011) have investigated gender differences of children and adolescents on positive social and emotional competencies using a measure of positive social-emotional attributes and resilience—the Social-Emotional Assets and Resilience Scales (SEARS) cross-informant system. Romer et al. found that females consistently has significantly higher total scores on all versions of the SEARS assessment system

($p < .01$), indicating consistent perceptions of females' higher levels of social-emotional competencies by all raters. These differences were not affected by the grade of students or the gender of the parent or teacher rater.

Study done by Amstadter, Myers and Kendler (2014) aimed to examine the genetic and environmental foundation of resilience. They have assessed exposure to stressful life events and internalizing symptoms at two time points in 7500 adult twins. Resilience was found to have a mild to moderate genetic heritability at each individual wave (~31%). Additionally, qualitative sex effects were found. The genes that impact on resilience are not entirely the same in males and females, although the degree of heritability is equal across the sexes. However, environmental influences also contributed roughly equally to determining the individual level of resilience.

Morano C. (2010) explored the role of gender within the context of the stress, appraisal, and coping model. The participants in this study were survivors of the trauma. The findings suggest that there are limited differences between male and female survivors in terms of perceived resilience, self-reported resolution of Erikson's life stages, and perceptions of other survivors' resolution of Erikson's life stages. However, gender differences did manifest in survivors' primary and secondary appraisals of their own experiences and in the types of coping skills they employed.

The gender differences in resilience and coping in the face of trauma have also been studied by Stratta, P., Capanna, C, Patriarca, de Cataldo, S., Bonanni, R. L., Riccardi and Rossi A. (2013). Stratta et al aimed to evaluate the impact of L'Aquila earthquake (Italy) on Resilience and Coping 2 years after the earthquake in a high school sample. 324 male and female students exposed to the earthquake and 147 not-exposed have been assessed with the Resilience Scale for Adolescents (READ) and the Brief COPE. Males exposed to the earthquake have reported consistently higher READ factor scores. Problem-focus coping strategies showed a similar pattern.

Vogt, Vaughn, Glickman, Schultz, Drainoni, Elwy and Eisen have studied resilience in women warriors as compared to men. Study aimed at finding out association between combat-related stressors and postdeployment mental health. Vogt et al used stress measures that included exposure to combat involving firing a weapon, being fired on, and witnessing injury and death; experiencing consequences of combat, such as observing or handling human remains and dealing with detainees; enduring difficult living situations in the war zone; and fearing for one's safety and well-being. Men reported more exposure to combat and battle aftermath, as well as difficult living conditions. However the differences in this exposure were relatively small. Few gender differences were reported in post-deployment mental health. Specifically, levels of post-traumatic stress, mental

health functioning, and depression were similar, though scores on substance abuse were higher for men than women.

In a research done by Boardman, Blalock and Button (2008) sex differences in heritability of the resilience were studied. The sample consisted of US adults aged 25 to 74 years. The heritability of resilience was found higher in men as compared to women.

Where gender differences in biological resilience seem clear, research on gender differences in psychological resilience tend to provide a mixed picture. The present paper has aimed to study the gender differences in psychological resilience in adolescents. To measure resilience, the 14-item resilience scale (RS-14) was used. The questionnaire was administered on 60 adolescent boys and girls (30 boys, 30 girls). The following hypothesis was proposed:

There is a significant difference between psychological resilience of boys and girls as measured by the 14-item resilience scale.

Method

Participants

The participants recruited for the study were selected randomly from a college of Thane, affiliated to Mumbai University. 60 (30 males and 30 females) students were included in the study. Participation in the research was voluntary.

Materials

In order to measure resilience of participants, the 14-Item Resilience Scale (RS-14) was used.

The 14-Item Resilience Scale was developed by Dr. Gail Wagnild. It is a self report inventory, using Likert scale. It contains 14 statements, each with seven options (represented in the form of seven numbers), ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Participants need to choose one numbers which they feel best indicates their feelings about the statement. Statements in the scale represent different indicators of resilience, including dealing with difficult situations, self discipline and determination, use of humor, belief about finding meaning in life, etc. There is no time limit to solve this test. Scoring is done by adding up all the answers given by participant. The participant may fall in any of the following category as per obtained scores.

Score Range	Category
14-56	Very Low
57-64	Low
65-73	Mod. Low
74-81	Mod. High
82-90	High
91-98	Very High

In a research done by Pritzker S. and Minter A. (2014), psychometric properties of RS-14 with large, ethnically diverse sample of early and middle adolescents were assessed. Principal component analysis finds a single factor structure. Cronbach's α for the aggregate sample was .91, ranging between .88 and .92 across racial/ethnic, gender, geographic, and age subgroups. Convergent validity is demonstrated with measures of both adolescent social self-efficacy and academic self-efficacy. Findings support the RS-14 as a useful instrument for assessing trait-like resilience in diverse early and middle adolescents.

RS-14 is strongly correlated with the longer RS, consisting of 25 items ($r=.97$) and the internal consistency reliability for the RS-14 is .93 (alpha coefficient).

Procedure

Participants in this research consisted of 60 students (30 males and 30 females) studying in Joshi-Bedekar College, Thane, affiliated to Mumbai University. The age of these participants was between 15 to 19 years. Those students who voluntarily wanted to take part in the study were given The Resilience Scale 14 test. Before the conduction of the test for research purpose, all the participants were explained the reason for administration of the test and assured of confidentiality. Thus consent was taken from the participants, keeping in mind ethical concerns. The instructions were read to the participants and they were told to answer the questions honestly. They were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaire. The doubts raised by the participants were answered frankly. Upon completion of the survey, the participants were thanked for their cooperation.

Results

The present research was done to study the gender differences in Psychological Resilience of teenagers. Resilience is defined as an individual's ability to properly adapt to stress and adversity. Participants in this research consisted of 30 boys and 30 girls falling in the age range of 15 to 19 years.

According to the hypothesis of the research, there is a significant difference between psychological resilience of boys and girls as measured by the 14-item resilience scale.

The t test was calculated to find out the differences in Resilience of boys and girls. T test is used to compare the two means obtained and when the Dependent Variable is in ratio scale of measurement. In this study, the resilience scores obtained by teenage boys and girls were compared. Hence, t test was thought to be an appropriate statistical measure.

Table 1 consists of the scores of 60 participants on RS-14 scale. Table 2 is summary data table for the calculation of t test. The t at degrees of freedom 58 was found to be 0.903, which is not significant. ($t_{(58)}=0.903, n.s$)

Discussion

It was hypothesized that there is a significant difference between psychological resilience of boys and girls as measured by the 14-item resilience scale. The obtained value of t was found to be non-significant. Hence, the hypothesis was not validated by the obtained data. A number of factors might explain these results.

In this study, the resilience was not measured as a response to some trauma or particular difficult situation which requires several coping mechanisms. There is no data available regarding the traumatic events these adolescent boys and girls have experienced in their lives. Most of them belong to nurturing families, which provide safe and secure environment. Thus, it could be possible that their ability to deal with difficulties has never been put to test till now.

Amongst various factors that influence or build the resilience of an individual, culture is an important one. In traditional Indian culture, there are different gender role expectations and appropriate behaviors associated with them. Thus, boys are encouraged to be hardy, brave, bold, whereas girls are nurtured to be patient, supportive, understanding. While these two sets of characteristics differ from each other, they both in their own ways are helpful in building more psychological resilience in one.

The questionnaire used to measure resilience is a small scale, consisting of 14 items. The scale might not be able to represent various aspects of psychological resilience and other factors associated with it. Thus, a more comprehensive scale may depict significant gender differences in resilience.

Different personality traits as well as environmental conditions which are unique to each individual may also play a role in determining the resilience of a person.

Implications

The research findings could be implied in different ways, such as;

1. To design and develop a training program for students to help them build resilience.
2. To conduct various sessions/programs which help students learn various coping strategies to deal with social/emotional traumas one may encounter in life.

Limitations

Several limitations have to be taken into consideration while interpreting the results of present study.

1. The research has not taken into consideration differences in life experiences of every individual that may affect resilience to a great degree.
2. The research sample is not adequate to make generalizations.

- The scale used to measure resilience was not comprehensive enough.

Conclusion

It was hypothesized that there is a significant difference between psychological resilience of boys and girls as measured by the 14-item resilience scale. From the obtained results it can be concluded that there is hypothesis of the study was not validated.

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Appendix

Table 1: Group Data

Sr. No.	RS- 14 Scores (Female Participants)	Sr. No.	RS- 14 Scores (Male participants)
1	44	31	71
2	77	32	60
3	83	33	92
4	67	34	81
5	74	35	82
6	72	36	76
7	27	37	80
8	88	38	73
9	77	39	62
10	78	40	94
11	76	41	91
12	84	42	87
13	63	43	72
14	35	44	75
15	65	45	81
16	80	46	59
17	77	47	77
18	80	48	75
19	92	49	74
20	75	50	91
21	88	51	86
22	83	52	63
23	65	53	85
24	62	54	54
25	74	55	66
26	80	56	80
27	85	57	73
28	68	58	74
29	81	59	64
30	81	60	73

Table 2 : Table for t Test Calculation

Group Statistics

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Resilience score 1	30	72,70	14,912	2,722
2	30	75,70	10,446	1,907

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Resilience score	Equal variances assumed	1,175	,283	-,903	58,371		-3,000	3,324	-9,654	3,654
	Equal variances not assumed			-,903	51,938	,371	-3,000	3,324	-9,670	3,670

Declining Child Sex Ratio : An Alarm

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Abstract : Today in the Indian context declining sex ratio has become one of the serious problems. Child sex ratio is another important area of concern today. The child sex ratio is calculated as number of girls per 1000 boys. Child sex ratio for India in 2011 Census was 914 and over the years this ratio has fallen from 976 in 1961, 964 in 1971, and 962 in 1981, 945 in 1991, 927 during 2001. A stage may soon come when it would become extremely difficult, if not impossible to make up for missing girls. Society needs to recognize this discrimination: girls have a right to live just as boys do. Moreover, missing numbers of either sex, and the resulting imbalance, can destroy the social and human fabric. In states like Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Gujarat, this ratio has declined to less than 900 girls per 1000 boys. It is an alarming signal. This may cause many problems at different level such as demographic, social, cultural etc.

This paper is an attempt to take an overview of problem of declining sex ratio in different states of India. The present study will also try to compare the variation in different states of India at different time period. For the analysis secondary sources will be used. Census, SRS and NFHS data will be used for the present study. A comparative analysis will be done to understand the seriousness of the problem. Through this research paper an attempt will also be made to understand the reasons behind the declining child sex ratio and will also try to suggest some measures to balance this child sex ratio.

Introduction

Today in the Indian context declining sex ratio has become one of the serious problems. Sex ratio is an important parameter that reflects the status of women in society. In India sex-ratio is declining inspite of social, educational and economic development. According to conventional definition, $\text{sex ratio} = (\text{Number of males} / \text{Number of females}) * 100$. However, in India, we usually define sex ratio as $(\text{Number of female} / \text{Number of males}) * 1000$ in any given population, at a specific point of time. Indian Census has the tradition of bringing out disaggregated information by sex on various aspects of population. The first and foremost component of gender statistics revealed by Census 2001, 532 million constituting 52 percent are males and 497 million constituting remaining 48 percent are females in the population.

Child population within the age group of 0 to 6 years is vulnerable as this section is exposed to various diseases causing enhancement in mortality rate. Correct enumeration of this group of population facilitates the planners to arrange for child care infrastructure much in advance, particularly inoculation nourishment and related medical support. In rural areas the children are more exposed to diseases due to paucity of medical facilities. The extensive information of child population may forewarn the administration in combating any unforeseen circumstances either in rural or urban areas.

The government departments like health, education, rural development, woman and child development etc. are the best users of census information on children. But still there is need to make people in general and government departments in particular aware about value of census information.

Like the sex composition of the total population, the sex composition by age groups is vital for studying the demographic trends of young population, its future patterns and particularly, the status of the girl child. Child sex ratio is another important area of concern today. Alarm bells started ringing when the Census 2001 data was released. It revealed a drastic fall in the sex ratio, especially the child sex ratio. The child sex ratio is calculated as number of girls per 1000 boys. The 2011 Census results on the sex composition of the Indian population have so far been discussed within the prevailing understanding of the reasons behind a declining child sex ratio. In 1901 there were 3.2 million fewer women than men in India – a hundred years later the deficit increased over 10 times to 35 million at the time of Census 2001. The most disturbing decline is seen in the age group 0 -6 years. The sex ratio (number of girls for every 1000 boys) within this age group plunged from 1010 in 1941 to 914 in 2011. The sex ratio in the age group 0 - 6 years plunged from 1010 in 1941 to 914 in 2011.

A declining is attributed completely to sex selective abortion of the female fetus, because factors such as higher male migration and higher female mortality in specific age group, negligence regarding health care of girl child, son preference also contribute to lowering the female sex ratio.

Literature Review

The Indian sex ratio has shown secular decline since the beginning of the twentieth century excepting some reverse trend of improvement during 1951, 1981 and 2001. Along with rise in population size, there is evidence of masculinity in sex ratio in general as well as in child sex ratio in particular. Although the masculinity of sex ratio is a reality from the very beginning and more so in case of child population in India (Seth 1996), the concern regarding this

phenomenon with the onset of this century is because of the startling figures exposed by the 2001 Census.

In fact, one scholar considers the female deficit to be about 5 million and speculates the reason behind this based on the findings of 1981 Census (Saraswathi, 1988). India is a country of striking demographic diversity. It exhibits a relatively high but declining fertility and uneven economic development with marked regional disparities by social group, age group and levels of prosperity (Agnihotri, 1995; Dyson & Moore, 1983).

Ansley Coale (1991) also drew attention to unusually high sex ratios at birth and high female mortality rates relative to males, especially in the early years of life and for daughters with elder sisters.

The high masculine sex ratios of the Indian population had been a matter of concern for many decades. Considerable attention has been paid to different dimensions of female deficits in India and persisting regional variations (Sen 1990; Agnihotri 2000; Dasgupta and Bhat 1995; Miller 1981 and 1989). The numerical imbalances between the male and female sexes were pointed out in the seventies (Visaria 1971; Natarajan 1997).

Scenario of Declining Child Sex Ratio in India

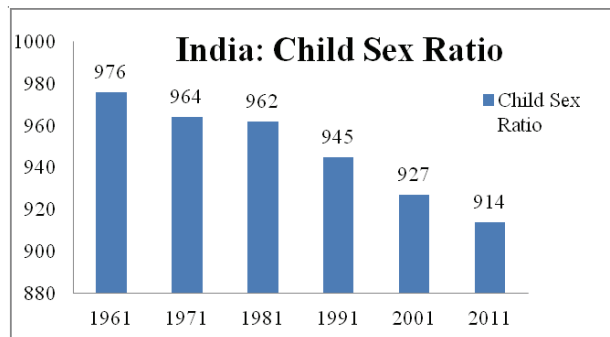
Census of India has been the major source of information about various demographic aspects of India's population. Declining Child Sex Ratio is one of the serious issues of demography of India. Usually, the natural sex ratios at birth are found to lie between 943 and 971 females per 1000 males. On this basis, the average figure worked out to 953 females per 1000 male children (Retherford and Roy, 2003; United Nations, 1998; Arnold, et al., 2002). The problem is better understood, if one considers the fact that the child sex ratio is primarily influenced by sex ratio at birth and mortality in the early childhood. The natural sex ratio at birth usually has higher male births. But the advantage of higher sex ratio at birth (SRB) is neutralized due to higher male infant mortality in the normal population. Prior to 2001, the child sex ratio was close to sex ratio at birth but due to rapid decline, this has fallen even below the natural SRB in Census 2001. This reflects a grim picture of the status of the girl child in the country and majority of the states.

Alarming trends are discerned in some of the major states like Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, and Delhi. Only Kerala, Pondicherry and Lakshdweep have shown an increasing trend between 1991-2001.

This decline in the sex ratio is not recent trend. From 1961 this pattern of decline is observed from 1961 the sex ratio among children 0-6 years was 976 which came down to 964, 962, 945, 927, and 914 in 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001, and 2011 respectively.

Table 1: India : Child Sex Ratio

Year	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Child Sex Ratio	976	964	962	945	927	914



The 2011 Census results on the sex composition of the Indian population have so far been discussed within the prevailing understanding of the reasons behind a declining child sex ratio: The use of prenatal diagnostic techniques followed by sex-selective abortion, female child neglect and female infanticide. This explains and argues for a multi-causal approach to analyses the declining child sex ratio. Attention needs to shift towards those families who, under the influence of the prevalent small family norm and son preference, stop producing children when one or two sons are born.

There are various socio-economic and health implications of a declining sex ratio. A fall in the number of females in society is likely to increase sex-related crimes against women, polyandry, bride selling, prostitution, sexual exploitation and increase in cases of STD and HIV/ AIDS. The health of the woman is affected as she is forced to go for repeated pregnancies and abortions. It has been found that the imposition of a two-child norm, where disincentives are associated with the number of children, also has a negative impact on the sex ratio and needs to be strongly discouraged.

Present study is concern with the analysis of the major fifteen of India. The comparative analysis of these states for selected major states is done.

Table No. 2: Child Sex Ratio of Major States of India.

States	Child Sex Ratio		
	1991	2001	2011
India	945	927	914
Andhra Pradesh	975	961	943
Assam	975	965	957
Bihar	953	942	933
Gujarat	928	883	886
Haryana	879	819	830
Karnataka	960	946	943
Kerala	958	960	959
Maharashtra	946	913	883
Madhya Pradesh	941	932	912
Orissa	967	953	934
Punjab	875	798	846
Rajasthan	916	909	883
Uttar Pradesh	927	916	899
Tamil Nadu	948	942	946
West Bengal	967	960	950

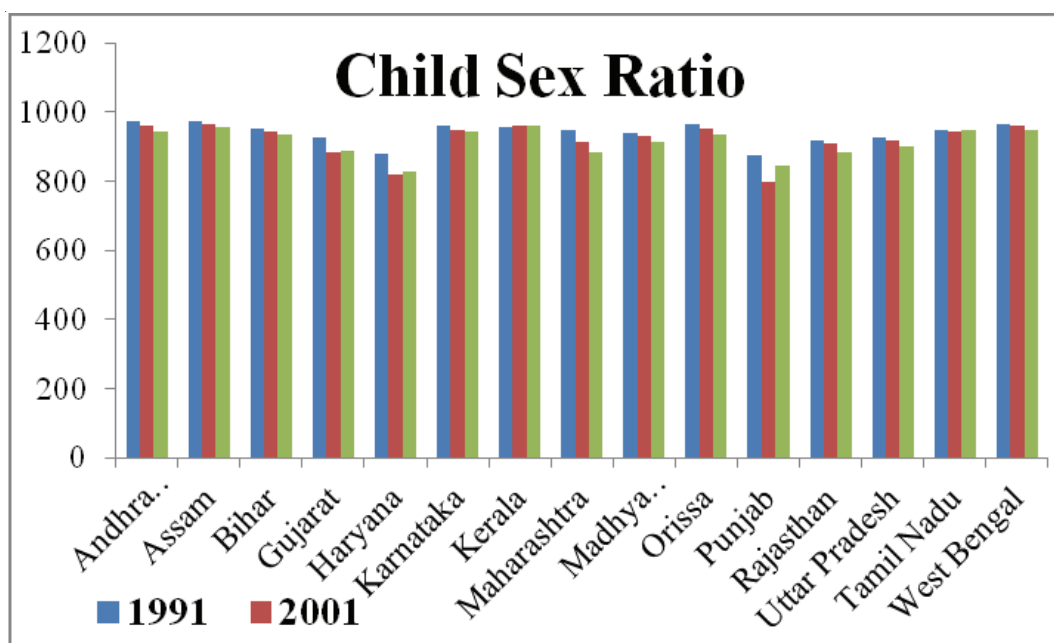


Table no. 2 gives the details of the child sex ratio of the major states of India. In 1991 lowest sex ratio was recorded in Punjab which was 875 followed by Haryana 879 girls for every 1000 boys. In 2001 and 2011 census lowest child sex ratio is recorded in Punjab 798 and 846 respectively. In year 1991 Assam and Andhra Pradesh shown highest child sex ratio i.e. 975 in both the states. 965 girls recorded against 1000 boys in Assam at the time of 2001 census. In 2011 highest child sex ratio is recorded in 959 in Kerala. Most of the states are showing consistently reducing child sex ratio.

There are areas within the country where the ratio has dropped to well below 900. In 2001 the ratios for some of the states are: Himachal Pradesh 896, Punjab 793, Chandigarh 845, Uttaranchal 906, Haryana 819, Delhi 865, Rajasthan 909, and Gujarat 879. These are not the most economically backward areas of the country. On the contrary, Haryana, with the lowest 0 – 6 sex-ratio in the country, is the most economically prosperous state of India. In fact, some of the poorest states have a sex-ratio well above the national average e.g. Assam in 2011.

Rural –Urban Differences in Child Sex Ratio

Place of residence is also equally important to influence Child Sex Ratio. It is again interesting to study the child sex ratio with the rural-urban differences. All the three census decades shows that rural India is having comparatively better picture regarding child sex ratio. Maximum rural area states selected for the present research shows higher child sex ratio than urban India i.e 948, 933, 919 in 1991, 2001, 2011 respectively. On the other hand in urban India the child sex ratio is 935, 906, 902. This trend is commonly observed in all the three decades and almost all the selected states.

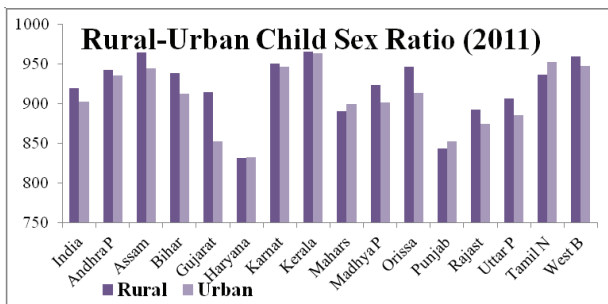
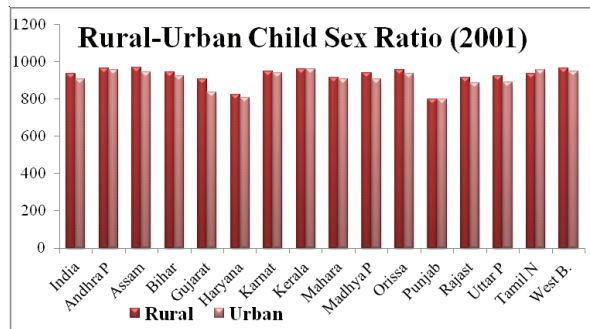
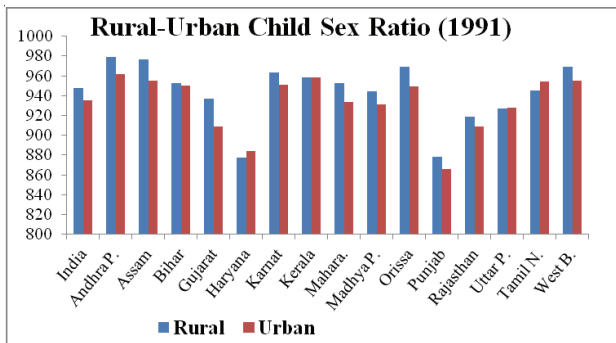
Table No. 3 focuses on the rural-urban differences in child sex ratio for three different decades. Data shows that states like Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh are consistently performing very poor. Mostly southern states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, with West Bengal are performing well regarding child sex ratio.

In census 1991 Haryana recorded lowest child sex ratio in both rural and urban areas. It is 877 for rural, and 884 for urban areas. With the number of 979 in rural and 962 in urban Andhra Pradesh has registered highest child sex ratio in study area.

2001 census was an alarming signal about declining child sex ratio. The picture of declining child sex ratio is more elaborately nurtured and recognised through 2001 census. Punjab with 799 for rural and 796 for urban registered lowest child sex ratio. Assam with 967 in rural and Kerala with 958 for rural registered highest child sex ratio.

Table no. 3 Rural-Urban Differences in Child Sex Ratio.

States	Child Sex Ratio					
	1991		2001		2011	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
India	948	935	933	906	919	902
Andhra Pradesh	979	962	963	955	942	935
Assam	977	955	967	943	964	944
Bihar	953	950	944	924	938	912
Gujarat	937	909	906	837	914	852
Haryana	877	884	823	808	831	832
Karnataka	963	951	949	940	950	946
Kerala	958	958	961	958	965	963
Maharashtra	953	934	916	908	890	899
Madhya Pradesh	944	931	939	907	923	901
Orissa	969	949	955	933	946	913
Punjab	878	866	799	796	843	852
Rajasthan	919	909	914	887	892	874
Uttar Pradesh	927	928	921	890	906	885
Tamil Nadu	945	954	933	955	936	952
West Bengal	969	955	963	948	959	947



Never before in history, it was 2011 when lowest child sex ratio was registered in India it was 914, for rural India it was 919 and for urban India it was 902. At the state level analysis it was observed that Kerala has recorded 965 in urban and 963 in rural highest child sex ratio. This decade also Haryana performed very poorly, it was 831 for rural and 832 for urban area.

One more important thing can be pointed out from the table that in almost all states and even at national level the child sex ratio of rural area is comparatively better. Reason may be the lack of facilities, less access to the modern treatments, poverty, lack of knowledge etc. are together affecting on comparatively better child sex ratio than urban.

Reasons for Declining Child Sex Ratio

The researches, and studies in the issues taken in this paper is mainly the product of combination of factors namely; the urge to have a son, acceptance of the small family norm as a result of the fertility transition, access to pre-natal sex determination tests and abortion has worsened the situation relating for the girl child (Bose, 2002; Dasgupta, 2005; George and Dahiya, 1998; Goodkind, 1999; Ganatra, *et al.*, 2001;

Bhat, 2002; and Mallik, 2003). The regional variations in sex ratio at birth in evidence could perhaps be related to the differential fertility levels across states. The urban share in the distortion is much higher than in rural areas (Anil Kumar, 1999). The current socio-economic and cultural environment including the impact of modernization has further forced the situation with regard to these factors. Further, in a situation where social insecurity is very high, where no income guarantee and no insurance exists; it is very tough to convince the parents that girls are assets and will look after them in their old age. From the available literature various factors have been identified in the declining child sex ratio, most prominent have been child's birth order, number of living sons, educational level of women and the rural-urban residence. The most influential factor that has affected the sex ratio in the northwestern states is a strong son preference. All together, there has been an age old as well as modern factor, namely the urge to have a son, acceptance of the small family norm, and access to pre-natal sex determination tests and abortion technologies. The intensity of these factors has increased due to the socio-economic and cultural demand for a son as well as the impact of modernization.

• Son Preference

Looking at the socio-cultural set up of the Indian society overall male child is given more importance. Status of women is subordinated by males at all levels. Both in rural and urban India especially in the northwestern states, if the first birth is a girl child, the sex ratio of the second birth largely worsen against girls. If the first birth is a male child, the sex ratio of the second birth for the entire northwestern states is in favour of females. To fulfill the desire of a son pre birth interventions are being practiced, resulting in reduced female births. The literature relates son preference to a variety of social and economic factors in the northwestern states, which interact to make females less valuable to their families. People are pressurized to bear sons while limiting the number of daughters in order to conserve scarce household resources. A son is still the man who will carry on the family name and take care of old parents. With such prejudices, the couples are forced to use sex selective technology; there is a great deal of social demand for a son. Often, skewed sex ratios in fevovr of male children are termed as son preference and their associated characteristics are said to determine daughter discrimination or neglect. However, son preference might carry on even in the absence of daughter neglect. In societies with a high preference for sons, the adoption of a small family norm often leads to couples stopping child-bearing as soon as they beget one or two male children. As there are relatively more male first and second births, the proportion of male births in the population may increase to some extent as a result of this.

• **Economic Considerations Regarding Daughters**

One of the reasons for the presence of fewer girls in India is the economic expenses associated with the bearing of a girl child. The net wealth out flow on the occasion of a girl's marriage is also another important aspect. Despite the Anti Dowry Act, the practice continues and is spreading all over the country. The threat of the dowry deaths has increased in many parts of India. With such evidences, it is true that those households or parents with more sons are not willing for any daughters. This costs and benefits trade leads to killing the girl in the womb than to be burdened with debts or to part with land and house (Grant 1998; Radhakrishnan, 1999). In the near past cases of farmer's suicide have been reported in the national dailies. The cause is not so much crop failure but the inability to repay debts incurred for a daughter's marriage (Bhalla, 2006). In this way a daughter becomes an avoidable social and economic burden. There is an inherent element of gender discrimination against girls.

• **Socio-Economic Discrimination**

A sons' utility is reflected in the economy of family labour provided by him on the farm or in the family business, earning a wage and salary through mobility, looking after old age parents and also attracting dowry. This indicates that a son is more valued asset to the family than a daughter. Whereas, girls are not given such opportunities to perform all these activities, instead, a perception of economic responsibility is highly attached with daughters. This has resulted in widespread practices of sex selective abortion. Our society, the socio-economic and cultural fundamentals have been always against our female population. Now the time has come that the state needs to facilitate a change in fundamentals, directing programmes in the spirit that the woman brings human life up so we all should bring her up. Insecure feeling regarding girl child, nature of evil evidences happening around are many time responsible for declining child sex ratio.

• **Sex Selective Abortions**

The decline in India's population sex-ratio during the 20th century has been the subject of much discussion in recent years. Sex-selective abortion of the female fetus following a prenatal diagnostic test is widely believed to be the major contributor to this declining phenomenon.

The factors other than sex-selective abortion including higher under-5 mortality for females in every state are also responsible. It is important to address the root causes of sex determination gender discrimination manifested through son-preference and daughter-neglect. The census of 2011 has brought much concern because the child sex ratio (0-6 years) declined yet again, from 927 girls per 1,000 boys in 2001 to 914 girls per 1,000 boys in 2011. This decline has been interpreted as the direct result of more sex-selective

abortions of female foetuses taking place. Sex-selective abortion of the female foetus is a manifestation of extreme gender discrimination and needs to be prevented. But restricting access to abortion services may not be the answer. The focus on identifying every potential sex-selective abortion-seeker has led to a situation of suspect of abortion-seekers. Healthcare providers and facilities are often unwilling to provide abortion services on the suspicion that the abortion may be for sex-selection. Restricting access to abortion services, no matter how justified the underlying intention, amounts to gender discrimination. It denies women access to a service that only women need. History tells us that when access to abortion services is restricted, the proportion of unsafe abortions increases. This results in considerable avoidable mortality and morbidity.

Suggestions

- Improving the status of girl child in the family and society as well.
- Reduce Gender Differences of Son Preference
- Give autonomy to young women
- Recognize the economic contribution of women
- Extend urban like benefits to rural population
- Girls need protection from modernization
- Providing social security to women/girls
- Giving equal opportunities for their growth and development.
- Active government campaigns against sex selective abortion.
- Providing financial incentives to parents with only one girl child.

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A Study of Awareness about Right to Information Act among Female Citizens- with Reference to Kalyan Taluka, Dist. Thane

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Abstract : The Right to Information Act 2005(RTI) is derived from our fundamental right to expression under Article 19 of the Constitution of India. The defined objective of RTI Act is to enable the citizens to have an access to information on statutory basis. The Act puts an obligation upon every public authority under clause (4) to provide information and to maintain records consistently with its operational requirements.

To fulfill the real aim for which the Act is created, the awareness among citizens and acceptance of the provisions of RTI from authorities of local administration is essential.

The research is an attempt to find out the level of awareness of RTI Act 2005 among female citizens, the response given by local authorities to the female citizens and the execution of procedures of the Act by female citizens of the above mentioned area.

Keywords : Right to information, female citizens, awareness, response, execution of procedure

Introduction

'Information' as a term has been derived from the Latin words 'formation' and 'forma' which means giving shape to something and forming a pattern, respectively. Information adds something new to our awareness and removes the vagueness of our ideas. Information is Power, and therefore it is important to share power with the humblest for empowering the weakest. It is precisely because of this reason that the Right to Information has to be ensured for all.

India got Independence in 1947 and proclaimed itself a Republic in 1950, with a Constitution. However, in practice, brown elite replaced the white masters and Swaraj did not come. Mahatma Gandhi had said, "Real Swaraj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of capacity to resist authority when abused." A few did acquire the authority and retained it, but the capacity to resist misuse of authority eluded the average Citizen of India. Right To Information (RTI) now empowers citizens to do that.

The Right To Information (RTI) is derived from our fundamental right to expression under Article 19 of the Constitution of India. If we do not have information on how our Government and Public Institutions function, we cannot express any informed opinion on it. This has been clearly stated by various Supreme Court judgments, since 1977. We accept that the freedom of the press is an essential element for a democracy to function. It is worthwhile to understand the underlying assumption in this well entrenched belief. Why is the freedom of the media considered as one of the essential features of democracy? Democracy revolves around the basic idea of citizens being at the center of governance and rule of the people. We need to define the importance of the concept of freedom of the press from the fundamental premise. It is obvious that the

main reason for a free press is to ensure that Citizens Right To Know is paramount. Since the Government is run on behalf of the people, they are the rightful owners who have a right to be informed directly. Justice Mathew ruled in the Raj Narain case, "In a government of responsibility like ours, where all the agents of the public must be responsible for their conduct, there can be but few secrets. The people of this country have a right to know every public act, everything that is done in a public way by their public functionaries. They are entitled to know the particulars of every public transaction in all its bearing. Their right to know, which is derived from the concept of freedom of speech, though not absolute, is a factor which should make one wary where secrecy is claimed for transactions which can at any rate have no repercussion on public security.

Right To Information (RTI) existed since the day the Constitution of India was framed. The present Act only gives procedures to operationalise this right.

Need for Right to Information

The Right To Information has already received judicial recognition as a part of the fundamental right to free speech and expression. An Act is needed to provide statutory framework for this right. This law will lay down the procedure for translating this right into reality. Information is indispensable for the functioning of a true democracy. People have to be kept informed about current affairs and broad issues – political, social and economic. Free exchange of ideas and free debate are essentially desirable for the Government of a free country.

In this Age of Information, its value as a critical factor in socio-cultural, economic and political development is being increasingly felt. In a fast developing country like India, availability of information needs to be assured in the fastest and simplest form possible. This is important because every developmental process depends on the availability

of information. Right to know is also closely linked with other basic rights such as freedom of speech and expression and right to education. Its independent existence as an attribute of liberty cannot be disputed. Viewed from this angle, information or knowledge becomes an important resource. An equitable access to this resource must be guaranteed.

Review of Literature

1. Provision and Salient Features of RTI Act 2005 – Orissa Review” August 2005-By Tarakanta Mohanty
2. “Information Manual under RTI Act,2005”- By Press Information Bureau
3. “Manual of RTI Act”- By Raj Kumar
4. “Developments”- A Report on RTI”- By Kavitha Rao

Problem of the Study

The most important milestone in the history of legislation of our country is the Introduction of the Freedom of Information Bill on 25th July, 2000 in the Lok Sabha. The defined objective is to enable the citizens to have an access to information on a statutory basis.

To have the RTI Management to fulfil its objective for which it is created, the awareness and acceptance from authorities of local administration and the citizens become essential factors. The research is an attempt to find out the level of awareness and acceptance of RTI in the practice of information management.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the level of awareness of RTI Act 2005 among female citizens
2. To study the Response given by local authorities to the female citizens
3. To study the execution of precedures of the RTI Act by female citizens of the Kalyan Taluka ,Thane Disrrict.

To scientifically analyse and understand awareness of the Local Authorities and the citizens regarding RTI and to provide suggestions to make enhancement in RTI awareness and its operationalisation so as to make information management transparent and more near to participative and democratic management.

Hypothesis of the Study

1. Acceptance for adopting Right To Information as a part of Information Management is distanced by the authorities of Government and local bodies; though it gets space under compulsion of legislation.
2. The awareness among female towards right to information with regards to information management fall

short and it reflects on exercising of the right to information by the female citizens.

Research Methodology

In order to conduct the empirical study the Research Methodology is considered. The methodology adopted is in the lines of analytical and descriptive method. The objectives and the hypothesis of the study to be kept in mind to develop a supporting research methodology.

The population of the study consists of Local Authorities and adult female citizens of Kalyan Taluka of Maharashtra State.

The sources of primary data to be:

1. Observation
2. Structured Questionnaire
3. Interview /Discussion

Sources of Secondary Data to be

1. Books
2. Magazines
3. Newspaper Articles
4. Legislations (Laws/Acts) with rules.
5. Websites

Scope of the Study

The Geographical scope of the study is the revenue jurisdiction of Kalyan Taluka of Thane District, Maharashtra State. The Time scope is the existing awareness of the Local Authorities and the female citizens' over the time period from 2012 to 2014.

The data is gathered from 220 respondents from the above mentioned geographical region on Random Basis.

Limitations of Study

1. The study is based on Census Method. Though, stratified Random Sampling is adopted which fall within permissible limits of conducting Social Research.
2. The data which becomes the foundation of the study consist of primary data. It contains the opinions and perceptions of the respondents which may be biased.

Observations of the Study

Awareness of the Citizens Mainly Female Citizens with Respect to Right to Information Act, 2005

The information collected through questionnaire is classified according to Gender into 2 parts i.e. Males and Females.

Awareness Count and Response Count for each group is also obtained. Information is presented through following Table.

Table1: Gender of the Respondents

SEX	NO.OF RESPONDENTS	AWARENESS COUNT	RESPONSE COUNT
Female	90	39.17	26.14
Male	130	36.15	27.54
Total	22	37.39	27.05

Above table indicates that out of 220 respondents, 90 respondents are females and 130 are males. Awareness count of females is 39.17 and that of males is 36.15. Response Count of females is 26.14 and that of males is 27.54. Above information is presented through the Bar Diagram as follows:

Findings of the Study

A) Findings in Specific

Observations for Awareness of Female Citizens wrt RTI Act, 2005

Out of the total 220 respondents 90 are female respondents and the remaining 130 respondents are males. It is observed that 26 female respondents have no knowledge and have not heard about RTI Act . 17 female respondents have complete knowledge of RTI Act.

And the remaining female respondents have heard about RTI Act, partially.

Observations for Response to Female Citizens from different Local Authorities wrt RTI Act, 2005

In the study conducted, it was observed that out of 220 respondents , 166 respondents know the procedure of RTI and executed it with various Local Authorities.

Out of these 166, respondents, the female respondents are 58. Out of these 58 female respondents who asked for different kind of information to Local Authorities, 36 are not all responded ny any of the Local Authorities, only 10 females got the complete response from Local Authorities.

This reveals the fact of lack of awareness and interest on the part of female citizens to utilise the fundamental Right i.e. Right to Information Act.

Observations for Execution of Procedure of RTI by Female Citizens

The study focuses on the aspect that out of 220 respondents 90 are female respondents. Out of these 90 females, 79 female respondents have not at all executed the procedure of RTI , it means only 11 female respondents have utilised the weapon of RTI for getting the information from Local Authorities.

B) Findings in General

1. The Local Authorities are not in comfort zone with reference to Right To Information Statue.
2. The Local Authorities sometimes differentiate among the citizens with reference to Information Management.
3. The Majority of the female citizens are not aware about the RTI Statue.
4. There are cases of ignoring the Applications for information by the authorities and the citizens have to move to the stage of Appeal to get the information.

Suggestions

1. The citizens of the country should be made to understand that the Right To Information Act, 2005 is recognised by the Supreme Court as a part of the Fundamental Right To Freedom.
2. Importance of RTI should be spread through various Government and Non-Government Organisations among the citizens through advertisement and publicity.
3. Special efforts should be taken by media to increase the participation of women for utilising RTI Act as a weapon to collect the information.
4. Through various training programmes, seminars, workshops the awareness of RTI must be increased among female respondents.

Significance of Right to Information

1. Right to Information provides the facility for Citizens to get information on the Government's actions and decisions. The law mandates that the information has to be given within 30 days.
2. It is a weapon in the hands of a common man as it aims at free flow of information from authorities to information seekers.
3. Right to Information develops the power of accountability, reduces corruption , impacts policy decisions and ensures better governance.

4. It reduces the inequality between information providers and the information seekers.
5. It aims at bringing transparency in the administration and public life.

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5. "Tell me ,Why, How, When"- "Outlook India" By Anuradha Raman on 9th April, 2007
6. www.nbtindia.org.in
7. www.spi.org
8. www.right2information.wordpress.com

Gender Bias to Healthcare in India

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Abstract : Right to health is one of the basic human rights. Women have been historically discriminated against, they are a group whose health concerns need to be prioritized, understood and researched. Gender inequalities, are directly related to poor health outcomes for women. Differential access to healthcare occurs because women typically are entitled to a lower share of household resources and thus utilize healthcare resources to a lesser degree than men. A multiplicity of factors including biological, social, cultural, environmental and economic, influence women's health status, their need of health services and their ability to access appropriate services. India faces high burden of disease because of lack of environmental sanitation and safe drinking water, malnutrition, poor living conditions, and limited access to preventive and curative health services. Expenditure on health by the Government continues to be low. Promoting healthy life style from early life is a 'no cost' intervention which needs to be incorporated in school curriculum. There is a need for increasing public awareness on the benefits of a healthy life style. This paper attempts to explore the various obstacles to improved women's health in India.

Keywords: Gender Bias, Gender Inequality, Health Care

Introduction

Health is determined by a broad range of social, environmental, economic and biological factors. Differences in health status and health objectives are linked to gender, age, socio-economic status, ethnicity, disability, location and environment, racism, sex-role stereotyping, gender inequality and discrimination, ageism, sexuality and sexual preferences. Health promotion, disease prevention, equity of access to appropriate and affordable services and strengthening the primary health care system are necessary, along with high quality illness treatment, services information, consultation, advocacy and community development are important elements of the health process. A multiplicity of factors including biological, social, cultural, environmental and economic, influence women's health status, their need to health services and their ability to access appropriate services. In particular women's health needs stem from the fact that:

- Women are more socially disadvantaged than men in terms of poverty, education and power. Socially disadvantaged people are more likely to become ill.
- Women are more likely to use health services because of their social role as care givers to children, older people, or people with disabilities and this places extra strain on their health.
- Women have particular sexual and reproductive health needs, for example, menarche, pregnancy, childbirth and menopause.
- Women are treated differently from men in society generally because of gender inequality resulting in, for example, violence against women and sexual assault. The Women's Safety Survey (1996) conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, found that 5.9 per cent of women surveyed had experienced physical violence in the previous 12 month period, and a further 1.5 per

cent had been sexually assaulted. On a population basis, these combined figures represent 490,000 women across Australia.

- Women are also treated differently within the health system. For example, Williams et al (1995) conducted a major study examining gender differences in depression. The study found that women were almost twice as likely as men to be diagnosed with depression and/or anxiety disorders and major and/or longstanding depressive disorders. The study also found that women diagnosed with depression were significantly more likely to be prescribed antidepressant drugs than men with the same diagnosis.

Specific health needs of women vary according to their biological needs and are distinct for the different age groups. The prevalent gender bias in the society runs through all the different age groups and manifests itself differently.

The unfavorable status of women in India affects the health status of women and their female children both directly and indirectly. The effects include a strong preference for sons, arranged marriages for very young girls, inequitable allocation of resources such as food, health care, education and income and discrimination against widows.

Factors affecting women's health are:

1. Attitude to marriage
2. Age of marriage
3. Value attached to fertility and sex of the child
4. Pattern of family organization and the ideal role demanded of women by social convention and the cultural norms.

The health of a country's female population has profound implications for the health and education of children and the economic well being of households, as

well as for the women themselves. The most direct effects of poor health and nutrition among females in India are high mortality rates among young children and women of child bearing age and high morbidity rates throughout the life cycle.

Gender Bias in Access to Healthcare

The United Nations ranks India as a middle-income country (UN, 2011). Findings from the World Economic Forum indicate that India is one of the worst countries in the world in terms of gender inequality (Raj, 2013). The 2011 United Nations Development Program, Human Development Report ranked India 132 out of 187 in terms of gender inequality. The value of this multidimensional indicator, Gender Inequality Index (GII) is determined by numerous factors including maternal mortality rate, adolescent fertility rate, educational achievement and labor force participation rate. Gender inequality in India is exemplified by women's lower likelihood of being literate, continuing their education and participating in the labor force (Raj, 2013).

Gender is one of many social determinants of health—which include social, economic, and political factors—that play a major role in the health outcomes of women in India (Balrajan and Selvaraj et al, 2011). Therefore, the high level of gender inequality in India negatively impacts the health of women.

The role that gender plays in health care access can be determined by examining resource allocation within the household and public sphere. Gender discrimination begins before birth; females are the most commonly aborted sex in India (Raj, 2013). If a female fetus is not aborted, the mother's pregnancy can be a stressful experience, due to her family's preference for a son (Patel & Rodrigues et al, 2013). Once born, daughters are prone to being fed less than sons, especially when there are multiple girls already in the household (Sen & Iyer, 2012). As women mature into adulthood, many of the barriers preventing them from achieving equitable levels of health stem from the low status of women and girls in Indian society, particularly in the rural and poverty-affected areas (Raj, 2013).

Women are also seen as less valuable to a family due to marriage obligations. Although illegal, Indian cultural norms often force payment of a dowry to the husband's family. The higher future financial burden of daughters creates a power structure that favors sons in household formation. Additionally, women are often perceived as being incapable of taking care of parents in old age, which creates even greater preference for sons over daughters (Singh, 2012).

Taken together, women are many a times seen less valuable than men. With lower involvement in the public

sphere—as exemplified by the labor and political participation rates and the stigma of being less valuable within a family, women face a unique form of gender discrimination.

Gender inequalities, are directly related to poor health outcomes for women (Raj, 2013). Numerous studies have found that the rates of admission to hospitals vary dramatically with gender, with men visiting hospitals more frequently than women (Balrajan & Selvaraj et al, 2011). Differential access to healthcare occurs because women typically are entitled to a lower share of household resources and thus utilize healthcare resources to a lesser degree than men (Sen & Iyer, 2012).

Amartya Sen (1987) has attributed access to fewer household resources to their weaker bargaining power within the household. Furthermore, it has also been found that Indian women frequently underreport illnesses. The underreporting of illness may be contributed to these cultural norms and gender expectations within the household. Gender also dramatically influences the use of antenatal care and utilization of immunizations (Balrajan & Selvaraj et al, 2011).

A study by Choi in 2006 found that boys are more likely to receive immunizations than girls in rural areas. This finding has led researchers to believe that the sex of a child leads to different levels of health care being administered in rural areas (Choi & Lee, 2006). There is also a gender component associated with mobility. Indian women are more likely to have difficulty traveling in public spaces than men, resulting in greater difficulty to access services (Mechakra, Freeman et al, 2012).

Problems with India's Healthcare System

At the turn of the 21st Century India's health care system is strained in terms of the number of healthcare professionals including doctors and nurses. The health care system is also highly concentrated in urban areas. This results in many individuals in rural areas seeking care from unqualified providers with varying results. It has also been found that many individuals who claim to be physicians actually lack formal training. Nearly 25 percent of physicians classified as allopathic providers actually had no medical training. This phenomenon varies geographically (Rao & Rao, 2011).

Women are negatively affected by the geographic bias within implementation of the current healthcare system in India. Of all health workers in the country, nearly two thirds are men. This especially affects rural areas where it has been found that out of all doctors, only 6 percent are women. This translates into approximately 0.5 female allopathic physicians per 10,000 individuals in rural areas (Rao & Rao, 2011).

A disparity in access to maternal care between rural and urban populations is one of the ramifications of a highly concentrated urban medical system (Adarnson & Krupp, 2012). According to Government of India National Family Health Survey (NFHS II, 1998-1999) the maternal mortality in rural areas is approximately 132 percent the number of maternal mortality in urban areas (Adarnson & Krupp, 2012).

The Indian government has taken steps to alleviate some of the current gender inequalities. In 1992, the government of India established the National Commission for Women. The Commission was meant to address many of the inequalities women face, specifically rape, family and guardianship. However, the slow pace of change in the judicial system and cultural norms have prevented the full adoption of policies meant to promote equality between men and women (Doshi & Gandhi, 2008).

In 2005 India enacted the National Rural Health Mission (NHRM). Some of its primary goals were to reduce infant mortality and also the maternal mortality ratio. Additionally, the NHRM aimed to create universal access to public health services and also balance the gender ratio (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 2013). However, a 2011 research study conducted by Nair and Panda found that although India was able to improve some measures of maternal health since the enactment of the NHRM in 2005, the country was still far behind most emerging economies (Nair & Panda, 2011).

Various groups have ranked gender inequalities around the world. For example, the World Economic Forum publishes a Global Gender Gap Index score for each nation every year. The index focuses not on empowerment of women, but on the relative gap between men and women in four fundamental categories - economic participation, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment (Mechakra, Freeman et al, 2012). It includes measures such as estimated sex selective abortion, number of years the nation had a female head of state, female to male literacy rate, estimated income ratio of female to male in the nation, and several other relative gender statistic measures. It does not include factors such as crime rates against women versus men, domestic violence, honor killings or such factors. Where data is unavailable or difficult to collect, World Economic Forum uses old data or makes a best estimate to calculate the nation's Global Gap Index (GGI) (Mechakra, Freeman et al, 2012).

According to the Global Gender Gap Report released by the World Economic Forum (WEF) in 2011, India was ranked 113 on the Gender Gap Index (GGI) among 135 countries polled (Sen, 1987). Since then, India has improved its rankings on the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index (GGI) to 105/136 in 2013 (World Economic Forum 2013) When broken down into components of the GGI, India performs well on political empowerment, but is scored to be

as bad as China on sex selective abortion. India also scores poorly on overall female to male literacy and health rankings. India with a 2013 ranking of 101 had an overall score of 0.6551, while Iceland, the nation that topped the list, had an overall score of 0.8731 (no gender gap would yield a score of 1.0) (Mechakra, Freeman et al, 2012).

Health Care in India

- India has 48 doctors per 100,000 persons which is fewer than in developed nations.
- Wide urban-rural gap in the availability of medical services.
- Poor facilities even in large Government institutions compared to corporate hospitals (Lack of funds, poor management, political and bureaucratic interference, lack of leadership in medical community)
- Increasing cost of curative medical services. High tech curative services not free even in government hospitals. Curative health services not accessible to rural populations.
- Limited health benefits to employees.
- Health insurance expensive.
- Prevention, and early diagnosis and treatment, if feasible, are the most cost-effective strategies for most diseases.
- Promoting healthy life style from early life is a 'no cost' intervention which needs to be incorporated in school curricula. There is need for increasing public awareness of the benefits of healthy life style.

Obstacles to Improved Women's Health in India

India faces the twin epidemic of continuing/emerging infectious diseases as well as chronic degenerative diseases. The former is related to poor implementation of the public health programs, and the latter to demographic transition with increase in life expectancy.

- Economic deprivation in a large segment of population results in poor access to health care.
- Poor educational status leads to non-utilization of scanty health services and increase in avoidable risk factors. Both are closely related to life expectancy and Infant Mortality Rate (IMR)
- Advances in medicine are responsible for no more than half of the observed improvement in health indices.
- Longevity, literacy and GDP per capita are the main indicators of human development. Longevity is a measure of state of health, and is linked to income and education. Weakness in health sector has an adverse effect on longevity.

- India ranks low (115th) amongst world nations judged by HDI.
- India faces high burden of disease because of lack of environmental sanitation and safe drinking water, under-nutrition, poor living conditions, and limited access to preventive and curative health services.
- Lack of education, gender inequality and explosive growth of population contribute to increasing burden of disease.
- Expenditure on health by the Government continues to be low. It is not viewed as an investment but rather as a dead loss!
- States under financial constraints cut expenditure on health.

Right to health is one of the basic human rights. Women have been historically discriminated against, they are a group whose health concerns need to be prioritized, understood and researched. Health is an important component of human development. With the rapid changes brought about through globalization and the resultant new economic order, there is an increase in the need for academic studies to be focused on the area of women's health. Women's health is one of the areas that deserve special concern. There is also a need to explore and understand the health concerns of women belonging to marginalized sections, since they are doubly vulnerable to discrimination. It is estimated by the UN that in the developing world as a whole, one third of all pregnant women receive no health care during pregnancy. According to another UN estimate women account for 70% of the world's poor, and poverty, inequality and limited decision making power adversely impact women's health. Since women worldwide, and more so in India, face gender-based discrimination at every stage of their lives, their psychological well-being also becomes a cause for great concern.

A multiplicity of factors including biological, social, cultural, environmental and economic, influence women's health status, their need of health services and their ability to access appropriate services. Gender inequality in India refers to socially constructed differences between men and women in India that systematically empower one group to the detriment of the other (Raj, 2013).

Therefore to sum up

- India faces high burden of disease because of lack of environmental sanitation and safe drinking water, under-nutrition, poor living conditions, and limited access to preventive and curative health services
- Expenditure on health by the Government continues to be low. It is not viewed as an investment but rather as a dead loss!

- Promoting healthy life style from early life is a 'no cost' intervention which needs to be incorporated in school curricula. There is need for increasing public awareness of the benefits of healthy life style.

In India, where many people live in poverty and the health infrastructure is poor, males as well as females suffer. However women face unique risks because of their reproductive biology, and in a country with world's highest maternal mortality ratios, the dangers are particularly pronounced. Moreover age and gender specific mortality rates indicate that girls and women under 30 are further disadvantaged because of socio cultural factors.

Conclusion

Strategies for Change

Improving women's health requires a strong and sustained government commitment, a favorable policy environment, and well targeted resources. The government's strategy should include balancing the roles of the private and public sectors to maximize resources and to extend care to women whom government programs do not reach. The public sector will continue to play a key role in providing services such as family planning, maternity care and control of infectious diseases and promote equity and economic efficiency and confer widespread benefits.

The expansion and strengthening the existing services will reduce the burden and the associated costs. For these improvements to be sustained and the female disadvantage decreased, health systems must be more gender sensitive, and education and employment opportunities must be expanded.

Changes need to be made in the allocation of resources so that funding is linked to states' performance in implementing the new approach as well as to population size and funding needs. New indicators of performance will be needed to replace method specific targets.

Specific steps by the government are needed to improve the quality of India's health care services. These include integrating family planning and maternal and child health services; prioritizing needs at the field level; training field workers, including auxiliary nurse-midwives and traditional birth attendants; protection at risk female children; accelerating anemia prevention; making temporary contraceptive methods widely available; and increasing the availability of medical termination of pregnancy.

Increased attention to female morbidity throughout the life cycle, including more gender sensitive approaches, are needed for the control of common problems such as malnutrition, malaria, tuberculosis and reproductive tract infections. These problems are amenable to cost effective prevention and treatment. The existing health system does not adequately meet the needs of pregnant women

particularly for complications of pregnancy. Three major problems need to be addressed: an absence of links between communities; sub-centers, and referral facilities; shortage of equipment and trained staff at referral facilities; and lack of emergency transport.

The government can take several steps to meet women's health needs, in addition to strengthening services. Through legislation, legal enforcement, harmful practices such as domestic violence and gender bias can be curbed. Working closely with civil society, particularly NGO's and women's groups will make services more responsive to women and improve utilization and impact.

Community support and participation are essential to facilitate the planning and delivery of health care services. Involving women's group is especially effective in improving women's access to services and increasing sensitivity to women's needs.

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Patriarchy and Misogyny in Social Media

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Abstract : Women have traditionally been subject to patriarchy and its hazards. Their rights, choices and status have consciously been influenced—if not curtailed—by the men in their lives or at least the male-dominated mindset in the families and society. Social media—Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and the likes—came as their liberator. It was a place where even women could ‘share’, ‘post’, ‘tweet’, ‘like’, ‘comment’ and have a ‘status’ of their choice. Views which people did not know existed or those which women did not dare to utter or whisper even, could now be ‘posted on their walls’. Or so we thought. One gradually realised that the ‘liberal’ and ‘liberating’ social media was far from an ideal place to assure gender equality. Women sharing their personal views on religion, traditions, sexuality and politics are not taken kindly. Most often, they are subject to online backlash and a barrage of abuses which stretch from humiliating to sexual comments and threats. This paper researches the social media, the inherent patriarchy and misogyny therein and the emerging challenges to women’s online safety and security in the country.

Keywords : patriarchy, misogyny, rights, status, social media, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, liberal, liberating, gender, equality, religion, sexuality, politics, abuse, online, safety and security.

Introduction

Social media refers to “a set of online tools open for public membership that support idea sharing, creating and editing content, and building relationships through interaction and collaboration.” (Kim & Ko, 2012) Over time, it has redefined and restructured communication. Simplicity of usage, immediacy and outreach has made it immensely popular across the world. Since its first known onset in 2004, social media has taken various facets of collaborative and individual usage such as Wikipedia, Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Youtube, Instagram, Second Life among others. It has expanded the traditional definition of ‘networking’. It has blurred boundaries between real and virtual worlds and people tend to share details of their mundane lives for the viewing of others—many times complete strangers.

With increasing number of people accessing the Web through phones, the user base has also considerably widened. India is now considered the second largest Internet market having overtaken the USA in its user base. (Access, Knowledge 2013) Even with 200 million users, it forms a fraction of the total Indian population. But we need to remember that two out of three users access social networks on a daily basis. (Rai 2014) The outreach therein is quite significant.

Given the basic nature of the Internet—even in the Indian context—one assumes that these would automatically act as liberators to women, “...can play an important role in empowering women in India and help them transform their lives” and can help them “achieve self esteem [sic] and express their views freely”. (Access, Knowledge 2013) It is where even women could ‘share’, ‘post’, ‘tweet’, ‘like’, ‘comment’ and have a ‘status’ of their choice. Views which people did not know existed or those which women did not dare to utter or whisper even, could now be ‘posted on their walls’. However, statistics are skewed against the favour of women even over the Internet. Over 84 per cent of the social

media users are ‘young men’ (20-35 years). (Two out of three internet users 2013) This evidently shows us that while women form only a third of online users in India, (Access, Knowledge 2013) the number falls further as one considers their presence on the social media.

These statistics suddenly bring to our notice a largely unfavourable atmosphere towards women even on these social networking sites. The present study looks at one such social media site, Twitter which has 500 million tweets sent per day across the world. (Twitter 2014) It has about 20 million users per day in India. (Rai 2014)

Hypothesis

The main contention of the present study is that :

- patriarchy exists on Twitter in its overt or covert form;
- women have an inherent fear while using social networking sites like Twitter.

Objectives

- Social media in general and Twitter in particular have not been liberating forces that they are touted to be;
- Crimes such as cyberstalking and cyberbullying are real problems faced by women which should not be trivialised by the social media sites and the law enforcement agencies.

Methodology

The present study covers a combination of primary and secondary sources.

- The researcher scoured through a huge number of articles and research that has already gone into topics related to the present (largely in Western countries).
- She then extensively went through Twitter handles, tweets and comments to confirm the trends.

- She simultaneously administered a questionnaire to female Twitter users (15-34 years age group).

Summary of the Sample Size

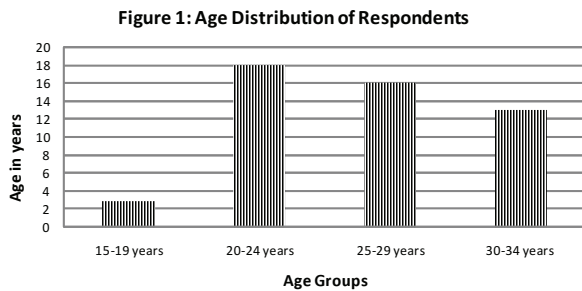


Figure 1 reflects the age of respondents. The questionnaire was administered to 50 female Twitter users (15-34 years age group) based in Mumbai who were selected randomly. This age group was selected based on studies which have proved that women in this age group are the most active on the social media sites. However, there were not too many young female Twitter users (15-19 years) who were forthcoming to respond to the questionnaire.

Among the respondents, 36 per cent are presently pursuing their undergraduate courses. Only eight per cent of the respondents did not own a smartphone and were thus exclusively dependent on PCs or laptops to access their Twitter account. Only 12 per cent of the respondents did not access their Twitter accounts regularly.

Twitter provides immense anonymity wherein users need not provide one's real name, sex or other details. One can pose as a member of the opposite sex, use fake name and age. However, 92 per cent of the respondents had a Twitter handle which was either their name or in one way or the other reflected their being a female. None of the respondents 'posed as male'. 80 per cent of the respondents tweeted regularly on 'social concerns, political issues and current affairs' which evoke Twitter discussions and debates.

Effects on Respondents' Opinions

Respondents stated that debates over their tweets were 'usually civilised'. However, 60 per cent of the respondents were directly or indirectly affected by the debates and the way they panned out. Of the six respondents who said that they were indeed affected by people's comments one was certain that she adapted her subsequent tweets in order to reduce the differences of opinions while five others were uncertain about the changes taking place in their opinions.

It is this latter part which is a great concern. While one may seem unaffected by the online activity, rape and marital/domestic violence jokes do have a considerable impact on the minds of the people exposed to them on a regular basis.

Facing Abusive Language

None of the respondents reported having faced overt abusive language or threat over Twitter. However, 34 per cent among them were uncertain whether the responses that they had faced bordered abuse. They chose not to respond to tweets when they 'sensed that the comments were getting aggressive'. There was evidently no case reported for action. About 20 per cent of the respondents though were unsure whether the excessive commenting on their viewpoints could have been because of the fact that they were women.

This is not an exclusive Indian phenomenon. Across the world, women on Twitter have attracted abuse not on the basis of their 'line of argument' but the fact that they "...venture into traditional male territory". (Mead 2014) Women sharing personal views on religion, traditions, sexuality and politics are not taken kindly. Most often, they are subject to online backlash and a barrage of abuses which stretch from humiliating to sexual comments and threats. Female personalities across the world Julia Gillard (Australia), Angela Merkl (Germany), Caroline Criado Perez (UK), Hillary Clinton (USA) have faced extremely personal and misogynist attacks over Twitter. In India, Barkha Dutt, Sagarika Ghose, Meera Kandasamy, Kavita Krishnan, Gul Panag regularly faced vicious abuse over Twitter for expressing their views over issues. (Arya 2013) On an average Kandasamy is known to get 30-50 abusive tweets in a single day.

A constant and open threat of rape (even gang rape) and filming and posting rape on social media; abuse mentioning female body parts; threats of bomb or acid attacks; revenge porn, morphing, malicious impersonation have been sent in to each of these women on an everyday basis. Cyberstalkers make maximum use of online anonymity. They use multiple identities and pseudonyms to abuse women to the point of being clearly labelled sexual harassment. Every attempt is made to subdue the female user. And it could be anyone from one's neighbourhood to across continents doing it. Letika Saran, former Director General of Police, Tamil Nadu, in fact stated that "people who won't think of committing a crime in the Real World, are very comfortable doing so in the virtual world." (DMGV 2013)

Aforementioned ladies have learnt to deal with these threats with a 'thick skin'. However, grave concerns arise when abusers go to the extent of tracking and naming the woman's children and their location. It is then that real fear sets in. It is not only high-profile women who face such attacks but average women also face such "cyberbullying" and "cyberstalking" which often goes unreported.

Feeling the Fear

Although majority of the respondents had not faced abusive attacks, 72 per cent of them had felt overtly scared or threatened at some point or the other while they were

online. Another eight per cent were unsure about their feelings. They were extremely concerned about online safety of their personal information. Cyberstalking, 'men posing as women', misuse of photographs shared were among the other top concerns of the respondents. These fears need deeper understanding and sensitive consideration.

Patriarchal pressures are known to adversely affect women's participation or change the way she expresses herself. In this case, it directly obstructs their freedom of expression with reduced participation or even closure of account. In either of these cases, online patriarchy which explicitly says "shut up you bitch" every so often through the tweets is strengthened. Objectification of women and hatred about their asserting their right to freedom of expression incline directly towards misogyny.

Reporting Abuse

Violence against Women is traditionally underreported. Virtual abuse of women is an even more intricate issue. While it was hard to prove sexual harassment at workplace, it is even more difficult to prove its existence over Twitter without efforts being taken.

Twitter has added the "report abuse" option since August 2013. Reported cases are considered and abusive matter taken down from the site. But the concern always remains as data is never completely deleted from the virtual world and may come back to haunt victims much later.

There is an excessive male presence in law enforcement agencies and technology companies across the world. (Buni & Chemaly 2014) Police reportedly have inadequate knowledge of social networking, misjudge/trivialise online abuse or are insufficiently trained for the same. When they attempt to track the abuse and the matter is taken down by the company by then, they again fail to understand how the tweet has 'suddenly disappeared'. Screening/moderating men in companies are increasingly facing reported cases of abuse. They can barely spend few minutes per reported activity and their mind-sets, judgment, prejudices and value systems may drastically affect the action taken.

Women then resort to ignoring such posts, blocking/moderating comments/reporting abuse (on sites which allow these) to naming and retweeting these abusive comments to shame these individuals. However, it is known to be emotionally depleting to be at the receiving end of the constant barrage of these abuses.

Conclusion

The study did not evidently bring out cases of abuse. However, it convincingly brought out the fact that fear lurks in the minds of female Twitter users. Patterns of patriarchal values expecting women to be careful about their activity, toning down their view to reduce aggressive retorts were

clearly visible. Women respondents were aware of traditional misogynist methods of using sexual threats, instilling fear and use of slander and character assassination being used on the social media.

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Health Related issues and Women Empowerment in Tribal Area with Special Reference to Panvel Taluka

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Abstract : Nowadays women play most important role in social and economic development. But they suffer from health related issues. From birth to death women face unnecessary dangers to their health, just because they are women. Female fetuses are aborted because they are females. Hundreds of thousands of women die in child birth. Primitive tribal groups of India have special health problems and genetic abnormalities like sickle cell anemia, G-6-PD red cell enzyme deficiency and sexually transmitted diseases. Maternal mortality was reported to be high among various tribal groups. The widespread poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition, absence of safe drinking water and sanitary living conditions, poor maternal and child health services and ineffective coverage of national health and nutritional services have been traced out in several studies as possible contributing factors to dismal health conditions prevailing among the tribal population in India. In tribal area women face many health problems unique to them or that more often or more seriously affect women than men. Most of the tribal women are anaemic. Many of them suffer from dental problems. Due to early marriages frequent abortions take place. Most of tribal women suffer from osteoporosis due to calcium deficiency.

Introduction

Nowadays women play most important role in social and economic development. But they suffer from health related issues. From birth to death women face unnecessary dangers to their health, just because they are women. Female fetuses are aborted because they are females. Hundreds of thousands of women die in child birth. Primitive tribal groups of India have special health problems and genetic abnormalities like sickle cell anemia, G-6-PD red cell enzyme deficiency and sexually transmitted diseases. Maternal mortality was reported to be high among various tribal groups (WHO 1996). The widespread poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition, absence of safe drinking water and sanitary living conditions, poor maternal and child health services and ineffective coverage of national health and nutritional services have been traced out in several studies as possible contributing factors to dismal health conditions prevailing among the tribal population in India. Poor eating habits among tribal women can relate to other health risks. (Fall. C. 1992). In tribal area women face many health problems unique to them or that more often or more seriously affect women than men. In this study the focus will be on certain interacting factors like the infant mortality rate, life expectancy, nutritional status, forest ecology, child health and health care practices which are generally responsible for determining the health status and health behaviour of tribal communities.

Objectives of the Study

- To explore health problems faced by women in tribal areas of Panvel Taluka.
- To examine nutritional status of tribal people in Panvel Taluka.

Methodology

Investigators visited villages like Bherale, Usarli, Dervali, Dundre, Lalwadi, Nere in Panvel taluka and interacted with tribal women. Data have been collected with the help of 'Interview Schedule', 'Group Discussion' and 'Meetings'.

Systematic surveys were carried out to properly understand the nature of health problems faced by women. Importance of issues like drinking water, sanitation, nutrition etc. was discussed with women and they were encouraged to bring about appropriate changes.

Status of Tribal Women in India

The tribal women, constitute like any other social group, about half of the total population. The tribal women, as women in all social groups, are more illiterate than men. Like others social groups, the tribal women share problems related to reproductive health. When primary and secondary subsistence activities are counted, women work more than men. Status of women varies in different societies. The conceptual framework to analyze women's status comprises the seven roles women play in life and work: - parental, conjugal, domestic, kin, occupational, community and as an individual. In order to appraise the social status of women in these diverse ecological areas, the findings have been divided into subsequent categories: - (a) a girl; daughter; an unmarried woman; (b) a married woman; (c) a widow; (d) divorcee; and (e) a barren woman. Role of women is not only of importance in economic activities, but also in non-economic activities. The tribal women work very hard, in some cases even more than the men. All the tribal societies in the study area are patriarchal in which men dominate in public life. However, in their own world women have a freedom, and a self-expression. With the onset of

development programmes economic changes are taking place but tribal women remain traditional in their dress, language, tools and resources, because they grow food crops rather than cash crops. Modernization is bringing changes, which affect men and women differently. India as a whole is characterized by sharp gender disparities, although women's status varies considerably by region. On virtually all frontiers of human societal pursuits like economic, educational, scientific, legal, political, official and religious sphere Indian women suffer profoundly. For all time there are socio-cultural factors, which validate for the status of women in particular society. It is always culture (a set of collective experiences of ideas, norms, values and beliefs associated with a people) with its gender role inequalities and socialization (the intricate process through which culture is transmitted from one generation to another) determines the position of women in a society. Gender roles are socially constructed. The family structure in India is patriarchal, patrilocal and patrilineal. Patriarchy denotes a culture of power relationship that promotes man's supremacy and women subjugation. It encompasses institutional endorsement of man's ascendancy within the family and other social structures. It justifies the normative process pertaining to the recognition and sustainability of his dominance in society. Consequently a boy is looked upon as the perpetuator of the family line, and a girl 'a bird of passage'. The Indian family organization makes discrimination between the sexes. It promotes a hierarchy of classification in which man centered issues take dominance whereas women derive their personalities from their fathers', husbands', brothers' and sons. With a secondary status, women play but a submissive role in social life. Despite several economic, political and social changes, women, are still far behind. One of the most unflattering statistics concerning India's girl child shows that the preference for a son runs across rich as well as poor households, educated as well as illiterate families. Widespread use of modern technology, a joint failure of medical ethics and failure to shed concept of a male heir has pushed female foeticide to high proportions. Female foeticide is just one side of the vast anti-women behavioural range in India. The tragedy is that even women, who have the choice, opt for a male child. They feel that only with a birth of a son, they will achieve higher status.

Result and Discussion

'Tribals are subject to exploitation, cruelty and poverty'. The saddest thing is that, this remains the same in many areas till today. As a growing, developing and one of the most searched place for land properties in Maharashtra, Panvel gave shelter for many tribals and their communities. Illiterate individuals of such groups still face exploitation, isolation and injustice from our society. Villages near to Panvel city and under Panvel Taluka have many such communities living in isolation. Records show that some

tribal people became educated and came to mainstream of society, still many tribal communities are illiterate, isolated and lives in extreme poor conditions.

Tribal communities in Panvel Taluka are facing a dilemma. Their own systems of health care are being replaced by state-sponsored hospitals; primary health centres; private dispensaries and so on. The government runs health delivery system, which does not function properly and so tribal people are forced to depend on private medical practitioners even for their basic health needs. Some private practitioners are not even formally qualified to prescribe or use allopathic medicines. At times they do so with disastrous consequences. Tribal people do not have any option but to avail of the substandard medical services from private practitioners at exorbitant costs.

Tuberculosis of the lung and pneumonia account for the heavy toll among the communicable diseases. About two-third of tribal women use wood as fuel for cooking; that coupled with poor ventilation and bad housing conditions may be the cause for prevalence of asthma- bronchitis. The prevalence of tuberculosis is one of the major killers in tribal areas. Reduction of tuberculosis has a negative relation with poverty, which is the root cause of ignorance, poor sanitation, malnutrition, irregular treatment and the high cost of drugs. A large scale analysis from National Family Health Survey clearly shows that among the women aged 30 years and older, 53% of the active tuberculosis cases are related to cooking smoke and suggests that the use of biomass fuel for cooking substantially increases the risk of tuberculosis in India.

Affluence, progressive aging of some tribal women, upward socio-economic conditions and changed life styles lead to an increase in non-communicable diseases. The most remarkable increase among the non-communicable diseases are observed in heart attacks, cancer and paralysis. The possible reasons for the rising trend of cancer may be increase in life expectancy, more accurate medical diagnosis, rise in the use of tobacco, pan masala and alcohol, air and water pollution and excessive use of pesticides. India is one among the top few countries in tobacco consumption; non-smoking tobacco consumption per adult is very high among women in India.

The existence of gastro enteritis have seen a reduction, but diarrhea remains one of the major killers of young girls and a formidable challenge to the health system as the suggested measures of preventing diarrhea are greeted with skepticism and a certain disinterest in India.

The consequences of iron deficiency are subtle but serious, including decreased work performance. Another critical nutrition concern, relates to the inadequate consumption of fruits and vegetable. These food groups are sources of key vitamins. Vitamin D is needed along with

Calcium to build strong bones. Calcium deficiency leads to Osteoporosis in tribal women.

Women constitute a marginalized section within tribal communities. Their plight is even worse. Women face difficulties in discussing their health problems with doctors, most of whom are men. As a result, even minor health problems, which could be easily treated in the initial stages, assume chronic and serious proportions. For instance, untreated gynecological problems in adolescent girls often lead to abortions and complications or even deaths during deliveries. Due to consanguineous marriages different syndromes and abnormalities are seen in child. The tribal people then end up spending a lot of money for expensive treatment outside the region. Apart from money, the whole family loses out on agricultural and wage work due to preoccupation with treatment of the patient in a distant hospital. HIVinfection is another major problem affecting tribals. Due to unawareness the infection is spreading swiftly among them. Tuberculosis is a supplementary with HIV infection, which damages health conditions. Unavailability of modern treatments accelerates the problems and even rarely detected. Heavy workload and poor nutrition make matters worse for women. The low literacy rate amongst girls and early marriages are other issues which need to be addressed. Health issues affecting children are also a cause for concern. All these factors have a bearing on the health and well being of women and children

Conclusion

Tribal people usually remain isolated. In tribal area of Panvel majority of women have poor health status due to inadequate health infrastructure, lack of awareness and access to healthcare, poverty and consequent under nutrition, poor environmental sanitation, poor hygiene, lack of safe drinking water, lack of access to healthcare facilities. They have deficiency of essential components in diet,

leading to malnutrition. Water borne and communicable diseases are existed in many tribal women. They are suffered from not only malaria and tuberculosis but also viral and venereal diseases. Most of the tribal women and girls are anemic. The tribal women have high fertility, high maternal and infant mortality rates. Therefore, need to plan and implement innovative development programs to address the nutrition and health needs of tribal women and girls in a comprehensive manner. These programs should include provision of food supplements, iron-folate as well as nutrition and health education.

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स्त्रियांची भाषा (विशेष संदर्भ : भिलोरी स्त्री)

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सामाजिक संरचनेतील स्त्री-पुरुषांच्या स्थानाचे त्या त्या समाजाच्या भाषिक उपयोजनात प्रतिबिंब पडलेले दिसते. नंदुरबार, नवापूर, अक्राणी (धडगाव), अक्कलकुवा, तोळदा, शहादा या ठिकाणी पाड्या पाड्यांवर अर्थात आदिवासी वस्त्यांमध्ये राहणाऱ्या 'स्त्री' ची भिलोरी भाषा कशी आहे आणि त्या स्त्रियांचे स्थान कसे आहे हे या शोधनिबंधात दर्शविण्याचा प्रयत्न केला आहे. या 'स्त्री' च्या भाषेतही पोटबोली आहेत. मावची, वसावे, कोकणी, भिलोरी, ढारकी, पावरा, पाडवी, नोयरी या भिलोरी आदिवासीच्या पोटबोली आहेत. भिलोरी भाषक समाजात पुरुषसत्ताक समाजरचनेचा प्रभाव जाणवतो. स्त्री-पुरुष संबंधात समानतेचे नाते नसल्याने पारंपरिक हिंदू स्त्रिया नवऱ्याला कधीही नावने हाक मारीत नाहीत. बायको नवऱ्याला हाक न मारता 'मुलांचे वडील' अशा अर्थी हाक मारते. उदा. दाजला बाहहा एहे आव. (दाजल्याचे बाबा इकडे या) नवऱ्याला डोहू, माटी, कोओवाला, धोणी(धनी) अशी हाक मारली जाते. को म्हणजे घर आणि कोओवाला म्हणजे घरवाला. संपूर्ण घराचा तोच वाली आहे अशी तिची धारणा असते. या शोधनिबंधात 'भिलोरी' स्त्री ची दैनंदिनी सांगितली आहे. खास स्त्रीचे म्हणून असणारे शब्द. वाक्यप्रचार, म्हणी सांगितल्या आहेत. स्त्री च्या संदर्भात वापरल्या जाणाऱ्या संबोधनांचे सर्वेक्षण करून समाजाच्या मनातील स्त्री- प्रतिमांचे गटवार वर्गीकरण केले आहे. त्या त्या समाजातील जीवनसरणीत रूढ असलेली सामाजिक मूल्ये 'स्त्री' च्या भाषेवर परिणाम करताना दिसतात. बहुविध समाजात पुरुषाच्या अस्तित्वावरच स्त्री चे 'असतेपण' अवलंबून असते. या 'स्त्री'ची भाषा तिचे समाजातील स्थान कसे स्पष्ट करते, ते या शोधनिबंधातून दर्शविण्याचा प्रयत्न केला आहे.

की वर्ड्स –सामाजिक संरचनेतील स्त्री-पुरुषांचे स्थान व त्याचे भाषिक प्रतिबिंब, भिलोरी स्त्री ची खास भाषा, स्त्री प्रतिमेचे गटवार वर्गीकरण, स्त्री व भाषिक विधीनिषेध

भाषा ही मानवाच्या सामाजिक अस्तित्वाची खूण आहे. मानवाच्या अनुभव घेण्याची प्रक्रिया, त्यामागील त्याचा दृष्टिकोण आणि त्याची अभिरूची या सर्वांच्या खुणा भाषेत आढळतात. भाषा ही मूलतः एक सामाजिक प्रक्रिया असल्यामुळे माणसाच्या सांस्कृतिक इतिहासातील स्थित्यंतरांचा आलेख भाषिक अध्ययनातून मांडता येतो. स्त्रियांच्या भाषेतून त्यांच्या अंतरंगाचा, वास्तवाचा अंदाज बांधता येतो. स्त्रियांच्या भाषेतून त्यांची सामाजिक पार्श्वभूमीही लक्षात येते. स्त्रियांच्या भाषिक सवयींतून त्यांची घडण, वृत्तिविशेष यांचे प्रकटन होते.

सामाजिक संरचनेतील स्त्री-पुरुषांच्या स्थानाचे त्या त्या समाजाच्या भाषिक उपयोजनात प्रतिबिंब पडलेले दिसते. पुरुषांना नेहमी आज्ञार्थी भाषेत बोलण्याची सवय असते, तर स्त्रियांना आज्ञार्थी भाषेत बोलणे जमत नाही. त्यांना बहुधा प्रश्नार्थी भाषेत बोलण्याची सवय असते. पुरुषसत्ताक समाजरचनेचा प्रभाव स्त्रीच्या बोलण्यात सातत्याने जाणवतो. पारंपरिक स्त्रिया नवऱ्याला नावाने हाक मारत नाहीत. धनी, यजमान, स्वारी, मालक, अहो अशा शब्दांनी ती नवऱ्याचा उल्लेख करते. घर सांभाळणे, मुले वाढवणे, नातेसंबंध जपणे ही कामे तिच्याच गळ्यात पडल्याने भावोजी, मामंजी, वन्सं, जाऊबाई, आज्ञेसासुबाई आदी शब्द स्त्रियाच जास्त वापरतात. काही काही ग्रामीण स्त्रियांच्या भाषेत मी या प्रथमपुरुषी सर्वनामाचा जवळजवळ अभावच असतो. याचे

कारण स्त्री ला स्वातंत्र्य नाही, स्वतःचे निर्णय घेण्याची मोकळीक नाही त्यामुळे स्वतःचे मत नाही. अशा स्त्री ला स्वतःचे वैशिष्ट्यापूर्ण स्थान नसल्याचा परिणाम म्हणून त्यांच्या भाषेत मी या सर्वनामाचा अभाव आढळतो. जुन्या हिंदी चित्रपटांतील गाणी पाहिली तरी पुरुष प्रधान संस्कृतीचाच पगडा दिसतो. प्रातिनिधिक उदाहरणे. तुम सैया गुलाब के फूल, तुम्हारे चरन की हू धूल, हुई क्या हमसें भूल?(नवरंग), पा लो यू दिल में प्यार मेरा के जैसे मंदिर में लौ दिये की, तुम अपने चरनो में खोली मुझको तुम्हारे चरणों का फूल हूँ मैं, मैं सर झुकाएँ खडी हूँ प्रीतम.. के जैसे मंदिर में लौ दिये की। (ममता)आदी गीतांतून स्त्री ने पुरुषासाठी सर्वस्व अर्पण करून त्याच्या चरणाशी रहावयाचे असते, ही धारणा पक्की करून घेतलेली दिसते.

स्त्री बऱ्याचदा नादमय, सूत्रमय भाषेत बोलते. तिच्या तोंडी ही काव्यमय भाषा येण्याचे कारण तिच्या नेणीवेतील ठसठसणारे दुःख दिलं तिथं मेलं पाहिजे, माहेरी जाणं पाऊस पाव्हण्यासारां ही तिची अनुभूती मोजक्या शब्दांत व्यक्त होते. स्त्रियांच्या भाषेत व्यर्थउद्गारवाची अन्हांनाचाही भरणा असतो. उदा. तुम्ही म्हणे नवी गाडी घेतली!, मी तरी बाई काय सांगणार? या वाक्यातील म्हणे, बाई आदी सारी वाक्यपूके स्त्रियांच्याच भाषेत आढळून येतात. अय्या, इश, गडे यासाखे लज्जाभावदर्शक शब्द सातत्याने स्त्री वापरताना दिसते. लैंगिक संबंधदर्शक वा इंद्रियवाचक शब्द

वापरायचे ती टाळते. तिच्या शिव्याही मेल्या, नालायका, मूर्खा, आचरटा, चांडाळा, गधडया अशा स्त्रीसुलभ असतात. एकूणच स्त्रियांच्या भाषेविषयी चर्चा केल्यानंतर भिलोरी स्त्रीच्या भाषेकडे आपण वळूया. महाराष्ट्रातील नंदुरबार जिल्हयातील शहादा तालुक्यातील केलीपाणी या गावातील स्त्रियांच्या भाषेचा हा अभ्यास आहे.

केलीपाणी मधील भिलोरी स्त्री-

नंदुरबार जिल्हयाला दोन राज्यांच्या सीमा लाभलेल्या आहेत. गुजरात राज्य पश्चिमोत्तर सीमेवर, तर मध्यप्रदेश राज्य जिल्हयाच्या पूर्वोत्तर सीमेवर आहे. त्यामुळे येथील स्त्रियांच्या भाषेवर मराठी, हिंदी, गुजराती या तीनही भाषांचा प्रभाव आहे. या भिलोरी स्त्रीची भाषा पाहण्याअगोदर या जमातीचा इतिहास व तिची दिनचर्या थोडक्यात पाहणे अगत्याचे ठरते. आर्यांच्या आगमनापूर्वी ही आदिवासी भिल्ल जमात सातपुडा पर्वताच्या दऱ्यागोऱ्यांमध्ये वसलेली आहे. हे लोक येथील मूळचे स्थानिक रहिवासी आहेत. पहाटे चार वाजल्यापासून भिलोरी स्त्रीची दिनचर्या सुरु होते. स्वतः लाकडाच्या झापाने बनविलेल्या तिच्या घरात अखंड निसर्ग तिच्याबरोबर असतो. घर म्हणजे एकमोठी खोली. दोन भागात विभागलेली. गाई, गुरे-वासरे, शेळया, कोंबडया एका बाजूस तर तिचा संसारदुसऱ्या बाजूस. घरात कशालाच कपाट नाही. चार ते पाचच मातीची भांडीकुंडी. तिही तिनेच स्वतःच बनविलेली. घराला न्हाणीघर नाही. विहीर नाही. गावात दुकान नाही. अशा स्थितीतही ही स्त्री आनंदाने सर्व कामे घरीच करते. पहाटे जातणीवर कोओटीवर दळण दळते. तिच्याच शेतातील बाजरी, ज्वारी, मका, वरी ही धान्य दळून भाकरीसाठी पीठ तयार करते. चाळणी सारी ने चाळून घेते. बांबूच्या टोपलीत भरून ठेवते. गाई, शेळीचे दूध काढते. सर्व प्रातःविधीसाठी नदीवर जाते. येताना दोन हंडे पाणी घरी घेऊन येते. कारण घराला विहीर नसते. केलीपाणी गावात सत्तर घरे आहेत. या सर्व घरातील स्त्रिया अतिशय कामसू आहेत. बऱ्याच अंशी शिक्षणापासून दूर आहेत. या गावची ग्रामपंचायत धनपूरला आहे. पोस्ट चिनोद्याला आहे. गावात जिल्हापरिषदेची शाळा आहे. पटावर सतरा ते वीस मुले आहेत. पण शिक्षकच येत नसल्याने मुले शाळेला जात नाहीत. कधीतरी शिक्षक उगवतो तेव्हा मुलांना जावेसे वाटत नाही. एकूणच शिक्षणाची दैना आहे. काही मुले आश्रम शाळांतून शिकतात. उदा. राणीपूर, बोरद, जांबाई, सलसाडी, तलावडी, नर्मदानगर या ठिकाणी आश्रमशाळा आहेत. शिक्षणात मुलीपेक्षा मुलांची संख्या जास्त आहे. केलीपाणी गावातील मुली आता शिकत आहेत. वासंती ठाकरे ही एफ.वाय.बी.एस्सी. ला

शिकणारी मुलगी पुढे नर्सिंग करणार आहे. ती बहुधा या गावातील प्रथम अर्थनिर्भर स्त्री असेल.

या स्त्री च्या घरातील जेवणात स्वतःच्या शेतातील भाजी असते. भेंडी, चवळी, तूर, कारले, वांगी, मिरची, डोडबे आंबट पाला, वालपापडी, दुधी, दोडका, भोपळा, हेलाआटे मश्रूम, सिरा, मोख, हेलेटो, हेगवोपालेभाज्या, कुटलेरानभाजी या भाज्या खाल्ल्या जातात. बहुतेक भाज्या भिलोरी स्त्री स्वतः शेतात पिकवते. तर काही भाज्या जंगलातून निवडून आणते. स्वतः दळलेल्या पिठाची भाकरी जेवणात असते. जेवण मातीच्या भांडयात चुलीवर बनविले जाते. हे पदार्थ ज्या भांडयात बनतात त्याला टोसवो, मातीच्या तव्याला 'खापरं' म्हणतात. डाळीत पेंडो किंवा डोडबे ही आंबट पालाभाजी संमिश्र करतात. तेल न टाकता या डाळी व भाज्या बनतात. नैसर्गिक खाण्याने व कामाने या स्त्री ची प्रकृती काटक असते.

घरी कोंबडया पाळलेल्या असतात. पाहुणा आला की स्त्रीला कोंबडीचे जेवण बनवावे लागते. पुरुषही हे मटणाचे जेवण बनवतात. लाकडाच्या किंवा दगडाच्या खलबलत्यात मसाला कुटला जातो. आधुनिक उपकरणांपासून ही स्त्री दूर आहे. गावात सौरऊर्जा आहे. वीजेची उपकरणे तिच्यापाशी नसतात. शेतात तिला डबा घेऊन जावे लागते. उन्हापासून संरक्षणासाठी त्रीसारो चोचले न पुरविता डोईचा पदर तिच्या कामी येतो. पळसाच्या पानांचे झाकण ठेवून ताटलीतून शेतात जेवण नेले जाते. जेवण देऊन ती शेतात कामाला लागते. मुलं लहान असली तरी घराची राखण करतात. कधी आजी-आजोबांजवळ राहतात. मोठी मुलं शेतात कामाला जातात. जेवण बनविण्यासाठी, गुरांना बांधण्यासाठी स्त्रीला शेतातून आधी घरी परतावे लागते. कपडे धुण्याचे काम स्त्री-पुरुष स्वतःचे स्वतः करतात. लहान मुलांचे कपडे मात्र स्त्रियाच धुतात. भांडी स्त्रिया घासतात. लाकडाच्या बाजल्यावर वा जमिनीवर सर्व कुटुंब एकत्रच निजते. दैनंदिनी पाहिल्यावर या भिलोरी स्त्रीच्या एकूण राहणीमानाची कल्पना येते. आता तिच्या भाषेकडे वळूया.

भिलोरी स्त्री ची भाषा -

भिलोरी भाषेत मावची, वसावे, कोकणी, कोटली, लाडशी, ढारकी, पावरा, पाडवी, नोयरी या पोटबोली आहेत. केलीपाणी गावातील भिल्ल स्त्री पाडवी व वसावे ही बोली बोलते. आईला या, याहाकी, आया, आईस, याहही असे शब्द आहेत. तिचे काही नातेदर्शक शब्द असे -

१. सासू- हावडी, हाहू, हाहावह

२. सासरा - हाअराहो
३. बहीण - बोअही, बोही, बोणही
४. नणंद - नंदेहे
५. दीर - दीहू, डेएहू
६. जाऊ - जवहा, जोवाहा, जवाहू
७. मावशी - जिजी, डोहलाओया ७. आत्या - फुची, फुईस
८. आजी - वोडीयाहही
९. आजोबा - वोडाबाहहा
१०. वडील - आबो, बाहको, बाबास, बाहहा
११. बायको - डोहली, बायोओ, थे
१२. नवरा - डोहू, माटी, धोणी(धनी), कोओवालू. कोओ म्हणजे

घर कोओवालू म्हणजे घरवाला. बायकोने नवऱ्याला नावाने हाक मारली तर मुले बोबडी बोलू लागतात अशी समजूत आहे. बायको नवऱ्याला नावाने हाक न मारता आपल्या मुलांचे वडील उदा. तिरशा बाहहा (तिरसिंगचे बाबा) अशी हाक मारते. गंमत म्हणजे नवऱ्यासाठी ती कधी ए या एकेरी संबोधनवाचक केवळप्रयोगी अज्जाचा वापर करू शकते.

स्त्रियांच्या संदर्भात वापरल्या जाणाऱ्या संबोधनाचे सर्वेक्षण करून समाजमनातील स्त्री-प्रतिमेचे गटवार वर्गीकरण करता येते. ते पुढीलप्रमाणे :

संबोधन	स्त्रियांच्या वर्तणुकीचे तपशील
वेहवालवाल	नवऱ्याबरोबर व्यवस्थित संसार करून प्रतिष्ठितपणा दाखवणारी
रांडाली, रोंडाली	विधवा, बेवारस, अनाथ स्त्री
चालाकी, उदडी	नवऱ्याबरोबर न राहणारी, स्वैराचारी
लफडावाली, फिरनारी	परपुरुषाशी संबंध ठेवणारी
जुवानी, जुवान, शेंट्ये	अविवाहीत, अस्पर्शित, धार्मिक विधीत स्थान नसणारी

स्त्रियांचे म्हणून काही विशिष्ट वाक्प्रयोग असतात. भिलोरी स्त्री ला स्वयंपाक करते म्हणजे काय विचारलं तर ती हातभर लांब उत्तर देऊ शकते. ही पुढील क्रियापदे स्त्रीच्याच भाषेत येतात. पुरुष त्याचा वापर क्वचितच करतात. पहा बरं ही क्रियापदे. १. निवडून (निवडणे) २. सारनू/चारनू (चाळणे) ३. उफनू (पाडणे) ४. काडनू(कांडणे) ५. कुटनू(कुटणे) ६. दोनू(दळणे) ७. चिरनू(चिरणे) ८. वाडनू(कापणे) ९. टोचनू(चोचणे) १०. मोलनू (मळणे) ११. पिजवूनू (भिजविणे) १२. मोगलूनू(तिंबणे) १३. थाबनू (थापणे) १४. लाटनू(लाटणे) १५. भुजनू (भाजणे) १६. पिलवाटनू(परतणे) १७. तोलनू(तळणे) १८. उलवाटनू(उलथणे) १९. आंबवूनू(आंबवणे) २०. तुवनू(धुणे) २१. चडवूनू(शिजवणे) २२. उकलावनू(उकडणे) २३. बाफनू(वाफवणे) २४. किसनू(किसणे) २५. खोदनू(खोवणे) २६. चारनू(गाळणे) २७. चिरनू(चुरडणे) २८. कुटनू(ठेचणे) २९. वाटनू(वाटणे) ३०. उकलावनू(उकडणे) ३१. तोपवूनू(तापविणे) ३२. चालवूनू(कालवणे) ३३. मिलवूनू(मिसळणे) ३४. निथडूनू(निथळणे) ३५. उफनू(उपसणे) ३६. फेटवूनू(फेटणे)

३७. कालनू(घुसळणे) ३८. मोगलूनू(फेसणे) ३९. फेकनू (भुरभुरणे) ४०. पोनू(पेरणे) ४१. कोहोटूनू(घोटणे) ४२. फिरवूनू(ढवळणे) ४३. गोहाटूनू (कुस्करणे) ४४. आटवूनू(आटविणे) ४५. कोटवूनू(कढविणे) ४६. खोगडूनू(खवडणे) ४७. मुरवूनू(मुरविणे) ४८. होलनू (सोलणे) ४९. निपनू(सारवणे) ५०. उफरिलो(पाडणे) अशा या क्रियापदांची यादी आणखीही वाढविता येईल.

भिलोरी स्त्रीच्या बोलण्यात म्हणी/वाक्प्रचारही येतात. काही प्रातिनिधिक वाक्प्रयोग उदाहरणादाखल -

डोगो पेटाई तो देखाई पण आपुहु भूक लागते नेकोडाहा देखाई (डोंगर पेटला तर सगळी दुनिया बघते पण पोटात पेटतं ते कोणी बघत नाही), इ इवं जातो रोय वाट्टाहा बोहाटी की फायदो? (साप निघून गेल्यावर काठी मारून काय उपयोग?), ववानू जगा प्रे कोनू मना (ऐकावे जनाचे करावे मनाचे), बुडी जाहे तो दिही पासी दोयहे प्र जमिनीन जाहे मी आयोहो पासीफिरी नाय दोगे (मातीत गेलेला सूर्य पुन्हा दिसतो पण मातीत गेलेली आई पुन्हा दिसत नाही) या

साऱ्या ढोलण्यातून तिच्या नेणीवेतले ठसठसते दुःख दिसते. लैंगिक शब्दांचा उच्चार ती करत नाही. खाती (स्तन), पोदे(ढुंगण), कास(योनी), एहलेज उतरयेहे, दिवटी आवली, पाडी आली(मासिक पाळी), बारथ जाआले, णाडी जाआलो(प्रातःविधी) आडुकोईलो (साडी नेसणे) असे तिचे म्हणून काही खास शब्द आहेत. ळ या मूर्धन्य व्यंजनासाठी ळ व ड या व्यंजनाच्या मधलाच उच्चार तर या दंतमूलीय/तालव्य व्यंजनासाठी व श च्या मधलाच उच्चार ही स्त्री करते, ज्याचे नेमके लिप्यंकन करणे कठीण आहे.

भिलोरी स्त्री ला एक ते वीस पर्यंतच गणती करता येते. १-एक, २-ब्र, ३-तीन, ४-चारे, ५-पाच, ६-सौ, ७-हात, ८-आठ, ९-नौ, १०- दह, ११-इयार, १२-बारा, १३-तेर, १४-चौदह, १५-पोनर, १६-हौल, १७-हत्तर, १८-एड्डर, १९-उगणीस, २० - विही. एवढ्या आकड्यांवरच ती पुढचे गणित करते. २१-विहीन एक, २२- विहीन ब्र, ३२- विहीन बारा , ३० म्हणजे एक विहीन दहा(२०+१०), ४० - ब्र विही(दोनदा वीस), ५० - ब्र विहीन दहा, ६०- तीन विही, ७०- तीन विहीन दहा, ८०- चार विही, ९०- चार विहीन दहा, १००- पाच विही/एक हौ, ५००- पाच हौ, हजार ला हजारच म्हणतात. एवढे सोपे तिचे गणित आहे.

याठिकाणी उलट हुंडा पद्धत आहे. मुलगा मुलीला हुंडा देतो. पूर्वी बैलजोडी/जनावर देत असत. आता पैसे स्वरूपात हुंडा देतात. सध्या केलीपीणी गावातील वधूचा भाव ४०,०००/- रुपये आहे! लग्नात फक्त डाळ, भात व वांग्याची भाजी असते. गोड नसते. मोहाच्या फुलांची दारू लोकप्रिय आहे. होळी हा त्यांचा सर्वांत मोठा सण असतो. सणाला, मंगलप्रसंगी दारू ही असतेच. स्त्रियांना तरकीर लावायचाही शौक आहे. लग्नात स्त्रिया गाणी गातात. या गाण्यातून तिचे वास्तव, तिची वेदनाच व्यक्त होताना दिसते.

उदा. १ - बाहको याखो पोयरी माने, जोजे नाये या खोपा भ्रायाहको याखो पोयरील मा गाळी हेहो याखो वा भेना

(अर्थ -वडील सांगायचे मला मुलगी नको आहे, आई सांगायची माझ्या मुलीला उगीचच शिवी का घालता?)

उदा. २ - मा भेना वा निंबोणी गावे नाय सोडू याखो वा मा भेना सोडा काय पोड्य वा मा भेना वा याहाकी बाहाकाले नाय

सोडू यासारखे मा भेना वा सोडा काय पोड्य वा

(अर्थ - तू सांगत होतीस की निंबोणी गाव मी सोडणार नाही पण

आता तुला हे गाव सोडावच लागणार तू हे पण सांगायचीस की मी आईवडिलांना सोडून जाणार नाही पण तुला हे गाव सोडावच लागणार)

यांसारख्या गाण्यांतून तिची आंतरिक खोल वेदनाच बाहेर आलेली दिसते. नऊवारी (साकं/नाटी)विशिष्ट पद्धतीने नेसलेली गुडघ्यापर्यंतच साडी आणि पोलका(टोको आंगडो), चांदीचे अलंकार हा तिचा पेहराव असतो. हाकल(हार), बावठे(दंडाखालची कोपरावरची वाकी), रुपयावाली हाकल(रुपयांचा हार), कळी हाकल(कळीवाली जाड च्च), आठकान्ये (कानाच्या पाळीला प्रत्येकी चार-चार रिंगा घातलेल्या असतात म्हणून एकूण मिळून आठकान्ये असं नाव) या भिल्लांची कुलदेवता देवमोगरा माता आहे. गुजरात व महाराष्ट्राच्या सीमेवर देवमोगरा हे गाव आहे. येथे महाशिवरात्रीला जत्रा भरते. या जत्रेदरम्यान स्त्री बाळंत झाली तर मुलीचे नाव मोगरा ठेवतात. होळी या सणाला मुलगा झाला तर होल्या आणि मुलगी झाली तर होली नाव ठेवतात. वोरहात(पावसाळा), हियाला(हिवाळा), उनालू(उन्हाळा) हे तिन्ही ऋतू स्त्रिया अहोरात्र मेहनत करतात. त्यांच्या समाज, संस्कृती व चालिरितींचे प्रतिबिंब त्यांच्या भाषेत पडले आहे.

एकूण भिलोरी असो वा शहरी असो स्त्रीच्या भाषेचा बारकाईने अभ्यास केला तर तिचे प्रश्न समाजाला कळतील. स्त्री ला समजून घ्यायचे असेल तर तिची प्रतिकात्मक भाषा समजून घ्यावी लागेल. भाषा समजून घेता घेता स्त्री चे अंतरंग समाजाला गवसेल आणि अंतरंग गवसले तर तिच्या काळजाच्या पायथ्याशी वसलेले वेदनांचे गाव दिसेल. या गावात कधी जरूर फेरफटका मारून या की तेथील खाचखळगे सहज दिसतील. केलीपाणी या गावात मी तो मारला. जे गवसले ते मांडले. अशी अनेक गावे व स्त्री मनाचे उंबरे आपल्या प्रतीक्षेत आहेत. माझी पावल तिकडे वळावीत या स्वतःलाच शुभेच्छा!

संदर्भ :

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Education and Women Empowerment in India

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Abstract : Women constitute almost half of the population in the world. But the hegemonic masculine ideology made them suffer a lot as they were denied equal opportunities in different parts of the world. Although in the Vedic period women had access to education in India, they had gradually lost this right. Women education not only helps in the development of half of the human resources, but in improving the quality of life at home and outside. Women education in India has also been a major preoccupation of both the government and civil society as educated women can play a very important role in the development of the country. Education is milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life. So, we can't neglect the importance of education in reference to women empowerment as India is poised to becoming a superpower, a developed country by 2020. The growth of women's education in rural areas is very slow. This obviously means that still large womenfolk of our country are illiterate, weak, backward and exploited. Education of women is the most powerful tool of change of position in society. Education also brings a reduction in inequalities and functions as a means of improving their status within the family.

Keywords : Education, Female Literacy Rate, Women Empowerment.

“If you educate a man you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family. Women empowered means mother India empowered”.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru

Introduction

Women constitute almost half of the population in the world. But the hegemonic masculine ideology made them suffer a lot as they were denied equal opportunities in different parts of the world. The rise of feminist ideas has, however, led to the tremendous improvement of women's condition throughout the world in recent times. Access to education has been one of the most pressing demands of these women's rights movements. Women education in India has also been a major preoccupation of both the government and civil society as educated women can play a very important role in the development of the country.

India is poised to emerge as one of the most developed nations by 2020, more literate, knowledgeable and economically at the forefront. No doubt, women will play a vital role in contributing to the country's development. Women power is crucial to the economic growth of any country. India is yet to meet this requirements despite reforms. Little has been achieved in the area of women empowerment, but for this to happen, this sector must experience a chain of reforms. Though India could well become one of the largest economies in the world, it is being hindered due to a lack of women's participation.

History of Women Education in India

Although in the Vedic period women had access to education in India, they had gradually lost this right. However, in the British period there was revival of interest in women's education in India. During this period, various socio religious movements led by eminent persons like Raja

Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar emphasized on women's education in India. Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, Periyar and Baba Saheb Ambedkar were leaders of the lower castes in India who took various initiatives to make education available to the women of India. However women's education got a fillip after the country got independence in 1947 and the government has taken various measures to provide education to all Indian women. As a result women's literacy rate has grown over the six decades and the growth of female literacy has in fact been higher than that of male literacy rate. While in 1971 only 22% of Indian women were literate, by the end of 2001 54.16% female were literate, by the end of 2011 65.46% female were literate. The growth rate of female literacy is 11.30% as compared to 6.29 % of that of male literacy rate.

Importance of Women Education in India

If it is said that education is the key to all problems, then it won't be improper. Thinkers have given a number of definitions of education but out of these definitions, the most important definition is that which was put forth by Mahatma Phule. According to Mahatma Phule, “Education is that which demonstrates the difference between what is good and what is evil”. If we consider the above definition, we come to know that whatever revolutions that have taken place in our history, education is at its base. It is through education that one realizes what is good and what is bad, what is proper and what is not. It is education which gives a vent/ voice to injustice. The 3-fold formula which Dr. B. R. Ambedkar gave to Indian society includes the most important thing to be education. In other words, he has emphasized education.

Women education in India plays a very important role in the overall development of the country. It not only helps in the development of half of the human resources, but in improving the quality of life at home and outside. Educated women not only tend to promote education of their girl

children, but also can provide better guidance to all their children. Moreover educated women can also help in the reduction of infant mortality rate and growth of the population.

Need of Women Education

Women empowerment can only be achieved through the provision of adequate and functional education to the women folk. This is crucial because no matter how rich or vast a nation is, without an effective, efficient, adequate and functional education for all its citizens (men and women) education which is relevant to its immediate needs, goals and objectives, such a nation would find it difficult to stand on its own. The brand of education being advocated is that type of education in which is embedded the spirit of self realization and all this is needed for the country's overall development like mass literacy, economic empowerment etc.

The need for women education is also informed by the fact that purposeful occupational achievement and satisfaction is ensured by deep self-awareness and understanding which can only be achieved through the provision of effective and functional education and guidance and counseling. This, has been noted is likely to guarantee women empowerment with its root based on women struggle to improve their status. The empowerment suggested is such that entails the process of challenging power relations and of gaining wider control over source of power. This, however, cannot be achieved without the provision of reasonable access to formal and functional education to the women folk. This is based on the premise that education has been adjudged to be a viable instrument of change in the positive direction. Provision of formal and functional education is needed for the women folk, because:

- It would empower them to know and ask for their rights to education, health, shelter, food clothing etc.
- It would empower them to fight against every form of discrimination against their folk, assert themselves about their right to equal treatment with their men counterpart as bonafide citizens of this nation.

- It would give economic power to the women and there by enable them to contribute their quota to the economic growth of the nation.
- It would empower the women scientifically through exposure to science and technological education for the challenges of the present technological age and information computer technology break through unfolding worldwide.
- It would help women to reduce maternal and infant mortality through improved nutrition, improved child rearing practice, health care and prevention against killer diseases.

Women Empowerment through Education

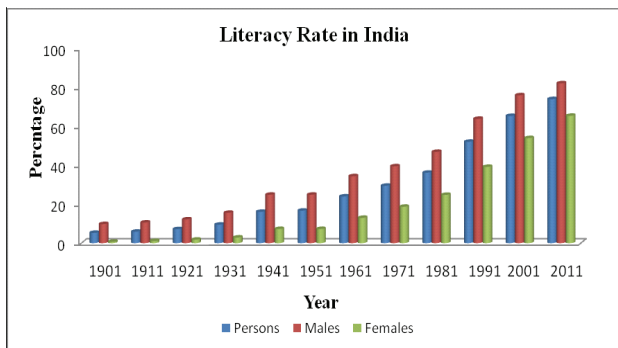
Women's empowerment is not limited only for the Indian society. If we consider the global aspect in this regard, we see that women are being given equal treatment in developed nations. In fact, if we take a retrospect of history, we come to know that women have always been given secondary position in society, but the difference between men and women created by the Nature is but natural. It is through education that we realize this fact.

Taking an account of this background, we come to know that women's empowerment has now become a topic of global discussion. Seeing all the aspects of this discussion, we will realize that education is the only means for empowerment of women. Therefore, literacy should spread amongst women. The literacy rate amongst the women in the post- Independent Era is not as per the expectations. We, as a nation, dream of becoming a Super Power by 2020. For becoming a Super Power, each element of our society/ nation should contribute in the nation building process. But if women, who are a major factor of this society, aren't literate then we can't expect to become a Super Power. Therefore, it is urgent for us to know the importance of women's education, which would, in turn, give an impetus to the process of women's empowerment. This can become a reality only when the women of this nation are empowered.

Table -1 Literacy Rate in India

Year	Persons	Males	Females	Male Female Gap in the Literacy Rate
1901	5.3	9.8	0.7	9.10
1911	5.9	10.6	1.1	9.5
1921	7.2	12.2	1.8	10.4
1931	9.5	15.6	2.9	12.7
1941	16.1	24.9	7.3	17.6
1951	16.7	24.9	7.3	18.30
1961	24.0	34.4	13.0	25.05
1971	29.5	39.5	18.7	23.98
1981	36.2	46.9	24.8	26.62
1991	52.1	63.9	39.2	24.84
2001	65.38	76.0	53.67	21.59
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46	16.68

Source: Census of India (2011)

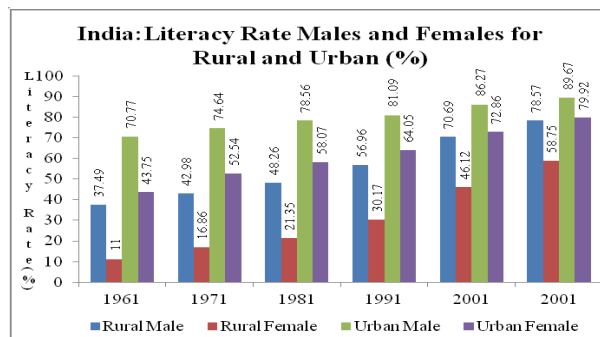


According to the **Table-1** the pre-Independence time literacy rate for women had a very poor spurt in comparison to literacy rate of men. This is witnessed from the fact that literacy rate of women has risen from 0.7 % to 7.3 % where as the literacy rate of men has risen from 9.8 % to 24.9 % during these four decades. During the post-independence period literacy rates have shown a substantial increase in general. However the literacy rate of male has almost tripled over the period e.g. 25% in 1951 and 76 % in 2001. Surprisingly the female literacy rate has increased at a faster pace than the male literacy during the decade 1981 -2001. The growth is almost 6 times e.g. 7.9 % in 1951 and 54 % in 2001. From this analysis one can infer that still the female literacy rate (only half of the female population are literates) is lagging behind male literacy rate (three fourth of the male population are literates). The rate of school drop outs is also found to be comparatively higher in case of women. This higher rate of illiteracy of women is undoubtedly attributing for women dependence on men and to play a subordinate role. The lack of education is the root cause for women’s exploitation and negligence. Only literacy can help women to understand the India’s constitutional and legislative provisions that are made to strengthen them. Thus promoting education among women is of great importance in empowering them to accomplish their goals at par with men in different spheres of life.

Table- 2 Literacy rates Males and Females for Rural and Urban areas in India

Year	Rural		Urban	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
1961	37.49	11.00	70.77	43.75
1971	42.98	16.86	74.64	52.54
1981	48.26	21.35	78.56	58.07
1991	56.96	30.17	81.09	64.05
2001	70.69	46.12	86.27	72.86
2011	78.57	58.75	89.67	79.92

- Literacy Rates for 1961 and 1971 censuses relates to population ages 5 years and above. The rates for 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011 censuses relates to population ages 7 years and above.
- The 1981 literacy rates exclude from Assam and 1191 literacy rates exclude from Jammu and Kashmir because census could not be conducted.



The **Table -2** shows the literacy rates of India for the period from 1961 to 2011, separately for males and females for rural and urban areas. Rural India could achieve a literacy rate of over 70 percent among its male population in census of 2001. Female literacy rate in rural India all along shows a dismal picture. Despite a steady increase in rural female literacy rate, all India level rural female literacy rate stands only at 58.75% at present. The rate of decadal increase in urban female literacy rate always ranged between 5 to 9 points in all India level.

Educational Equality

Another area in which women’s equality has shown a major improvement as a result of adult literacy programs is the area of enrolment of boys and girls in schools. As a result of higher participation of women in literacy campaigns, the gender gap in literacy levels is gradually getting reduced. Even more significant is the fact that disparity in enrolment of boys and girls in neo-literate households is much lowered compared to the non-literate households.

Educational Provisions in Centrally Sponsored Schemes in School Education (CSS)

Major Schemes for Elementary Education

- Operation Black Board
- Teacher Education
- Education Guarantee Scheme & Alternative and Innovative Education (EGS & AIE)
- Mid-day Meal Scheme
- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)
- Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV)
- Shiksha Karmi
- Mahila Samakhya
- District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)
- National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL)
- Lok Jumbish
- Janshala Programme

Restricted access to education by women in this country is profoundly rooted in history, religion, culture, the psychology of self, law, political institution and social attitudes which interact in several ways to limit women's access to formal education when compared with their male counterparts. It has been observed that Indian women are lagging behind their counterparts in developed and some developing nations due to the late start in educating them. This is caused by our traditions and culture which are hostile to women. This tradition reduces them to kitchen manageresses and producers of babies. Thus, their education ideally, is expected to end in kitchen a condition which ironically is detested by many parents thereby discouraging their investment in girl-child education.

Other problems against women education include the familiar problems like lack of funds, inadequate facilities, inadequate manpower, sexual harassment, conflicting societal role expectations, government policies and lack of political will power to implement the entire educational programme.

Present Position of Women Education in India

In spite of the forceful intervention by a bastion of female privilege, feminist critics, constitutional guarantees, protecting laws and sincere efforts by the State Governments and Central Government through various schemes and programmes over the last 62 years and above all, the United Nation's enormous pressure with regard to the uplift of the plight of women in terms education is still in the state of an enigma in India for several reasons. The 2011 Census report indicates that literacy among women as only 65.46 percent. It is virtually disheartening to observe that the literacy rate of women India is even much lower to national average i.e. 4.04. The growth of women's education in rural areas is very slow. This obviously means that still large womenfolk of our country are illiterate, weak, backward and exploited. Moreover education is also not available to all equally. Gender inequality is reinforced in education which is proved by the fact that the literacy rate for the women is only 65.46% against 82.14% of men as per 2011 Census.

Conclusion

According to the Country Report of the Government of India, "Empowerment means moving from a weak position to execute a power." Education of women is the most powerful tool of change of position in society. Education also brings a reduction in inequalities and functions as a means of improving their status within the family. To encourage the education of women at all levels and for dilution of gender

bias in providing knowledge and education, schools, colleges and universities should be established even exclusively for women in the state. To bring more girls, especially from marginalized families of BPL, in mainstream education, the government is providing a package of concessions in the form of providing free books, uniform, boarding and lodging, clothing for the hostilities midday meals, scholarships, free circles and so on.

Taking an overview of all the above aspects, we come to know that the transformation is very much needed, accepting at the same time that its pace may be less than desired. For giving this process a momentum, education is indispensable. Hence, if women's empowerment is to be effected, it can be carried out only through the medium of education. Hence, it is of foremost importance to raise the level of education amongst women.

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Neoliberalism and Livelihood of Fisher Women : An Investigation

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Abstract : In a period of neo-liberal capitalism our relationship to nature is being dramatically transformed through the process of commodification. More and more of nature is being framed in terms of exchange value and mediated through the market. The outcome is ecological collapse through pollution, over consumption of natural resources, destruction of habitats and biodiversity, global warming, displacement and loss of livelihood of the indigenous people. Fishing community is one such community that solely depend on the sea resources (nature) for their livelihood and the roles that a fisher women plays are integral for the maintenance and economic prosperity of the family

Technological advancement along with neoliberal policies of government has led to deterioration of the condition of fisherwomen in fisheries of the maritime states of India. This study is an attempt to document the issues and problems that fisherwomen face in the context of neoliberalism.

This investigative study also attempt to know more about a segment of the working female population (Koli women) that has always projected itself as markedly different from the rest of women. These women are distinctly independent, strong, bold, outgoing, able to do their work and manage their money-attributes that do not go with our general understanding of women in the patriarchal society.

Keywords : Neoliberalism, Fisherwomen, Women empowerment, Ecological collapse.

Introduction

All through the history, the sea has been providing for the sustenance of the fishing community living along the coastal regions of India with plenty of marine fish and plants. A major chunk of world population also depend on fisheries as a source of proteins and millions worldwide are directly engaged in fishing activities as a source of livelihood. However, the member of the fishing community who represents a large section of the world's population are considered to be the poor and are marginalized from the mainstream economy with little access to education, social services, infrastructural developments and market conditions.

Kolis

Kolis are a fishing community of original natives of Mumbai region. They are the erstwhile owners of Mumbai who have been reduced to a backward minority. They live in villages known as *koliwad*s. The *Koliwad*s are spread over Mumbai, Thane, and Raigad districts which is also called as Mumbai Metropolitan Region. There were around 100 such *koliwad*s in Mumbai region a century ago. The number is now reduced to only 50. The communities first lost most of their ancestral land to the Britishers and then to the state of Maharashtra and the local self government towards myriad developmental projects. The land that surrounded the *koliwad*s in the past is now utilized by the government and other agencies for the purpose of development works like setting up residential complexes, industrial complexes, commercial establishments, government housing colonies, textile mills, public sector undertakings and so on. It is not only that the land were taken away by the Britisher's forcefully but it was never returned to them even by the independent Indian

government. And once Mumbai became part of Maharashtra in 1960, the Maharashtra government continued to acquire lands surrounding the Koli settlements without even passing the benefits of development to the *kolis*.

Thus the community that had comfortable life in the past is struggling to manage their lives adjusting to the myriad changes that are occurring around them.

Role of Women in Fishery Sector

Fishing is a traditional occupation that involves large number of women in India who eke out their living by working shoulder to shoulder with men or sometime independently also. Most women in marine fisheries are involved in seaweed collection, collection of bivalves and seeds with seasonal and regional attributes. It is reported that about seventy percent of the workers employed in seaweed collection and processing in India are women. They are also into the collection of bivalves and their marketing to ornament dealers and lime collectors.

Women are employed in the fresh water fisheries throughout the year where they are engaged in fishing using scoop nets, traps in addition to the hand picking method. In Kerala, women are increasingly engaged in the construction and maintenance of ponds, feeding and harvesting of fish. In Andhra Pradesh, women are employed in shrimp farms for nearly five months a year in activities like pond construction, seed collection and segregation, de-weeding of pond and hand picking of shrimp during harvest.

Nearly forty percent of the labour engaged in shrimp farm activities in Tamilnadu are women. It is the post harvest sector that provides maximum employment to women in fisheries where they are engaged in beach work, small scale fish trading, fish curing, drying, net making, peeling and

processing plant work. A lot of women engaged in fisheries are into fish vending where they operate as the much needed link between producers and the final consumers. They purchase fish from fishermen at landing sites through auction or from traders through bargaining. They carry baskets of fish as head loads for marketing. They either end up selling the entire fish stock collected for the day or if anything remains unsold the same is either used for household consumption or for drying. On an average, they earn two-three hundred rupees a day.¹

Maharashtra is one of the leading states in fishing industry next only to Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. It has six coastal districts engaged actively in fishing with around 184 fishing ports and 200 fishermen cooperatives. Maharashtra has a great potential for marine fisheries development mainly due to its 720 km long coastline and around 1.12 lakh sq. km. of area suitable for marine fishing. According to Marine census (2003) Maharashtra has 2,85,321 fishermen population, out of which 1,26,377 i.e. 44.3% are actually engaged in fishing industry.² The share of fisheries in Gross State Domestic Product of Agriculture and allied activities of the state during 2008-09 was 2.3%.³ According to an estimate Maharashtra contributes roughly about Rs. 800 crores of foreign exchange through fishing business.

The fisher women (Koli Women) in Maharashtra too like their counter part in other states are involved mainly in post harvest activities such as fish handling, sorting, grading, weighing, gutting, icing, wholesale trading, retail trading, drying, processing and marketing.

Sashi Mishra (2011) study of Uttan Village, "Women and Fish Selling Business" highlights the hardship that the fisher women have to undergo. Their day starts at the break of dawn, collecting fishes, sorting them and then packing them neatly with the help of other laborers or themselves for transporting the catch to the market. This routine is followed up by cooking and completing the household chores and work like mending fishing baskets and drying up the fishes and so on.

Impact of Neoliberalism on Koli Women

The neoliberal policy of government and the associated changes in and around Mumbai Metropolitan Region is redrawing the contours of the lives of the Kolis in general and Koli women in particular. Number of studies have proved that the traditional local fishing grounds are being encroached upon under the neo-liberal policies of both the state and the central government. As a result the

coastal communities rights to fish and earn a living are being violated and they are forced out of their traditional means of livelihoods. Large multinational and national trawler, sea water pollution due to dumping of industrial waste and oil exploration such as at Vasai high along with a plan to give away the coastal land in the name of rehabilitation of gaathan by fabricating the floor space index, relaxation of the coastal regulation zone norms and neo-urban residential sprawl in the 'corridor' such as Vasai-Virar region, Kalyan-Dombivali and other is threatening the fishing environment. This has resulted in sharp decline in the fish catch and subsequent reduction in the income of the fisher family. Due to this most of the men have given up fishing. They are working as construction workers, daily wage earners on trawlers and few are in white collar jobs.

In the process of making Mumbai a global metropolis the neo-liberal hegemonic power exerts dominance over urban policy and planning. They push for the implementation of development projects for the elite and middle class people such as shopping malls, freeways, luxury apartments, consequently, ignoring the need of the indigenous community and thus encroach upon their right to city.

Thus the technological advancement along and the neoliberal policies of the state and the central government along with international policies, environmental degradation, illegal fishing and climate change is threatening the very existence of the fishing community.

Due to decline in household income at least one woman from each household for example from Naigaon *Koliwada* is now involved in fish selling. Their day begins with visiting the auction site. The auction begins at two in the morning. Every morning, a few hundreds of men and women visit the fish auction site. Fisherwomen buy a few baskets of fish and load them into tempos to be sent to fish market. They themselves board 4.30 am local train to go to the market. By this time, the tempo too reaches the market. They sell their entire fish stock to other fisherwomen in the market at wholesale rate for retailing. They may sell their fish to individual customers as well. Depending up on the sale of fish, they are back home by seven to ten in the morning. Their daily profits during peak season range from Rs. 500 to Rs.1000. There are other women who go as far as places to sell fish. They bring back whatever is unsold to the local market and sell there. Some fisherwomen collect fish from the auction site and sell it at the local market itself.

However, women complain that due to direct selling of fish from landing site to the shed of the merchants the

¹ Vijaya, 2008, "Empowerment of Fisher Women". Agrotech Publishing Academy, Udaipur.

² GOM (2003) : 'Maharashtra: Fishery Census - 2003', Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying & Fisheries, Government of Maharashtra, Mumbai.

³ GoM (2010): 'Economic Survey of Maharashtra: 2009-2010', Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Maharashtra, Mumbai

poor fisherwomen find it difficult to get the fish for selling. They are also facing competition due to fish marketing taken over by male vendors/wholesaler and malls and up-market shops that promise free home delivery.

Women were traditionally also involved in basket and net-making but due to the introduction of trawlers and commercial nylon nets these skills of women are no more required. Thus fisher women are particularly vulnerable to the negative impact of neo-liberal policies. They are gradually driven out from the sea and its resources. As a consequence women are now turning to other occupation.

In spite of the hardship that the *koli* women are facing they are markedly different from other segment of the working female population. These women are distinctly independent, strong, bold, outgoing, able to do their work and manage their money-attributes that do not go with our general understanding of women in the patriarchal society.

They have freedom to use their earnings as they want. They provide sound economic stability to their family. Most of them prefer acquiring gold to depositing their money in the bank. According to these women, gold turns out to be handy during financial crisis. These women and their families do not want their children to take up fishing as they feel that the fishing as an occupation involves a lot of hardships, odd working hours, huge investment and the profit margins are steadily declining. Moreover, the educated youth is not interested in pursuing their traditional occupation. While the older generation is upset with this trend as they feel the community will lose its identity in due course of time.

If developmental processes have to be life sustaining, then stress has to be placed on nature-policies that do not bear immediate fruit and are perhaps not profit oriented in today's sense of the world. Nurture involves protecting and recreating the habitats, and the breeding and nursery grounds. It means regulating the fishery through legislation. It means caring for the natural flow of nutrients and preventing pollution. It means providing for need and not for the greed.⁴

Conclusion

In a period of neo-liberal capitalism our relationship to nature is being dramatically transformed through the process of commodification. More and more of nature is being framed in terms of exchange value and mediated through the market. The outcome is ecological collapse through pollution, over consumption of natural resources, destruction of habitats and biodiversity, global warming, displacement and loss of livelihood of the indigenous people.

Women in fisheries are a non-existent category for policy makers who want to take India into twenty first century through the high tech global market.

Fishing communities is almost solely depending on the sea resources for their livelihood and the roles that a fisher woman plays are integral for the maintenance and economic prosperity of the family. One of the most important instruments for empowering women is to allow them equal access to and control on productive resources such as land, capital, technology, credit as well as marketing outlets, information, education, training etc without any discrimination. Time has come for women to come out of the drudgery of housework and give vent to the creativity and entrepreneurship. The *Koli* women, therefore, need to create new discourse and a new model, rewriting the development paradigm that emphasized the neoliberal policies focusing mainly on urbanization and industrialization. The alternative model for development should not merely be economic based nor it should be political or social. In fact, it should include material necessity interwoven with symbolic production through the promotion of cultural events and political presence.

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Status and Role of Women in Mass Media

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Abstract : Media being a powerful medium of communication acts as a catalyst in reflecting and shaping social norm. Its influence changes the lifestyle and perception of society. Undoubtedly it plays a vital role in gender equality. However it is unfortunate that media many times plays a biased role in relation to gender issues depicting a sub ordinate status to fairer sex. This study is an attempt to understand the role of media in this perspective as evident from different empirical research. The study was conducted to find out role and depiction of women in different form of media(Film. TV, Advertising etc) and its consequential effect. It also tries to highlight media bias towards masculinity and possible measures to overcome the current state of media biasness.

Key Words: Media, Gender equality

Introduction

Media as a socializing agent acts as a mirror through which people learn to perform their culturally assigned role. Media stands as an important tool in the society, especially in the twenty first century. It takes the important role of providing frameworks, providing entertainment, and reporting current events (*Hermes, Joke.Media Representation of the Social Structure: Gender. Devereux, (8), 192- 210*). Through this, the media can stand as an essential player in the elevation of gender equality, both in the representation all sexes and within an organization. Getting the right balance of gender equality in journalism and advertising has been an important area of focus in the recent past. Hence people in the media should work towards identifying challenges, advancing on gender equity, and contributing to policy formulation as well as healthy debates.

Media and Gender Issues

Fair portrayal of gender ought to be one of the principles of the media as it is ethical and professional. The media needs to portray both male and female in an honest, fair, and accurate manner ((*Hermes, Joke.Media Representation of the Social Structure: Gender. Devereux, (8), 192- 210*). However, the media all over the world does the contrary. Unbalanced portrayal of gender is quite common in the media world over. According to the global media monitoring association, women feature more in stories that portray them as victims. Additionally, the media identifies women according to their family status more often than it relates the same with men. Reviews also show that women are less likely to feature in major headlines. The media also regards men as experts more than it regards women with the same qualities. Most knowledge produced by dominant sections of society is generalized and passed as human knowledge. Women are excluded from the process of knowledge and portrayed as subject of knowledge within disciplinary knowledge.

Women (half of the population) are creators, actors and audiences for media. But on our screens, in our news

and behind the scenes they are still woefully underrepresented.

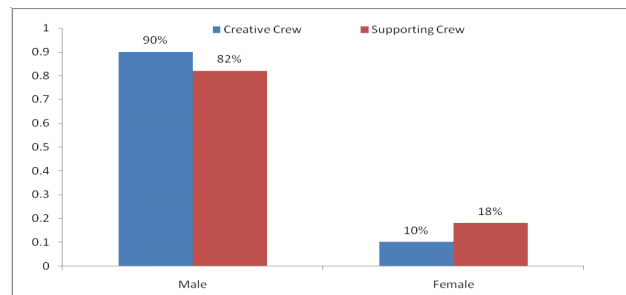


Figure 1.Representation of female in Media Crew – Film (Source: Mother Jones)

Hardly 10% constitute the creative crew and 18% the supporting(Figure 1). Female characters are sidelined, stereotyped, and sexualized in popular entertainment content

In TV too though the representation of women is around 30 % as far as intellectual work is concerned, but the ultimate power lies with men who dictate term of business. The percentage of women in all job categories in the print and broadcast newsroom has remained stagnant at around 37 percent since 1999. During the 2014 election, male journalists wrote the vast majority (72 percent) of the election stories, (and primarily quoted fellow male journalists) (Figure 2). Obviously role of female journalists are abysmally low.

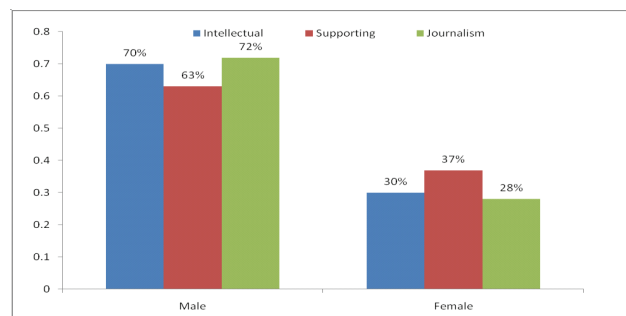


Figure 2.Gender Inequality in TV (Source: Mother Jones)

It is a matter of fact that a mountain of statistical and anecdotal evidence that women’s voices, with their breadth of expertise, diversity, experiences and humanity, are not being fully represented, and cannot be ignored if true gender equality in the media is to be achieved.

Portrayal of Women in Mass Media (Film and TV)

The exploitation of women in mass media refers to the criticisms often levied by the advocates of women’s rights against the use or portrayal of women in the mass media (such as television, film and advertising) to increase the appeal of media or a product to the detriment of, or without regard to, the interests of the women portrayed, or women in general. The most often criticized aspect of the use of women in mass media is *objectification*.

Late Budd Boetticher (<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0091430/>) famous classical movie director of hollywood once opined, “What counts is what the heroine provokes, or rather what she represents. She is the one, or rather the love or fear she inspires in the hero, or else the concern he feels for her, who makes him act the way he does. In herself the woman has not the slightest importance.”

The researchers from the various study claim that, “If media images communicate that sexual exploitation is neither serious nor harmful, the environment is being set for sexual exploitation to be viewed as trivial and acceptable. As long as there are media producers who continue to find the degradation of women to be humorous, and media outlets that will air the content, the impact and seriousness of sexual exploitation will continue to be understated and not meaningfully addressed in our society”.(Arpita Sharma) ‘*Portrayal of Women in Mass Media*’ Media Watch(2012) 1-7)

A 2012 study lead by sociologist Stacy L. Smith of Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism found that in both prime-time television and family films, women were grossly under represented and likely to be depicted as secondary to male character. (<http://annenberg.usc.edu/Faculty/Communication%20and%20Journalism/~media/5DB47326757B416FBE2CB5E6F1B5CBE4.ashx>)

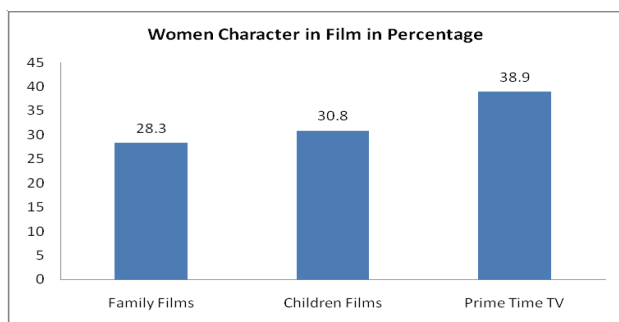


Figure. 3

According to this study, only 28.3 percent of characters in family films, 30.8 percent of characters in children’s shows, and 38.9 percent of characters on prime time television were women (Figure.3).

Critics of the prevalent portrayals of women in the mass media observe possible negative consequences for various segments of the population, such as:

- Women of average or normal appearance feeling inadequate or less beautiful in comparison to the overwhelming use of extraordinarily attractive women.
- Unrealistic expectations by men of how women should look or behave.
- Stereotyping of women who are positively portrayed by or sexualized in the media, limiting the societal and career opportunities for people who fit these stereotypes.
- The excessively coercive nature of appeal to strong sexual instincts to sell products or promote media.
- Increase in the likelihood and acceptance of sexual violence

However if women’s images exhibit traits of strength such as courage, determination, intelligence, self-respect and honesty, the viewers perceptions can be exploited for positive results.

In Indian context various serials shown in television have done nothing significant to improve Indian women’s image; in fact, she is depicted as *Sati-Savitri*, totally subordinated to her husband. Women have been shown as passive, dependant, emotional, subdued in different characters. They have been thrown out of their own houses if not willing to succumb to the dictates of their husband and so on. Even if the husband ill-treats her and sends her out, towards the end of the soaps, she will prostrate before him, begging his pardon. Who is to pardon whom? Highly ridiculous.

It can be observed that mainstream cinema as well as leading TV channel being dynamic and larger than life, only signifies the sexist images manifold creating its own brand of distortion. Thus we have ‘item numbers being passed off as ‘Bollywood dance’ and ‘eve-teasing’ and ‘sexual harassment’ of the heroine by the so called hero leading to romance between them. One must be aware about this sexist imagery and its impact on the viewers, leading to increasing incidents of violence against women as has been witnessed in recent times around the country. (Vidura Jan-March, Vol.5, No1, 2013.8-9)

Women and Advertising

Clothing designer Calvin Klein has himself been a critic of the use of women in advertising, having said “Jeans are

about sex. The abundance of bare flesh is the last gasp of advertisers trying to give redundant products a new identity.”

Gallup and Robinson, an advertising and marketing research firm, has reported that in more than 50 years of testing advertising effectiveness, it has found the use of the erotic to be a significantly above-average technique in communicating with the marketplace. This research has led to the popular idea that “*sex sells*”.

Most advertisements expose women who are very thin and attractive. These images send messages to young girls and women that you have to look like this or you are undesirable. The obsession of staying thin comes from comparison theory, where people look at others and determine who is in the better state of attractiveness. A survey proved that women who viewed thin and attractive women in ads showed lower self-esteem than the women who viewed ads with average looking women.

Women should realize that advertisements wrongfully portray women as thin sex- goddesses and this image is not real. Women do not have to be thin to be beautiful or show their cleavage and give sexual favors to get what they want. Through education, women can gain respect and promote a healthy body image and ignore what advertisements are representing.

The roles of women have greatly domesticated in popular culture, especially in advertisements. Many advertisements contain women in roles such as cooks, maids, babysitters, as well as sex objects in order to sell product. In the beginning, advertisements were once shown to sell a product, however, as years pass, advertisements begin to objectify women and begin to use women as a way to sell products.

However, sometimes it makes people wonder why women do advertisements that degrade themselves. Everyone has their own reasons, for some that may be relevant to money, while others may enjoy this type of publicity. Females were once non existence when it came to advertisements, but now has become an object for the product.

Overall, the media treatment of women is narrow and continually reinforces stereotyped gender roles and assumptions that women’s functions are that of a wife, mother and servant of men. This is especially so in advertising. The lack of gender sensitivity in the media is evidenced by the failure to eliminate the gender-based stereotyping that can be found in public and private local, national and international media organizations.

Courtney and Lokeretz(1971) examined image of women in magazine advertisements.

They reported the following findings:

1. Women were rarely shown in out-of-home working roles.
2. Not many women were shown as a professional or high level business person.
3. Women rarely ventured far from home by themselves or with other women.
4. Women were shown as dependent on men’s protection.
5. Men were shown regarding women as sex objects or as domestic adjuncts.
6. Females were most often shown in ads for cleaning products, food products, beauty products, drugs, clothing and home appliances.
7. Males were most often shown in ads for cars, travel, alcoholic beverages, cigarettes, banks, industrial products, entertainment media and industrial companies.

Komisar (<https://www.kpcb.com/partner/randy-komisar>) refers to the image created by advertisers in 2000 as a combination sex object, wife and mother who achieves fulfillment by looking beautiful for men. Thus a women is not depicted as intelligent, but submissive and subservient to men. If women have a job it is as a secretary or an airline hostess.

The Media and Masculinity

The media has also stereotyped male figures in the society. The media normally characterizes men as powerful, independent, dominant, aggressive and gives little room at all for alternate masculinity visions. The media also tends to demean the ability of men to take up domestic roles, care, or oppose violence. Such depictions can affect perceptions in relation to gender role in society. In short, the media has a big impact in promoting a biased vision of the roles and responsibilities of male and female in the society. The media needs to pay more attention in addressing and identifying the various imbalances as well as gaps that are currently present in its field. The European commission gives several recommendations regarding this issue. This commission recommends that the media is to set gender parity expectations on radio and television panels and create thematic databases that dwell on gender issues. In addition to that, the commission advocates for conscious effort in portraying men and women in non-stereotypical aspects (Morna , Mpofu , and Glenwright , 8).

Conclusion

Thus it can be concluded that the over all effect of the portrayal of women in media is to reinforce rather than reduce prejudices and stereo types. The mass media in India excluding a few exception has not made adequate efforts to discuss serious issues concerning women and prepare the

women to play their rightful and equal role in society. To change this condition, it is necessary to monitor the media and point out the merits and demerits continuously. It is evident that the media has an important role of influencing the involvement of women in decision-making processes and activities aimed at setting agendas. Community media, in most cases, increases the gender balance in the media. It promotes the perception of all genders as partakers of journalism material and not merely as consumers. Initiatives such as community media encourage the involvement of women in making critical and technical decisions. They also have the capacity to promote balance and reduce the stereotypes that the media has already instilled in the society.

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Rape : The Socio-Legal View

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Abstract : A woman is an embodiment of patience, tolerance and strength. She is bold enough to face all the atrocities yet India has never awarded an equal status to women and from time to time she has been subjected to ill treatment, harassment, & violence. Rape is among one of the highest forms of crime which is committed against women. The effect that rape has on women is out of imagination of the common man. The marks on her body fade with time but left are marks on her mind and on her soul which remain forever. She is a woman, a human being who deserves equal treatment as man and not a toy which can be thrown away after playing with it. There has been a rise in number of rape cases in India from past few years. While the entire nation is moving towards becoming a developed country, the crimes against women are increasing at an alarming rate, no doubt women are trying their best to excel in every field but the society does not seem to want to see an improvement in status of women. This paper also deals with legal provisions of Rape and punishments for the same.

KeyWords: women , rape

Introduction

More than half of the world population comprises of women. In spite of this dominating majority, women continue to be treated as second class citizens. The pathetic condition of women in society is an indicator of the low value put on women's lives, and their suffering is very much in tune with the social system and life pattern. Women are not safe in the world today. At least 1 out of 3 females on earth has been physically or sexually abused, often repeatedly and by a relative or acquaintance. A large range of sex related crimes take place under assorted structures and situations, of which the most perceptible and perilous are sexual assault, forcible rape, sexual abuse of mentally or physically disabled people, sexual abuse of children, adultery, fornication and trafficking of people for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Out of all these crimes, rape is considered to be the most obnoxious and gravest form of human rights violation and a major social problem in many societies of the world. While the United Nations continues to promote democracy as the best system to secure women's dignity and rights, India the world's largest democracy fails to protect the nation's women.¹ The scourge of rape continues to wreak havoc on the nation's thousands of innocent women. A rapist not only causes physical injuries but also more indelibly leaves a scar on the most cherished possession of women, i.e., her dignity, honour, reputation and not the least her chastity.²

United Nations Documents on Population Fund and Violence against Women indicates that approximately 1 out of 5 women experiences rape or attempted rape during her lifetime.³

Social Impact

In the modern world, Indian is fast emerging as a global power but for half of its population, the women across the country, the struggle to live life with dignity continues.

Women, irrespective of their class, caste and educational status do not feel safe. In the modern society women have been the victims of exploitations since long time in different fields of life be it physical, social, mental or financial. There are several causes of sexual as well as moral abuse which are very often highlighted by the media in modern Indian society, and a lot of those also remain unexplored.⁴

Rape is a total violation of a woman's rights over her own body and of her ability to make a sexual choice. Rape is an attack not only on a woman's body, but on her sense of who she is and how she functions in the world.⁵ Rape leaves a permanent scar on the mind and body of the victim. Child victims suffer the greatest. Not only the victims but also her entire family is put to shame and humiliation. Victims of rape happen to be of different age group but children, adolescents and young women constitute the main target group. The Court has, innumerable times, declared that "Right to Life" does not merely mean animal existence but means something more, namely, the right to live with human dignity.⁶ Right to Life would, therefore, include all those aspects of life which go to make a life meaningful, complete and worth-living. Rape is committed by not strangers but by known person, near relatives, friends and neighbours.⁷

Important Figures

The number of rape cases in India increased by 3.6 percent to 22,172 in 2010 from 21,397 cases the previous year, according to figures from the National Crime Records Bureau. Nearly 68,000 rape cases were registered across the country during 2009-11 but only 16,000 rapists were sentenced to prison, presenting a dismal picture of conviction of sexual offenders. According to National Crime Records Bureau, 24,206 rape cases were registered in India in 2011 but only 5,724 people were convicted for the crime. Similarly, in 2010, 22,172 rape cases were registered while the number of convicted persons for the crime was 5,632. A

total of 21,397 rape cases were registered in 2009 but only 5,316 persons could be convicted. Forty percent of all sexual abuse cases in India are incest, and 94% of the incest cases had a known member of the household as the perpetrator. The number of such cases has decreased by 14.0% during the year over the previous year (9,961 cases). Andhra Pradesh has reported 42.7% (3,658 cases) followed by Maharashtra 12.5% (1,071 cases) of total incidences during the year 2011. Andhra Pradesh has reported the highest crime rate (4.3%) as compared to the National average of 0.7%. An increasing trend in cases of rape has been observed during 2007 – 2008. A mixed trend in the incidence of rape has been observed during the periods 2008 - 2011. These cases have reported an increase of 3.5% in the year 2008 over the year 2007, a decline of 0.3% in the year 2009 over 2008 and an increase of 3.6% in 2010 over 2009 and further an increase of 9.2% in the year 2011 over the year 2010. Madhya Pradesh has reported highest number of Rape cases (3,406) accounting for 14.1% of total such cases reported in the country. Mizoram has reported of crime rate 7.1 as compared to National average of 2.0%. Rape cases have been further categorised as Incest Rape and other Rape cases.

Rape Victims

There were 24,270 victims of Rape out of which 24,206 Rape cases were reported in the country. 10.6% (2,582) of the total victims of Rape were girls under 14 years of age, while 19.0% (4,646 victims) were teenage girls (14-18 years). 54.7% (13,264 victims) were women in the age-group 18-30 years. However, 15.0% (3,637 victims) victims were in the age-group of 30-50 years while 0.6% (141 victims) was over 50 years of age.

Offenders were known to the victims in as many as in 22,549 (94.2%) cases. Parents / close family members were involved in 1.2% (267 out of 22,549 cases) of these cases, neighbours were involved in 34.7% cases (7,835 out of 22,549 cases) and relatives were involved in 6.9% (1,560 out of 22,549 cases) cases.

Post- Delhi Gang Rape Case

Justice Verma Committee Recommendations

In keeping with the public outrage over Nirbhaya's brutal gang rape in Delhi on November 16, the Justice J S Verma Committee has raised the bar of punishment for a wide range of existing and proposed sexual offences even as it rejected the demand for introducing death for rape. The report released on 23rd January, 2013, has proposed codification of a stringent alternative to the life sentence, evolved through judicial activism in the last five years. Major recommendations made by Justice Verma Committee are as follows-

- The Panel rejects death penalty for rape, retains existing punishment of 7 years to life sentence (in which convict may be released after 14 years at govt's discretion)
- But if rape causes death or leaves victim in vegetative state, imprisonment should be 20 years to rest of convict life.
- Punishment for gang rape to 20 years to rest of convict life. If gang rape causes death or leaves victim in vegetative state, convicts should be jailed for the rest of their lives. Same punishment for repeat offenders.
- If the victim is a minor, panel recommends minimum 10 years jail, going up to life sentence. If minor dies during rape or is reduce to vegetative state, sentence should range from 20 years to rest of convict's life.
- Panel for recognizing new offences, such as disrobing a woman, trafficking and stalking.
- Introducing offence of 'breach of command responsibility making a senior officer of security forces liable to jail of 7-10 years if subordinates commit rape.
- 'Intentional touching' to constitute offence of sexual assault with maximum punishment of 5 years.
- Custodial rape to attract minimum 10 years jail, maximum life term.
- Public disrobing of woman made specific offence and will attract jail 3 to 7 years.
- 'Voyeurism' or 'peeping toms' could get 3 years jail.
- Stalking offence referred to as 'eve teasing' included in specific offence.
- Rape to be made gender-neutral. Violent and forced sex on either gender to be 'sexual assault'.
- Panel doesn't recommended lowering juvenile age but wants juvenile justice system strengthened.
- Marital rape to be recognized as an offence for women of all ages.*
- Recommended the rape cases by Armed Forces be treated in ordinary court, not Court Marshal.*
- Acid attack to be specific offence: will attract minimum 10 year in jail as victim's right to live with dignity is impaired.

*These recommendations by the committee were rejected by the Cabinet .

Rise in Rape Complaints

After Delhi Gang Rape Case, a rise in rape cases reported by 50% in Uttar Pradesh. Statistics reveal that 75 cases of rape were lodged with police during the second half of December 2012 as compare to 50 and 40 cases during the corresponding period in 2011 and 2010. A total of 163 cases of molestation, 325 of kidnapping and 92 cases of sexual assault were reported between December 16 and 31 in UP. The Statistics shows a minimum of 13% increase in the number of cases lodged under different heads as compare to the same period in 2011 and 2010.

Rape has been defined in Indian Penal Code in Sec. 376 IPC

Conclusion

The recent amendments that have been brought in the Indian Penal Code, 1860, Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 and Indian Evidence Act, 1876 through the enactment of Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2013 have added a lot of credence to the legal system of the nation. Various new provisions have ensured that strict penalties ought to be imposed against such criminal conduct affecting the women in the country both physically as well as mentally. Provision of relief for new offences like stalking, voyeurism, acid attack, etc. against the women further provides a ray of hope in improving the status of women and removing malpractices prevailing in the society from a very long time. Legal assistance will be of great help to the victims if it comes on time. Rape victims are in dire need of support by Govt. and NGOs in the form of counselling and rehabilitative measure.

The Justice Verma Commission was set up following the murder of 'Nirbhaya' to create recommendations regarding how India might curb violence against women and strengthen rape laws. In its 630-page report of 23 January 2013, the Commission suggested amendments to the law to provide for quicker trials in rape cases and enhanced

punishments for sexual offences. By identifying Indian society's patriarchal frameworks as the foundation upon which crimes against women occur, the Commission has given Indian statutory agencies cause to reflect on the extent to which social attitudes and norms contribute to the climate of misogyny that feeds the commodification of women and, ultimately, violence against women.

The Commission underlines the Indian government's responsibilities under the country's Constitution to protect the "right to life with all aspects of human dignity for women"; in turn, every citizen of India has a "fundamental duty", under Article 51A, "to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women."⁸

According to Justice Arjit Pasayat, "While a murderer destroys the physical frame of the victim, a rapist degrades and defiles the soul of a helpless female."

Therefore rape laws in order to be of great deterrence must have a cooperative victim, professional investigation, diligent prosecution; and an expeditious trial. For otherwise it shall not be the law, that fails, but the applicants, the process and application. Failure of law reflects the failure of the society to protect and serve humanity.

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Theorizing Unequal Status of Equal Halves

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Abstract : The term “gender” is now the dominant cover for analysis of sex identities and practices i.e., for discussing social relations within and between groups identified as men and women. The gendering process frequently involves creating hierarchies between the divisions in enacts. Gender is everywhere when we admonish girls behaving like boys or tease boys behaving timid as girls, we are doing gender. A woman had no identity of her own. By and large, they are still victims of suppression, of stereotype, traditional and rigid roles all over the world- in the beginning as girls, later as women. Women were considered as a body, thing of pleasure, and symbol of sexuality.

In ancient India’s history, for instance there existed works such as Altekar’s “Classic position of women in Hindu civilization” (2005) which argued for a golden age of women in the Vedic period. During the Early Vedic period, the condition of women was said to be satisfactory. In the middle period, the condition of women slightly changed, it became pathetic, pangful and deteriorated. In today’s India, when we talk about gender equality and women empowerment, we find that they are seen as achievers. But the question that arises in mind is that if this is the reality or only theoretical. Are women powerless or submissive? When we deeply think and rethink over it, then we will be able to understand the actual scenario.

The proposed paper will explore the history and discourse of equal halves in contemporary period and also attempt to theorize the gendering process, which are responsible for the actual condition of second sex.

Key Words:- Equality, Gender, Second sex and Unequal status.

Introduction

Gender typically refers to the social process of dividing up people and social practices along the lives of sexual identities. The gendering process frequently involves creating hierarchies between the divisions in enacts. Gender in the modern west usually refers to two distinct and separate categories of human beings (i.e the division into men and women) as well as to the division of social practices into two fields. The gendering of social practices may be found, for example in contemporary societies, in a strong association between men and public life and women and domestic life, even though men and women occupy both spaces. Gender refers to a binary division of human beings and social practices to the point that this division is being construed as oppositional (i.e opposite sex). The two categories are not merely regarded as distinct and opposed; they are also put into a hierarchy in which one is typically cast as positive and the other as negative. Cranny- Francis et. al. (2003;2) notes that in this setting ‘a buddy (a word derived from brother) is a good thing to have, but no one wants to be a siisy (derived from sister).’ Similarly, positive masculine categories such as “bachelor” may be set against negative feminine equivalents like ‘spinster’.

The term “gender” is now the dominant cover for analysis of sexed identities and practices i.e, for discussing social relations within and between groups identified as men and women. (Kemp and Squires, 1997;11)

Gender is everywhere when we admonish girls behaving like boys or tease boys behaving timid as girls, we are doing gender. Most generally, we locate male and female sexes specific and distinctive attitudes and roles, likewise we also impose different sets of expectations on

them. More importantly, we seem to imply that these attributes and roles may not be easily exchanged. We do this without much thought and are not particularly self-conscious about the way of the world. In other words, it appears fairly common sensical to us that boys and girls are to be distinguished through physical manners and behaviour. If questioned, we answer that this is natural; the way things are and have always been, that God or Nature intended us to live thus. In our lives, however, we seldom remain tied to those roles, qualities and behaviour patterns, which are expected of us. While the facts of our sex- the presence of different reproductive organs- are incontrovertible- the things which are meant to be or not. A girl often feels frustrated when she finds out that she can be neither patient nor tolerant, qualities which women are supposed to possess in abundance. She may not be either passive or willing to be sidelined.

Likewise, there are young men who feel uncomfortable having to prove, insistently and unhappily, that they are macho. These men probably dislike fast bikes, do not want to tease girls nor do they feel that the world is theirs to appropriate and own. Such young men are bound to feel uneasy with this shadowy ideal of a powerful and authoritative masculinity that looms large over them. Then again, many of us feel that ordering of the world, and human behaviour into masculine and feminine is unfair. Women, of course, and with good reason, are more likely to feel thus- even the wealthiest and the most powerful of women are perceived as mothers, wives, daughters or sisters. They are seldom viewed as persons on their own right and very few women see themselves as autonomous beings. Some men also experience the world they find themselves as being deeply indiscriminatory because they are subject to norms

that elevate some men over all men and women. Other men feel that they are less evolved than women, in matter of emotional happiness and pleasure and therefore imagine that women are better than them. Men, they say with sorrow, cannot be loving, nurturing and self-sacrificing as women can be.

The point is, at various moments in our lives we do actively question the routine practices of gender. But we rarely question the fundamental premises these practices are based on. We do not ask ourselves why men and women are not more similar than we imagine them to be. Whether masculine or feminine, attributes and roles cannot be exchanged or transformed or, what if men and women can be equal to and coeval with each other. The paper tried to discuss analytical descriptions of some of the better known persuasive arguments about masculine and feminine natures, characters, roles and destinies. And, have also offered a set of counter arguments: it points out that the notions of masculinity and femininity, by claiming universal and timeless validity, foreclose criticism and possibility of change. We also understand that it would be more effective and useful to locate gender in the history of civilizations and learn to see it as a set of arrangements that evolve at certain points in time.

Gender Relations in Vedic Period

In ancient India's history, for instance there existed works such as Altekar's "classic position of women in Hindu civilization" (2005) which argued for a golden age of women in the Vedic period. We also realised that history almost invariably had a top-down approach- marginalised groups, including women and those who did not have easy access to literate traditions, were thus either rendered invisible or were represented from the perspective of the powerful: almost invariably upper caste/ upper class men. Were these strategies through which histories of women could be recovered?

The epics have been viewed as representing the concerns of ruling elites. This is also true, (although in different ways) of Sanskrit plays. Also related to the preoccupations of the ruling elite is the *Manubhasya of Medhatithi* and *Rajtarangini* of *Kalhan* both of which provided a scope for exploring gender relation within a relatively delimited chronological and spatial context- that of early medieval Kashmir. At another level, colonial and post- colonial contexts need to be borne in mind in terms of the present day dissemination of these texts through print. While we have access to some elements of epic traditions through oral and performative traditions by and large, contexts of communication and transmission have been revolutionised, and we can only speculate about earlier modes of communication embedded with the status of women in the Indian social structure. While the history of each one of these texts certainly demand for more critical attention than they have received so far.

Hence, during the Early Vedic period, the condition of women is said to be satisfactory. Hindu women enjoyed equal rights and privileges with men. The girls were at par with the boys and they used to enjoy equal status in the matter of education and other social activities. Prior to it, in the Indus Valley Civilization also, women's condition was far more superior and satisfactory. In the medieval period, the condition of women had been slightly changed, it became pathetic, pangful and deteriorated. Today the condition of women has changed. When we talk about Gender Equality and women empowerment, we find that they are seen as achievers. But, a question comes in mind whether this is a real picture or only theoretical? Are women powerless and submissive? When we deeply think and rethink over it, then we will be able to understand the actual scenario. Women's position started decaying and deteriorated in the later Vedic period. The Brahmins were in dominance. Right from the beginning the priests started doing manipulation in religious books. There was a shift from Varna system to caste system. Thus, the pattern and form of marriage, mate selection had been changed. Spiritual inequality, responsibility and accountability for both men and women is a well developed theme in the religious texts. Numerous scholars of ancient India such as A.S. Altekar, "The Position of Women in Ancient India", 1938, P.V. Kane, "History of Dharmasastra", 1930, Westernmark, "A History of Human Marriage", 1921, G.M. Tripathi, "Marriage from Under Ancient Hindu Law", 1906 etc. are some of the very noteworthy writers, who have written about women and their inferior position. Manu, Kautilya, Yajnavalkya, Narad, and Brihaspati are some very significant writers of law manuals, dealing with women's position and their proprietary rights in family wealth. Prominent modern historians like D.D. Koshambi, K.P. Jaiswal, R.C. Majumdar, R.R. Kamble, A.I.B. Ashma, D.C. Sarkar, Romilla Thapar, R.K. Mukherjee, Dr. R.S. Sharma, Dr. Irfan Habib, Dr. D.N. Jha, Dr. Uma Chakravarti etc. have also described some aspects of women's suffering and their exploitations among various sections of the society and various aspects of females in different periods of India.

Theoretical Perspective

Historical explanations of masculinity and femininity are diverse. Yet they are informed by a crucial epistemological and political principle: masculinity and femininity are not the aspect of biology and physiology. Neither are they God given instead they are the parts of systems of thought and action, which human beings have constructed over centuries. This means that their meanings and significance are myriad dependent on time and place, influenced by facts of both geography and history. Here, the paper has focussed light on few theories of masculinity and femininity. They are not expository in nature. They do not comment on existing truth, whether this truth is expressed by religion, science, caste and politics or

proclaimed as normative and pragmatic. These explanations of masculinity and femininity are concerned with questions of how, why and when men and women come to be reviewed as essentially different things.

One of the most significant historical theories of masculinity and femininity is the Marxist theory of gender. This theory has several variants and emphases, but its fundamental hypothesis is clear and coherent: gender is not an isolated piece of reality; it has to be seen in relation to the social whole, to what Marxists refer to as totality. That is, ideas of masculinity and femininity are neither normative, as religious doctrine would have us believe, nor do they exist as categorical imperatives. Male and female roles and functions are not just functional- they do not merely reflect social expectations. They exist as aspects of social and economic systems. In this sense, they reflect, express as well as influence social and economic realities of economic power, social dominance and cultural authority.

Levi Strauss and Meillassoux, (1981) these critiques of Engels suggest that women first came to be controlled by men through an exchange process between different communities. Women were exchanged as gifts for marriage in South India, the custom of taking a bride from a family and in return marrying a daughter into family is still extant and for ritual purpose. The exchange of women happened at the time when human society was in state of transition from an earlier stage centred around the woman and her household to a later stage when men sought to control over women. The process of exchange became the basis of women's subordination: firstly, they became object, secondly they lost the access to their body too and largely, they were reduced to their productive worth. Gradually, the exchange of women became the norm, leading to specific and important changes in the status of women: marriage entitled women to move into their husband's homes. Women were thus displaced from their immediate and familiar context. Moreover, childbirth proved alienating since children were considered as the property of the men and could only inherit through them.

Large on, rape was a way of keeping women under control of men. It became easy for them to extend that self same aggression towards other men. The exchange of women, abduction and rape were viewed as salient aspects of patriarchy. These were means through which female sexuality was sought to be controlled. This control was exercised in the interest of male power and gradually institutionalized at several levels – work, culture, custom, religion, education.

'Juliet Mitchell (1971) suggests that neither males' control over production nor their appropriations of the female experience of reproduction are solely responsible for the exploitation and subordination of women. Social and economic structure that locks production and reproduction

together must be seen as comprising four levels namely production, reproduction, socialization and sexuality, each of which in distinctive ways, perpetrates male dominance and ensures female submission. Thus, we need to problematize the notion that little girls measure themselves against their brothers. Infact it may be said that boys feel a sense of inferiority than with respect to girls.

The aforesaid description prompts us thus to conclude that gender is both part of world as well as a way of understanding this world. Historical explanations of masculinity and femininity are diverse. Yet they are informed by a crucial epistemological and political principle: masculinity and femininity are not the aspect of biology and physiology. Neither are they God given. Instead they are the parts of systems of thought and action which human beings constructed over centuries. This means that their meanings and significance are myriad dependent on time and place, influenced by facts of both geography and history. Here, we have considered four theories of masculinity and femininity. They are not expository in nature. They do not comment on existing truth, whether this truth is expressed by religion, science, caste and politics or proclaimed as normative and pragmatic. These explanations of masculinity and femininity are concerned with questions of how, why and when men and women come to be reviewed as essentially different things.

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Juliet Mitchell (1971) deserves here special quote. She suggests that neither males' control over production nor their appropriations of the female experience of reproduction are solely responsible for the exploitation and subordination of women. Social and economic structure that locks production and reproduction together must be seen as comprising four levels namely production, reproduction, socialization and sexuality, each of which in distinctive ways, perpetrates male dominance and ensures female submission. This does not mean these levels function completely independently of each other, but each of them affects human lives in specific ways. Socialization is a crucial component of experience of reproduction. It refers to many ways in

which women and the family raise and prepare children to fit in with the demands of the world. The family does not perform its socializing functions in isolation. It exists in a dynamic relation to the world outside. This includes not only the sphere of production, but also the worlds of religion and culture, of community life and custom. Sexuality is usually subsumed in reproduction, but it has to be viewed as an integral experience in which women have little control and of which they have only a limited and habitual knowledge.

Conclusion

Lastly, I would like to conclude the paper with the words of Simon De Beauvoir (1953) and approvingly agrees with her and other female psychoanalysts that for the little girl, her body is quite complete. If at all she feels a lack, it is because, argues De Beauvoir, she finds herself differently situated in the world than the boy. Gender role and identity emerge from, and in turn, constitute the social context and class society: a marked feature of Hindu society is its legal sanction for an extreme expression of social stratification, in which second sex and subaltern is subjected to humiliating condition of existence. Thus, the liberation of women will not be complete without the destruction of patriarchy. It is not enough if women join workers and overthrow capitalism, they still have to wage a battle against patriarchy.

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Constitutional and Legal Safeguards for Women to Ensure Equality

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Abstract :“Can you better the condition of your women? Then there will be hope for your well-being. Otherwise you will remain as backward as you are now”. – Swami Vivekananda

Various articles of our constitution enables the women in our country to safeguard themselves and to ensure equality among the other sections of the society. For instance **Article 15 (3)** enforces the state to make special provision in favour of **women** and children, **Article 39(d) provides** equal pay and equal work for both men and **women**”. **Article 51(A) (e) provides** to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of **women**. These articles further enable the legislature to frame Acts and Enactments to safeguard women.

Indian Penal Code has also incorporated many sections to safeguard women and to ensure equality. This includes Rape (**Sec. 376 IPC**), Homicide for Dowry, Dowry Deaths or their attempts (**Sec. 302/304-B IPC**), Molestation (**Sec. 354 IPC**), Sexual Harassment (**Sec. 509 IPC**),

Since our Independence, many Acts have been enacted by the legislature to safeguard women and to ensure equality. This research paper shall cover a study on few of the constitutional safeguards, few sections of the Indian Penal Code and other Acts enacted by legislature with reference to safeguards for women to ensure equality

Keywords: IPC, Legislature, Parliament, Act

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Historical Background

The need for separate acts and enactments for women was felt necessary in India right from the ancient days due to presence of various anti social activities in those days such as ‘*Sati*’. Various efforts were taken to prevent sati even before the Mughal Rule in India. Permission had to be taken from the Delhi sultanates prior to any *sati*. However the first official act related to prevention of sati came in the year 1827 when the ‘*Sati Regulation Act, 1827*’ was passed by Lord William Bentinck. Much opposition from orthodox Hindu groups was made arguing that self immolation by sati was a privilege and not a harsh treatment. In spite of this the act was passed by Lord William Bentinck on 4th December, 1827.

1.1.2 Present Scenario

In the post independence era with the increase in the number of crimes and anti social activities against women the number of acts related to women has increased to a larger extent. Certain articles of our constitution such as Article 15 (3), Article 39(d) and Article 51(a) ensures safety and equality for women. Various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) have also ensured some measures to safeguard equality for women. Many acts have been enacted such as The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987 and The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition And Redressal) Act, 2013, have enabled the women in our country to ensure equality.

1.2 Objectives

The objectives of this research paper can be stated as follows:

1. To review the various Constitutional articles, sections of IPC, provisions of ‘The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005’, ‘The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition And Redressal) Act, 2013’ and other legal safeguards in India to ensure equality to women.
2. To analyse how these Acts have helped to ensure equality for women
3. To conclude on the role of the constitution and legal safeguards for ensuring equality for women.

1.3 Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature. The study is based on secondary data collected from the official websites, various publications such as journals, newspapers, magazines, internet and from other studies taken up by government and other independent organizations.

1.4 Constitution - Ensuring Equality to Women in India

1.4.1. Article 15 (3)

Article 15 of the Constitution of India prohibits the state from making any discrimination on the grounds of race, caste, sex, or place of birth. However Article 15(3) specifically provides that *nothing in article 15 shall prevent the state from making any special acts, rules and laws for women* and children. This means that even though the state is not allowed to discriminate on any specific grounds, it can make separate provisions for women and children to ensure equality and empowerment.

1.4.2. Article 39 (a) and (d)

Article 39(a) of the Constitution of India states that the state shall always direct its policy towards securing

men and women equally, to have the right to adequate means of livelihood. This means that the state shall neither make any policy which shall be favorable only to men nor shall make any policy that shall be detrimental to the interest of women.

Further Article 39(d) of the Constitution of India states that the state shall direct its policy in such a manner that there is equal pay and equal work for both men and women. This article therefore ensures that none of the acts or laws in India shall have a provision which shall provide different pay scale to men and women.

1.4.3 Article 51(a)

This article provides that it is the duty of every citizen to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women. Therefore adhering to this article, citizen of India shall not commit any act which shall show a critical or disrespectful attitude towards women.

The Constitution of India has thereby ensured that there are sufficient articles in the constitution which shall ensure the equality and empowerment of women in India.

1.5. Indian Penal Code - Legal Safeguards to Women in India

1.5.1. Protection against Molestation

Section 354 of the IPC ensures women to be protected against molestation. As per this section, any person who assaults women with an intention to outrage or insulting her modesty is guilty of an offence. The word insulting the modesty of women includes writing letters in a vulgar language, making vulgar gestures, singing songs with vulgar suggestions etc. This section thereby ensures the women to be free from any of such acts by any person.

1.5.2. Protection against Torture - Both Mental and Physical

Section 498A of the IPC protects women from torture, both mental and physical. This section was laid down with the objective to cut down the domestic violence against women. A criminal case shall be filed against her husband and his relative if he or his relative subjects the women to a cruelty. Further this section also allows a women to file a criminal case against her husband or their relative if they have conducted any act that is likely to drive her to suicide, or which would cause injury to her or health, harassment with the purpose of forcing her to give some property, or harassment because she is unable to yield to the demand for more money or do not give some share of the property.

1.6. Acts in India - Ensuring Equality to Women

1.6.1. Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

This act was enacted by the parliament in the year 2005 to protect the women in India from domestic violence.

It came into force from October 26, 2006. The salient feature of this act is that it not only covers the domestic violence enforced upon women by her husband but covers all the sections of women domestic violence which may be enforced either as a sister, daughter or any other relation.

This act covers domestic violence against women which includes habitually assaulting or making the life of the aggrieved person miserable by cruelty of conduct even if such conduct does not amount to physical ill-treatment, or forcing the aggrieved person to lead an immoral life, or otherwise injuring or harming the aggrieved person. After giving an opportunity to the aggrieved person of being heard an order shall be passed which shall prohibit the respondent from doing various acts such as Aiding or abetting in the act of domestic violence, entering the place of employment of aggrieved person or if the person is child, its school or any other places, attempting to communicate with the aggrieved person, committing any other acts specified by the protection officer. The respondent shall also pay to the aggrieved person monetary relief and compensation as directed by the magistrate. This Act therefore protects women from all the domestic violence and ensures equality among her family members.

1.6.2. The Sexual Harassment Of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013

Whereas the act mentioned in 1.6.1 above ensures safety and equality for a women in her family, the next place where the women being not treated properly is her work place. To combat this issue, the aforesaid act was enacted by the parliament in the year 2013. This act not only ensures prevention of harassment but also lays down a mechanism for redressal and complaint. It protects the women from sexual harassment at not only at her work place but also covers harassment at transportation modes used by employee to visit her work place such as bus, train etc.

For proper implementation of this act, the employers will have to establish an Internal Complaints Committee at its office which shall address to the complaints of the aggrieved party. The Internal Complaints Committee has the right of the civil courts for gathering the evidence. Any employer having more than 10 employees and fails to establish a Internal Complaints Committee shall be punishable with a fine of Rs.50,000. Repeated violations may also cancel their license and registration.

These strict provisions have ensured the minimization of sexual harassment of women at the work place and ensure equality. The level at which it is achieved though is not satisfactory.

1.7. Other Miscellaneous Legal Safeguards

1.7.1. National Commission for Women

The National Commission for women was established

in the year 1992. The objective of this commission is to be a voice for the women in India to advice the government of India while framing any policy or enactment of any act or any other matters affecting women in India. The issues on which the commission has so far interacted with the government through various activities includes issues related to dowry, sexual harassment, politics, reservations in jobs etc. related to women.

Establishment of this commission therefore has ensured that the policies and acts enacted by the government shall not be wholly male diverted and thereby giving equality to women.

1.7.2. Reservation for Women in Local Self Government

As stated in 1.7.1 above, the National Commission for Women ensures that the voice of women in India reaches the government while framing policies and enacting acts. However to allow more transparency in law framing with the objective of giving equality to women, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Acts passed in 1992 has laid down that 1/3rd of the total seats in all the elected bodies shall be reserved for women.

This amendment has therefore ensured that the women in India will not only be able to advice the government in law framing to have equality but shall also participate in the law framing.

1.8. Conclusion

Latest acts enacted have enabled women to not only to ensure equality in her family but also to gain

empowerment and equality at her workplace. Constitutional amendments made, have further ensured that the women in India shall also participate in the law framing procedure so as to ensure equality to the sixty one crore women population in India. Therefore the constitution and legal measures have made their fullest efforts to ensure equality to the women in India. However the women in India is not been made aware of these constitutional and legal powers either due to the predominant cultural drawbacks of women in India or because of the other social problems in India such as poverty and illiteracy among the women. These legal safeguards have to reach up to the women for which it has been made.

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विज्ञापन की दुनिया में अपनी ज़मीन की तलाश में स्त्री का संघर्ष (चित्रा मुद्गल कृत एक ज़मीन अपनी उपन्यास के विशेष सन्दर्भ में)

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विज्ञापन की चकाचौंध दुनिया में जितना हिस्सा पूँजी का है, शायद उससे कम हिस्सेदारी स्त्री की नहीं है। इस नए सत्ता प्रतिष्ठान में स्त्री अपनी देह और प्रकृति के माध्यम से बाजार के सन्देश को ही उपभोक्ता तक नहीं पहुँचाती, बल्कि इस उद्द्योग में पर्दे के पीछे एक बड़ी वर्क फ़ोर्स भी स्त्रियों से ही बनती है। एक ज़मीन अपनी विज्ञापन की उस दुनिया की कहानी भी है जहाँ समाज की इच्छाओं को पैना करने के औजार तैयार किये जाते हैं और स्त्री के उस संघर्ष की भी जो वह इस दुनिया में अपनी रचनात्मक क्षमता की पहचान अर्जित करने और सिर्फ देह - भर न रहने के लिए करती है। आठवें दशक की बहुचर्चित कथाकार चित्रा मुद्गल ने इस उपन्यास में उसके इस संघर्ष को निष्पक्षता के साथ उकेरते हुए इस बात का भी पूरा ध्यान रखा है कि वे सवाल भी अछूते न रह जाँएँ जो विज्ञापन जगत की अपेक्षाकृत नई संघर्ष भूमि में नारी स्वातंत्र्य को लेकर उठते हैं, उठ सकते हैं।

यह सर्वविदित है कि भूमंडलीकरण के सिद्धान्त ने बाजारीकरण की प्रक्रिया को सर्वाधिक बल दिया है। बाजार के विकास का अत्यंत अनिवार्य तत्व है विज्ञापन और विज्ञापन का अर्थ है - जो दिखेगा वो बिकेगा। विश्वबाजार में अपने उत्पाद के अधिकतम उपभोक्ताओं की तलाश में विभिन्न उत्पादक कंपनियों एवं विज्ञापन एजेंसियों में होड़ सी मची रहती है। इसी प्रतियोगिता के नाते अपने उत्पाद के सर्वाधिक प्रसार के लिए सर्वोत्तम दृश्यों का प्रचार विज्ञापन एजेंसियों के लिए आवश्यक हो जाता है। अतः हम कह सकते हैं कि विज्ञापन का मूल उद्देश्य है आकर्षण और बात जब आकर्षण की आती है तो उसके केंद्र में स्त्री का होना अनिवार्य सा हो जाता है। अन्य क्षेत्रों की भाँति विज्ञापन के क्षेत्र में भी स्त्री की भूमिकाएँ कई प्रकार से उभर कर आयी हैं तथा कई प्रकार से उसका उपभोग भी होने लगा है। अत्याधुनिक समाज में भूमंडलीकरण की यह प्रक्रिया स्त्री जीवन को सकारात्मक एवं नकारात्मक दोनों रूपों से प्रभावित कर रही है। परिणामस्वरूप अपनी शक्ति, योग्यता एवं प्रतिभा के बावजूद उसे व्यापक स्तर पर नई असमानताओं एवं असुरक्षाओं का सामना करना पड़ रहा है। समकालीन हिंदी साहित्य में बाजारवाद, विज्ञापन और स्त्री विमर्श को केंद्र में रख कर कई उपन्यासों का ताना बाना बुना जा रहा है। इस दृष्टि से कथाकार चित्रा मुद्गल जी का एक ज़मीन अपनी उपन्यास विशेष रूप से विज्ञापन एजेंसियों के कई दृश्य - अदृश्य पहलुओं पर प्रकाश डालता है तथा आकर्षण और चकाचौंध की आड़ में उसके छद्म और भक्षक रूप का पर्दाफाश करता है।

एक ज़मीन अपनी उपन्यास मुंबई जैसे महानगर में अपने लिए नई ज़मीन तलाशने की इच्छा से आँखों में अनेकों सपने लेकर शहर में आने वाली स्त्रियों के दुधारी संघर्ष की तीखी दास्ताँन है। वैसे भी

जिस शहर में किसी भी सामान्य व्यक्ति के लिए अपनी पहचान बना पाना आसन नहीं, जहाँ प्रतिदिन उसे अपनी रोजी रोटी कमाने व अपनी जगह बनाये रखने के लिए प्रतियोगिताओं से गुजरना पड़ता है वहाँ स्त्री के लिए अपनी पहचान बना पाना नाक से चने चबा पाने जैसा कठिन कार्य है खास कर तब जबकि वह सुन्दर भी हो और अपने चरित्र के प्रति स्वाभिमानी भी। यह संघर्ष तब और भी अधिक गहराता है जब उसके संघर्ष का क्षेत्र विज्ञापन अथवा लाइट - कैमरा - एक्शन की आकर्षक दुनिया हो शायद इसलिए लेखिका ने स्त्री के समक्ष उपस्थित चुनौतियों को दर्शाने के लिए उपन्यास में नायिकाओं के संघर्ष भूमि के रूप में विज्ञापन के क्षेत्र को ही चुना है।

विज्ञापन की दुनिया के इस कटु यथार्थ के साथ विज्ञापन के क्षेत्र में स्त्री की हिस्सेदारी, स्त्री देह और बाजार, नारी स्वातंत्र्य एवं भटकाव, निरंतर प्रतियोगिता एवं संघर्ष तथा अपने बूते पर अपनी जमीन की तलाश जैसे कुछ प्रमुख बिन्दुओं को केंद्र में रखकर लेखिका ने उपन्यास का ताना बाना बुना है। अतः उपन्यास की कथावस्तु, पात्र, परिवेश एवं भाषाशैली के आधार पर उपन्यास में आये इन समस्त प्रमुख बिन्दुओं को विस्तार से समझना आवश्यक है -

विज्ञापन जगत की कड़वी सच्चाई

मुंबई के परिवेश में रचे इस उपन्यास में अंकिता, नीता, अलका, मारथा, नीना जैसी कई सुन्दर, सुशील, सुशिक्षित एवं सक्षम लडकियाँ विज्ञापन लेखन के क्षेत्र में अपनी प्रतिभा के अनुसार विभिन्न एजेंसियों में कार्य के लिए जुड़ती हैं परन्तु अपने काम के साथ कई जगहों पर वह अपनी नौकरी की सुरक्षा हेतु अपने बाँस अथवा अधिकारियों द्वारा छली जाती हैं। अपने आप को संजोए

रखने की कोशिश में भी उन्हें इस बात का अहसास दिलाया जाता है कि यदि उन्हें इस क्षेत्र में अपनी पहचान बनानी है तो किसी न किसी के साथ अनैतिक संबंधों में उन्हें जुड़ना ही होगा। क्योंकि इस दुनिया में अन्य कार्य क्षेत्रों की अपेक्षा ज़बरदस्त प्रतिस्पर्धा है।

अनेक महत्वकांक्षी लोग जिनकी तस्वीरें और खुद वे एजेंसी एजेंसी एडियाँ रगड़ने के बावजूद किसी विज्ञापन में अपना चेहरा दर्ज नहीं करा पाते, हार थक कर लिखने पढ़ने के काम से आ जुड़ते हैं। लोगों से मिलना जुलना इस रंगीन दुनिया में फूलने फूलने की सर्वाधिक महत्वपूर्ण योग्यता है। शिफारिश जैसी चमत्कारिक कूँजी के लिए भी किसी व्यापारी अथवा अधिकारी की पत्नी, प्रेमिका होना आवश्यक है। इस बात को बहुत अच्छे से समझ लेने वाली नीता संवाद के साक्षात्कार से पहले मि. भोजराज की शिफारिश के संदर्भ में अपनी मित्र अंकिता से कहती है कि मि. भोजराज तुम्हारी शिफारिश करते भी तो किसी व्यक्तिगत कारण से नहीं...तुम न उनकी प्रेमिका हो, न मित्र, न संबंधी...तुम मात्र उनके लिए एक बेहतर कॉपी लेखक हो... किसी भी क्षेत्र में नौकरी पाने के लिए प्रतिभा का होना आवश्यक है लेकिन बाजार की दुनिया में नौकरी के लिए मात्र प्रतिभावान होना सबकुछ नहीं। स्थायी नौकरी की तलाश में हर प्रकार का प्रयास कर चुकने के बाद नीता ने ये जान लिया है कि वे खरीददार हैं, उन्हें मालूम है, वे जब चाहें जैसे चाहें बुद्धि और प्रतिभा खरीद सकते हैं...उसके लिए उन्हें किसी को स्थायी नौकरी देने की जरूरत नहीं है। स्थायी नौकरी पर वे मित्र, प्रेमिका संबंधी या लेन- देन के आधार पर किसी को भी रखकर किसी को कृतज्ञ कर सकते हैं, किसी पर दया...न जाने कितने प्रतिभाशाली फ्रीलांसिंग करते हुए उनकी दयादृष्टि का मोहताज हो अधर में लटके अनिश्चय सड़ रहे हैं और महत्वपूर्ण पदों को वे लोग सुशोभित कर रहे हैं जो सिर्फ ग्लैमरस हैं। यह ग्लैमर की दुनिया है अंकू...। यहाँ जीने की, जी पाने की पहली शर्त है- विशिष्ट दिखना, विशिष्ट करना, विशिष्ट होना, विशिष्ट बनना जो वास्तविकता नहीं है...बहुत कड़वी बात कह रही हूँ...तुम्हारी भावनाओं को ठेस पहुचने के ध्येय से नहीं...यह मेरा कटु अनुभव है...

उपन्यास में विज्ञापन क्षेत्र की चुनौतियों एवं समझौतों को प्रकट करने के उद्देश्य से लेखिका ने फिल्मरस, आब्जर्वेशन, पूर्णा, संवाद, उल्का, माध्यम जैसी कई एजेंसियों को खंगालने की कोशिश की है। इन एजेंसियों के कर्ता धर्ता के रूप में मि. मैथ्यू, मि. गुहा, मि. सक्सेना, मि. सुधीर, मि. शैलेन्द्र जैसे चरित्रों के माध्यम से यह बताने का प्रयास किया है कि विज्ञापन अपने आप में एक व्यापक बाजार है। यहाँ उत्पाद वस्तुओं एवं उनके खातेदारों की कोई कमी

नहीं है। कमी है तो जी तोड़ परिश्रम कर उन खातों को अपने एजेंसी में जोड़ने की। परन्तु परिश्रम की रीत तो जैसे यहाँ खत्म ही हो गयी है। कुटनिति और जोड़ तोड़ ही अब इस उद्योग की शिराओं में बहने लगी है। झपटो, मारो, खाओ इसका स्वभाव हो गया है। इन्हीं दुर्बलताओं का लाभ उठा कर स्त्री को वस्तु समझने वाले सक्सेना जैसे कामुक कुटिल खाते एजेंसियों को अपनी उँगलियों पर नचाते हैं और स्त्रियों का शोषण करते हैं। जब तक इनके एकाधिपत्य को छिन्न भिन्न नहीं किया जायेगा, शोषण, कुचक्र से मुक्ति संभव नहीं...।

स्त्री को वस्तु समझने तथा विज्ञापन दर विज्ञापन उसे बदलते रहने की इन एजेंसियों के अधिकारियों की गन्दी सोच को दर्शाते हुए लेखिका बताती है कि फिल्मरस के मि. गुहा के संबंध में तो यह भी मशहूर है कि जब भी उनकी एजेंसी में कोई नई मॉडल आती है तो वह उनकी जिंदगी के साथ साथ उनके कमरे में भी चित्र बन कर टंग जाती है और इसी प्रकार मॉडलों के बदलते रहने के साथ उनके कमरे के वे चित्र भी बदलते जाते हैं। नीता के साथ अनुबंध करने वाले पूर्णा के मि. सुधीर का शौक तो और भी धिनौना है। उनके बीच आम्रपाली के तीन सालों का अनुबंध समाप्त होते ही सुधीर की पत्नी अपने शौकीन पति की कड़वी सच्चाई को उगलते हुए उसे इस बात का अहसास कराती है कि तुम सिर्फ उनके लिए एक फिल्म थी...सिर्फ एक फिल्म। और जो गहरा लगाव एक संवेदनशील निर्देशक को चरम संवेदना के साथ अपनी फिल्म निर्माण के दौरान फिल्म से होता है...वह फिल्म सोचता है, फिल्म खाता है, फिल्म पीता है, फिल्म ओढ़ता है, फिल्म सोता है, फिल्म चलता है और फिल्म ही रति करता है... तुम वही और उतनी ही हो और फिल्में बनाना उसका शौक है। अर्थात् अनुबंध खत्म होने के साथ साथ फिल्म खत्म, फिल्म खत्म होने के साथ ही एक बड़े निर्देशक के साथ उठने बैठने का समय खत्म जिसका सीधा मतलब है उस मॉडल का टाइम खत्म।

स्त्री देह और बाजार

उपन्यास में नीता के माध्यम से स्त्री देह और बाजार के अनुबंधित संबंध को बखूबी उतारते हुए लेखिका बताती है कि कल तक सामान्य सी दिखने वाली नीता पूर्णा के मि. सुधीर के साथ जुड़ते ही आधुनिक पोशाक ब्रांड आम्रपाली की मॉडल बन जाती है। एक विशिष्ट व्यक्ति के साथ जुड़ते ही वह भी विशिष्ट पद पा लेती है। आम्रपाली के तीन सालों के अनुबंध का मतलब है तीन सालों तक मि. सुधीर के साथ रहने का अनुबंध। और इस अनुबंध

में बनी फ़िल्में भी कुछ इस प्रकार की है कि सोचने मजबूर कर दे। कहने के लिए वे आम्रपाली की पोशाकों के प्रचार हेतु बनाई गयी फ़िल्में हैं परन्तु उन फ़िल्मों में नीता के सुडौल जिस्म पर से पोशाकें ही अदृश्य हैं।

विज्ञापन की दुनिया ग्लैमर की दुनिया है यहाँ का समस्त कार्य व्यापार बेईमानी और सेक्स के बूते पर चलता है। बड़े उद्योगपतियों के खातों को अपनी एजेंसी में जोड़ने हेतु मि. मैथ्यू जैसे लोग अपनी एजेंसी में कार्यरत संघर्षशील लड़कियों के भविष्य को खाई में धकेल देने से भी नहीं चूकते। मै साक्षात् प्रमाण हूँ उस शोषण का...नीता ने बताया था मुझे...बाद में इसके सबूत भी उपलब्ध हुए कि आप खातों को मुट्ठी में रखने के लिए मजबूर लड़कियों की मज़बूरी का फायदा उठा कर उन्हें उनके मनोरंजन के लिए परोसा करते हैं...जब तक मैं इस व्यवसाय में पूरी तरह से अंग नहीं बनी थी, बहुत से चेहरों पर चढ़े मुखौटों से वाकिफ नहीं थी...आप भी उनमें से एक थे...मैं उन लड़कियों से भी परिचित हूँ, जिनका इस्तेमाल आप आवश्यकता पड़ने पर करते रहते हैं। मि. मैथ्यू, कुछ परिश्रमी और ईमानदार लोग भी इस उद्योग में हैं, जो मूल्यों के प्रति सचेत ही नहीं है, उन्हें आचरण में भी जीते हैं...मैं भी काम कर रही हूँ...मगर आपकी तरह पाँच सितारा होटलों में कमरे आरक्षित कर खाते नहीं जुटा रही... माध्यम एजेंसी की मुख्य कार्यकारी अंकिता का यह बयान केवल उसके निजी कटु अनुभव को ही नहीं दर्शाता बल्कि सर्वाधिक खाताधारक एजेंसियों के उन धिनौने उसूलों को भी उजागर करता है जिसके चलते विज्ञापन जगत का नाम बदनाम हो चुका है। वह मैथ्यू की ही तरह धिनौने इरादों से इस पेशे से जुड़े अन्य लोगों को भी फटकारने से नहीं चूकती। फ़िल्मों में सिनेमेटोग्राफी करने वाले शैलेन्द्र जैसे चरित्रहीन व्यक्ति के लिए, जिसके लिए स्त्री मात्र भोग्या है, उसे यह कह कर अपने केबिन से खदेड़ देती है कि माध्यम चकला नहीं है शैलेन्द्रजी, नारी की देह की नुमाईश पर वह अपने लिए रोटी नहीं सेंक सकती! आप जा सकते हैं।

कला की आड़ में होने वाले इस दुराचार तथा नयी पीढ़ी पर उसके घातक परिणाम को मध्य नज़र रखते हुए यह कहा जा सकता है कि द्वापर में जो काम दुःशासन बल से नहीं कर सका, आधुनिक काल में वह काम व्यवसायिज्ञों ने छल से कला विज्ञापन कला के नाम पर बड़ी चालाकी से कर लिया और विडंबना यह है कि इसमें सबसे अधिक शोषित जो है, उसे इसका पता तक नहीं है कि उसे नंगा किया जा रहा है, उसे बेचा जा रहा है। उसकी देह ही नहीं, समूचे व्यक्तित्व को चौराहे पर नीलाम किया जा रहा है।

अपनी ज़मीन की तलाश

उपन्यास में नीता और अंकिता विज्ञापन की धुरी पर घुमने वाली वो दो लड़कियाँ हैं जिनके जीवन का उद्देश्य मुंबई शहर में अपनी ज़मीन की तलाश है। ये दोनों ही लड़कियाँ किसी न किसी के जान पहचान से इस शहर में अपने सपने ले कर आयीं हैं। स्थायी नौकरी व अपना मकान किसके सपनों में शामिल नहीं होता? बंबई में अपने घर की कल्पना किसी के लिए भी जीवन का सबसे खूबसूरत सपना हो सकता है... उसके लिए भी है... कभी न सच होने वाला सपना! लेकिन क्या सचमुच वह उम्मीद के डोरों पर पग धरती वह रास्ता बुन सकती है जो उसे अपने घर की दीवारों तक ले जायेगा? वह छत जिसे ग्यारह महीने का मोहताज नहीं होना पड़ेगा...? कोई शिवराम, करीम, परब उससे आकर यह नहीं कह सकेगा कि ए बाई !...अभी अपने को मकान खाली मंगता है...तुम किदर दूसरा जागा अपना इंतजाम कर लो। और यह शहर भी कैसा जिद्दी प्रकृति का है जल्दी किसी से घुलता मिलता नहीं परंतु जब यह किसी को अपना लेता है तो अपने रंग और तेवर से ऐसा सम्मोहित करता है कि इसके आगे बाकी सारे शहर फ़ीके लगने लगते हैं। इसी रंग में रंगी लड़कियाँ तेजी से तरक्की करने और शार्टकट तरीके से अपनी पहचान बनाने की इच्छा से अपनी प्रतिभा और मूल्यों को ताक पर धरकर मॉडलिंग की दुनिया में कदम रखती हैं। जबकि वो बखूबी जानती हैं कि कम समय में ही पर्दे पर अपनी पहचान, वसोंवा बीच पर तीन बेडरूम का प्लैट और आलिशान गाड़ी स्वयं अपने शोषण के अनुबंध के बिना संभव नहीं हो सकता। वह सुविधाओं के अनुसार एजेंसियां बदलती है। उसका मानना है कि छलाँग भरने का खतरा उठाये बिना प्रगति का मोल भाव संभव नहीं। रातों रात नंबर वन मॉडल का दर्जा हासिल करने हेतु वह कम कपड़ों की सीमा तक पहुँच जाती है। ये और बात है कि वही नीता अपने उद्देश्य की परिणिति में अपने अनुबंध के साथ अपना सबकुछ खो बैठती है और बहुत कम समय में ही ग्लैमर की जिंदगी से टूट कर अपने ही हाथों अपने जीवन का अंत कर देती है। जब स्त्री वस्तु बनती है, तब उसकी जिन्दगी दूसरों के हाथों की कटपुटली बनकर बर्बाद हो जाती है, लेकिन अंकिता की सृष्टि उपन्यासकार के मन की स्त्री संबंधी धारणा ने की है।

उपन्यास में नीता की मित्र अंकिता अत्यंत सजग, सिद्धांत प्रिय तथा नैतिकता को महत्व देने वाली स्त्री है। विज्ञापनबाजी का शिकार बनने से पहले ही वह अपने आप को संभाल लेती है। वह कर्मठ, ईमानदार, निष्ठावान एवं प्रतिभासंपन्न भी है। स्थायी नौकरी की तलाश उसे भी है परंतु वह अपने सपनों के लिए किसी भी

कीमत पर अपने चरित्र का समझौता करना नहीं चाहती। अपने प्रतिभा के बल पर फिल्मरस नामक एजेंसी में एक सामान्य कॉपी लेखक से ऊपर उठ कर मि. भोजराज जैसे सज्जन उद्योगपति की एजेंसी माध्यम में बतौर मुख्य कार्यकारी अधिकारी तक का सफ़र तय करती है। अपने लक्ष्य की ओर बढ़ती हुई न वह केवल अपनी जमीन तलाशती है बल्कि अपनी प्रतिभा के बल पर कामयाबी के उस शिखर पर पहुँच कर अपने बूते पर विज्ञापन की दुनिया में अपनी पहचान बनाने में सफल हो जाती है।

उपसंहार

कुल मिलाकर कहें तो यह उपन्यास बाजारीकरण के इस दौर में विज्ञापन जगत के गदले उसूलों के साथ विज्ञापनबाजी के नाम पर स्त्री शरीर का वस्तु के रूप में उपयोग में लायी जाने वाली सोच पर पनपती संस्कृति का प्रमाणिक दस्तावेज है। विज्ञापनबाजी और स्त्रीविमर्श को साथ ले कर चलने वाला यह उपन्यास इस बात का खुलासा करता है कि आधुनिकता की आड़ में स्वार्थ प्रेरित मानसिकता व्यक्ति को कहाँ से कहाँ पहुँचा देती है।

संदर्भ -

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Policy Initiatives to Ensure Enquality and the Role of Civil Society in Empowering Women

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Abstract : This paper titled “The Role of Civil Society in Empowering Women” will begin with an introduction. The introductory part is the account of history where women were held in high esteem followed by a long period when their status declined. But in the 19th century the interaction with Western civilization and colonial domination women’s question loomed large. The colonial domination set the change in motion. As the 19th century Europeans believed that the status of women was integral to the level and strength of civilization. With this belief the Europeans concluded that Indian customs were degrading to women’s status.

From here the paper continues and goes on to mention the role of civilians in empowering the women. The first among the civilians to be influenced by the Western liberal thought were the reformers, who due to their reformist ideology started viewing the women as their subjects. It was this initiative of the social reformers that then encouraged the women reformers to come forward. One example of this was Pandita Ramabai who set up the Arya Mahila Samaj for the general upliftment and enlightenment of women. Thereafter, the women themselves who very much are a part of the civil society began to define their interests, propose solutions and take action. Women started forming their own associations and assumed leadership roles.

In the civil society, nationalist leaders like Mahatma Gandhi ever since his arrival on political scenario mobilized women to combat imperial power. The participation of women in freedom movement won them great respect for their political work, shaped the movement for women’s right and then followed social action, education and legislation.

The paper then will continue to trace the changes in the civil society in the post independence period. Such as in 1971 the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare appointed a committee to examine the constitutional, legal and administrative provisions that have a bearing on the social status of women, their education and employment. The paper will also mention the role of United Nations that focused world attention on status of women. And so the period from 1975-1985 was seen as women’s decade. The post 1990 also saw the establishment of the National Commission for women, so as to give impetus for improvement in the status of women.

The paper will then be concluded with some suggestions as to what more can be done. As gender equality is a constituent of development as well as instrument of development. It is for the civil society to realize and accept the fact that women are equal partners in life, having an equal identity.

The objectives of this paper are:-

- 1 To discuss about the position of women from the earlier to the modern times.
- 2 To point out the changes in the civil society especially in the post independence period in empowering women.
- 3 To suggest some strategies, by which it is hoped women can further empower herself.

“To be a woman-a wife, a mother, an individual-in India means many things. It means that you are a store house of tradition and culture and, in contrast a volcano of seething energy, of strength and power that can motivate a whole generation to change its values, its aspirations, its very concept of civilized life”.¹

Introduction

Women although never equal to men in India, enjoyed a position of high dignity during the early Vedic period. In the later Vedic period, women’s loss of status was systematically institutionalized through denial of education, early marriage, polygamy, kulinism, the practice of sati, denial

of property and finally purdah. Women bore patiently many burdens of the household and dependence on others. The value of their work went unrecognized. This deplorable and pitiable condition of women attracted the attention of some reformers in the eighteenth century.

Historically, it is relevant to recall, that the improvement in the status of women of the upper and middle classes in India, began from the latter half of the 19th century and in the 20th century. The interaction with the Western civilization gradually brought about changes in the condition of women. Most of the 19th century European theory stated that the status of women was integral to the level and strength of civilization and concluded that the Indian customs degrading the women’s status led to most of the social reforms. These reforms led to women’s gradual access to education, employment, widow remarriage, prohibitions on early marriage, access to property rights and other rights within marriage. All this was also the direct outcome of the participation of large masses of women in the different streams of the political and armed struggle for freedom against British imperialism. The social movements and struggles of the dalits and the backward classes, led by

¹Femina, 14, no. 17., August 171973. P.5

Jyotiba and Savitribai Phule and Dr.B.R.Ambedkar, pioneering the emancipation of women, through social and political struggles and legal reform also contributed to this movement. These reforms for the first time introduced monogamy by the Hindu Marriage Act 1956.

Due to the initiative of the social reformers women reformers like Pandita Ramabai came forward and set up the Arya Mahila Samaj for the general upliftment of women. Thereafter women themselves began to define their interests, propose solutions and take action. Women formed their own association and started assuming leadership roles.

But, still there are critical issues plaguing in our society even in this modern age. There is exploitation of working women, both urban and rural, especially among women belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Also sexual exploitation of women has unfortunately seen an increase over the period of time. Women are vulnerable to large scale exploitation by way of prostitution and trafficking due to unemployment and pauperization of large sections of society. Declining female sex ratio is again not a new phenomenon in India. Demographic trends have always demonstrated adverse female to male ratio in India. Today there is a fall in baby girl's chances of being born. This is certainly connected with the increased availability and use of sex determination tests followed by selective abortion of female fetuses. The vulnerability of women as a class has nothing to do with their economic independence. Women have been victims irrespective of her economic background. The rich and poor alike are the victims of social barriers and disadvantages of various kinds.

Here, the need is felt for evaluating, promoting and monitoring the level of women's empowerment. Moreover, the health and nutrition of household is generally in her hands. So women empowerment is necessary, for ensuring not just their own welfare, but the well being of the entire household. Failing to empower women as well as men to reach their full potential is violation of the basic human rights.

Empowerment

"Empowerment is the process by which the powerless gain greater control over the circumstances of their lives. It includes both control over resources and over ideology. A growing intrinsic capability; a greater self confidence and an inner transformation of one's consciousness that enables one to overcome external barriers". (Sen and Batliwala).

This definition recognizes that the process of empowerment involves not only changes in access to resources but also an understanding of one's rights and entitlements and the consciousness that gender roles can

be changed, and gender equality is possible. The second important idea here is that the concept of empowerment is more generally applicable to those who are powerless, whether this be male or female individuals or a group or class or caste. Hence there is nothing about the concept of empowerment which applies to women alone. Nevertheless, there is a lack of women's empowerment which is seen all types of class, caste and also within families and households.²

Women have always been discriminated, have suffered and are suffering discrimination in silence in the civilized as well as primitive society. Even though self sacrifice and self denial are their nobility and virtue, yet they have been made victims of all inequalities, indignities and discrimination. To protect women against all this, Constitution of India has come out with special provisions.

Policy Initiatives to Ensure Equality

Constitution and Women

The constitution of India prohibits any discrimination solely based on the grounds of sex. The prohibition of gender based discrimination has been given the status of a fundamental right. Various other laws have been enacted to deal with the personal matter like marriage, divorce and succession of women. The criminal law also contains numerous provisions to deal with the crimes committed against women; enactments like the Dowry Prohibition Act, supplement the existing criminal laws to combat the evil of dowry. Number of labour and industrial laws provide for the protection and welfare of the women, which include maternity benefit, prohibition of employment of women in dangerous activities and crèche facility for the children of working women. In order to curb the immoral and antisocial practice of prostitution, the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act has been enacted. The female foeticide and infanticide have assumed dangerous proportions due to the determination of the sex of the foetus, which became possible due to advanced scientific inventions. The parliament passed the Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act 1994 to arrest this undesirable trend. The constitution further imposed fundamental duty on every citizen to abstain from practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

Notwithstanding these provisions, violence against women is a universal reality but in most instances, is invisible. Women's movement in the past have been instrumental in enabling the State to accord requisite attention to perpetration of violence within both the 'private' and 'public' domain and integrate social and economic policies and provisions to control violence against women.

²Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.xxxix, No.7, 2004

There are several impediments that come in the way of administration of justice to women. These impediments have often emanated partially from the police force and partially from the society that has not been adequately gender sensitized. Thus there is an urgent need for reviewing the constitutional provisions and the manner in which the law has been implemented in the criminal justice system in India.

United Nations and Women

India has led the world in ratifying UN conventions and international covenants like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). National plans and policies have consistently reflected a vision of progress that gives a central place to the achievement of human rights, freedoms and well-being for all. The last few years in the post independence period i.e. since 1970s have seen dramatic increase in the space available for women in the Indian society. In 1971 Ministry of Education and Social Welfare appointed a committee to examine the constitutional, legal and administrative provisions that have a bearing on the social status, their education and employment and to assess the impact of these provisions. Along with this came the United Nations request to all countries to prepare a report on the status of women for the International Women's year scheduled for 1975. By 1973 the proceedings were concluded. These studies and reports issued in 1974, titled as 'Towards Equality', were the first major effort to understand the extent to which constitutional guarantees of equality and justice had not been met for the women. 'Towards Equality' was the wake up call. The women who wrote it asked how a country that called itself democratic could continue to live with worsening conditions for half of its population. This report and the subsequent studies alerted educated middle class women to the worst inequalities in their society. Even the authors of this report charged that women's status had not improved but had in fact, declined since independence.

Beginning in the late 1970s was the contemporary feminist movement. This movement brought women's issues to the attention of all Indians. Feminists galvanized by endemic violence against women, developed new organizations and new institutions in the 1980s.

In 2002, the United Nations millennium campaign was launched, with the aim of motivating people world over to initiate action in support of identified issues in the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) that also included women empowerment, so as to bring about a change both in the life of women and the countries as such. It is undoubtedly an issue of concern that due to the problem of poverty, women have no access to education. Due to this women lag behind men in terms of various development indicators.

Conclusion

Within our democratic polity, laws, several development policies plans and programmes have been announced for women's advancement in various spheres of public life, since the fifth five year plan onwards, with the significant shift in our approach from welfare to development as far as women's issues are concerned. With the empowerment of women having become a national priority, the enhancement of the status of women and safeguarding of the rights and legal entitlements of women received more emphasis. This culminated in the declaration of 2001 as The Empowerment Year for Women. And the state of Maharashtra has been one of the leading states that have set up State Level Commission for Women to adopt affirmative actions to accelerate the process of empowerment of women.

Further the setting up of national commission for women and the enactment of 73rd and 74th Amendments in 1993 are few of the steps, planned to provide for women's bold participation in decision making at the local levels, albeit by reservation of seats in the local Panchyati Raj institutions and municipalities.

Lastly, these are some of the suggested strategies, by which it is hoped women can be empowered. These are:-

- 1 Creation of mass consciousness about the status of women.
- 2 Supportive services should be provided by the central and state governments and voluntary organizations for women in distress.
- 3 Legal aid centres, mobile courts and counseling centres should be organised.
- 4 Efforts should be made to organize the unorganized women workforce to protect their rights and safeguard themselves from exploitation. Insurance cover, maternity and other benefits should be expanded to unorganized women workforce.
- 5 Different media should be involved to create awareness for women's education and their role in economic, social and political development of the nation. Portrayal of women should be properly done by the media.
- 6 More productive beneficiary oriented schemes should be launched especially for women by the government and non government organizations.
- 7 More and more women voluntary organizations should be encouraged to launch women development programmes.

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Reel Representation of Women's Quest for Equality: A Study of Marathi Film 'Baimanus'.

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Abstract : Women have been marginalized, dominated, exploited and victimized on several levels such as social, economic, political, sexual etc. The politics of exploitations functions at varied levels of family as well as social and political institutions. Barring few exceptions women's quest for identity and equality has scarcely found place in 'reel' representation. However some films deconstruct the set societal norms and dare to stand by positive value of dignity, equality and welfare of the community.

'Br' by celebrated Marathi writer, Kavita Mahajan, is a bold, experimental and critically acclaimed novel. 'Baimanus' is a film adaptation of 'Br'.

This research paper aspires to investigate how poverty, blind faith, racial and gender inequalities are responsible for the pathetic condition of women and whether the present film gives enough voice to it. Keeping this in view the present one stands out and breaks the major stereotypes. The said study also attempts to explore how an urban female protagonist's search for identity intersects with rural women's quest for political equality thereby blurring the gap between rural and urban problems of marginalization. Through contrasting characters, the film gives voice to the dangers of surrendering to outdated, unexamined and slavish standards of institution of marriage.

This research paper also tries to focus on women as represented from the point of view of the film producer, director, audience and the author. When the film is based on a particular novel, inter-semiotic hurdles may crop up hence this research paper probes whether the male director's angle is in conflict with the female author's voice.

Keywords : Stereotype, Quest for Equality, Marathi Cinema, objectification of women, marginalization.

"As all advocates of feminist politics know most people do not understand sexism or if they do they think it is not a problem. Masses of people think that feminism is always and only about women seeking to be equal to men. And a huge majority of these folks think feminism is anti-male. Their misunderstanding of feminist politics reflects the reality that most folks learn about feminism from patriarchal massmedia." – **Bell Hooks.**

Media and society interact and influence each other eternally. Real heroes and events get representations in media but it is reel life that predominantly impresses real life of society. It is not only the fashions, thoughts, style that is imitated but even ideologies are picked up or borrowed consciously or unconsciously by the society from media. Interestingly enough patriarchy has succeeded in creeping into and conquering media too. Hence audience, men and women alike, should be watchful of the obvious or subtle patriarchal ideologies getting perpetuated through media, films in particular.

Women have been marginalized, dominated, exploited and victimized on several levels such as social, economic, political, sexual etc. Although it happens in real life, it has scarcely found its place in reel representation. One can count such films on fingertips which have some message or reflection of social responsibility. Most of the films are made on demand and supply basis projecting female characters either as meek, submissive wife and daughter in law or as seductress to titillate the masses. However, feminist film

critics have raised serious objections to the erotic exhibition of female body and its exploitation, so also objectification of women and male gaze. Mostly the directors surrender to the stereotyped role of women in the mainstream media and portray women characters that are in agreement with conventional role accorded to women. Barring few exceptions Marathi film industry too is no exception. Yet critics, audience and researchers alike always have upheld Marathi films with offbeat and untouched themes

"Films reach a wider audience than literature as they move across the barriers of class, literacy, religion and even language. Not only do they reflect reality, they also construct reality. Film technique has both borrowed from and contributed to literary aesthetics" (Jasbir and Sudha, 2002). Feminist film studies is immensely interesting yet challenging field encompassing variety of topics like gender studies, female biopic, women as auteur, lesbian representation etc. Karen Hollinger teaches Film, Gender and Women Studies at Armstrong Atlantic State University. She has written extensively on women's representation and involvement in Film Studies. In India Jasbir Jain and Sudha Nair's edited book, "*Films and Feminism: Essays in Indian Cinema*", overviews extensively feminism in India. However female centric films in Marathi need critical attention which is neglected even by feminist critics. As far as Marathi cinema is concerned, the issues like women's image, her sexuality, protest against patriarchal supremacy and woman's journey towards self-assertion and definition warrant research.

The main aim of the present research paper is to study whether rampant marginalization of women gets sufficient space in the reel representation and if there is any qualitative and quantitative difference in rural and urban marginalization. Therefore the said study also attempts to explore how an urban female protagonist's search for identity intersects with rural women's quest for political equality thereby blurring the gap between rural and urban problems of marginalization. The select film is a female centric one. Hence it is worth enquiring if the present one stands out and breaks the major stereotypes. *Baaimanus*, a literary adaptation of the novel *Br* portrays an urban female protagonist's search for meaningful space for herself while helping tribal women folk in their battle for political equality thereby realizing that patriarchy is equally strong and there is only marginal difference between rural and urban oppression.

Marathi cinema has a glorious tradition with *Raja Harishchandra*, directed by Dadasaheb Phalke as India's first full-length feature film, released in 1913, at the helm of it. Marathi cinema received critical acclaim in 2004 with the film *Shwaas* bagging the Golden Lotus National Award. It really breathed in a new vigor into Marathi film industry as it was the second Marathi film to win the President's Medal after *Shyamchi Aai* (1950). Then it never looked back. It has produced many films that are not only critically acclaimed but commercially successful as well. It has brought fresh ideas, untouched subjects and deeper human sensitivity on the celluloid.

Although it has a glorious tradition of producing female centric films, it had either an image of docile daughter, yielding damsel, obedient sister, surrendering wife, ideal daughter-in-law sacrificing mother or nagging mother-in-law. Except Jabbar Patel's *Umbartha*, which handled a much revolutionized subject, rest all fall in one and only category where women's self-sacrificing image is not only depicted but her martyrdom too is worshipped. However off late, the directors like, Sunil Sukhthankar, Sumitra Bhave, Chandrakant and Umesh Kulkarni, Gajendra Ahire to quote a few have dared to experiment with feminist issues. Films like *Shewri*, *Not only Mrs. Raut*, *Vastu Purush*, *Evaddhass Aabhal*, *Jogwa* etc deal with assertive female protagonists who show courage to challenge patriarchy and stand by positive values of dignity, equality and welfare of the community. Since there is a dearth of analysis and appreciation of cinematic representation of assertive female figure, the need was felt by the researcher to pursue the study of the flick, *Baaimanus*.

'*Baaimanus*' (Woman kind) portrays a female protagonist's search for identity and quest for equality surrounded by equally marginalized, dominated and exploited female victims. '*Baaimanus*' is a film adaptation of a bold, experimental and critically acclaimed novel '*Br*' by celebrated Marathi writer, Kavita Mahajan. The director very

ardently and sensitively deals with the assertive female protagonist who challenges patriarchy by positive values of dignity, equality and welfare of the community in the film titled *Baaimanus* and it truly captures the spirit of the source text i.e. the novel '*Br*'.

The plot of the cinema revolves round the city-bred, middle-class house wife, Prafulla. When the film opens she is already divorced after almost 18 years of marriage. Highly materialistic and spiritually vacant husband brands her to be misfit and leaves forcing compulsory loneliness upon her though with a sufficient alimony and a house to live in. She is flabbergasted, stunned, even her daily routine is in topsy-turvy. With mutilated self-esteem she joins an NGO working for tribal women folk. The motif of journey symbolizes Prafulla's physical journey surveying tribal village settlements of remote pockets of rural Maharashtra coinciding with her search for identity and spiritual journey towards self-definition. She realizes that poverty, illiteracy, blind-faith, class and gender inequality are responsible for the disastrous condition of women. And she becomes cognizant about the similarity between woes and sufferings of rural and urban women. She remains tongue-tied when a tribal woman remarks, "Tribal women have an extra rib than men, to be thrashed and broken by husbands". She feels her broken rib realizing how common is female suffering and how same are male folk. Adivasi's cultural diversity, nature's bounty of Satpura region rejuvenates renewed strength and vigor in her. The camera oscillates between rural and urban area with use of flashback technique intermittently that unfolds her story.

"Films, by virtue of their wider audience reach, not only reflect and affirm, but also interrogate social and gender images and stereotypes" (Jasbir and Sudha) and "*Baaimanus*" breaks all the major derogatory stereotypes highlighted by feminist criticism. Molly Haskell substantiates it in terms of reel representation of female folk. In her celebrated book, 'From Reference to Rape: the Treatment of the Women in the Movies' she suggests that, "film reflects society, through ideological and social construction of women who are either to be revered (as the virgin) or reviled (as the whore)" (Molly 124). Channi is branded as a "slut" to obstruct her work as a village-head, whereas Jayabai is declared as a 'witch or possessed woman' as she dares to challenge male autocracy for her rights. *Baaimanus* deconstructs yet another popular stereotype of ideal mother. The mother figure is respected, worshipped and idealized universally. Ironically an individual mother is expected to sacrifice her individuality, even her personhood at the altar of motherhood. The protagonist breaks this stereotype of 'ideal mother when she drives out her selfish and opportunist son. Thus the film follows the advice given by Bell Hooks to "black women not to accept stereotypical representations in film, but rather actively critique them" (Oppositional Gaze, p. 95)

Sensitization Regarding Safety and Security of Women in Metro Cities

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Abstract : Even though women have achieved a leap and bound progress, practically in every field of life, still a question with major concern arises “Is She Safe”? With this, surveys have been studied by our group by using resources like newspapers, various published articles, statistics released by National Commission for Women (NCW), etc. This has proved that in India, especially in Metro cities, women are more susceptible for vulgar, unwanted, unjustifiable, out of greed and lust attack. Statistics reflects that after more than 65 years of sovereignty, crimes against women still persist.

Most of the working women in metro cities in India, (also in small cities and villages too) feel insecure about their safety, mostly during night shifts. Everyday, there is at least one or more news about shocking incidents of harassment or sexual assault against women. On studying various aspects of this serious problem, it has been understood that among the number of reasons, to some extent weak functioning of administration, self behavior, lack of awareness and alertness of the victim is also responsible.

Though, in attempt of security, our government is making many laws but they are not strictly followed. So women are not safe in the country, hence women laws and amendments which are made for their security, safety and empowerment need to be revised and refined. There should be some organizations, NGO's for protection of women and girls by providing emergency phone numbers, Self defence training programs for women, installation of safety devices at working places, like camera and above all setting up efficient complaint redressal system. Thus, continuous efforts are required to upgrade security system not only to make women safe but also for survival of women fraternity.

Keywords: Metro cities, harassment, security, crime.

The present paper deals with the unequal status of women manifested with reference to safety and security. Safety is the state of being “safe” (from French *sauf*) the condition of being protected against physical, social, spiritual, financial, political, emotional, occupational, psychological, educational or other types or consequences of failure, damage, error, accidents, harm or any other event which could be considered non-desirable. Safety can also be defined to be the control of recognized hazards to achieve an acceptable level of risk. This can take the form of being protected from the event or from exposure to something that cause healthy or economical losses. It can include protection of people or of possessions.

“Safety and security are two sides of the same coin”.

Definition

According to Merriam Webster, the primary definition of safety is “the condition of being free from harm or risk”, which is essentially the same as the primary definition of security which is “the quality or state of being free from danger”

“Stri janma tujhi kahani, hrudyi amrut nayni pani”

A woman is not only a sister, wife, mother. She is an ideal person in society like Jijamata, Ahilyabai Holkar, Rani of -Jhansi, Sarojini Naidu, Kiran Bedi, Medha Patkar, Mother Teresa, P.T. Usha, Lata Mangeshkar, Kalpana Chawla and

we ourself as well. We are part of the society; we develop not only our house but also culture and society. But others think we are a cultural maker. An attack on women is an attack on culture and society. Here is a statistical data of working women mostly in metro cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Hyderabad and Bangalore.

Women Working Data – 2013

Cities	Numbers
Delhi	5.42 lakhs
Mumbai	6.5 lakhs
Kolkata	2.5 lakhs
Chennai	2.6 lakhs
Hyderabad	3.67 lakhs
Bangalore	1.75 lakhs

Following table depicts the record of crimes in cities of Delhi and Chennai in the year 2013.

Crime	Delhi	Chennai
Rape	1559	94
Murder	1014	180
Sexual Harassment	3319	141
Burglary	331	646

(Source: Delhi Police and Chennai Police Annual Report-2013.)

The above data reveals that in the city of Delhi crime against women is at its peak. Delhi is more unsafe for women than any other metro cities. The above stated crime does not prevail only in Delhi but also in Chennai, Mumbai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, and Bangalore.

Women face safety and security problems like rape, gang rape, murder, acid attack, blade attack, sexual harassment, kidnap, burglary, eve-teasing, etc. Our city, Mumbai is not quite safe for women, especially girls, who have to leave the four walls of their house either for work or for studies. The situation becomes worse when the women have to work for late hours at night due to nature of their services. Law gives protection to women in this concern.

Legal Act related to Safety and Security of Women:

❖ 19th July 2007-“Recent Supreme Court Ruling in Dowry Death Case”

The Commission is seriously concerned with the recent Supreme Court Ruling in Dowry- Death case passed in the case of Appasaheb and another v/s State of Maharashtra which has ruled that “Demand for money on account of some financial stingency or for meeting some urgent domestic expenses or for purchasing manure cannot be termed as a demand for dowry. “The Commission held a meeting in this regard on 19/01/2007 which was attended by legal experts and representatives of women’s organizations. The Commission strongly expressed that this judgment restrictively interprets dowry without regard to the intention behind the law, especially Section 2 of the Dowry Prohibition Act, as well as the fact that dowry continues to consume women in our society.”

The group unanimously passed a following resolution which was forwarded to the Women and Child Development Home Department, Law and Judiciary Department, Government of Maharashtra to immediately file Review Petition in the Supreme Court for review of the judgement.

❖ 19th Jan 2007- Resolution

In the meeting held at the Maharashtra State Commission for Women, on 19th January, 2007, strongly condemned the judgement of the Hon. Supreme Court in the matter of Appasaheb and v/s state of Maharashtra in criminal appeal no. 1613 of 2005.

❖ 15th Dec 2006 – Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

The enforcing agencies under the Act are mainly First Class of domestic Judicial Magistrates, Protection officials, Police officials, Service Provider and the aggrieved person herself. The cases of domestic violence are on the rise and timely intervention is essential in such cases as it includes not only physical abuse but also economic, emotional and sexual abuse.

Sexual Harassment at the Workplace

The Maharashtra State Commission for Women has taken steps for ensuring implementing the Vishakha guidelines as well as the direction given in the Medha Kotwal lele case by the Hon. Supreme Court with regard to sexual harassment at the workplace.

Women in the society are protected by various laws framed in the constitutions. Women are the backbone of the society. Safety and security of the women is actually the prime responsibility of society. Physically healthy women is the asset of society. Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Hyderabad, Bangalore are considered as A1 cities. Nowadays in Metro cities women face a lot of problems.

Women should be quite serious about their own problems of safety and security. They should be aware of their own rights. They should have knowledge of the laws framed from them. For the issue of safety and security women should come together and unite. Women should come on a platform of NGOs to discuss their safety issues, problems faced by women of every stratum of the society, and find solutions to overcome them. Striving is the nature of women. Every woman must strive to ensure each of her fellow kind is safe and secure in her own vicinity.

Women who work in night shift using odd mode or odd type of travel should pay special attention for their safety and security.

Measures Related to Safety of Women

- When it comes to working women, particularly those who work till late in the evenings, or do night shifts, certain safety and security measures should be systematized, say experts. The Chennai High Court recently upheld an order declaring unconstitutional Section 66 (1) (b) of the Factories Act, provision of which prohibited the employment of woman in any factory between 7 p.m. and 6 a.m.
- In Metro, cities schools and colleges should arrange some lectures for all age group of students. They should arrange some free seminars, workshops, debates, posters which give information about safety and security for women. Awareness should be started in women from their childhood then only it will germinate in the personality.
- Safety and security of women is the responsibility of the entire society.
- At the work place, women should prefer to remain in group, giving first priority to their safety measures.
- All women should carry police contact number with them.

- Women should take assistance of available connectivity source for their safety and security.
- Women should be careful of hidden cameras while using trial rooms in malls.
- The saying of Adv. N. Rajkumar : “Since 2006, there has been a series of legislation on issues concerning safety and security of women at workplace. Due to poor awareness and cumbersome process in implementation, this legislation has not helped women much. We also need individual guidelines framed by organizations to punish the offenders” are absolutely true till today.
- Our law should be very strict about women safety and security.
- City police should give priority to safety issues related to women.
- In Metro cities, women should also have good security system in their homes. Chennai is largely a safe city for women.
- Women should be personally equipped with tools and techniques to defend themselves.
- Though the safety of women travelling during night by company-arranged cabs is quite ensured by many firms, centralized scrutiny of all office vehicles by a GPS system, assisted by police patrol at night shifts, and details of the drivers should be verified.

Conclusion

Women and girls in metro cities face similar problems; the relative importance of each women’s safety problem will be different in different places. Women’s safety and inclusion against the present background of rapid urban growth, large-scale migration, insecurity of employment and lack of access to essential services. Women’s safety means a safer, healthier community for everyone. This is a participatory process focused on changing community norms, patterns of social interaction, values, customs and

institutions in ways that will significantly improve the quality of life in a community for all of its members.

Though women feel that they do not get support from the police, most still believe that the police have an important role to play. Several other suggestions were made to improve the infrastructure and facilitate the use of public spaces. Proper lighting is a pre-requisite for making public spaces safe, along with regular maintenance. Bus stops are one place where women feel relatively safe to wait and the new design bus stops are more open and well lit.

Many of the women, particularly those with disabilities, talked about the poorly maintained and often non-existent pavements in many parts of the city. Another area of concern was how to make public transport safer and more accessible for all. Working with bus drivers and conductors and appointing more women for these posts are significant policies that could go a long way in addressing the issue of safety in public transport.

Women reported feeling unsafe in both secluded and crowded places, as well as during day and night. While they are afraid of being physically hurt, harassed, molested or raped in deserted spaces, they also fear harassment in crowded spaces, most commonly in crowded public transport. What emerges from the experiences of the women is the fear of violence, feelings of exclusion, and lack of confidence in the agencies that are supposed to ensure their safety.

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An Analysis of Gender Based Violence in Delhi and NCR

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Abstract : In the history of mankind one finds that different and disparate cultures, however distant they may be in time and space have at least one thing in common and that is the disdain of women. In Gandhian era and the decades after independence have seen tremendous changes in the status and the position of the women in the Indian society. Indian constitution has laid down as a fundamental right- the equality of the sexes. But the change from a position of utter degradation of women in the nineteenth century to a position of equality in the middle of the twentieth century is not a simple case of the progress of women in the modern era. The position of women in the Indian society has been a very complicated one. In fact, it could not be an exaggeration to say that the recent changes in the status of women in India is not a sign of progress but it is really a recapturing of the position that they held in the early Vedic period. Yet, the status of women who constitute almost half of the Indian population is not that encouraging. Gender based violence – including rape, domestic violence, mutilation, murder and sexual abuse- is a profound problem for women across the globe. Nonetheless, it is not considered as a public problem of serious concern.

Violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men. Gender based violence is clearly based on unequal power relation between men and women. The status of women in India is not equal to the status of men in terms of access, participation and reward. The issue of gender discrimination manifests itself as violence in the family, community and society. It broadens the definition of violence by including both the physical and psychological harm done towards women, and it includes acts in both private and public life. Violence against women is usually defined as inclusive of all forms of physical and sexual assault, psychological, emotional and verbal abuse, sexual harassment, female foeticide, female infanticide, abuse of the girl child, social harassment, mental torture, physical violence and cruelty affecting the body and mind of the women. This paper analyses the socio-economic profile of women and different types of gender based violence prevalent in the society and consequences/impact of violence on women in terms of personal, familial, social and cultural levels. The paper is based on primary and secondary data. This paper reveals the types of sexual harassment and steps taken by the society, family members, and system and by victims themselves. At the end it suggests the measure to be taken to avoid gender based violence.

Introduction

Around the world, as many as one in every three women has been beaten, coerced into sex, or abused in some other way - most often by someone she knows, including by her husband or another male family member; one woman in four has been abused during pregnancy.

The term “gender based violence” refers to violence that targets individuals or groups on the basis of their gender. Gender-based violence (GBV) is violence that is directed against a person on the basis of gender. It constitutes a breach of the fundamental right to life, liberty, security, dignity, equality between women and men, non-discrimination and physical and mental integrity. Violence against women has profound implications for health but is often ignored. Violence against women has been called “the most pervasive yet least recognized human rights abuse in the world.” Accordingly, the Vienna Human Rights Conference and the Fourth World Conference on Women gave priority to this issue, which jeopardizes women’s lives, bodies, psychological integrity and freedom.

“Gender-based violence (GBV) is the general term used to capture violence that occurs as a result of the normative role expectations associated with each gender, along with

the unequal power relationships between the two genders, within the context of a specific society.” (Bloom 2008, p14).

In 1993, the United Nation General Assembly defined violence against women as “any act of gender based violence that result in, physical, sexual, psychological harm or suffering to women”

“The struggle for women’s rights, and the task of creating a new United Nations, able to promote peace and the values which nurture and sustain it, are one and the same. Today - more than ever - the cause of women is the cause of all humanity.”(United Nations,1993)

Gender-based violence also serves – by intention or effect – to perpetuate male power and control. It is sustained by a culture of silence and denial of the seriousness of the health consequences of abuse. In addition to the harm they exact on the individual level, these consequences also exact a social toll. Because gender-based violence is sustained by silence, women’s voices must be heard. UNFPA puts every effort into enabling women to speak out against gender-based violence, and to get help when they are victims of it.

Literature Review

Felipe Russo Nancy, Pirlott Angela (2006) : The

United Nations has identified gender-based violence against women as a global health and development issue, and a host of policies, public education, and action programs aimed at reducing gender-based violence have been undertaken around the world. This article highlights new conceptualizations, methodological issues, and selected research findings that can inform such activities. In addition to describing recent research findings that document relationships between gender, power, sexuality, and intimate violence cross-nationally, it identifies cultural factors, including linkages between sex and violence through media images that may increase women's risk for violence, and profiles a host of negative physical, mental, and behavioral health outcomes associated with victimization including unwanted pregnancy and abortion. More research is needed to identify the causes, dynamics, and outcomes of gender-based violence, including media effects, and to articulate how different forms of such violence vary in outcomes depending on cultural context.

DCPCR(2014) had studied status of adolescent girls covering slums in 11 districts of Delhi in which 528 girls were interviewed. It has been found that 51 have been victim of child abuse (emotional, physical, sexual and gender based), Girls were deprived of menstrual hygiene. Only 56% girls use sanitary napkins; 30% use cloth or locally made pads; 6% use both. 22% respondents felt they were malnourished; 26% suffered from illness like anaemia and weakness; only 13% had gone for treatment when ill; 2% said to have never consulted a gynaecologist whatsmore 66.6% girls were school going; 19.69% were dropouts

Sara B. Johnson, Shannon Frattaroli, Jacquelyn Campbell, Joseph Wright, Amari S. Pearson-Fields, and Tina L. Cheng.”(2005): In focus groups designed to probe violence and fighting, urban youth emphasized the impact of gender-based violence in their lives. We used this opportunity to qualitatively explore how gender-based violence affects the lives of urban adolescents. Thirteen structured focus group interviews were held with youth from three high violence settings: a large, urban high school, a training center for disadvantaged youth, and a school for adjudicated youth. Participants were 120 urban, predominant African American youth and young adults ages 14–22. Seven focus groups were conducted with females and six with males. Participants did not talk about violence without discussing the gender-based violence they experienced in a number of social roles: as witnesses to family violence, as victims of intimate partner and dating violence, or as peer observers of harassing and violent behaviour. Male participants felt that other males used violence as a way of maintaining a sense of power over their partners. Participants of both genders struggled to identify the boundaries between playing, harassment, and abuse. Female participants suggested that females sometimes wanted males to hit them, interpreting this violence as a sign of commitment.

Similarly, females struggled to determine if gender-based violence could be a reflection of love.

Research Design

The sample of this study consists of 100 women from Delhi and NCR. It includes working, nonworking women and college going students.

Objectives of the study

1. To find out whether women of Delhi NCR region are reeling under sexual harassment
2. To find out the types of sexual harassment.
3. To find the steps taken by harassed women.
4. To find out whether the victim is known to accused.
5. To know the response of family when they come to know about the harassment.
6. To know what were the reasons victim do not disclose the accident to some one.
7. To know what were the reasons victim do not disclose the accident to family.
8. To know the effects of sexual harassment on victim .
9. What steps should be taken to avoid sexual harassment.

Methodology

Simple Random sampling technique was followed to obtain representative sample. The questionnaires were administered personally to all the associates. It is 36–items questionnaire consisting of both positively and negatively keyed items. **The test retest value of the questionnaire is 0.7.** In this questionnaire researcher tried to cover various dimensions like

- Type of sexual violence
- Relationship between victim and accused
- Response of victim to harassment
- Revelation of incidence
- Reasons not to tell about the incidence
- Family response/support
- Police /Legal response
- Impact of harassment on victim

Results and Discussion

The result of the research shows that out of 100 respondents 76% said that they have experienced the sexual

violence at some point of time and only 24% said that they have never faced such type of situation. Out of 76% who faced sexual violence 54% experienced visual types of violence that they face dirty looks in public or in private. 19% faced physical violence. 40% are the victims of physical violence either by their known ones or unknown. 58% are victims of verbal abuse. 16% said that they faced stalking. 8% of victims faced flashing while 15% reported rapes. The 32% victims said that they have never seen the accused before. 5% told that they have seen the accused before but not known. According to this survey 3% are victimized by their spouses and 10% are victimized by their known ones. 6% accepted that their family member is responsible for their agony. 2% are victimized by their friends and 17% by their colleagues. Even former spouses are responsible for abuse. 2% victims accepted that their former spouses harassed them. 6% are victimized by someone who is in caring or supervising role.

After the incidence the victims are so shaken that it took them more courage to take any action against the accused. According to this study 25% of victims have taken action against the accused. Out of these 25%, 54% told about the incidence to their relatives. 11% have gone to health care centers or hospitals. 11% victims approached the police and court. Researcher tried to find out the reasons for not telling the incidence. 11% of victims said that they thought nothing would be achieved by telling the incidence to anyone. This shows the failure of our society and system as our society and system is not able to crop the confidence in half of its members. 18% victims said that they did not want to upset their mothers by revealing the incidence. 8% victims said that they did not find the incidence important to tell to anyone and 10% said that they want to forget about the incidence. 4% were confused whom and how to tell about the incidence. And the most important fact is 6% of victims didn't tell about the incidence to anyone because they were scared of the accused.

Researchers tried to find out the reasons why victims have not told about the incidence to their families. 17% said that their families can't help them they themselves have to handle the situation. 14% were worried that their family will restrict their mobility. 23% victims told that their family might have got worried and would have acted strongly.

We tried to find out the reaction of the family of those who told about the incidence to their families. 31% victim's family discussed the situation on how to deal with such situations. 10% victim's family told them to avoid to put up in such situations. 8% families suggested the victims to be quiet and not to take any action. 3% victim's family reacted strongly and restricted their movement and treated the victims as accused.

We tried to find out the effect of violence on victim. 25% victims told that they have not suffered any long term

effects. 32% suffered psychologically and 17% confessed that they suffered both physical and psychological effects.

Researcher tried to take views of respondents about the steps to be taken to avoid sexual violence. On the basis of survey it has been concluded that 54% said that women should take self-defense training. 50% suggested that family should support the victims. 27% said there is need to change the outlook of the society. 30% suggested that females should carry items to protect themselves. 24% suggested to avoid wearing certain types of clothes. 12% suggested avoiding certain places completely. 14% are of view to avoid going alone all the time. 29% suggested avoiding going alone at night. 35% suggested to take help of police and NGO.

Conclusion

The result of the research shows that women are suffering from gender based violence in Indian society but it is really shocking that majority of victims are not reporting the incidence to anyone this shows the failure of our society and system to create the trust in half of its population. This is the time to take necessary steps to prevent such gender based violence. We should not treat the victims as accused. They already are the sufferers. As called up by the Honorable Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi that instead of restricting the girls we should tell/teach our boys to behave in dignified manner with girls. It's the responsibility of whole society to make it safe for everyone.

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Gender Disparity in Assertiveness and Academic Performance of Professional College Students : The Case of Kerala Agricultural University

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Abstract : Several studies have been reported in India and other developing countries, on determinants of gender disparities in academic performance, at various levels of education; particularly in professional colleges which follow internal evaluation system. A research was conducted recently among professional college students under Kerala Agricultural University to see how levels of assertiveness contribute to personal stress and academic performance, particularly among girls. The University has students enrolled from all over the state through Competitive Entrance Examinations and female students constitute a large majority. The study used a pre tested structured questionnaire, to survey a randomly selected sample of 192 students of College of Horticulture, College of Forestry and College of Cooperation, Banking and Management located in the main campus of the university. 68% of the respondents were female students. The colleges follow a semester system which has an internal evaluation pattern along with residential learning in campus, through practical and library assignments. Focused Group Discussions and Key Informant Interviews were also conducted to elicit more qualitative data and for triangulation. The study revealed that female students had declined rates in academic performance compared to males in the initial semesters of campus life, contributed by higher levels of personal stress and lower assertiveness. Statistically significant differences were observed in levels of assertiveness and stress between male and female students. Regression analyses indicated that assertiveness levels are being influenced by rural-urban background of the family, size of the family, birth order, self esteem, language difficulties, parental education, and parental occupation. The study also showed that low assertiveness restricted the female students to clarify doubts in learning, limited seeking help from others, pleasing friends and others for the sake of pleasing, and even being exploited or abused sexually.

Keywords : Gender Disparity, Academic Performance, Assertiveness, Professional Education

Background and Rationale

The world today is progressing towards Universal Education.

The current trends, however say that the goal will not be reached by the 2015, target date decided over 160 countries as one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) at the Millennium Summit in September, 2000. Already, the pledge to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005 has been missed out by about 70 countries. The goal to improve adult literacy rates remains illusive: although literacy is central to achieving the 'Education For All' (EFA) goals, over 800 million adults, of which almost two-third are women, who are illiterates (Cynthia, 2005).

Education has been used as a vehicle for a nation's economic development as well as for an individual's progress. The evidence from third world countries show a close link between women's education, and saw economic development, and between the sizes of the gender gap in education and national development (King and Hill, 1993).

Education influences people's lives through several channels. It increases access to knowledge, information, and new ideas. It enhances overall efficiency, market opportunities, and social status. It also changes attitudes and behaviours, among other things, bringing about openness to new ideas and experiences, an increasing independence from traditional authority, and a questioning of passivity and fatalism. These effects apply to both sexes.

However, men are exposed to new ideas through their wide contacts with the world outside home and local community, as well as through formal schooling. In contrast, many women in the developing world have few contacts with the outside world; and for them, formal schooling remains perhaps the primary channel for the transmission of new ideas (Shireen, 1995).

The relationship between gender and education is complex and dynamic. Therefore, issues of gender inequality in education and related factors within developing countries have been gaining increased attention globally over the last three decades, especially since the 1990 World Conference on 'Education for All' in Jomtien, Thailand (Janigan, 2008).

Historical Glance on Female Education

Many studies have shown that the foundation for the development of education was religious-worship (Pankhurst, 1968). The church provided basic education for their male and female followers, particularly how to read and write the Bible. The other themes of their education were closely related to their domestic role with an emphasis on housewife roles and other domestic subjects so that they would become good maids and mothers (UNICEF, 1982). This implied that women were not involved in all types of educational programs and course of study in the earliest times. The educational opportunities for girls remained distinctly below than those open to boys. The report of UNESCO (1970) indicated that this is true not only in qualitative terms, but

also in quantitative terms of education. Nearly everywhere in the world, school age-girls are given fewer educational opportunities than boys. Without exception, the majority of illiterates are females.

In developing nations, it is believed that education of females contributes towards population control; family health and nutrition; receptivity to innovations and educational motivation of school-age girls (Coombs, 1985). According to him, in many developing countries, a remarkable expansion has taken place in girls' educational access in recent years. However, inequalities still persisted in educational access as well as in educational experiences mainly on reaching the upper levels.

British rule brought about substantial progress in terms horizontal and vertical expansion of education system in India, and it has become one of the top development strategy in post independence period in the country. Technical and professional education has also assumed great importance, and agricultural universities, medical and engineering colleges were established across the nation. In the recent decades, India witnessed faster expansion of professional education to cater to the needs of human resource development to support technological advances of the country. The number of females on rolls increased tremendously, and it marked the narrowing down of the gaps of gender mainstreaming in higher education sector in the country.

Several studies in the past in different countries have indicated that levels of assertiveness will influence the academic performance of students in their class rooms, since it contributes to their self esteem, self confidence and ability to clarify doubts and learn the lessons well. Regardless of age, course program and location, there was difference between males and females in the levels of assertiveness. Ramazan and Galin (2005) observed in their study on the relationship between self-assertiveness and school's attitude that there were significant differences in school's attitude as well as levels of assertiveness between boys and girls. As reported by Mohebi *et al* (2012), provision of assertiveness training could reduce the academic anxiety of pre college students, in turn improving their performance. Mahmoud and Rania (2013) in their study on, 'Effectiveness of Assertiveness Training Programme on Self Esteem and Academic Achievement' in adolescent girls at secondary school at Abha city found a positive association among the variables. The same authors (2014) again in another study reported that assertiveness was contributing to psychological well being and self efficacy of first year female student nurses.

Same is true particularly in the most literate state of Kerala, where participation of females in professional education overtakes that of males in many fields, but performance is influenced by multiple factors. Whatever be

the case, being a part of the gendered society, several social and psychological factors related to gender disparities still influence the participants of professional learning, affecting the females adversely.

Generally, most of the observations and studies conducted in all gendered societies of the world show that females are generally lower or deprived of certain traits of empowerment such as assertiveness, self esteem, self confidence, mobility, freedom of expression, participation in decision making in household and community affairs and even in self destiny issues. This might result in lower performance in vocations, and in roles of leadership that might come as a part of any career. Only very few empirical studies have been conducted in India so far on determinants of gender equality in the process of learning and shaping of professionals in higher education. It is probably with the assumptions of equal opportunities assured in the higher learning institutions by law and by norms. Hence, a study was undertaken to address this knowledge gap, especially in the context of Kerala where several social, political and economic reforms have taken place in the past several decades.

Objectives of the study

The research was undertaken with an aim to analyze the academic performance of professional college students of Kerala Agricultural University, as influenced by their levels of assertiveness and its determinants. The specific objectives were:

- To assess the variations in academic performance of the students in different stages of campus life in professional education;
- To study the gender disparities in levels of assertiveness and personal stress among the professional college students in relation to their academic performance; and
- To analyze the factors influencing their levels of assertiveness resulting in differential academic performance.

Methodology

This research was conducted among the students of Kerala Agricultural University during March – May, 2014, since all the constituent colleges of this university offer professional degree programs of four years duration. The university has students enrolled from all over the state through competitive entrance examinations and female students constitute the large majority. The current trend is to have about 70-75 percent girl students on rolls, after good performance in the state level entrance examinations, probably except in Forestry degree program due to less preference for it among girls. The education is in semester

system with internal evaluation and residential learning in campus with much practical and library assignments. All undergraduate students of the three colleges, in the main campus at Vellanikkara, namely College of Horticulture, College of Forestry and College of Cooperation, Banking and Management were included in the sampling frame. The sample respondents were drawn using stratified random sampling with probability proportional allocation method to decide year wise and program wise distribution. Total sample size was 192, in which 131 (68%) were female students based on the allocation mentioned.

The study used a pre-tested structured questionnaire for distribution among the respondents to elicit the needed quantitative data, while Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were also conducted to gather more qualitative data and for triangulation. Major psychological variables like assertiveness, personal stress and self esteem were measured using standardized scales with suitable modifications. The quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS computer software with statistical tools such as ‘Percentages’, ‘Frequencies’, ‘Chi square test’, and ‘Multiple Linear Regression Analysis’. Qualitative data was analyzed with descriptions, narrations and interpretations.

Results and Discussion

The results obtained from the data analysis are presented below according to the sequence of objectives.

Verification of secondary data available in the office records of the colleges indicated that girl students had lower

performance levels in the initial semesters of the degree programs in all constituent colleges, which showed enhancing trends in the later semesters. In the case of boys, such a remarkable trend was not obvious, with variations irrespective of year of study. The probable reasons might be the higher levels of personal stress observed among females in the initial stages of campus life, which declined along with adaptation in the later years. Similarly, the level of assertiveness was lower among females, compared to males and it also might have contributed to lower academic performance due to inability to openly discuss with peer groups, and seek clarifications from teachers and others.

A perusal of Table 1 illustrates that the levels of assertiveness had a difference between girls and boys at statistically significant level of less than 1%. It was also found that the assertiveness of boys and girls had significant association with their academic performance. The lower assertiveness of girls adversely affected their academic performance, while it was not very obvious in the case of boys. The ways of upbringing of females in this gendered society, and the social norms inhibiting open discussions and interactions with the teachers might have influenced this result. The Table further shows that boys had better assertiveness levels than girls, and those who had higher levels of assertiveness in both categories had better academic performance. This implies that measures to improve the assertiveness of students might help in better performance in learning, for which trainings or special sessions can be thought of by the concerned authorities.

Table 1. Association between levels of assertiveness and academic performance of the respondents (n= 192)

Academic Performance Category	Levels of assertiveness			
	Low	Medium	High	Chi square
Boys (61)	14 (22.95)	22 (36.07)	25 (40.98)	
Low	07 (11.48)	10 (16.39)	03 (04.92)	
Medium	04 (06.57)	06 (09.84)	08 (13.11)	
High	03 (04.92)	06 (09.84)	14 (22.95)	
Girls (131)	54 (41.22)	53 (40.46)	24 (18.32)	51.287***
Low	32 (24.43)	13 (09.93)	03 (02.29)	
Medium	16 (12.21)	18 (13.74)	05 (03.82)	
High	06 (04.58)	22 (16.79)	16 (12.21)	
Total	68 (35.42)	75 (39.06)	49 (25.52)	

Figures in brackets indicate percentages *** significant at less than 0.01 level

P value = 0.000

Personal stress was also higher among girls in the initial semesters, due to transplanting shocks from changing the environment of living with supportive parents to the hostel atmosphere, with full autonomy and independence. Boys have enough exposure and mobility outside home even before joining the campus, and the change of living environment might not create personal stress to such an extent. In a gendered society, free mobility outside home is curtailed for girls by various means and the change itself creates the stress. Moreover, the self responsibility to take care of personal security, career prospects and locating trustworthy friendships also add to good amount of stress

for girls, compared to boys. Results presented in Table 2 reveals that personal stress also had negative and significant association with academic performance of professional college students, and it was more evident in the case of girls. The results also indicated significant difference between girls and boys in the levels of personal stress. The Table explains that the lower the levels of personal stress, the better were the academic performance of the respondents. The Chi Square Test showed a significant association between personal stress and academic performance of the professional college students.

Table 2. Association between levels of personal stress and academic performance of the respondents (n= 192)

Academic Performance Category	Levels of personal stress			
	Low	Medium	High	Chi square
Boys (61)	19 (31.15)	25 (40.98)	17 (27.87)	
Low	04 (06.56)	11 (18.03)	09 (14.75)	
Medium	05 (08.20)	05 (08.20)	06 (09.84)	
High	10 (16.39)	09 (14.75)	02 (03.28)	
Girls (131)	36 (27.48)	46 (35.11)	49 (37.40)	46.719***
Low	04 (03.05)	12 (09.16)	29 (22.14)	
Medium	12 (09.16)	16 (12.21)	18 (13.74)	
High	20 (15.27)	18 (13.74)	02 (01.53)	
Total	55 (28.65)	71 (36.98)	66 (34.38)	

Figures in brackets indicate percentages *** significant at less than 0.01 level

P value = 0.000

Further analysis was done to identify the major factors influencing the assertiveness levels of the professional college student respondents of the study and the results are presented in Table 3 below. A perusal of the results show that self esteem and parental occupation of the students has significant influence on their assertiveness at less than 1% level, where as rural-urban background, birth order, language difficulties and parental education had significant influence at less than 5% level. This implies that self esteem (the value one attaches on oneself) of the student has to be considered and means to improve it through supplementary

trainings might help to improve the academic achievement of the students of higher learning programs. The other factors being easily non manipulable cannot be modified and the results throw limelight to the need of supplementary trainings for the students coming from rural areas, those with lower parental education, having English language difficulties, lower birth order, and with parents with rural occupations. The total contribution of all selected eight variables was 71% to make changes in the dependent variable assertiveness and it gives important clues to make the above mentioned inferences.

Table 3. Multiple Linear Regression on the effect of selected independent variables on levels of assertiveness of the respondents (n = 192)

Sl. No.	Variables	Coefficients			Sig.
		B	Std. Error	T	
	(Constant)	.460	.208	2.209	.029
	Sex	.034	.057	.593	.554
	Rural-urban background	.118**	.050	2.351	.020
	Birth order	.061**	.026	2.392	.018
	Self esteem	.011***	.003	3.535	.001
	Proximity of home to town	.066	.035	1.885	.061
	Language difficulties	.116**	.049	2.374	.019
	Parental education	.010**	.005	2.140	.034
	Parental occupation	.050***	.016	3.078	.002

***Sig. at less than 0.01 level **sig. at less than 0.05 level, $R^2=0.710$, Adj. $R^2=0.704$

B: Coefficient (intercept) of the linear equation, R^2 : Coefficient of determination

Conclusions

The findings of the study indicate that the levels of assertiveness of girls in this gendered society is lower than that of boys and it exerts significant influence on their academic achievements as well as in many aspects of personal life and career. This can be inferred from the importance of personal stress in academic achievement and the higher stress seen among girls. The situation can be much improved if special supplementary trainings are designed for girls with the background factors revealed by the study. It also tells us that whatever be the modernization and improvements taking place in social life, the gender prescriptions and roles and behavior are also to be considered

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Constitutional and Legal Provisions for Women in India

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Abstract : This paper tries to cover the status of women during the pre-independent period, the post-Independence period and since then women advancement in the various spheres .Since then there is a paradigm shift in the approach to women issues from Welfare to Development. Women empowerment is considered as a central issue in determining the status of women. Some of the provisions are discussed in this paper.

- Constitutional Provisions For Women:
- Legal Provisions
- Special Initiatives for Women

 1. National Commission for Women
 2. Reservation for Women in Local Self -Government
 3. The National Plan of Action for the Girl Child (1991-2000)
 4. National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001

The Department of Women & Child Development in the Ministry of Human Resource Development has prepared a “National Policy for the Empowerment of Women” in the year 2001. The goal of this policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women.

Verma Committee Report

A three-member Commission, headed by former Chief Justice of India, Justice J.S. Verma which was assigned to review laws for sexual crimes submitted its report to the Government during January 2013. The Commission has recommended comprehensive changes in criminal laws to deal with crimes and atrocities against women which are as under:

- Punishment for Rape
- Punishment for other sexual offences
- Registering complaints and medical examination
- Marriages to be registered
- Amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure
- Bill of Rights for women
- Review of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act
- Police reforms
- Role of the judiciary
- Political Reforms

Women in India have come a long way by carving a niche for themselves in various fields in our male dominated society. Over the years they have won more rights and freedom to choose the way they want to live their lives without being discriminated against.

She no longer prefers to be called a ‘hermit crab’. She has come out of the four walls and now she is everywhere... in army, battlefield, in business, in courts, in office, in outdoorspace, on television, in the university, flying planes, fighting wars, running offices, ruling countries and she is doing it well. She has tasted success.

Pre Independent India

The reason behind this social transformation has been the constant efforts by the government through various policy programmes to empower women. Looking back during the pre independence period, though there were no positive contributions made by the British government, yet, freedom

strugglers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy’s efforts to abolish *Sati* (a practice of a wife burning herself alive in her husband’s pyre) under the Governor general Lord William Cavendish Bentinck 1829, Ishwar Chand Vidyasagar’s crusade for improving situations of women led to women remarriage act

Women freedom fighters like Kittur Rani Channama of the princely state of Kittur in Karnataka opposed the Doctrine of lapse, Rani Laxmi Bai – Queen of Jhansi led Indian rebellion in 1857, Begum Hazrat Mahal, co-ruler of Avadh led to the revolt of 1857.

In 1917, the first women’s delegation met the Secretary of the state to demand women political rights supported by Indian National Congress. The All India Women Education Congress was held in Pune which became a major organisation for the movement of social change. In 1929, Child Marriage Restrain Act was passed stipulating 14 years as the minimum age of marriage for a girl.

Post- Independence period

The greatest advantage of participation of women in political nationalism had an indirect effect. It brought women into the forefront of thought and action. India is proud to have to its archives Mrs Indira Gandhi as the first lady Prime Minister of independent India. to add feather in the cap, Mrs Pratibatai Patil, the first women President and Miera Kumar the first women Speaker of the Lok Sabha.... the list continues.

The principle of gender and equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. Policies, programmes and systems are established to ensure mainstreaming of women's perspectives in all developmental processes, as catalysts, participants and recipients. Wherever there are gaps in policies and programmes, women specific interventions are undertaken to bridge these. Coordinating and monitoring mechanisms is also devised to assess from time to time the progress of such mainstreaming mechanisms. Women's issues and concerns as a result are specially addressed and reflected in all concerned laws, sectoral policies, plans and programmes of action.

Women advancement in the various spheres started since the inception of the Fifth Five Year Plan(1974-78). Since then there is a paradigm shift in the approach to women issues from Welfare to Development. Women empowerment is considered as a central issue in determining the status of women.

Constitutional provisions for Women

1. Equality before law for women (Article 14)
2. The State not to discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them (Article 15 (i))
3. The State to make any special provision in favour of women and children (Article 15 (3))
4. Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State (Article 16)
5. The State to direct its policy towards securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood (Article 39(a)); and equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Article 39(d))
6. To promote justice, on a basis of equal opportunity and to provide free legal aid by suitable legislation or scheme or in any other way to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities

(Article 39 A)

7. The State to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief (Article 42)
8. The State to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Article 46)
9. The State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people (Article 47)
10. To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51(A) (e))
11. Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat (Article 243 D(3))
12. Not less than one- third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level to be reserved for women (Article 243 D (4))
13. Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality (Article 243 T (3))
14. Reservation of offices of Chairpersons in Municipalities for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women in such manner as the legislature of a State may by law provide (Article 243 T (4))

Legal Provisions

To uphold the Constitutional mandate, the State has enacted various legislative measures intended to ensure equal rights, to counter social discrimination and various forms of violence and atrocities and to provide support services especially to working women.

Although women may be victims of any of the crimes such as 'Murder', 'Robbery', 'Cheating' etc, the crimes, which are directed specifically against women, are characterized as 'Crime against Women'. These are broadly classified under two categories.

- (1) The Crimes Identified Under the Indian Penal Code (IPC)
 1. Rape (Sec. 376 IPC)

2. Kidnapping & Abduction for different purposes (Sec. 363-373)
3. Homicide for Dowry, Dowry Deaths or their attempts (Sec. 302/304-B IPC)
4. Torture, both mental and physical (Sec. 498-A IPC)
5. Molestation (Sec. 354 IPC)
6. Sexual Harassment (Sec. 509 IPC)
7. Importation of girls (up to 21 years of age)

(2) The Crimes identified under the Special Laws (SLL)

Although all laws are not gender specific, the provisions of law affecting women significantly have been reviewed periodically and amendments carried out to keep pace with the emerging requirements. Some acts which have special provisions to safeguard women and their interests are:

1. The Employees State Insurance Act, 1948
2. The Plantation Labour Act, 1951
3. The Family Courts Act, 1954
4. The Special Marriage Act, 1954
5. The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955
6. The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 with amendment in 2005
7. Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956
8. The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 (Amended in 1995)
9. Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
10. The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971
11. The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1976
12. The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976
13. The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006
14. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 1983
15. The Factories (Amendment) Act, 1986
16. Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986
17. Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987
18. *The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005*

1. Special Initiatives for Women

National Commission for Women

In January 1992, the Government set-up this statutory body with a specific mandate to study and monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and legal safeguards provided for women, review the existing legislation to suggest amendments wherever necessary, etc.

Reservation for Women in Local Self -Government

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Acts passed in 1992 by Parliament ensure one-third of the total seats for

women in all elected offices in local bodies whether in rural areas or urban areas.

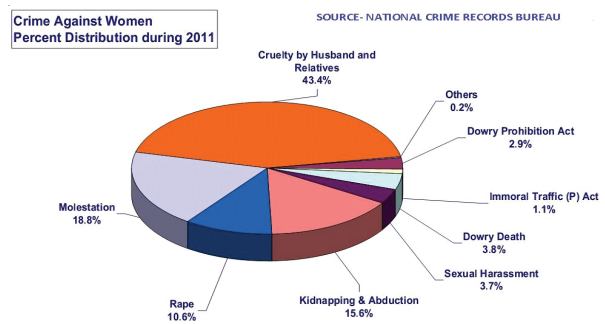
The National Plan of Action for the Girl Child (1991-2000)

The plan of Action is to ensure survival, protection and development of the girl child with the ultimate objective of building up a better future for the girl child.

National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001

The Department of Women and Child Development in the Ministry of Human Resource Development has prepared a “National Policy for the Empowerment of Women” in the year 2001. The goal of this policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women.

Though there are a lot of policy initiatives, there is incidence of crime against women



It is clear from the above pie chart that though there are a lot of legal, constitutional and legislative policies for women empowerment, there is a rise in the rate of crime and injustice against women. In order to prevent the incidence of crime against women along with legislations, committees have been appointed one such committees report is mentioned below.

Verma Committee Report

A three-member Commission, headed by former Chief Justice of India, Justice J.S. Verma which was assigned to review laws for sexual crimes submitted its report to the Government during January 2013. The Commission has recommended comprehensive changes in criminal laws to deal with crimes and atrocities against women which are as under:

Punishment for Rape: The panel has not recommended the death penalty for rapists. It suggests that the punishment for rape should be rigorous imprisonment or RI for seven years to life. It recommends that punishment for causing death or a “persistent vegetative state” should be RI for a term not less than 20 years, but may be for life also, which shall mean the rest of the person’s life. Gang-rape, it suggests should entail punishment of not less than 20 years, which may also extend to life and gang-rape followed by death, should be punished with life imprisonment.

Punishment for other sexual offences: The panel recognised the need to curb all forms of sexual offences and recommended - Voyeurism be punished with upto seven years in jail; stalking or attempts to contact a person repeatedly through any means by upto three years. Acid attacks would be punished by upto seven years if imprisonment; trafficking will be punished with RI for seven to ten years.

Registering complaints and medical examination: Every complaint of rape must be registered by the police and civil society should perform its duty to report any case of rape coming to its knowledge. "Any officer, who fails to register a case of rape reported to him, or attempts to abort its investigation, commits an offence which shall be punishable as prescribed," the report says. The protocols for medical examination of victims of sexual assault have also been suggested. The panel said, "Such protocol based, professional medical examination is imperative for uniform practice and implementation."

Marriages to be registered: As a primary recommendation, all marriages in India (irrespective of the personal laws under which such marriages are solemnized) should mandatorily be registered in the presence of a magistrate. The magistrate will ensure that the marriage has been solemnized without any demand for dowry having been made and that it has taken place with the full and free consent of both partners.

Amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure: The panel observed, "The manner in which the rights of women can be recognised can only be manifested when they have full access to justice and when the rule of law can be upheld in their favour." The proposed Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2012, should be modified, suggests the panel. "Since the possibility of sexual assault on men, as well as homosexual, transgender and transsexual rape, is a reality the provisions have to be cognizant of the same," it says. A special procedure for protecting persons with disabilities from rape, and requisite procedures for access to justice for such persons, the panel said was an "urgent need."

Bill of Rights for Women : A separate Bill of Rights for women that entitles a woman a life of dignity and security and will ensure that a woman shall have the right to have complete sexual autonomy with respect to her relationships.

Review of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act: The panel has observed that the "impunity of systematic sexual violence is being legitimised by the armed forces Special Powers Act." It has said there is an imminent need to review the continuance of AFSPA (Armed Forces Special Power Act) in areas as soon as possible. It has also recommended posting special commissioners for women's safety in conflict areas.

Police Reforms : To inspire public confidence, the panel said, "police officers with reputations of outstanding ability

and character must be placed at the higher levels of the police force." All existing appointments need to be reviewed to ensure that the police force has the requisite moral vision. The panel strongly recommended that "law enforcement agencies do not become tools at the hands of political masters." It said, "Every member of the police force must understand their accountability is only to the law and to none else in the discharge of their duty."

Role of the Judiciary : The judiciary has the primary responsibility of enforcing fundamental rights, through constitutional remedies. The judiciary can take suo-motu cognizance of such issues being deeply concerned with them both in the Supreme Court and the High Court. An All India strategy to deal with this issue would be advisable. The Chief Justice of India could be approached to commence appropriate proceedings on the judicial side. The Chief Justice may consider making appropriate orders relating to the issue of missing children to curb the illegal trade of their trafficking etc.

Political Reforms: The Justice Verma committee observed that reforms are needed to deal with criminalisation of politics. The panel has suggested that, cognizance has been taken by a magistrate of a criminal offence, the candidate ought to be disqualified from participating in the electoral process. Any candidate who fails to disclose a charge should be disqualified subsequently. It suggested lawmakers facing criminal charges, who have already been elected to Parliament and state legislatures, should voluntarily vacate their seats.

Conclusion

No doubt the principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women for neutralizing the cumulative socio economic, education and political disadvantages faced by them. But it is quiet disheartening that the survey shows that incident of crime against women over the years has been increasing at an alarming rate. Crime against women irrespective of various legislations are at a higher level.

Only legislation and law enforcement agencies cannot prevent incidents of crime against women. There is need of social awakening and change in the attitude of masses, so that due respect and equal status is given to women. Youth have to actively participate in the campaign of prevention of crime against women and proper implementation of various policies enshrined for women. Mass media can play an active role here as in the present days it has reached every corner of the nation. Women organisations, NGO's and women themselves have to take a positive initiative and implement the policies.

Dissenting Voices : Analytical Study of the Transition of Socio-Cultural-Legal Situation of Women in India

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Abstract : It is often said that the Universe is a depiction of femininity. The feminine reflection of nature occupies a very important role in the religious history of India. The Earth has always been celebrated by holy texts of Hindus as Prithvi, Dharatimata, Dharitri. From Vedas down to Puranas the “female form” of nature is celebrated. Indian mythology has no dearth of “Goddesses” which are sacred and hold high places in the tradition of Hindu Religion; hence a “positive” inference can easily be derived even by a lay man from the Mythological and Theological research concerning the Mytho-theological status of women in India. However, when a focus of research shifts from mytho-theological investigations to the socio-legal examination; the curtain of illusions starts falling down to reveal the naked, painful truth of the situation of women in India. On one hand, this country celebrates the “feminine power” and on the other the cultural dominance of male species evidently reduced the social existence of women to that of an animal. The sexist mentality of male-dominated society has been a major cause for the deteriorating condition of women, and to tackle this menace, the constitution of India has provided strong measures to establish gender justice and equality. Enactments of Central Laws for women have further strengthened the protection mechanism of women's rights. The Government of India has shown its sensitivity towards seriousness of the issues of women's rights violations by ratifying important International conventions like CEDAW. The purpose of this Research Paper is not only to analyze the socio-cultural-legal transition of situation of women out also to expose the socio-legal contradictions present in Indian society that from time to time has brutally challenged the fundamental existence of women.

Key words : India, Women, Law, Legal, Rights.

Introduction

The history of India is a history of social contradictions, revolutions and counter-revolutions. History of Indian women is a saga of glory, struggle, survival and success. In ancient Indian society, male species has always had a dominant hand. The socio-cultural status of women was comparatively lower than their male counterparts. The masculine ignorance mistook delicate feminine body as a sign of weakness and feminine beauty and sexuality always considered as threatening, damaging and challenging to the ‘Tower of Power’ of traditional male dominance. What is threatening should either have to be destroyed or brought under the absolute control. This is exactly what happened with women all over the world and therefore most of the civilizations in the world including Indian civilization had always been male dominated societies.

Medical science has established the fact very long ago that female sexuality is far more powerful than male sexuality. Estrogen is far more powerful on female sexual desire than testosterone could ever hope to be.¹ This truth of nature changed the entire course of fate of male-female relationship. There was a time in pre-historic era when no family system was in existence, no concept of formal relationship was in existence. Matriarchal autocratic system of clan was in existence which would be entirely controlled by the supreme matriarch (matriarchal system is still prevalent in numerous tribal societies all over the world and there are still tribes where concept of formal relationships does not

exist). Gradually the realization of the truth of “threatening” female sexuality compelled male-species to create a system that not only cut the wings of women but also suppressed her socio-sexual status from erstwhile matriarch to slave.

From the eternal phobia of ‘female supremacy’ institution of marriage was invented which further evolved as a foundation of family system where man is given full control over woman and offspring. Family system, a system of social division of labor and exploitation where man is considered traditionally as a head of the family further completely controlled the ‘sexual energy’ of woman which was flowing freely in the early ages of the evolution of human civilization. After the invention of family system numerous other social systems were also invented. Though it is claimed that the social systems like family system was created to stabilize the nomadic life of human beings however sociological facts indicates something else. That was an era from where the historic downfall of women started. That was an era when man started to control the society. That was an era when the status of women reduced from head of the clan to that of sexual slave of man who owned her in the sweet name of marriage. Invention of family system as a ‘political unit’ controlled the natural, open, illimitable, wise socio-sexual behavior of women and freedom of their choice of sexual partners to a great extent which further resulted in the rise of suppressive behavior of men towards them which increased with the evolution of society.

¹ Dr. Trina Read and Dr. Brian Parker, Who wants sex more, men or women? Retrieved from <http://www.hitchedmag.com/article.php?id=741>

However, In Indian-subcontinent during Vedic period it was seen that the status of women was bit improved compared with pre-vedic era of Indian Civilization. The evidence in this regard can only be found in vedic literature. There was a 'time and space' somewhere far back in history during the early vedic era wherein women enjoyed the status almost at par with men. It is an old saying "where women are honored, gods resides there". She was considered as a "Ardhangini", one half of her husband's body. Though the early vedic family was of patriarchal nature women had some amount of control over the entire household. A *Rigvedic* hymn describes how a maiden could take a soma twig and offer herself as a sacrifice to Indra.² It is observed that the patriarchal system of Vedic era never denied women their rights and privileges which did not directly challenge the Patriarchy. It is an availability of education opportunities, women in those days were able to devote themselves to education. In vedic society the concept of child marriage was not in existence.³ Therefore, women had opportunity to acquire education. If they wanted to pursue knowledge without getting married they were allowed to do so. The educators divided women into two groups namely *Bramhavadinis* and *Sadyovahas*. *Bramhavadinis* were lifelong students of theology and philosophy, and *Sadyovahas* used to continue their studies till their marriage at the age of 15 or 16.⁴ Many educated women became teachers and upadhyayinis. The history of India witnessed many capable and wise women like *Visvavara*, *Apala* and *Ghosha* even composed mantras and rose to the ranks of rishis.⁵ Once a liberal Indian society of Vedic era that gave liberty and a sense (false?) of equality to women, a society that once celebrated social, political, economic, cultural and sexual liberation of women gradually declined into closed, rigid, sexist and male dominated society that rejected basic human rights to women. Once celebrated in the Vedas, women later on reduced to the level of beasts in the "smriti era" by the smritis like "*Manusmriti*". Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in his article "The Rise and Fall of Hindu Women" argues that Hindu religion through its religious texts, such as the Manusmriti always degraded women.⁶ Even celebrated 17th century saint-poet Tulsidas could not refrain from condemning the women when he quoted- Dhol, Ganwar, Shudra, Pashu, Naari, *ye sab hain tadan ke adhikari*" in his celebrated book "*Ramacharitmanas*", which means Dhol (a musical instrument), ganwar (an illiterate person), shudra (low caste person), Pashu (animal), Naari (Woman) deserve to be beaten up. There are numerous documentary evidences

available in ancient and medieval literature to examine the position of women which indicates the gradual decline of their socio-cultural status in every walk of life in India. The historical conspiracy to control, suppress and destroy the "feminist power" achieved great success when evil customs like sati, purdah, child marriage, enforced widowhood, Devdasi system, Dowry system eclipsed the society which further caused to decline women's status.

During the last few decades the incidents of sexual harassment at work place, eve teasing, abduction, prostitution, rape, honor killing, female infanticide and caste-atrocities (against women from Dalit communities) against women are on rise. Many women in India are still living a life without any self-identity. The quest for gender justice that has been continuing since ages has still not reached the destination. For centuries women have been subjugated by male dominated society in the name of religion and religious morality. The status of women in India further deteriorated during the medieval period with the advent of Muslims. In Mughal and British era the situation of women got worsen, as they were made victims to numerous brutal customs, traditions that by then became an integral part of Hindu and Muslim culture. Some great-women rulers like Razia Sultana who was the only women-Empress to rule the throne of Delhi, Nur Jahan, Gond queen Durgavati who ruled for fifteen years were the examples of women power that shined in the dark age. In spite of these powerful women, the condition of women remained unchanged. Efforts of social reformers like Mahatma Jyotirao Phule and Savitri Baai Phule for emancipation and education of women brought revolutionary change in the life of Indian women however, today's woman of 21st century, who is smart, beautiful, elegant, educated, independent, socio-psycho-sexually liberated still suffering from the hot iron of 'sexist-mentality'. It is often seen that deeply rooted religious traditions and social institutions had always played a major role in determining the status of women. If religious scriptures like Smritis and verses of Holy Quoran that openly condemned the women take a place of law they are bound to affect their social existence.

The Midnight of 15th August, 1947 was not an ordinary midnight. It was a night that was impregnated with a dream of freedom. India achieved its independence from British Raj at a stroke of 12 O'Clock at midnight of 15th August, 1947. A new era began. A long cherished dream of "Free India" was at last realized. The festival of light of freedom

² A.S. Altekar, Position of women in Hindu civilization (1938; New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1959, p. 10.

³ P.S. Joshi, Cultural History of Ancient India (New Delhi: S.Chand, 1978, p. 7.

⁴ A.S. Altekar, Position of women in Hind Civilization (1938; New Delhi, Motilal Banarsidas, 1959, p.11.

⁵ R.C. Mujumdar, Ancient India (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1964), p. 64.

⁶ Ambedkar, B.R. (1951), "The Rise and Fall of the Hindu Woman: Who was Responsible for it?", originally published in the journal, The Mahabodhi(Calcutta), Vol.59, May-June, 137-51, Reprinted in BAWs, Vo.17, Part2, Section 4, (Mumbai: Government of Maharashtra), 109-23. The text used here is the BAWs version reproduced in, Rege, Sharmila (2013), Against Madness of Manu: B R Ambedkar's Writings on Brahmanical Patriarchy, Navayana Publishing, New Delhi.

brought new light of hopes to women. As a first Parliament of Independent India the “constituent assembly” was elected to write its Constitution. The Constitution of India was drafted by Drafting Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. B.R.Ambedkar which was adopted by Constituent assembly on November 26, 1949, and it took effect on January 26, 1950.

Constitutional and Legal Protection Mechanism for Women in India

The Constitution of India became savior of women. It has become a source of revolutionary laws that challenged and destroyed the archaic, traditional laws sanctioned by the male-dominated Indian civilization. Principle of gender justice and equality enshrined in the Indian constitution in its preamble, fundamental rights, fundamental duties and directive principles of state policy. Constitution not only grants equality and equal protection of law to women but also equip the state to adopt measures of protective discrimination in favor of women. Within the democratic, constitutional framework our protective laws, gender justice policies, plans and programs have aimed at women’s emancipation and empowerment in all walks of life. India has also ratified various international human rights conventions to safeguard the rights of women. CEDAW (Convention on Elimination of All forms of discrimination against women) has proved to be a revolutionary convention that was ratified by India in 1993.

Constitutional Provisions for Women

Fundamental Rights, among others, ensure equality before the law and equal protection of law; prohibits discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, and guarantee equality of opportunity to all citizens in matters relating to employment. Articles 14, 15, 15(3), 16, 39(a), 39(b), 39(c) and 42 of the Constitution are of specific importance in this regard.

Following are the Constitutional Rights, Privileges and safeguards granted to women by virtue of constitution of India:

- (i) Equality before law for women (Article 14)
- (ii) The State not to discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them (Article 15 (i))
- (iii) The State to make any special provision in favor of women and children (Article 15 (3))
- (iv) Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State (Article 16)
- (v) The State to direct its policy towards securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of

livelihood (Article 39(a)); and equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Article 39(d))

- (vi) To promote justice, on a basis of equal opportunity and to provide free legal aid by suitable legislation or scheme or in any other way to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities (Article 39 A)
- (vii) The State to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief (Article 42)
- (viii) The State to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Article 46)
- (ix) The State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people (Article 47)
- (x) To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51(A) (e))
- (xi) Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat (Article 243 D(3))
- (xii) Not less than one- third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level to be reserved for women (Article 243 D (4))
- (xiii) Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality (Article 243 T (3))
- (xiv) Reservation of offices of Chairpersons in Municipalities for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women in such manner as the legislature of a State may by law provide (Article 243 T (4))

Legal Provisions

- (A) The Crimes exclusively against women Identified Under the Indian Penal Code (IPC)
 - (i) Rape (Sec. 376 IPC)
 - (ii) Kidnapping & Abduction for different purposes (Sec. 363-373)

- (iii) Homicide for Dowry, Dowry Deaths or their attempts (Sec. 302/304-B IPC)
 - (iv) Torture, both mental and physical (Sec. 498-A IPC)
 - (v) Molestation (Sec. 354 IPC)
 - (vi) Sexual Harassment (Sec. 509 IPC)
 - (vii) Importation of girls (up to 21 years of age)
- (B) Some acts which have special provisions to safeguard women and their interests are:
- (i) The Employees State Insurance Act, 1948
 - (ii) The Plantation Labour Act, 1951
 - (iii) The Family Courts Act, 1954
 - (iv) The Special Marriage Act, 1954
 - (v) The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955
 - (vi) The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 with amendment in 2005
 - (vii) Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956
 - (viii) The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 (Amended in 1995)
 - (ix) Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
 - (x) The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971
 - (xi) The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1976
 - (xii) The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976
 - (xiii) The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006
 - (xiv) The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 1983
 - (xv) The Factories (Amendment) Act, 1986
 - (xvi) Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986
 - (xvii) Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987
 - (xviii) The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

Despite of having strong protection mechanism, it is seen that the entire legal system has miserably failed to create a sense of faith and confidence in the heart of woman. Therefore, it is necessary not only to strengthen the laws but also their execution mechanism.

Conclusion

The journey of thousands of years in search of the light of equality has come a long way. It was quite an arduous journey. From prehistoric era of power-liberty to the post vedic era of perpetual slavery and oppression thousands of generations of women gone through the unspeakable pain and suffering. The constitution of India, the Dharma of Modern India has now become the savior of women. By virtue of Constitution of India, women are now granted their basic fundamental rights and the status as a human which was denied to them for generations. To defend the ideals of constitution various laws were made to bring women in the light of justice and equality, however, it is seen that the atrocities against women are continuously increasing. Modern woman who is technosavy, independent and strong; still lives in the dark shadow of fear in Indian society. The nature of offences against women are changing with the time, for e.g., with the advent of internet technology Pornography was introduced which is the highest form of exploitation of women. Newspapers are still filled with the news of Rapes, Incest Rapes, Dowry Deaths, Sex Scandals, Forced Prostitution, Abduction, Female Infanticides, Honor killings.

India is blessed to have enough Constitutional and Legal protection for her women, however, merely laws will never be sufficient. It is important to sensitize modern young male generation about the existence of women. It is a responsibility of Mothers to teach their Sons to respect the sacred femininity. Woman is another name of Love, Passion and Sacrifice. She is both, the creator and the destroyer. Happy woman creates a happy world.

It is important to break the barriers of genders. The time has come to recognize each other beyond the gender identities. The time has come to recognize each other as fellow human beings.

Considering the wide spread practice of 'Gender Discrimination' and the violations of Constitutional and Legal rights by crazy 'Male-chauvinists' of 21st century, it is necessary that India should undertake in-depth review and reform of the existing laws, policies, practices that caused the extreme discrimination and oppression of women. Just and fair struggle against Gender- Discrimination will have to continue. The world will evolve, the dissenting voices shall be heard, and that evolution one day will bring the light of wisdom that will break the chains of slavery once and for all.

महिला समानतेची हमी देण्याबाबत धोरणात्मक पुढाकार आणि महिला सबलीकरणामध्ये समाजाची भूमिका

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महिला सबलीकरणाच्या संदर्भात घेतलेले धोरणात्मक निर्णय - महिलांचा विकास होण्याच्या दृष्टीने १९९४ रोजी पहिले महिला धोरण जाहीर केले गेले. ७ मार्च २००१ रोजी नव्या धोरणाला मान्यता देवून महिलांचे सबलीकरण, विकास, आरक्षणात वाढ, संरक्षण इत्यादी अनेक गोष्टींचा विचार करून सदर वर्ष महिला सबलीकरण म्हणून साजरे केले गेले. त्या निमित्ताने विविध उपक्रम राबवून महिला कायद्यात दुरुस्ती व सुधारणा करण्यात आल्या. धोरणात्मक निर्णय - १९९४ पहिले महिला धोरण महाराष्ट्राचे मुख्यमंत्री श्री. शरदचंद्र पवार यांच्या पुढाकाराने धोरण बनविणारे अग्रेसर राज्य म्हणून महाराष्ट्राची ओळख निर्माण झाली. केवळ कल्याणकारी योजना राबवून स्त्री सक्षम होणार नाही तर महिलांचा समग्र निर्णय प्रक्रियेत सहभाग अत्यावश्यक, या विचारातून, कालानुरूप बदलाला स्वीकारून दुसरे महिला धोरण २००१ तत्कालीन मुख्यमंत्री श्री. विलासराव देशमुख यांच्या पुढाकाराने आले गेले. महिलांच्या समानतेची हमी देण्याची भूमिका वरील दोन्हीही धोरणात घेतली गेली. उदा. महिलांवरील अत्याचार, महिला विषयक कायदे, त्यांच्या आर्थिक दर्जात सुधारणा, प्रसार माध्यमाची भूमिका महिलांना केंद्रस्थानी ठेवून नियोजन, स्वयंसेवी संस्थांचा सहभाग, स्वयंसहाय्यक बचत गटांचा विकास, महिला विषयक हक्क व कायदे या सर्वांमुळे महिलांची शिक्षणातील प्रगती, आरोग्य सुधारणा, मालमत्तेवरील हक्क, महिला विषयक कायद्यांची जनजागृती, नोकरीमधील ३०% आरक्षण, राजकीय क्षेत्रात स्थानिक स्वराज्य संस्थेत ३३% महिला आरक्षण, आता हेच आरक्षण ५०% झाले आहे. या धोरणानंतर जवळपास एक तपाने तिसरे महिला धोरण - ८ ऑगस्ट २०१३ मुख्यमंत्री - श्री.पृथ्वीराजजी चव्हाण व मान्यवर यांच्या पुढाकाराने सामाजिक, आर्थिक, मानसिक परिवर्तनाचा वेध घेवून - महिलांना सन्मान- प्रतिष्ठा, शिक्षण - सुरक्षा, आरक्षण - संरक्षण एकूणच समान हक्काचा न्याय देणाऱ्या या तिसऱ्या धोरणात आधुनिक महिलांपासून ते देवदासी, तृतीयपंथीय महिलांसाठी समान हक्कांचे धोरण उदा. महिला संपत्तीत समान हक्क, महिलांसाठी सनद, जेंडर बजेट, जाणीव जागृती वा संनियंत्रण पर्यवेक्षण, महिला वसतिगृह पाळणाघर. भारतीय संविधानामध्ये स्त्रियांना समान अधिकार (कलम १४) देश व राज्याकडून होणाऱ्या भेदभावापासून संरक्षण कलम १५(1) समान संधी (कलम १६) समान कामासाठी समान वेतन (कलम ३९ डी) या खेरीज विशेष कायदे अधिकार सरकारला देण्यात आले आहेत. कलम १५(क) स्त्रियांच्या प्रतिष्ठेला हानी पोहोचवणाऱ्या प्रथा बंद करणे (कलम ५१ (ए) (ई) कामाच्या ठिकाणी न्याय व सुरक्षित परिस्थिती आणि प्रसूति सहाय्य देण्याची सोय (कलम ४२) अशा अनेक कायदेशीर तरतुदीही आहेत. वरील सर्व धोरणे सरकारकडून समाजासाठी राबवली गेली आहेत. पण केवळ धोरण करून स्त्री सक्षम होईल? धोरणातली मानसिकवृत्ती प्रत्येक माणसाच्या मनातून उदयास येणे, वृद्धिंगत होणे, हेच समाजाचे या संदर्भातील पुरेपुर उत्तरदायित्व ठरेल. (याबाबतचे सविस्तर स्पष्टीकरण)

‘सक्षम, सबल महिला म्हणजेच संपूर्ण देशाचा विकास’ हे सूत्र लक्षात घेऊन महाराष्ट्र सरकारने सन १९९४ साली तत्कालीन मुख्यमंत्री श्री. शरदचंद्र पवार यांच्या पुढाकाराने महिलांसाठी स्वतंत्र अशा धोरणाची निर्मिती केली गेली. पण केवळ उपक्रमशीलता आणि योजना राबवून स्त्री पूर्ण अर्थाने सामर्थ्यवान होणार नाही ही ऋणात्मक बाजू लक्षात घेऊन उपक्रमाबरोबरच महिलांना निर्णय प्रक्रियेत सक्रिय करणारे, कालानुरूप झालेल्या बदलांचा स्वीकार करणारे दुसरे महिला धोरण तत्कालीन मुख्यमंत्री श्री. विलासराव देशमुख यांच्या नेतृत्वाखाली अस्तित्वात आले.

वरील दोन्ही धोरणांचा परामर्श घेता असे दिसते की, महिलांच्या समानतेची हमी देण्याची भूमिका अनेक धोरणात्मक निर्णयातून घेतली गेली. उदाहरणार्थ, महिलांवरील अत्याचार, महिला विषयक कायदे, त्यांच्या आर्थिक दर्जात सुधारणा, प्रसार माध्यमांची भूमिका, स्वयंसहाय्यक बचत गटांचा विकास अशा विविध अंगानी स्त्री समानतेचा आणि उत्कर्षाचा विचार करण्यात आला.

महिला विषयक हक्क व कायदे या सर्वांमुळे महिलांची शिक्षणातील प्रगती उंचावली. आरोग्य विषयक मानसिकतेत सुधारणा झाली. महिलांचा मालमत्तेतील हक्क, महिला विषयक कायदयामुळे झालेली जनजागृती, शासकीय तसेच विविध क्षेत्रातील उपलब्ध झालेल्या नोकरीच्या संधी या स्थित्यंतरामुळे स्त्रीचे अवकाश अधिक विस्तीर्ण होऊ लागले आहे. स्वर्गीय राजीव गांधींच्या प्रेरणेतून नोकरीमधील ३० टक्के आरक्षण, राजकीय क्षेत्रात स्थानिक स्वराज्य संस्थेत ३३ टक्के आरक्षण, राजकीय क्षेत्रातील सहभाग वाढविण्याच्या दृष्टीने ५० टक्के आरक्षण या सारख्या गोष्टी स्त्री विकासाला पोषक आणि पूरक व्यासपीठ मिळवून देणाऱ्या आहेत. एका बाजूला शिक्षणाचे आणि अर्थाजनाचे हे धवल चित्र आपल्या समोर असले तरी बदललेल्या काळानुसार, बदललेल्या सामाजिक स्थितीगतीनुसार महिलांसमोरील आव्हाने ही सातत्याने वाढत आहेत. वाढत्या हिंसाचाराच्या घटना चिंतनीय आहेत आणि म्हणूनच महिलांच्या संरक्षणाचा विचार अनिवार्य होतो आहे.

दुसरे महिला धोरण होऊन एक तप लोटले. तब्बल बारा वर्षांनी बदललेल्या परिस्थितीशी सुसंगत, आणि स्त्रीला एक माणूस म्हणून निर्भयतेने जगता यावे, निसर्गाने आणि कायदयाने दिलेले अधिकार सक्षमतेने वापरता यावेत यासाठी सर्वकष पातळीवर विचार होऊन विविध विषय आणि उपसमित्या यांच्या संयुक्त अभ्यासातून महिलांच्या सक्षमीकरणाला गतिशील करणारे, महिलांना सन्मान-प्रतिष्ठा, शिक्षण-सुरक्षा, आरक्षण-संरक्षण अशा बहुस्तरीय परीघाचे तिसरे महिला धोरण जागतिक महिला दिनाच्या निमित्ताने ८ मार्च २०१३ रोजी जाहीर झाले.

स्त्रियांच्या मानसिक परिवर्तनाला पूरक आणि प्रगतीला वर्ध्निष्णू करणाऱ्या समानतेला पोषक असे वातावरण निर्माण करणाऱ्या, तिसऱ्या महिला विषयक धोरणामध्ये एकूण २५ प्रकरणांचा समावेश आहे. स्त्री शक्तीला आणि स्त्री अस्मितेला सकतेने फुलण्याची, बहुआयामी प्रयत्नांची जाणीव सदर धोरणात निदर्शनास येते. देवदासी, संगीतबारी, तमाशा कलावंत, पुरुष कैद्यांच्या पत्नी, तृतीयपंथी यांना सन्मानपूर्वक जीवन प्रदान करणाऱ्या योजना शासनाने सदर धोरणात आल्या आहेत. त्याचबरोबर सर्व स्तरांतील महिलांसाठी स्त्री केंद्रित अर्थसंकल्प, जाणीव जागृती, संनियंत्रण पर्यवेक्षण, शिक्षण संशोधन, आरोग्य, व्यसनमुक्ती, पर्यावरण, सांस्कृतिक धोरण, महिलांसाठी पाळणाघरे, महिलांसाठी सनद, महिला लोकप्रतिनिधी, बचतगट, असंघटित कामगार, अपंग आणि मतिमंद महिला, लैंगिक शोषण झालेल्या महिलांना आधार देणाऱ्या विविध योजनांची निर्मिती या धोरणाद्वारे केली गेली.

भारतीय संविधानामध्ये सर्व भारतीय स्त्रियांना समान अधिकार (कलम १४) देश व राज्याकडून होणाऱ्या भेदभावापासून संरक्षण (कलम १५(१)), समान संधी (कलम १६) समान कामासाठी समान वेतन (कलम ३१ डी) यांची हमी देण्यात आली आहे. याबरोबरच स्त्रिया व मुले यांच्यासाठी विशेष कायदे करण्यात आलेले आहेत. (कलम १५)(क) स्त्रियांच्या प्रतिष्ठेला हानी पोहोचविणाऱ्या प्रथा बंद करणे (कलम ५१ (ए) (इ)) आणि कामाच्या ठिकाणी न्याय व सुरक्षित परिस्थिती आणि प्रसूति साहाय्य देण्याची सोय (कलम ४२) अशा वेगवेगळ्या कायद्यांची संविधानामध्ये सोय आहे आणि ही कायदेशीर तरतूद स्त्रियांच्या समान न्यायासाठी आणि अन्यायकारक परिस्थितीमध्ये उपकारक अशा स्वरूपाची आहे.

या तिसऱ्या धोरणातील विविध योजनांचा अभ्यास केला तर असे दिसून येते की, महिलांच्या उन्नतीसाठी, सर्वांगीण विकासासाठी, सुढ मानसिक आणि शारीरिक स्वास्थ्यासाठी व्यापक अशी उद्दिष्टे अंतर्भूत असलेले हे तिसरे धोरण आहे. यामध्ये मुलींचे

घटते प्रमाण कमी करण्याच्या प्रभावी उपायोजनांची तजवीज दिसते आहे. स्त्रीच्या पारंपारिक प्रतिमेला धक्का देऊन आधुनिक स्वरूपाची स्वबळावर उभी राहणारी नवी प्रतिमा निर्माण करण्याचा प्रयत्न आहे. धर्म, वंश जात, सत्ता प्रदेश या कारणांमुळे वाढत्या हिंसाचाराचा प्रतिकार करण्यासाठी आवश्यक ते पाठबळ व तशा प्रकारच्या हिंसा घडणार नाहीत यासाठी उपाययोजनांवर भर आहे.

स्त्रीला समानता प्रदान होण्यासाठी पुरुष मानसिकता बदलवण्यावर भर देऊन स्त्री-पुरुष संबंधाची निकोप वाढ होण्यासाठीचे ही प्रयत्न या धोरणात आहेत. त्यामुळे सर्व क्षेत्रातील समान संधीची उपलब्धता निर्माण करण्याचे उद्दिष्ट गाठता येऊ शकते. सर्व क्षेत्रातील स्त्रियांच्या हितांचे संवर्धन होण्याच्या दृष्टीने नियोजनातील आणि निर्णय प्रक्रियेतील त्यांचा जाणीवपूर्वक सहभाग हे महत्वाचे उद्दिष्ट अंतर्भूत आहे. मुळ प्रवाहापासून दूर गेलेल्या अनेक घटकांच्या पुनर्वसनाबरोबरच अन्यायकारक व अनिष्ट प्रथांपासून मुक्तता करणारे प्रतिबंधक उपाय अशा गुणवत्तापूर्ण उद्दिष्टांनी हे धोरण परिपूर्ण दिसते.

समान संधीच्या प्रदानातून सबलीकरण प्रक्रियेचा आपण विचार करतो त्यावेळी सबलीकरण या संकल्पनेतील अंतर्भूत गोष्टींचा परामर्श अनिवार्य ठरतो. सबलीकरणामध्ये स्वतः निर्णय घेण्याचे सामर्थ्य आवश्यक आहे आणि योग्य निर्णय घेण्यासाठी माहिती आणि इतर साधने वापरस उपलब्ध असणे गरजेचे ठरते. निर्णय करण्यासाठीचा विस्तृत पर्याय असणे, सामूहिक स्वरूपाचा निर्णय घेताना दृढ निश्चय घेण्याची क्षमता, परिवर्तन घडवून आणण्याच्या योग्यतेबाबत सकारात्मक विचारसरणी असणे नितांत गरजेचे आहे. वैयक्तिक किंवा सामूहिक सामर्थ्यामध्ये सुधारणा घडविण्याचे कौशल्य आत्मसात करण्याची योग्यता याच प्रक्रियेत मोडते. लोकशाही पध्दतीने इतरांचे दृष्टिकोन बदलण्याचे कौशल्य या प्रक्रियेत महत्वाचे ठरते. अखंड आणि स्व-पुरस्कृत विकास प्रक्रिया आणि परिवर्तनात सहभाग घेणे, स्वतःची सकारात्मक प्रतिमा तयार करणे आणि नकारात्मक जाणिवांवर ताबा मिळविणे अशा अनेक गोष्टी सबलीकरणात अनुस्यूत आहे. स्त्रियांचे आध्यात्मिक, राजनैतिक, सामाजिक किंवा आर्थिक सामर्थ्य वाढविणे यामध्ये स्वतःच्या क्षमतांसंबंधी असलेला आत्मविश्वास वाढविणे अपेक्षित आहे.

या सर्व धोरणात्मक प्रवाहात एक मुद्दा अधोरेखित करावा लागतो तो असा की, १९४८ साली संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघाने मानवी हक्कांची सनद तयार केली त्यातही स्त्रियांचे काही वेगळे प्रश्न आहेत ही विचारप्रणाली अस्तित्वात नव्हती. या वैचारिक उगमासाठी ही

१९७५ साल उजाडावे लागले. स्त्री उन्नत झाली नाही तर समाजही उन्नत होणार नाही. ही जाणीव होऊन संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघाने प्रथम आंतरराष्ट्रीय महिला वर्ष जाहीर केले आणि त्याचे औचित्य साधून भारत सरकारने डॉ. नीरा देसाई यांच्या नेतृत्वाखालील समस्येकडे वाटचाल स्त्रीपरिस्थिती हा दर्शन विषयक अहवाल तयार केला. त्याच्या पाठोपाठ डॉ. इला भट यांनी श्रमशक्ती अहवाल तयार केला. स्व. राजीव गांधी यांच्या पुढाकाराने प्रॉस्पेक्टिव प्लॅन तयार झाला. संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघाने एका लयीत स्त्रियांना विकास साधण्यासाठी आंतरराष्ट्रीय संकेत तयार केले. १९७९ मधील सीडॉ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against women हा एक महत्वाचा दस्तऐवज आहे. भारताने त्यातील काही मुद्दे वगळून त्यावर सही केली आहे.

एकूणच महिला समानता धोरणात्मक तरतुदींवर वरील सर्व उपरोक्त घटनांचे आणि इतिहासाचे संस्कार आहेत आणि त्यातूनच स्त्री समानतेची ही धोरणे उदयास आली आहेत. सन १९९४ मध्ये संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघात झालेल्या घडामोडी या पार्श्वभूमीवरच पहिले महिला धोरण अस्तित्वात आले. २००१ साली दुसरे धोरण कार्यान्वित झाले. महत्वाची गोष्ट ही की, महिला धोरण बनवित असताना प्रत्येक तीन वर्षांनी महिला धोरणाचा पाठपुरावा करण्याची व प्रत्येक तीन वर्षांनी महिला धोरणाचे मूल्यांकन करून नवीन धोरण तयार करण्याची प्रक्रिया अमलात आणावी अशी योजना होती. महिला सबलीकरणामध्ये समाजाची भूमिका या विषयाच्या अंतर्भूत जो उपविषय आहे त्यामध्ये महिला सबलीकरण प्रक्रियेत समाजाचे नेमके उत्तरदायित्व कोणते ? असा विचार करताना या सामाजिक उत्तरदायित्वाचे पहिले अपयश या ठिकाणी माझ्या निदर्शनास येते.

या धोरण निर्मिती प्रक्रियेत दुसऱ्या धोरणानंतर तिसरे महिला धोरण आले जाण्यासाठी, कार्यान्वित होण्यासाठी तब्बल १२ वर्षांचा कालावधी जातो, ही बाब चिंतनीय आहे. कारण समाजाचे उत्तरदायित्व ही संकल्पना सरकारी यंत्रणांनाही लागू पडते. एखादी यंत्रणा राबविली जाते, कार्यप्रवण होते म्हणजे तरी काय होते तर त्या यंत्रणेमधली माणसे कार्यप्रवण होतात. अनेक व्यक्तींच्या समूहातून समाज नावाची एक व्यापक संकल्पना आकाराला येत असते. आणि म्हणूनच, एखाद्या यंत्रणेला हे धोरणात्मक निर्णय घेण्यासाठी १२ वर्षे जावी लागतात, याचाच अर्थ हा की त्यामध्ये अंतर्भूत मानवी घटकांकडून प्रस्थापित विषयाबद्दल अनास्था असते किंवा विशेष औत्सुक्य नसते आणि अशा प्रकारची उदासीनता ही कोणत्याही व्यवस्थापनासाठी चांगली नसते. कारण कार्यप्रणाली निर्माण करणारी माणसे, ती राबवणारी माणसे आणि ज्यांच्यासाठी

या योजना किंवा धोरणे अस्तित्वात येतात तो घटक यांची त्या कार्याबद्दलची आस्था, तत्परता आणि आनंद या तीन गोष्टी असणे आत्यंतिक गरजेचे असते. तरच समाजातील विविध घटकांसाठी निर्माण होणाऱ्या योजना, धोरणे खऱ्या अर्थाने समाजापर्यंत पोहोचतात आणि फलश्रुत होतात.

व्यवस्थापनातील सामूहिक उत्तरदायित्वांमध्ये अतिशय महत्वाचा भाग, म्हणजे धोरणातील उद्दिष्टांबद्दल असलेली अंतःस्थ तळमळ! विविध योजना तळागाळा-वाड्यावास्त्यांपर्यंत पोचवणाऱ्या प्रशासनामध्ये जे मानवी घटक कार्यरत आहेत, त्यांच्याकडून परस्पर सहकार्य आणि उद्दिष्टपूर्तीबद्दलची प्रामाणिक तळमळ यातून स्वच्छ आणि भ्रष्टाचारविरहित कार्यप्रणालीची अंमलबजावणी होऊ शकते आणि ही गोष्ट धोरणांच्या यशस्वितेसाठी ही बाब महत्वाची ठरते.

यानंतर विचार करावा लागतो तो ज्या स्त्रियांसाठी या बहुआयामी योजना आल्या गेल्या आहेत त्यांच्या मानसिकतेचा. कारण केवळ शहरातील स्त्री सक्षम होवून राष्ट्र सशक्त होत नाही, तर खेड्यापाड्यातील, दुर्गम भागातील स्त्री सबल होणं हेच खरे परिवर्तन होय आणि त्या स्त्रीला मिळणारी शिक्षणाची संधी, स्वतःला सिध्द करण्याची संधी, वेगळे काही करून दाखवताना मिळणारे प्रोत्साहन आणि त्या अनुषंगाने आवश्यक ठरणारे नैतिक पाठबळ या मध्ये महत्वाचा आणि गुणवत्तापूर्ण सहभाग हवा तो तिच्या जवळच्या नातेसंबंधातील माणसांचा तसेच तिच्या कार्यक्षेत्रात संबंधित असणाऱ्या माणसांचा. एकूणच तिच्या परिघातील मानवी घटकांची तिच्या प्रगतीकडे पहाण्याची निकोप दृष्टी, आणि मदत करता आली नाही तरी किमान अडसर होणार नाही अशी वर्तनपध्दती ही या उत्तरदायित्वांमधली एक विशेष गोष्ट आहे. कारण विविध धोरणांच्या माध्यमातून स्त्री जेव्हा विकास करू पाहते. त्यावेळी तिची अर्धी ताकद तिच्या जवळच्या लोकांकडून होणाऱ्या अडसराना बाजूला करण्यातच खर्च होते, त्यातून विकास प्रक्रिया मंद होते आणि उद्दिष्टपूर्तीचा आवश्यक तो उच्चांक गाठला जाऊ शकत नाही. जवळच्या व्यक्तींच्या सौहार्दपूर्ण सहकारानंतर अपेक्षित आहे तो समाजातील लोकांचा स्त्री जगताशी असणारा वर्तनव्यवहार. विविध धोरणांच्या मदतीने कोणत्याही स्तरावरील स्त्री मग ती सधन असो वा निर्धन. सुविद्य असो वा निरक्षर, सौंदर्यवती असो वा सुमार व्यक्तिमत्त्वाची-तिच्या व्यक्तिमत्व विकासामध्ये एकूण समाजाची भूमिका फार महत्वाची ठरते. यामध्ये सर्वात महत्वाची गोष्ट घडणे आवश्यक आहे ती म्हणजे स्त्री, स्त्रीची सखी झाली पाहिजे. समस्त स्त्री वर्गामध्ये

एकसंघत्वाची भावना वाढीस लागली पाहिजे. असूया, ईर्ष्या, या भावनांचे उच्चाटन होणं फार गरजेचे आहे. महिला सबल होताना समग्र स्त्रीशक्ती संघटित होणे गरजेचे आहे. त्यामुळे विकासाला पूरक अशी पार्श्वभूमी तर तयार होईल त्याखेरीज निकोप संबंध प्रस्थापित झाल्यामुळे सामाजिक आरोग्यही वाढीस लागेल.

एकूण स्त्री सबल आणि सक्षम होत असताना भारतीय पुरुष प्रधान संस्कृतीला छेद देऊन एक उदारमतवदी दृष्टीकोण वृद्धिंगत होणे गरजेचे आहे. अर्थात पूर्वी इतके कोणत्याही क्षेत्रात पुरुषाचे दृष्टिकोण आता स्त्रीविश्वासासाठी संकुचित राहिलेले नाहीत. पण त्या दृष्टिकोणामध्ये अजून सशक्तता आणि खोली येणे अपेक्षित आहे आणि त्याबरोबर सर्वात महत्वाचा आहे. तो तिच्या अस्मितेचा आदर किंवा उचित सन्मान! 'मी स्त्री आहे' या सहानुभूतीच्या अपेक्षेत आता स्त्रिया राहिलेल्या नाहीत. शिक्षण, कायदा आणि समान अधिकाराने त्यांना निर्भयता आणि आत्मविश्वासाचे कोंदण नक्कीच दिले आहे पण तरीही प्रगतीच्या या वाटेवर समाजाच्या मानसिकतेमध्ये परिवर्तनाची आवश्यकता आहे. समाजामधील सर्वसाधारण स्त्रीविषयी आता दृष्टिकोणात निकोपता आहे. परंतु देवदासी, संगीतबारी, तमाशा कलावंत, तृतीयपंथी यांच्या विषयी आजही अज्ञान आणि गैरसमजुती यांचे प्राबल्य दिसून येते. अपंग, मतिमंद महिला, लैंगिक शोषण झालेल्या महिला यांच्या पुनर्वसनासाठी समाजाचा कृतियुक्त सहभाग अपेक्षित आहे. या सहभागासाठी आवश्यक ठरते ती स्वयंप्रेरणा आणि स्वयंप्रेरित होण्यासाठी व्यक्तींची पूरक अशी मनोवृत्ती आणि मानसिकता तयार होणे अतिशय महत्त्वाचे आणि गरजेचे आहे. सामूहिक मतपरिवर्तन किंवा समूहाच्या जडणघडणीचा आपण जेव्हा विचार करतो त्यावेळी एक गोष्ट प्रकर्षाने लक्षात घ्यावी लागते ती म्हणजे समूहाचे मन तयार होणे किंवा परिवर्तन होणे ही गोष्ट एका दिवसात किंवा थोड्या कालावधीत घडणारी गोष्ट नव्हे. बाल्यावस्थेपासून तशा प्रकारच्या वैचारिक संस्कारांची पेरणी होणे आवश्यक

आहे. कारण अनेक व्यक्तींच्या समूहातून समाज बनतो आणि म्हणूनच सामाजिक उत्तरदायित्व ही संकल्पना व्यापक आहे. आणि त्या उत्तरदायित्वाच्या यशस्वी फलश्रुतीसाठी घरात जन्माला येणाऱ्या पुल्लिंगी घटकावर स्त्रीविषयक दृष्टिकोनाचे आवश्यक ते संस्कार होणे ही मूलभूत बाब आहे. स्त्रीचे घरातील अस्तित्व, सामाजिक स्थान, तिला मिळणारी वागणूक, तिच्या कर्तृत्वाचा आदर, मुळात एक माणूस म्हणून तिचे हक्क अशा अनेक गोष्टींचा संस्कार घरात मूल जन्माला आल्यानंतर बाल्यावस्थेपासूनच होणे गरजेचे आहे. मुलगा म्हणून वाढवत असताना स्त्री विषयक, उदार, सशक्त दृष्टिकोनाचे

बीज पुरुषात रुजले पाहिजे. मुलीला घडवत असताना सबल, सक्षम स्त्रीच्या संस्कारांच्या अवगुंठनातूनच मुलीची वाढ आणि विकास केला पाहिजे. म्हणजे मग आपोआपच तद्विचारानुसारी समाजप्रवृत्ती तयार होईल आणि 'समाजाचं उत्तरदायित्व काय ?' असा विचार आपोआप थांबेल. स्त्रीच्या सबलीकरणासाठी, सक्षमीकरणासाठी समाजाने काही वेगळे प्रयत्न करायचे ही भूमिकाच नसेल. सबल स्त्री अगदी बालपणापासूनच घडवली जाईल, आणि त्या प्रक्रियेसाठी उपकारक अशा जाणिवांची निर्मिती ही समाजाकडून सहजभाव अशा स्वरूपात असेल. त्यासाठी वेगळे काही करण्याची गरजच निर्माण होणार नाही. नातेसंबंधात संपर्कात येणाऱ्या प्रत्येक स्त्री रुपासाठी मग ती मुलगी, बहीण, मैत्रीण, प्रेयसी, पत्नी, आई तसेच कोणत्याही स्तरातील स्त्री साठी तिच्या व्यक्तित्वाला पूरक, पोषक अशी मनोभूमी प्रत्येक माणसाकडून आपोआपच तयार होईल.

स्त्री विकासासाठी, सक्षमीकरणासाठी आवश्यक असणारी मानसिकता ही आमच्या आयुष्याचा एक भाग असणे आणि श्वासाइतक्या संथ लयीत तो सहजतेने समाजाकडून आविष्कृत होणे हीच उत्तम सामाजिक दायित्वाची परिपूर्तीच नव्हे काय ?

Constitutional and Legal Safeguards for Women to Ensure Equality

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Abstract : As we all know that India was famous for its male dominating society but today it has become female oriented. The Indian Constitution has granted equality to women in all fields. Every policies, plans, programs aim at development of Women. Indian Government has taken vital measures for working women. Some special initiatives are made to protect women. National Commission for Women was established in February 1992 to receive the provision related to the constitutional and legal safeguards for women. In 1992, the 73rd constitutional amendment were passed by the parliament in which one-third seats are reserved for women in both rural and urban areas. The national plan of action for the girl child was established in 1991-2000 to ensure survival, protection and development of the girl and aiming to brighten up their future. The department of women and child development has prepared a National Policy for the employment of women in the year 2001. The aim of this policy was about development, advancement and empowerment of women. For the sake of protection, IPC has identified crimes like :- Rape Section under 375 of IPC, sexual harassment under section 509 of IPC, etc. There are also some crimes, which are identified under special laws. They are - The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, The Special Marriage Act, 1954 so on and so forth. After introducing so many laws and provisions for women to protect them and their interest, still we find women are harmed, assaulted, disrespected in the "so called society" where women are seen as an 'object'. We can see Nirbhaya's case; how brutally she was raped and killed but the rapist who got the punishment after one and half year. Indian Constitution needs to introduce more laws and apply them strictly, so that innocent women can have justice.

Introduction

This paper will focus on constitutional and legal rights for women, which are introduced for women to ensure them equality in the society and provide them better opportunities. The research shows how women were being treated in the earlier centuries and how they improved their position in the society.

Constitutional Rights

Constitutional rights are those rights, which are granted by the government to their citizens so that they can lead a disciplined and chaos-free life. It consists 395 Articles in 22 parts and 8 schedules, 80,000 words and took only two years, eleven months and eighteen days to build. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was the father of Indian constitution. He was pragmatic and visionary in his approach.

Historical Background of India

In the 18th century, we have seen how women were being treated. The cases like *zamindari* system, *Sati*, Child marriage, *Pardah pratha* forced government to introduce laws for women.

In 1829, "*Sati Pratha*" was abolished by Raja Ram Mohan Roy. In this system, widows were burned with their demised husband. In the past, people never thought about re-marriage. They treated widows very badly as if she were "untouchable".

Child marriage was one of the cause of ruining

women's life. At the age of seven, little girls used to get married as at that time women were seen as a burden.

"*Pardah Pratha*" was another issue, where women are not allowed to show their face to any outsider and only allowed to talk to their husband and children.

India today is known for its Secularism, Democratic, Sovereign, Diversity and Culture. But there was a time in India, where women were not even educated as the society believed that education will turn woman into an uncultured person. Women at that time was dependent upon their families. They did not have their own identity. Women in the past struggled a lot to get equality, education, better opportunity and political positions.

Present Situation

In the 21st century, we can see that women are progressing in every field. After the introduction of constitutional laws, they are getting their position in the society yet many more steps need to be taken. 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments provide access to women in decision making process. Now 49% of votes are drawn by women. Right to education plays an important role in removing gender inequality, gives equal access to resource, power, decision making and strengthen the position of women. Violence, sex ratio, high literacy rate, infant mortality was a decline after the rights are established. In all these issues we saw qualitative change.

To enhance the position of women many

programmes have been directed and many private NGO's are coming forward to help. Courses like -personality development, skill training , self- defense are introduced as a part of these programmes .In rural areas too NGO's involved in work with women and provided them with livelihood and education.

Some Constitutional Provisions Made to Protect Rights for Women and Dignity

1. Article 15 ensures that no discrimination be made against its citizen on the basis of caste , class , creed , race , sex , place of birth or region.
2. Article 16 says no discrimination be made by the state against its citizen including women while providing jobs.
3. Article 39 to pursue a policy of providing the minimum necessities of life of the citizen without discriminating between men and women .
4. Article 42 to provide human condition for the citizens to fulfill their occupational obligations . The state take it as its responsibility to provide maternity benefits for its women employees .
5. Article 24 ensures reservation of seats in gram panchayat for women and to improve social condition of women .

Problems Which Need to be Rectified

1. In rural areas proper sanitation is needed.
2. Reservation without empowerment would not help women to achieve their objective.
3. Inequality is still present in the society. The way men see women should be changed .
4. Lack of political will .
5. Lack of awareness.
6. Lack of social and economic empowerment .

Government should stress on equal work and elimination of discrimination in employment. Universal education for women should be provided- "Educate a man and you educate an individual , educate a woman and you educate a family " .

Legal Safeguards for Women

To uphold the Constitutional mandate, the State has enacted various legislative measures intended to ensure equal rights, to counter social discrimination and various forms of violence and atrocities and to provide support services especially to working women.

Although women may be victims of any of the crimes

such as 'Murder', 'Robbery', 'Cheating' etc, the crimes, which are directed specifically against women, are characterized as 'Crime against Women'. These are broadly classified under two categories.

(1) The Crimes Identified Under the Indian Penal Code (IPC)

- Rape (Sec. 376 IPC)
- Sexual Harassment (Sec. 509 IPC)
- Homicide for Dowry, Dowry Deaths or their attempts (Sec. 302/304-B IPC)

(2) The Crimes identified under the Special Laws (SLL)

Although all laws are not gender specific, the provisions of law affecting women significantly have been reviewed periodically and amendments carried out to keep pace with the emerging requirements. Some acts which have special provisions to safeguard women and their interests are:

- (i) The Special Marriage Act, 1954
- (ii) The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955

RAPE (Section 376 of Indian Penal Code)

It is commonly agreed that rape is a crime of violence, and sex is the weapon used. It directly or indirectly affects more than a million people in an year. Rape destroys the entire psychology of a woman and pushes her into deep emotional crisis. The physical scars may heal up, but the mental scar will always remain. Both women and men are victims. Some victims feels that they were to blame for their attack, that they were in the wrong place at the wrong time, they should not have dressed in such a provocative fashion, because they were intoxicated they could not ward off their attackers and many other such reasons. There are many circumstances of rape such as date rape, stranger-to-stranger rape, jail and prison rapes. To create a charge of rape the following must be established :

- (i) There must be a sexual intercourse by a man with a woman and;
- (ii) sexual intercourse must be under circumstances falling under any of the six clauses of section 375 of Indian Penal Code.

Rape cases in India increased by 3.6% to 22,172 in 2010 from 21,397 cases the previous year, according to figures from the National Crime Records Bureau. Nearly 68,000 rape cases were registered across the country during 2009-11 but only 16,000 rapist were sentenced to prison, presenting a dismal picture of conviction of sexual offenders. There were 24,270 victims of rape, out

of 24,206 reported. Rape case in country, 10.6% of total victim of rape were girls under 14 years of age, while 19% were teen-age girls, 54.7% were women in the age group 18-30 years. However, 15% victims were in the age group of 30-50 years while 0.6% were over 50 years of age. Reasons why rape doesn't get reported included many reasons, primary reason being the anonymity desired by the family.

Sexual Harassment (Section 509 of Indian Penal Code)

One of the evils of the modern society is the sexual harassment caused to the women, particularly the working by their male counterparts and other members of the society.

Sexual harassment is a criminal offence which can destroy human dignity and freedom. The legal definition of 'sexual harassment' varies from country to country; however, the broad definition of sexual harassment is that of unwelcome sexual advances or verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, which has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with the individual's work performance, or creating an intimidating, hostile, abusive or offensive working environment.

Sexual harassment affects women's mental health and self-esteem, often because of the general tendency to blame the victim based on the belief that it was her inability to handle the situation that led to the harassment. The number of such cases has decreased (8,570 cases) by 14.0% during the year 2011 over the previous year (9,961 cases). Andhra Pradesh has reported 42.7% (3,658 cases) followed by Maharashtra 12.5% (1,071 cases) of total incidences during the year 2011. Andhra Pradesh has reported the highest crime rate (4.3) as compared to the National average of 0.7.

Homicide for Dowry, Dowry Deaths or their attempts (Section. 302/304-B of Indian Penal Code)

Dowry remains the major reason for discrimination and injustice towards women in India. When dowry demands are not met, it precipitates into serious consequence for the young bride. The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 marks the first attempt by the Government of India to recognize dowry as a social evil and to curb its practice. The act was modified with the Dowry Prohibition Amendment Act of 1984, which has again been modified with Dowry Prohibition Bill 1986. Women's organization have played key role in this process of change. The 1961 Act define dowry and makes the practice of dowry- giving and taking, a punishable offence. However, it is ridiculous to see that even among highly educated

sections, the articles of dowry are proudly exhibited in the marriage as a status symbol. The dowry abuse is increasing in India. The most severe is 'bride burning', the burning of women whose dowries were not considered sufficient by their husband or in-laws. Most of these incidents are reported as accidental burns in the kitchen or are disguised as suicide. Dowry is one of those social evils that no educated woman will own up with pride; still many are adhering to it. Practices of dowry tend to subordinate women in the society. Women should be more economically empowered and should be educated properly regarding the various legal provisions; only then this evil menace could possibly be eradicated from Indian social system.

Conclusion

Though the status of women in India, both historically and socially, has been one of respect and reverence, but the hard truth is that even today, they are struggling for their own identity, shouting for diffusion of their voices and fighting for their own esteem. Every day, they cross among the fears and fraught for individuality. Despite the constitutional guarantee of equality of sexes, rampant discrimination and exploitation of women in India continues. The incidence of bride-burning, woman battering, molestation and ill-treatment of women are on increase. It is high time now that women should get a respectable and dignified position in the Indian society. Awareness in the women as well as society should be created and their equal rights should be effectively implemented. Crimes against women should be made punishable and a research should be done on every crime which comes to the light.

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Constitutional and Legal Safeguards for Women to Ensure Equality with Special Reference to Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal Act, 9/12/2013)

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Abstract : Women in our male dominated society are subjected to various types of ill treatment of which sexual harassment is the worst. It is an attack not only on the body of woman but on her mind; in fact on her identity as a whole. Very little is spoken about sexual harassment and very little is done. The present day legislations for the protection of women are inadequate and are half heartedly implemented. To create awareness and to sensitise the academicians and students about the contemporary legislations. Generally instances of sexual harassment go unnoticed or are covered under the veil of eve-teasing or banter. The Indian Constitution has extensively incorporated provisions to ensure the equal status of women in Fundamental rights, Directive Principles of State Policy and Fundamental Duties.

To deal with the cases of harassment of women as they come out of their *protected* environment, special legislation was made to that effect. The Act has extensively defined 'aggrieved woman', workplace, and sexual harassment. It will be helpful for women to fight against the harassment. Internal Complaints Committee is functional at the organizational level and the Local Complaints Committee is working at the district level.

Fear of losing the economic freedom and income, fear of disbelief, lack of power of the victim vis-à-vis the harasser and lack of awareness about sexual harassment and its grievance mechanisms are deterrence to complaints.

Introduction

Women in our male dominated society are subjected to various types of ill treatment of which sexual harassment is the worst. It is an attack not only on the body of woman but on her mind; in fact on her identity as a whole. Very little is spoken about sexual harassment and very little is done.

According to study of International Labour Organisation conducted in 1992 sexual harassment is closely linked with power and takes place in society which often treat women as sex objects and second class citizens.

Women have entered the workplace much later compared to men challenging the notion of patriarchal division of labour. Generation of habits considering the workplace as a male domain confronts the emergence of new women workforce resulting in major shifts. Because of this outlook of the workplace, men women are often made to feel that they are being *allowed* to be there, puts women at the receiving end of the professional hostility which is expressed through the harassment of female colleagues and subordinates.

Hypothesis: - The present day legislations for the protection of women are inadequate and are half heartedly implemented.

Need for Study: - To create awareness and to sensitise the academicians and students about the contemporary legislations. Generally instances of sexual harassment go unnoticed or are covered under the veil of eve-teasing or banter.

Legal Provisions / Background

Constitutional Provisions: - The Indian Constitution has

extensively incorporated following provisions to ensure the equal status of women.

Fundamental rights - Right to Equality, Article 14 and 15, Right to Freedom, Article 19 and 21

Directive Principles of State Policy – Article 39 and 42

Fundamental Duties – Part IVA Article 51A (e)

International Conventions: - Various provisions of the international organizations have highlighted the equal status of women. The most important of those is Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women that is CEDAW(1979) which was ratified by India in 25th June 1993 provides for the elimination of discrimination against women in the field of employment because the right to work is an inalienable right of all human beings, same employment opportunities and free choice of profession and employment (Article 11).

Landmark Judgments:-

Vishakha and others V/s State of Rajasthan 13th August 1997

The Supreme Court in this famous judgement represented a landmark legal decision. For the first time Sexual harassment was defined in an official legal context and outlined specific, mandatory provisions to ensure the health and safety of women at workplace. It places the onus of responsibility for the protection against sexual harassment on the employer. Failure on the part of the employer to comply with the mandatory creation of organizational setup to counter sexual harassment constitutes a contempt of court.

The guidelines interpret sexual harassment as that behavior which constitutes “unwelcome or uninvited

attention or the imposition of behaviour with sexual overtones on women co-workers". So sexual harassment is determined not by the perpetrator but by the victim.

Medha Kotwal Lele and others v/s Union of India 26th April 2004

In the years after the *Vishakha* ruling there has been significant ambiguity surrounding the exact implementation of *Vishakha* guidelines. In the letter by Medha Kotwal Lele which was converted to writ Petition by the Supreme Court in 2001, following issues were brought into light - *Vishakha* guidelines were not being uniformly and extensively implemented throughout the country and there are government failures in its implementation. There is need to have specific measures. *Vishakha* guidelines did not address all workplace relationship with the third parties and servicetakerse.g. students in college/university, patient in hospital.

The Supreme Court in its various interim orders cleared up the ambiguities in the implementation process. At the same time directed the Union Legislature to be "extremely serious" about getting a law passed on the subject of sexual harassment at workplace.

Ordinary Law: - To deal with the issues of the sexual harassment both the civil and criminal laws have been passed by the Indian parliament. The civil law to that effect is the Sexual Harassment of Women At Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act. And the criminal law with the amendment in the Indian Penal Code Section 354A:-

354A.(1) A man committing any of the following acts—

- (i) physical contact and advances involving unwelcome and explicit sexual overtures; or
 - (ii) a demand or request for sexual favours; or
 - (iii) showing pornography against the will of a woman; or
 - (iv) making sexually coloured remarks, shall be guilty of the offence of sexual harassment.
- (2) Any man who commits the offence specified in clause (i) or clause (ii) or clause (iii) of sub-section (1) shall be punished with rigorous imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine, or with both.
- (3) Any man who commits the offence specified in clause (iv) of sub-section (1) shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to one year, or with fine, or with both.

The Sexual Harassment Of Women At Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition And Redressal) Act, 9/12/2013.

To deal with the cases of harassment of women as they come out of their *protected* environment, special

legislation was made to that effect. The details of it are as follows-

Provisions of the Act

The Act has extensively defined 'aggrieved woman', workplace, and sexual harassment. It will be helpful for women to fight against the harassment.

Aggrieved woman:- A woman who is in relation to the workplace and who is of any age- employed or not, who alleges to be subjected to the act of sexual harassment. The domestic servants, agricultural labourers and unorganized working sectors women are also included. In the other category female students of college and university and patients of hospitals who are not employed but they are in the ambit of sexual harassment. The complaint can be raised by the women employees against the clients of service industry like banks and airlines.

Sexual harassment:- The conduct of a sexual nature or based on sex affecting the dignity of a woman which is unwelcome, unreasonable and offensive to the recipient. This conduct could be physical, verbal, non-verbal or display of objects.

There are two types of sexual harassment *quid pro quo* and hostile environment.

Quid pro quo means 'this for that' or 'something for something'. It refers to a demand by a person in authority, such as supervisor. It is a type of exchange to give or take away employment benefit for the sexual demands. It is an abuse of authority and power.

Hostile environment refers to unwelcome physical contact and sexually coloured remarks. It interferes with a woman's work performance and creates an abusive and offensive work environment. It can be by any member of the organization.

Workplace:- The workplace is not limited to the 'geographical workplace'. For the purposes of Act it means either in the context of workplace relationships or while performing professional duties. This means that if the harassment takes place outside the working hours and outside the premises of the organization, it is considered to be the sexual harassment of the workplace.

Grievance Handling Mechanism

Internal Complaints Committee – Every employer of a workplace, where more than 10 workers are employed, should constitute an 'Internal Complaint Committee.' It shall consist of the following members-

- a senior woman as Presiding officer.
- two members amongst the employees who have experience of social work and have legal knowledge.

- one member of the NGO committed to the cause of women.

Local Complaints Committee

The Collector or Deputy Collector of for every district to exercise powers and functions under this Act. It should deal with the complaints from establishments where the ICC has not constituted or if the complaint is against the employer himself.

LCC shall consist of-

- The chairperson, who is the eminent woman in the field of social work.
- One member to be nominated from amongst the women working in the block or ward
- two members from NGOs
- One woman nominee belonging to SC/ST or OBC or minority community.
- One ex-officio member dealing with social welfare or women development.

The complaint committee has to inquire into the complaint, with principles of natural justice. The respondent has to file his reply within 10 working days. The complaint committee should send one copy to the respondent within 7 working days to get a reply. A complaint shall include 6 copies with supporting documents.

Limitations on Action:-

The women who are vulnerable to such offences are generally new recruits, widows, divorcees, single women, those appointed on contract or other women who have got jobs on compassionate grounds. Such women are those who are not so senior in hierarchy, experience and authority. Also the women belonging to minority communities – either religious or social, disabled are vulnerable to the sexual harassment. As these women are not so senior they prefer not to complain against the harassment.

Deterrence to complain:-

There is a fear of losing employment particularly to the migrants and domestic workers. There is a fear of losing the economic freedom and income. At some work places there is a fear of transfer.

The reporting of crime does not take place because there is a fear of disbelief. The woman may be labeled as a woman who provokes men. The woman could be labeled as frigid and who doesn't understand compliments. The women who complain about sexual harassment are often branded as 'trouble makers', 'mentally unstable' or incompetent.

There is lack of power of the victim vis-à-vis the harasser. Also there is lack of awareness about sexual harassment and its grievance mechanisms.

Effects of Sexual Harassment

During the course of harassment the woman suffers the range of emotional and physical effects. The physical effects could be nausea, loss of appetite, headaches, and fatigue. The emotional effects could be humiliation, anxiety, depression and loss of motivation. The overall impact could be absenteeism, decrease in productivity, and a loss of confidence in one's ability.

Conclusion

After the outrage of Nirbhaya Case, and also the explosion of Tarun Tejpal and Justice A.K. Ganguly scandals the reforms were introduced in the women's laws. The Verma Committee was constituted to rethink about the penalties in wide ranging sexual crimes against women. The Draft Proposal of this Sexual Harassment Bill (2010) was passed, but it has certain limitations.

Procedural limitations of the Act.

1. *Gender specific* – The protection under this Act is available only to women. The gays and lesbians are not covered under the provisions of this law.
2. *Conciliation process* – Section 10 of the Act provides for settling the matter between the aggrieved woman and the respondent through the conciliation process. But the sexual harassment cases usually have a power imbalance between the victim and accused which is implicit in the nature of offence. So the victim will be in a disadvantageous position. The stipulation of conciliation as the first step would end up the woman to give up legal remedies. Certain acts of sexual harassment are violation of woman's body and dignity which ought not be subject matter of compromise.
3. *Secrecy* - Section 16 of the Act prohibits the publication or making known contents of complaint and inquiry proceedings but because of such secrecy the wrong doer may affect the workplace.
4. *Victimisation* – No protection against the retaliation and victimization which is a very common consequence faced by individuals upon making a complaint of sexual harassment.
5. *No Suo moto Action by the Court* – The aggrieved woman has to lodge a complaint about the incident, in case of her physical and mental incapacity a complaint can be filed on behalf of her. This provision does not allow the court to take an action on its own.
6. *Non compliance to the rules* - It is mandatory for every

workplace which has more than 10 workers to constitute an ICC, but 90% of the workplaces have either not formed the committee or the formation is not as per the requirement. There has been non communication of these rules to the women employees. Most companies look at it as a legal mode, not as a resolution mode.

The discrimination against women violates the principle of equality of sexes, rights and respect for human dignity. It is an obstacle to the participation of women, and it hampers the prosperity, growth and development of society at large. Women have a right of stress free work environment.

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India Centre for Human Rights and Law

Representation of Women in Media

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Abstract: Although feminist activists and academicians concerned with the women's question have critically analyzed negative portrayal of women in media, research literature related to developing countries is uneven across regions. This paper focuses on the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986 and also to give a picture of representation of women in India of developing countries. Indian scholarship has been given far more attention than any other country.

With the introduction of new communication technologies, the power of mass media has grown in nature. This paper attempts to give a global picture of representation of women in the mass media—films, television and print media (newspapers and magazines).

Introduction

Indecency relates to public morals. It is related to state of mind. Random House Dictionary defines the word 'decency' as 'the state or quality of being decent, conformity to the recognized standard of propriety, good taste, modesty, etc.'

To prohibit indecent representation of women through advertisements or in publications, writing, painting, figures or in any other manner, the Parliament enacted the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986.

"Indecent Representation of Women" means the depiction in any manner of the figure of a woman, her form or body or any part thereof in such a way as to have the effect of being indecent, or derogatory to or denigrating women, or is likely to deprave, corrupt or injure the public morality or morals.

According to Section 3, no person shall publish or caused to be published, or arrange or take part in publication or exhibition of, any advertisement which contains indecent representation of women in any form.

Section 4 prohibits the production, sale and distribution of books, pamphlets, papers, slides, films, writings, drawings, paintings, photographs, representations, figures, etc. which present women in an indecent manner.

In *Chandra Kumari v/s Commissioner of Police, Hyderabad*¹ it was held that the dignity of women is protected by the Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

Section 7 provides that, 'A poster shall be deemed "obscene" if—

- a) Its effect is to tend to debase and corrupt persons who are likely, having regard to all relevant circumstances, to read or see the matter contained or embodied in it;
- b) It holds out or recommends to the public anything to be used as, or suggestive of, a sexual stimulant;

- c) It undermines the accepted canons of decency or encourages vicious or immoral acts;
- d) It lowers the sacredness of the institution of marriage or depicts scenes of rape, criminal assault on women or other immoralities;
- e) It exhibits the human form in a state of nudity or indecorous or sexual posture; or
- f) It encourages lasciviousness or arouses impure and lecherous thoughts.

Section 10 provides that every person who contravenes the provisions of the Act shall on conviction, be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to six months or with fine which shall not be less than Rs.2000/- or which may extend to Rs.5000/- or with both.

Recent feminist media criticism that has drawn from cultural studies shifts our attention from the text to the context of reception in which the audience plays an effective role in producing and negotiating textual meanings. Construction of textual meanings is an integral part of social and power relations in society, which are constantly contested and negotiated by the audience. Gallagher argues that in the recent years feminist media criticism, heavily influenced by post-structuralist and post-modern theory, places far more emphasis on autonomy of audience reading of the text and validating audience "pleasures" and ignores the fact that women as audience are positioned within a cultural system which reproduces particular representations of "femininity" and "masculinity".

The ways in which women are portrayed in media has emerged as an important area of research and action among feminist researchers and activists in developing countries since the 1980s. It was the comprehensive study on the portrayal of women in the mass media that drew our attention to demeaning and derogatory media images of women across the world. Except in the case of government controlled media in "socialist" countries, for example China, media

¹ A.I.R.1998 AP 302

under represent or misrepresent women and their concerns, use them in advertising as a commodity and present traditional stereotyped images of women as passive, dependent and subordinate to men.

The Kerala High Court asked the Director General of Police to pay serious attention to 113 cases registered by the Kerala state police against indecent representation of women in advertisement and films.

Disposing of a petition filed by Saju Pulluvazhy of Rayamangalam in Ernakulam, the division bench comprising of Chief Justice Manjulla Chellur and Justice K Vinod Chandran directed the DGP and the State Government to act according to the provisions mandated in the Indecent Representation of Women Prohibition Act, 1986. The court held that the Act should be implemented in letter and spirit. "There is truth in the contention of the petitioner that there was laxity on the part of the implementing agency."

The government had issued a circular in 2012 and the agency has failed to implement those provisions in its letter and spirit, the court observed. According to the petitioner, the Act imposed a ban on advertisements which represented women indecently. It also prohibited the publication and circulation of books and pamphlets containing such representations. He said that advertisements of textile shops, jewellery and films carried indecent pictures of women in violation of the Act.

Though the police were bound to prevent a cognizable offence under section 149 of the Criminal Procedure Code and the Police Act, they allowed to let go the criminals scot free.

The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Amendment Bill, 2012 was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on 13th December, 2012. The bill sought to enlarge the scope of Indecent Representation Act, 1986 and intended to bring new forms of communication like internet, mobile etc within the ambit of the Act so as to regulate indecent representation of women in the country.

A Parliamentary panel has suggested the setting up of a central regulatory body to monitor indecent representation of women. The creation of such an authority as envisaged by the National Commission of Women would be quite appropriate in effectively dealing with such cases. The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Amendment Bill, 2012, seeks to broaden the scope of the law to cover the audio-visual media and content in electronic form prescribing stringent penalties which would act as a deterrent to violation of the law. It was strongly advocated before the committee that there was an urgency to review, evaluate and regulate the content of the serials and shows on television due to its reach and penetration in Indian homes. It was admitted that there was no ambiguity in bringing the film makers, directors and trade bodies under the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act. The committee accordingly, recommended that these issues be taken up by the Ministry in right earnest.

Perception of Women towards Entrepreneurship and its Avenues with respect to Thane City

Ms. Mohini Nadkarni

Abstract : Indian society is a masculine society, where fraternity and equality are said to be a way of life. But even in 21st century, women are not given equal opportunities as men. Even entrepreneurial ideas of successful and talented women in cities are not given due consideration mainly due to gender bias. We can only imagine the loss of talent and opportunity at lower socio-economic levels.

Women are neither weaker nor a minority section of the society. Empowerment of women refers not to provision of help but to provision of equal opportunity to women in all facets of life. Women are born managers, the best example of this is a housewife.

One of the important ways of empowering women is making them financially independent. This can be done through opening of entrepreneurial avenues to women of all sections of society and of all age groups.

Before providing the facilities it is essential to understand the prevailing situation of the society. This can be clearly understood through a questionnaire method which can reach even remote sections of the society.

Introduction

A woman is a wife, mother, daughter, sister and even grandmother. But that doesn't limit her scope of action. The daily chores of a woman at home are best examples of multitasking. But this quality is in-built in women. If they can manage a household efficiently, then why are these talented section of society tagged as a weaker and helpless section?

Women are born managers. But in our present society, their innovative thinking and valuable ideas are suppressed by judgmental views like, "women are not meant to step out of their house", "women can't understand business", etc.

This dignity and respect can be attained by women only through recognition of their talent and empowerment. Empowerment need not imply just providing donations to this section of society and considering them weak. Empowerment in the true sense refers to making this section independent and giving them an equal status in all facets of life by respecting their views and providing them opportunities which they are denied just because of gender bias.

One of the ways of empowerment is financial independence. A financially independent woman can support herself and if needed her entire family. One of the sources of such independence is 'Entrepreneurship'. In a common man's language making them "business women" will provide a greater window for them to implement their ideas and strategies. Starting or even maintaining a currently functioning enterprise is not a child's play. It has many aspects such as Finance, handling inventories, technological know-how, market information, etc., which can be made available by Government, NGO's, Financial Institutions, through family support or even by obtaining training in the required field.

Before providing these facilities and services to this section it is necessary to understand the awareness regarding entrepreneurship and its avenues. Anything that

is true for one may not be true for all. The perception of various women towards entrepreneurship differs with age group and income levels with respect to the risk taking aspect of enterprise.

Objectives

1. To obtain perception of women of different age groups and income levels about entrepreneurship.
2. To identify the needs of women entrepreneurs to start an enterprise.
3. To identify hurdles being faced by established women entrepreneurs.
4. To find possible solutions for such problems.

Sample design

1. A sample unit of 35 women has been chosen from Thane city.
2. Simple Random Sampling is used. These samples include women from various strata of life.
3. Personal interview method has been used with a specific questionnaire.
4. The responses are tabulated according to the pre-determined categories.

Hypothesis

1. a) H_1 : age group and perception of women towards entrepreneurship are not independent of each other
b) H_0 : age group and perception of women towards entrepreneurship are independent of each other
2. a) H_1 : income levels and perception of women towards entrepreneurship are not independent towards each other.
b) H_0 : income levels and perception of women towards entrepreneurship are independent towards each other.

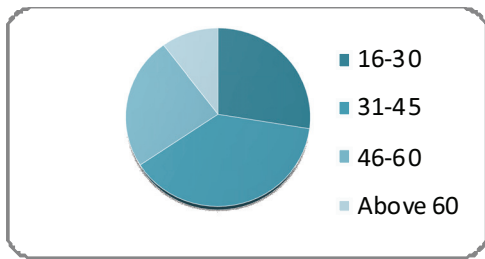
Findings

Table 1

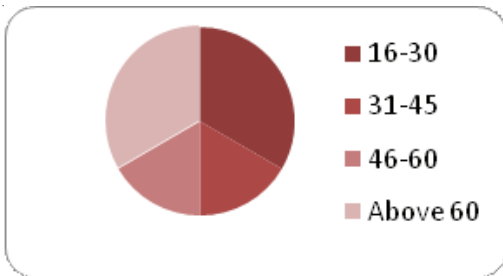
Interrelationship between age group of women and their willingness to take risk as an entrepreneur

Age Group (in years)	Perception towards entrepreneurship		
	Positive	Negative	Total
16-30	08	02	10
31-45	11	01	12
46-60	07	01	08
60 above	03	02	05
TOTAL	29	06	35

Positive



Negative



From this data it can be observed that women’s choice of taking up the option of entrepreneurship is largely affected by their age group. From the data we can get following inferences:

1. Women belonging to age group 16-30 years are willing to take maximum risk. This is so mainly because of the fresh ideas which they are willing to implement. They have many role models in front of them to get inspired from. Moreover they have relatively more time in life to explore and experiment with their career options. Hence nearly 80% of women in this age group have a positive approach towards entrepreneurship.
2. Women belonging to the age group 31-45 years are mainly women who wish to support their family and are either dependent class or are burdened with financial and other responsibilities of a family. Hence

any avenue opened in front of them to earn is welcomed by them. Nearly 90% of women from this class are willing entrepreneurs or are establishing entrepreneurs who have found their enterprise. These women want to be independent and require “invisible hand” to inspire and promote them.

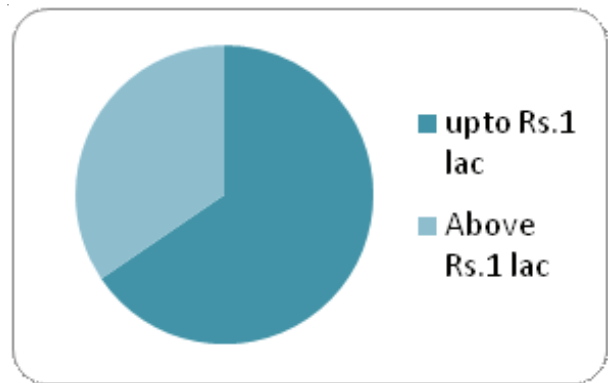
3. Women from age group 46-60 years are either entrepreneurs with an established business or are experience entrepreneurs who due to age and health are not active entrepreneurs any more. It is observed that in these entrepreneurs, 60% of women entrepreneurs took up the enterprise already established by their family and not by their choice. They learnt everything required from their family. At present these women do want to become an entrepreneur but of the enterprise they wanted to own. The only hurdle they feel now is their age and health due to which they cannot give required amount of time to a new enterprise.
4. This group includes women who are above 60 years of age. They have traditional ideas with an innovative approach, but cannot implement it due to age and age related problems. They are willing to take up entrepreneurship if are provided with efficient and sufficient man power.

Table 3

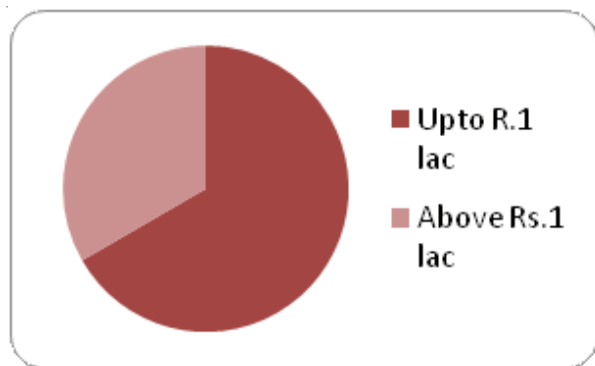
Interrelationship between Level of income of women and entrepreneurship

Annual income	Perception towards entrepreneurship		
	Positive	Negative	Total
Upto Rs.1 lac	19	04	23
Above Rs.1 lac	10	02	12
TOTAL	29	06	35

Positive



Negative



Following are the findings derived from the data

1. Women with annual income upto Rs. 1 lac are relatively more inclined to be an entrepreneur since they shoulder a greater financial burden of supporting their family and fulfilling their day to day needs. The hurdles faced by them are mainly financial and technological. Family many a times supports and is ready to help these women in setting up an enterprise. They are willing to take up entrepreneurial options which are available to them while they are at home, like those of food catering service providers, tailoring, beautification or starting a child day care centre.
2. Women in the income group above Rs.1 lac p.a. are relatively less enthusiastic since their monetary requirements are well met. But they wish to become an entrepreneur in order to be self-sufficient and independent financially. This class includes women from various sections of society running and willing to run variety of enterprises ranging from practicing as a Medical professional or owning a printing enterprise to being a head of a Self-help group.

Testing of hypothesis

Hypotheses were tested with the help of Chi Square Method.

- Age group and perception of women towards entrepreneurship.

Chi-square value for **table 1** is **2.6736111** calculated at 5% with 3 degrees of freedom. The H_0 : age group and perception of women towards entrepreneurship are independent of each other has been accepted.

From the data it can be followed that women residing in city areas of Thane region are enthusiastic entrepreneurs who if channelized appropriately can run an enterprise efficiently. They are willing to take risk of running an enterprise irrespective of their age group.

- Income level and perception of women towards entrepreneurship.

Chi-square value for **table 2** is **0.175095** calculated at 5% with 1 degree of freedom. The H_0 : income level and perception of women towards entrepreneurship are independent of each other has been accepted.

From the data it can be followed that women residing in city belonging to various income groups have positive perception towards entrepreneurship. They are willing to take up entrepreneurship irrespective of their annual incomes.

Conclusions

1. Perception of women in Thane city towards entrepreneurship is independent of their age group.
2. Perception of women in Thane city towards entrepreneurship is independent of their annual income.
3. Since the data is independent ANOVA TEST and YULE'S coefficient are not to be used on data.

Solutions

1. Various schemes can be initiated by Government in collaboration with NGO's.
2. Financial help is to be provided to those who deserve it rather than to those who ask for it.
3. Infrastructural facilities such as Wi-fi connectivity, subsidised transportation facility, adequate power supply, etc are to be made available.
4. Training programs after taking up aptitude tests are to be provided according to the requirement and ability of an individual.
5. Investments rather than donations are to be encouraged in women run enterprises. This helps in maintaining the sense of responsibility and the burden of repayment acts as a guiding force to enhance performance of an enterprise.

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Effect of Location and Marital Status on the Social Freedom of Female Undergraduates

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Abstract : Women constitute about half of the population of the world. But since time immemorial they are subjected to hegemony by the male counterparts who have made them suffer a lot of biasness. Time and again they are also denied equal opportunities in different parts of the world. The need for women's empowerment arises from the inferior position they have been bestowed for a long time. The empowerment is an important tool which can bring changes in their socio-economic condition. On the part of both nation and individual, women are considered as the major constituent of society and no society can progress till they are left behind. Women empowerment refers to providing women with equal opportunities in all the fields.

To empower herself women must begin to participate in all spheres of life. Their economic empowerment is being given prime importance for country's progress. To achieve empowerment women have to be aware of their rights and privileges in a modern society. It is education which can bring about awareness in them related to their status, social injustice and prejudice done towards them. The progress although is very slow towards empowering women but the impact of today's women in decision making and their presence in respective fields outside home can be clearly seen now.

In the present study the effect of location and marital status on the social freedom of female undergraduates has been seen. The study was carried out on sample of 110 undergraduate female students studying in Aligarh undergraduate colleges. The revealed results have been presented and discussed in the paper.

Keywords: Empowerment, Location, Marital status.

Introduction

Women Empowerment means to empower women not only in any single facet of life but in each and every aspect of their lives. It means to let them understand their true identity. And, for it the first and foremost thing is to let them make their own decisions which can fill them with a sense of independence or we can rather say a sense of social freedom. The 10th plan document of India (2002-2007) has defined social freedom and empowerment of women as creating an enabling environment through various affirmative developmental policies and programmes for the development of women besides providing them easy and equal access to all the basic minimum services so as to enable them to realize their full potential. Empowerment as a concept was first brought into notice at the International Conference at Nairobi in 1985. The conference concluded that it is the redistribution of power and control over resources in favor of women through positive intervention. Women Empowerment has been a critical issue in India in the sense that it has been talked about with great enthusiasm from the past few centuries. Numerous studies have shown that most of the problems of women contribute because of the lack of their education. It is the need of the hour to raise our voice for the women empowerment not only in India but in the whole world. According to Kabeer (1994) there are three important factors included in women empowerment resources, agency and achievements. Education is the most

important concern in this regard according to the opinions of both the social reformers and the educationists. It is already known that for the upliftment and empowerment of the women, education is the sole criteria. Education helps a person to become critically aware of his /her capabilities, strengths, realities and weaknesses. Women education not only promotes personal benefits but also social, economic and familial benefits. Lancuster (1965) conducted study on housewives who weren't going college and reported that women gave evidence of uncertainty in decision making towards their families.

Kalpna Shah (1984) in her study in Surat found that majority of women believed that women had lower status than men. All of them believed that main responsibility of women was to look after her family. In her spare time she should develop her independent personality which should not be in conflict with her husband.

Caplan (1985) said it is the urban, educated, working class women who are the real beneficiaries and are in vanguard positions. The rural, uneducated lower class housewives remain by and large unaffected by it. Channa (1989) found that according to older age respondents the position of wife has moved from complete subservience to have an upper hand over husband. Kantamma (1990) conducted the study on status of women in relation to education, employment and marriage and it was found that higher the education of women, greater the participation in

decision making and communication with spouse and progressive opinion in different issues. Kamath (2007) underlined the reason for relative low number of women reaching top levels in the organizations. Many women leave the work typically when they have a child and later many of them do not find suitable avenues to get back to work. Kamath suggested that while creating a gender neutral workplace we must not lose the sight of the fact that women do have special responsibilities and therefore special needs at time. He stressed the need to understand the phenomenon properly and look at the ways to ensure that we do not loose talented women because we are not supportive of their special needs. J. Muzamil and S. Akhtar (2008) revealed that 60% unmarried women hold non specific decision making power for participation in local government as compared to 54% married women. They also found that 54% married women bear masculine decision making power for participation in income generating activity as compared to 38% unmarried women.

Objectives of Study

1. To analyse the relationship of Women Empowerment awareness of total sample of undergraduate female students with respect to marital status (married and unmarried).
2. To analyse the relationship of Women Empowerment awareness of total sample of undergraduate female students with respect to location (rural and urban).
3. To compare married and unmarried undergraduate female students from rural and urban backgrounds with regards to their level of women empowerment awareness.

Hypothesis of Study

1. There would be no significant difference in the women awareness level of total sample of undergraduate female

students with respect to marital status (married and unmarried).

2. There would be no significant difference in the women awareness level of total sample of undergraduate female students with respect to location (rural and urban).
3. There would be no significant difference in the women empowerment awareness of married and unmarried female students from rural and urban background.

Method and Design of Study

In the present study the target population was the undergraduate female students studying in government and private colleges of Aligarh city. A list of all the graduation courses of Aligarh Muslim University and nearby Private Colleges was prepared and care was taken to ensure due representation of married unmarried and rural urban background female students. In the second phase 110 students were randomly selected as sample for the study. Out of these 110 students 42 were married girls and 68 were unmarried while 37 were from rural background and 72 were from urban background.

Tool Used

For the present investigation a standardised test “Women Empowerment opinnionaire” developed by S. Amani in 2009 was used. The test is reliable as its reliability coefficient is 0.88.

Statistical Techniques Used

The main statistical techniques used for the data analysis were One Way ANOVA and ‘t’ test for knowing the significance of difference between the means of different comparative groups. The data was analyzed with the help of computer by using SPSS to get accurate results and also to save time.

Groups	N	Mean	S.D	d.f	‘t’ value	Remark
<i>Married Undergraduates</i>	42	100.45	12.357	108	2.380*	<i>Significant at 0.01 level</i>
<i>Unmarried Undergraduates</i>	68	107.51	16.585			

Analysis and Interpretation of Results

Table 1: Comparison of mean scores of Women Empowerment awareness of Total Sample of undergraduate Girls with respect to their Marital Status

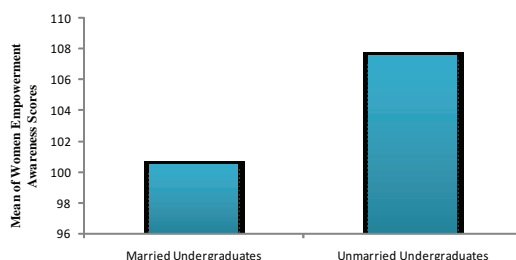


Figure 1

Table 1 shows scores of women empowerment for married undergraduate females as 100.45 and S.D as 12.357 while for unmarried female undergraduates it was found to be 107.51 and 16.585 respectively. When the mean scores were put to t test the t value came to be 2.380 which were

significant at 0.01 level of significance, implying that the unmarried undergraduate girls were more free socially and had more awareness about women empowerment as compared to married girls. Hence the Hypothesis 1 is rejected.

Table 2: Comparison of mean scores of Women Empowerment awareness of Total Sample of undergraduate girls with respect to their place of residence

Groups	N	Mean	S.D	d.f	't' value	Remark
<i>Rural Undergraduates</i>	37	92.95	10.609	108	6.843*	<i>Significant at 0.01 level</i>
<i>Urban Undergraduates</i>	73	110.84	13.981			

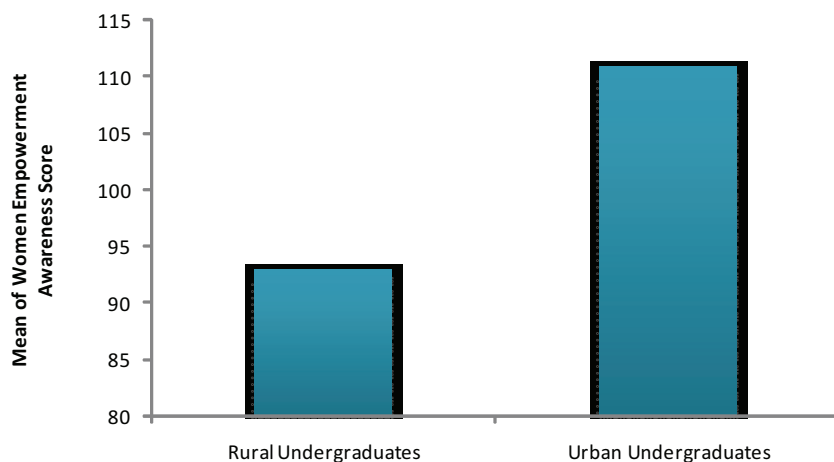


Figure 2

When the mean women empowerment scores were compared for rural and urban undergraduate females 't' value came out to be 6.843 inferring that girls from urban background felt more free socially having high awareness towards women empowerment as compared to their counterparts coming from rural areas. Thus hypothesis 2 is also rejected.

Table 3: Comparison of Women Empowerment Awareness of Married and Unmarried Under Graduate Girls with Rural and Urban Background.

<i>Rural Married Undergraduates (N=16)</i>		<i>Rural Unmarried Undergraduates (N=21)</i>		<i>Urban Married Undergraduates (N=26)</i>		<i>Urban Unmarried Undergraduates (N=47)</i>		<i>F value</i>	<i>Remark</i>
<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D</i>	18.303*	significant at 0.01 level
91.44	5.831	94.10	13.187	106.00	12.083	113.51	14.356		

T value comparison of Women Empowerment awareness of married and unmarried undergraduate girls with rural and urban background.

<i>Groups</i>	<i>Rural Married Undergraduates</i>	<i>Rural Unmarried Undergraduates</i>	<i>Urban Married Undergraduates</i>	<i>Urban Unmarried Undergraduates</i>
<i>Rural Married Undergraduates</i>	-	2.66	14.56*	22.07*
<i>Rural Unmarried Undergraduates</i>		-	11.90*	19.42*
<i>Urban Married Undergraduates</i>			-	7.51

* = significant at 0.05 level of significance

When the mean scores of women empowerment awareness of four groups of married and unmarried females from rural and urban background were compared by F test, the F value came to be 18.303 which is significant at 0.01 level of significance. On further application of t test it was seen that both urban married and non married girls were more socially aware about women empowerment w.r.t rural sample while no significant difference was found between the rural married and unmarried girls' awareness and between urban married and unmarried groups. Thus hypothesis 3 is partially accepted.

Conclusion

The present study reveals that both marital status and locality had an influence on the women empowerment awareness among girls. Results shows that unmarried undergraduate girls were more free socially and showed more awareness about women empowerment than unmarried girls. Also, girls from urban background were found to be more free socially and having more awareness towards women empowerment than rural girls.

Awareness about women empowerment is very important for girls. Marital status or locality must not pose a hindrance in the social freedom of girls. Education is an important tool that can help in women empowerment. Education helps the women to become aware of their own strengths, responsibilities, rights etc.

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Declining Sex Ratio in India

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Abstract : The paper analyses the causes of declining sex ratio in India. An attempt is made to suggest measures that can be taken to check this decline in sex ratio.

A Report Commissioned by the UN Resident Coordinator in India points out that women in India are outnumbered by men. There are an estimated 39 million missing women. They face nutritional discrimination. They have little control over own fertility and reproductive health. Women are less literate with high dropouts.

The objectives of the study are:

1. To understand the reason for declining sex ratio in the age group 0-6 year.
2. The girl child is excluded even before birth-Why?
3. What measures should be taken to improve child sex ratio?

2011 census showed that there is a dramatic decline in 0-6 yrs sex ratio in many States of India, The census commissioner at that time. J.K.Banthia, took proactive step of publicizing data by calling a meeting in New Delhi 2003 an presenting the facts in the report title “Missing Girls-mapping the adverse child sex ratio in India” he set out the extent to which the girls were Missing.

26th June 2011 Sunday Hindustan Times. Indore.

“Girls are being ‘converted’ into boys” - by the hundred every year - at ages far below they can even imagine giving consent for their life-changing operation. This shocking, unprecedented trend, catering to the fetish for a son, is unfolding at conservative Indore’s well-known clinics and hospitals on children who are 1-5 years old. The process being used to ‘produce’ a male child from a female is known as genitoplasty, each surgery costs Rs. 1.5 lakh. these children are pumped with hormonal treatment as part of the sex change procedure that may be irreversible.

The low cost of surgery and the relatively easy and unobtrusive way of getting it done in this city attracts parents from Delhi and Mumbai to get their child surgically ‘corrected’. While genitoplasty is relatively common - it is used to correct genital abnormality in fully-grown patients - the procedure is allegedly being misused rampantly to promise parents a male child even though they have a female child. The parents press for these surgeries despite being told by doctors that the ‘converted’ male would be infertile. With this, girl child discrimination in India graduated from discreet murder in fetes to brazen medical tampering with child’s gender and future. If that’s not bad enough, Indian law which has encountered nothing like this so far, allows this is surgery by its silence and grey areas.

The objectives of the study are

Declining Sex Ratio in India:

2011 census showed that there is a dramatic decline in the 0-6 yrs. sex ratio in many states of India. The census commissioner at that time. J.K. Banthia, took the proactive step of publicizing that data by calling a meeting in New Delhi in 2003 and presenting the facts. In the report titled: - ‘Missing girls’ – mapping the adverse child sex ratio in India’ ,he set out the extent to which the girls were missing. For, while the overall sex ratio for women to every 1000 men had risen from 927 in 1921 to 933 in 2001, the sex ratio in 0-6 yrs. Age group had fallen dramatically from 945 in 1991 to shockingly low of 927 in 2001.

The other reality that the census data revealed was that the sex ratio was worse in the most prosperous district. Of the 10 district with the lowest sex ratio, 8 were in Punjab, one of India’s richest states and 2 were in Haryana, also better off than most other states. The 10 states with the most adverse sex ratio were Punjab, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Gujarat, Himachalpradesh, U.P, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan & Maharashtra. As is evident from this list, the majority of these states are not economically backward. There is no denying the fact the decline in the child sex ratio is the reflection of the prevalence of the gender biases in the society. At that all India level, in opposition to the biologically & medically known robustness of a girl child, a higher infant mortality rate among female is noted the compared with that of the males. The discriminating treatment in spheres of health and nutrition has adversely affected girls, increasing their mortality during infancy and childhood.

In a pioneering contribution, Amartya Sen captured the cumulative impact of multiple forms of deprivation that women face in an intuitively appealing measure of ‘missing women’. It measures women’s adversity in mortality and seeks to better understand the quantitative difference between actual number of women and number expected the absence of a significant bias against women in term of health care & other resources for survival. After computing the differences between the sex ratio and norm of women per thousand males & the actual sex ratio, it is multiplied by the

number of males to obtain the number of missing women. In the same way, estimates of missing girls are computed.

The sex ratio rose between 2001 & 2011. Using the same norm that Sen did estimates of missing women increased from 46.35 million 2001 to 49.73 million in 2011. Although the increase in missing women despite a higher sex ratio may seem surprising, it is explained by the fact that the number of men grew rapidly to compensate for the smallest difference between the norm & the actual sex ratio in 2011. The child sex ratio depends on two factors: sex ratio at birth, and gender specific mortality rates among children born. While preventing the abortion of female foetuses reduces a skewed sex ratio at birth, it has the likely consequence that 'unwanted' girl foetuses grow into girls who are deprived of nutrition and health care. These unwanted girls will then be more vulnerable to infant and child mortality.

In his maiden Independence day speech P.M. Modi lamented the neglect of daughters, restriction on their movement, parental attitude that favoured sons, shameful rapes of girls and women, lack of toilets facilities and sanitation. In a populist view he urged presents to treat sons and daughter equally, doctor to refrain from female foeticide & every school to have separate toilets for girls. Undoubtedly, these add up to a bold and ambitious vision of social development in which men and women are equal participants. The complexities of gender inequity, however, cannot be resolved by the rhetoric of a "change of heart". Thus the goal of gender equality cannot be achieved merely by a change of heart.

As girls account for a large share of 'unwanted' fertility that is about 60% in northern India, pre-natal sex-selection technologies have thrived despite legal restrictions. The PNDT Act of 1994 & its tightening in 2014. In more than 15 years of the enactment of this law, a little over 600 cases have been lodged across the country, but the total number of convictions is an abysmal 20. Not surprisingly, selective abortions of girls ranged between 4-12 million during 1980-2010 and the practice has spread to most regions. The market for sex determination & selective abortion is large & growing.

Female education has ambiguous effects, it weakens son preference at a given family size, but it also results in a decline in fertility and a strong son preference.

Do financial incentives make a difference? The Devirupak programmes in Haryana reward parents if they have either fewer children or a larger fraction of girls. Perversely, this lowered fertility & led to a more male-skewed sex ratio. Resting on the premise that changes in material condition can seriously undermine an existing normative order such as patriarchy, recent evidence from villages in Punjab, Haryana & H.P points to reshaping of entrenched practices through a marriage squeeze – string

marriage norms, patrilineal inheritance & patrilocal residence, old age support of parents by sons, and lack of autonomy of women – as a consequence the skewed sex ratio.

It is of course constable whether this process of social transformation and gender equity is likely to be rapid & extensive without strict enforcement of legal provision and advocacy and awareness activities that showcase women's successes and the contribution to the family's wellbeing. Simplistic traditions of a "change of heart" are not just rhetorical but raise expectations that are unlikely to be fulfilled.

Policy

Analysis of secondary data from census, special studies undertaken by registrar general's office and sample registration system support the observation that the decline in CSR over the 1990's could be attributed to sex selection abortion (SSA). Decline in CSR between 1991 and 2001 was concerned in states. Those are economically developed. Data on socio-economic profile of women in these states, available from the census, suggests that they were victims of gender-discrimination and enjoyed a subordinate status. This decline in CSR was concentrated in urban areas. Not only had CSR fallen but sex ratio at birth has increased substantially in some of these states. The decline in CSR was likely to be concentrated in the higher socio-economic groups that had knowledge as well as access to prenatal sex determination test. With the adoption of small family norm even if couples were to opt for just one child, in the absence of their resorting to sex determination test, one could expect the CSR to be much more balanced than what was revealed in various studies in reality.

The subservient status of young women within the family, irrespective of whether nuclear or extended, combined with urgency to bare a son, forces women to undergo sex determining prenatal test. The role assigned to them is nearly that of bearing and rearing children. Education of women along with their work participation in economic activity could help immensely in reducing the preference for a male child among women. Their economic independence probably could give them the strength to defy family pressure to bare a son.

All efforts need to be made to change the social attitude and values and improve the status of women. It is their inferior status in Indian society i.e., the root cause of gender bias and resulting gender discrimination. Hence it is necessary ...

1. To make women conscious of the discrimination that is currently prevailing against them, and then empowers them to protest against it.
2. To reduce gender discrimination against girls within the household by increasing their access to education

and employment which could go a long way in reducing the gender bias that currently threatens society.

Suggestions

In short run, implementation of pre natal diagnostic test (PNDT) Act, prevention and regulation of misuse these tests much more forcefully than in past is called for. Effective implementation of the act demands constant policing. In the long run, education and employment of women is considered to be the best solution to the old problem of gender bias in India.

1. The lower status that women have in the family and society has created a vicious cycle where women also prefer son and look themselves as inferior.
2. All social practices especially dowry that are derogatory and discriminatory to women that emphasize the importance of son would have to go,
3. The concept of son as insurance against illness and old age needs to be replaced by health insurance and old age security must be provided by the government.
4. Change of attitude among both elite and middle classes.

The 1991 census showed that sex ratio divide in women deficient pocket were deepening and newer pocket were not known for pronounced male bias. However, academia, civil society and the status refuse to believe that it could partly be campaigning against sex selection abortion, and that this trend needs to be arrested urgency. The activists campaigning against sex collection, abortion were afraid that we wait for sufficient data in terms of marked demographic changes the national level, the damage would be almost irreversible.

2011 census showed that there is a dramatic decline in the 0-6 yrs. Sex ratio is many states of India. The census commissions at those times. J.K. barthia, Took the proactive step of publicizing that data by calling a meeting in new Delhi in 2003 & presenting the facts. In the report titled in : - 'missing girls' – mapping the advance child sex ratio in India", he set out the extent to which the girls were missing. For, while the overall sex ratio for women to every 1000 men had risen from 927 in 1921 to 933 in 2001, the sex ratio in 0-6 yrs. Age group had fallen dramatically from 945 in 1991 to shockingly low of 927 in 2001.

The other reality that the census data revealed was that the sex ratio was worse in the most prosperous district. Of the 10 district with the lowest sex ratio, 8 were in Punjab, one of India's richest states & 2 were in Haryana, also better off than most other states. The 10 states with the most adverse sex ratio were Punjab, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Gujarat ,himachalpradesh, U.P, uttarakhand, rajasthan&

Maharashtra.

As is evident from this list, the majority of these states are not economically backward. There is no denying the fact the decline in the child sex ratio is the reflection of the prevalence of the gender biases in the society. At that all India level, opposition to the biologically & medically known robustness of a girl child, a higher infant mortality rate among female is noted the compared with that of the males. the discriminating treatment in spheres of health and nutrition has adversely affected girls, increasing their mortality during infancy and childhood.

When viewed overtime, mortality rates for the country seen to have been improving, as they have continuously moved downwards. Nevertheless this decline has not bridged gender disparities. The female IMR continue to remain higher than that of male infants. Continued presence of a smaller number of women in population has posed a challenge to demographer's social scientist and women's study researchers. A number of reason have been provided by researchers for reduction in mortality in younger age group mainly in boys namely son reference, gender bias against girls in health care, nutrition, food allocation and so on. The desired family size and the gender composition of children under the prevalent regime of male preference work towards the elimination of girls in the initial stages through the fatal stages through intervention of advanced scientific technology and at the infancy stage through neglect and discrimination.

Sex ratio in states and union territories of India:

States with highest female sex ratio	Kerala	1058
State with lowest female sex ratio	Haryana	861
UT- with highest female sex ratio	Pondicherry	1001
UT- with lowest female sex ratio	daman & diu	710

The social pressure for marriage for girls has been spread to community and regions where They were previously less prevalent. The rising probability of male children is growing attractiveness Just as the mounting social compulsion of having to provide for dowry is serving as a factor to prevent girls being born into families. The use of available techniques to determine the sex of child and doing away with the birth of girls is implicit within this. It is therefore presented as a safe guard against future calamities and hardship that are bound to befall on the household when it is time to get daughters married. The social menace of dowry has indeed become a major factor against children

especially among the relatively better off section of the population, since they are the ones who have to safeguard and in some even enhance their social status by investing heavily in their daughter's dowries.

Poorer economic position has been responsible for anti-girl child stance as factors like getting proper marriage alliances, payment of dowry etc., weigh heavily. However research across different economic group has highlighted different picture. A more advance sex ratio was noted among the better off and relatively economically prosperous regions as compared to the poorer communities and region, thus exposing the gender bias among the economically better off- ' Prosperity Effect' on sex ratio.

In 2001 census, the government of India officially acknowledge the role of sex selection abortion (SSA) in declining CSR in the Indian Population. According the registrar general of census, the declining CSR during 1991-2001 can be attributed to:

1. Demand for sons as old age security and as escape from dowry
2. Unregulated use of pre natal diagnostic test
3. Failure of state laws, policies and programs to comprehensively address issued of female survivals.

Sr no.	India/ state/union territories	1991	2001	2011
	INDIA	927	933	940
1	Jammu & Kashmir	896	900	883
2	Himachal Pradesh	976	970	974
3	Panjab	882	874	893
4	Chandigarh	790	773	818
5	Utternchal	936	964	963
6	Haryana	865	861	877
7	Delhi	827	821	866
8	Rajasthan	910	922	926
9	Utterpradesh	876	898	908
10	Bihar	907	921	916
11	Sikkim	878	875	889
12	Arunachal Pradesh	859	901	920
13	Nagaland	886	909	931
14	Manipur	958	978	887
15	Mizoram	921	938	975
16	Tripura	945	950	961

17	Meghalaya	955	975	986
18	Assam	923	932	954
19	West Bengal	917	934	947
20	Jharkhand	922	941	947
21	Odhisa	971	972	978
22	Chattisgardh	985	990	991
23	Madhya Pradesh	912	920	930
24	Gujrat	934	921	918
25	Daman & diu	969	709	618
26	Dadra & nagarhaweli	952	811	775
27	Maharashtra	934	922	946
28	Andhra Pradesh	927	978	922
29	Karnataka	960	964	968
30	Goa	967	966	968
31	Lakshadweep	943	947	946
32	Kerala	1036	1058	1084
33	Tamilnadu	974	986	995
34	Pondicherry	979	1001	1038
35	Andaman & nicobar ISI	818	846	878

The above table shows that in Jammu and Kashmir the sex ratio has declined from 900 in 2001 to 883 in 2011, Uttaranchal from 964 to 963, Bihar 921 to 916, Gujarat 921 to 918, daman and diu from 709 to 618, dadra and nagarhaveli from 811 to 775, Lakshadweep 947 to 946. Though himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra show a marginal improvement in the sex ratio, a detailed study district wise would help to unravel the causes responsible for it.

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स्त्री पुरुष समानता : मराठी स्त्रीलेखिकांच्या साहित्यिक कृती संदर्भात

सुवर्णा पुंडले

सेंट मीराज कॉलेज फॉर गर्ल्स, पुणे

स्त्री-पुरुष निसर्गाच्या उत्क्रांतीतून निर्माण झालेले एक वास्तविक सत्य. दोन्ही जीवांची गरज सारखीच. जगण्याचा नियम दोघांनाही सारखाच. जन्मतः शारीरिक वेगळेपणामुळे आलेल्या जबाबदाऱ्या फक्त वेगवेगळ्या. त्यांना मिळालेली विचारशक्ती, विचारातील तारतम्य, स्मरणातील अभूतपूर्व गोष्टी या नर-मादी अर्थात स्त्री-पुरुषात समान असतात. इतिहासात वळून बघतांना स्त्रियांच्या जीवनात आलेली स्थित्यंतरे बघितल्यावर त्यांच्या भूतकाळातील स्थानाची व वर्तमानकाळातील स्थानाशी तफावत नक्कीच दिसून येते. त्यामुळे असे म्हणणे वावगे ठरणार नाही की, स्त्रियांना समान हक्क मिळवून देणे म्हणजे हिमालयाचे एव्हरेस्ट शिखर चढून जाण्यापेक्षासुद्धा अवघड काम झाले आहे. देशात चाललेल्या विविध चळवळींमधून सहभागी होणारी स्त्री आपल्यासाठी (स्वतःसाठी) समानतेचा हक्क मिळविण्यासाठी आजही लढत आहे. भारतीय संस्कृतीत पहिल्यापासून पितृसत्ताक (पितृप्रधान) संस्कृतीच्या परंपरेने नेहमीच स्त्रियांना दुय्यम स्थान दिले. भारतात होवून गेलेले मोठ-मोठे विचारवंतही संपूर्ण समाजाला जागृतावस्थेत आणण्याचा प्रयत्न करण्यात यशस्वी झाले नाहीत. महत्वाचे म्हणजे स्त्री समानता हा कायदा येऊन किंवा तो लागू करून नव्हे तर वैचारिक पार्श्वभूमीवर तो स्वीकारण्याची मानसिकता निर्माण होणे अत्यंत आवश्यक आहे. कारण स्त्रीला दास करून घेण्याची वृत्ती ठेवणारा समाज तिला समानता देण्याचा विचारच काय पण कल्पनाही करू शकत नाही. स्त्री स्वातंत्र्य किंवा स्त्री मुक्तीच्या आधुनिक चळवळीचे श्रेय युरोपियन संस्कृतीला दिले गेले पाहिजे. त्याचबरोबर जॉन स्टुअर्ट मिलने व्यक्ती स्वातंत्र्याचा जोरदार पुरस्कार केला. याच व्यक्तीस्वातंत्र्याच्या तत्त्वज्ञानामधून स्त्री स्वातंत्र्याची, समानतेची पहाट झाली. स्त्री समानता या विषयांशी संबंधित असे कितीतरी साहित्य आपल्याला विविध भाषांमध्ये दिसून येते. मुख्यतः हे साहित्य स्त्रियांकडूनच लिहिले गेले आहे. कारण समानता न मिळणे या सारखे अपमानास्पद तिला दुसरे काही वाटत नाही. त्याचाही उल्लेख करणे तेवढेच महत्वाचे आहे. त्याचबरोबर प्रगतीशील विकसित देशातील परिस्थितीचा आढावा आणि तुलना हा मुख्य उद्देश ठेऊन विविध दृष्टीकोनातून त्यांचा अभ्यास होणे आवश्यक आहे. ताराबाई शिंदे, विभावरी शिरकरांपासून सुरुवात होऊन स्त्री-पुरुष समानतेचा पुरस्कार आजतागायत तो मेघना पेठे, सानिया यांच्यापर्यंत येऊन ठेपला आहे. अत्यंत प्रभावी आणि समर्पक पध्दतीने आपल्या साहित्यातून समानतेचा उद्घोष केला आहे. यांच्या साहित्यातून तो फक्त मतस्वातंत्र्यापर्यंत मर्यादित राहिला नाही तर लैंगिक स्वातंत्र्य, समानतेपर्यंत येऊन पोहोचला आहे. कागदावर कायद्यातून आलेल्या नियमांपेक्षा मना-मनातून आदराच्या भावना आणि सद्विचिने मिळणारी समानता स्त्रियांना अपेक्षित आहे. जी तिला मिळणे हेच तिचे स्वातंत्र्य व लोकशाहीचे प्रतिक असेल.

स्त्री-पुरुष निसर्गाच्या उत्क्रांतीतून निर्माण झालेले एक वास्तविक सत्य. दोन्ही जीवांची गरज सारखीच. जगण्याचा नियम दोघांनाही सारखाच. जन्मतः शारीरिक वेगळेपणामुळे आलेल्या जबाबदाऱ्या फक्त वेगवेगळ्या. त्यांना मिळालेली विचारशक्ती, विचारातील तारतम्य, स्मरणातील अभूतपूर्व गोष्टी या नर-मादी अर्थात स्त्री-पुरुषात समान असतात. इतिहासात वळून बघतांना स्त्रियांच्या जीवनात आलेली स्थित्यंतरे बघितल्यावर त्यांच्या भूतकाळातील स्थानाची वर्तमानकाळातील स्थानाशी तफावत नक्कीच दिसून येते. भारतामध्ये स्त्री-पुरुषसमानता येण्याआधी किंवा त्यासाठी कराव्या लागणाऱ्या संघर्षा आधी युरोपात अत्यंत प्रभावीपणे व्यक्तिस्वातंत्र्य आणि समता या उदारमतवादी मूल्यांच्या उदयाबरोबरच तत्कालीन स्त्रीच्या अवस्थेची जाणीव तेथील विचारवंतांना झाली. स्त्रीला स्वातंत्र्य व विकासाचा अधिकार मिळाला पाहिजे असा विचार युरोपात मांडला जाऊ लागला. सन १७९२ मध्ये मेरी बोल्स्टन क्राफ्ट यांनी “ए विंडीकेशन ऑफ दि राइट्स ऑफ वुमन” या ग्रंथाद्वारे तत्कालीन स्त्रीच गुलामगिरी व शोषण स्पष्ट करून स्त्रीविषयीच्या पारंपारिक कल्पनांना नकार देते. त्यांतून फक्त एवढेच प्रतिपादित करावयाचे होते की स्त्रीला सर्व

अधिकार मिळाले पाहिजेत. जॉन स्टुअर्ट मिल यांनीही सन १८६९ मध्ये “दि सब्जेक्शन ऑफ वुमन” हे पुस्तक प्रसिद्ध करून विवाहसंस्था आणि कुटुंबसंस्था स्त्रीच्या व्यक्तिस्वातंत्र्याला - विकासाला बाधक कशा आहेत ते स्पष्ट केले. १८४८ मध्ये अमेरिकेतील गुलामगिरी विरुद्धच्या लढ्यात सहभागी झालेल्या स्त्रियांनी स्त्रियांच्या हक्कांचा जाहिरनामा घोषित करून मालमत्तेत समानवाटा, शिक्षण व रोजगाराच्या समान संधीची मागणी केली. १८९० मध्ये ‘सफ्रेजेट’ चळवळीने स्त्रियांना मतदानाच्या अधिकाराची मागणी केली गेली. ज्याची पूर्तता १९२० साली झाली.

भारतामध्ये १९व्या शतकात स्त्रियांच्या परवशतेला पुरुषनिर्मित मूल्यव्यवस्थाच कशी जबाबदार आहे याचा उहापोह करणारा ‘स्त्री-पुरुष तुलना’ हा निबंध ताराबाई शिंदे यांनी लिहिला. या निबंधात स्त्रीपुरुष विषमतेची सोदाहरण चर्चा करून स्त्री-पुरुष समानत्वाची विवेकवादी भूमिका मांडली. विसाव्या शतकाच्या उत्तरार्धात स्त्री मुक्ती / स्त्री समानता ह्यांच्या लढ्याला गती मिळाली. १९४९ साली सिमॉन द बोव्हा यांनी ‘दि सेकंड सेक्स’ या ग्रंथातून

स्त्रीत्वाची वेगळी ओळख स्पष्ट केली. त्या म्हणतात, “स्त्री जन्मतः स्त्री नसते तर संपूर्ण समाजव्यवस्था तिला स्त्री म्हणून घडवते.”

अर्थात हा समाज एखाद्या स्त्रीला तू स्त्री म्हणून कशी निकृष्ट किंवा पुरुषापेक्षा निम्न स्तरांवर आहेस हे सतत सांगत राहतो. जन्म घेतल्यापासून तिच्या मनावर सतत बिंबवले जाते ते तिचे स्त्रीपण!

यापूर्वी १९२९ मध्ये व्हर्जिनिया वुल्फ या ब्रिटिश लेखिकेनेही समानतेचा मुद्दा मांडला होता. त्याचं म्हणणं होत की, स्त्रियांना जर सर्व क्षेत्रांत पुरुषांच्या बरोबरीने वाव मिळाला असता तर शेक्सपिअर सारखी लेखिका पुढे येणे अशक्य नव्हते. जीवनाच्या सर्वच क्षेत्रात पुरुष सत्तांतर केंद्रवर्ती राहिल्याने स्त्रियांच्या सर्जनशीलतेला व्यक्त होण्यासाठी अवकाशच कसा उरला नाही हे व्हर्जिनिया वुल्फ यांनी या Room of one's own ग्रंथातून स्पष्ट केले आहे.

स्त्रियांच्या वाट्याला आलेल्या दुय्यमत्वाचा विचार हळूहळू साहित्याकडून पण घेतला जाऊ लागला. त्याचं मुख्य कारण होतं स्त्रियांचं शिक्षण. स्त्रिया पदवीधर झाल्या. त्यामुळे स्त्रिया पुरुषांच्या बरोबरीने, विशिष्ट उद्दिष्टासाठी कटिबद्ध होऊन घराबाहेर पडू लागल्या. समानतेबाबत कृष्णभामिनी यांनी “स्त्रीलोकओ पुरुषं” या शीर्षकांतर्गत ठणकावून म्हणतात, “स्त्री व पुरुष स्वभावतःच समान आहेत. स्त्रिया फक्त पुरुषाची सेवा करण्यासाठी निर्माण झालेल्या आहेत. या खेरीज त्यांच्या जीवनाचा दुसरा काही हेतू नसतो असे म्हणणे “खोटे व निषेधाह्वं” आहे. जेव्हा स्त्री व पुरुष यांना कर्तव्यांच्या व हक्कांच्या बाबतीत समानता प्राप्त होईल तेव्हाच मानवतेला खरे तेज प्राप्त होईल.”

पुरुषसत्ताक व्यवस्थेत स्त्रीला लिहिण्यावाचण्याचे सुद्धा स्वातंत्र्य नीटपणे मिळाले नाही. पण त्या काळांतही काही स्त्रियांनी लिहिण्या-वाचण्याचे स्वातंत्र्य प्राप्त केले. त्यांतील एक काशिबाई कानिटकर यांनी आपला लेख ‘सुबोध पत्रिके’त छापयला दिला. पण आपण खूप मोठा अपराध करत आहोत ही भावना आपल्या मनांत दाटून आली असे त्या आत्मचरित्रांत स्पष्ट करतात.

पुरुष प्रधान संस्कृतीत तेव्हा मोठमोठ्या लेखकांची नावे घेतली जात होती, तेव्हा शेवटी विवेचन करतांना स्त्रियांच्या नावाचा उल्लेख होत असे.

स्त्रियांच्या जडणघडणीचा जो काळ होता. त्यावेळी त्यांची अभिव्यक्ती होणं अत्यावश्यक होतं. त्यामुळे १८९०-१९०० मध्ये ज्या स्त्रियांनी लेखन केलं त्यांत त्यावेळच्या स्त्रियांच्या परिस्थितीचे समाजांत त्यांना मिळत असलेल्या वागणूकीचे सर्वोत्तम चित्रण

मिळेल. त्यामध्ये शांताबाई, लक्ष्मीबाई अभ्यंकर यांचे लेखन दिसून येईल.

याच कालखंडांत काशीबाई कानिटकर, गिरिजाबाई केळकर, आनंदीबाई शिर्के यांचे लेखन दिसून येते. पण साहित्यिक क्षेत्रांत ही पुरुष-स्त्री असमानता आपल्याला दिसून येईल. कारण तिथेही त्यांच्या कामाचा उल्लेख सर्वसाधारणपणे न होता ‘स्त्री लेखिका’ असा केला जातो.

विभावरी शिरूरकर यांनी आपल्या लेखनाद्वारे स्त्रियांचा कोंडमारा करणाऱ्या सामाजिक रुढी व प्रथा यांना कथाविषय बनविले. पुरुष केवळ स्त्रीच्या शरीर सौंदर्याकडे पाहतो आणि आत्मिक सौंदर्य लाथाडतो यांवर त्यांनी कथेद्वारे भाष्य केले.

त्यानंतर कुसुमावती देशपांडे, वसुंधरा पटवर्धन, शिरीष पै आदींनी विविध साहित्यांतून स्त्री-पुरुष समानतेचा पुरस्कार केला. वैचारिक पातळीवर स्त्री दास्याच्या मुक्तीची चळवळ विसाव्या शतकानंतर सुरू झाली. त्याच बरोबर विद्या बाळ यांनी लिंगभेदावर आधारित स्त्री-पुरुषांची प्रतिमा घडविणाऱ्या संस्कार व्यवस्थेला आव्हान दिल्याशिवाय स्त्रीचे ‘माणूस’ म्हणून जगणे शक्य होणार नाही ही वस्तुस्थिती लक्षात आणून दिली. स्त्री-पुरुष प्रवृत्तीचा समतोल साधल्याशिवाय माणूसपण निर्माण होणार नाही यासाठी मानसिक संवादाची गरज आहे.

स्त्री-पुरुष असमानता ही अजून मुख्यतः दिसून येते ती म्हणजे संसारांत घेतल्या जाणाऱ्या अपत्यांच्या निर्णयमध्ये. कारण शरीर हे स्त्रीचे जरी असले तरी त्यावर सर्वस्वी अधिकार तिचा नसतो. जेव्हा तिचे लग्न होते, तिचे मातृत्व हेदेखील तिला ऐच्छिक रहात नाही. सानिया यांची ‘रिच्युअल’ कथाही हेच दाखवते. लग्नसंस्थेमुळे अपरिहार्यपणे आणि सक्तीचे आलेले मातृत्व पुरुष-स्त्री समानता यावर मोठं प्रश्नचिन्ह उपस्थित करत आहे.

आपल्या शरीरावरही आपला अधिकार राहू नये यापेक्षा असमानता अजून कुठे बघायला मिळेल. समाजात पसरलेली असमानता स्त्री लेखिकेकडून अशा प्रकारे साहित्यांच्या माध्यमांतून व्यक्त होतांना दिसते.

साहित्यांतून प्रत्येक वेळी हीच गोष्ट स्पष्ट करण्याचा प्रयत्न केला गेला आहे की लोकशाही पद्धतीने चालविल्या जाणाऱ्या आपल्या देशात कायदेकानून बनवून सगळ्यांचा समानता आणि स्वातंत्र्याचा अधिकार तर दिला पण लिंगभेद आणि आर्थिक विषमता यामुळे तो कार्यरत झालेला दिसून येत नाही. त्याचबरोबर पुरुषांच्या मानसिकतेमध्ये खूप प्रमाणात बदल होणे आवश्यक आहे.

मेघना पेठे आणि गौरी देशपांडे यांनी लिंगभेदावरून होणाऱ्या असमानतेचा कडाडून विरोध केला. स्त्री स्वातंत्र्याच्या प्रश्नाचा धीटपणे आविष्कार आपल्या कथांमधून केला. लहानपणापासून एक 'मुलगी' म्हणून नाही तर 'व्यक्ती' म्हणून वागणूक मिळावी हीच अपेक्षा त्यांच्या कथांमधून मुक्त स्त्रीच्या नाना छटा आपल्याला दिसून येतात.

त्यांच्या कथा नायिका पुरुषांच्या तालावर नाचणाऱ्या नाहीत. ती पुरुषी वर्चस्वापासून मुक्त आहे. नेहमीच चुचकारून, लाडीगोडी करून पुरुष आपल्या मनाप्रमाणे स्त्रियांना वागायला भाग पाडतो पण गौरी देशपांडे ह्यांच्या नायिका पुरुषांच्या या पद्धतीला नकारात्मक पद्धतीने चपराक देतात.

गौरी देडपांडे यांनी तर बंडखोरपणे कथेतील पुरुष पात्रे बिनचेहऱ्याची वाटावीत इतकी चित्रित केली आहेत. त्यांच्या कथांमधून बिनचेहऱ्याचा प्रियकर दिसून येतो. त्यांच्यासाठी त्या नावापेक्षाही सर्वनामाचा वापर करताना दिसतात. कारण त्यांना नेहमीच असे वाटत राहिले की स्त्रीने स्वतःच्या आयुष्यांचे सगळे संदर्भ 'मी नवऱ्याची बायको, बापाची मुलगी' यापेक्षा 'स्त्री' आहे यावर लावावेत. तिने एक 'स्त्री' म्हणून स्वतःच्या अस्तित्वाचे सत्व टिकवायला हवे आहे. स्त्री-पुरुष समानतेचा पुरस्कार करण्यासाठी त्यांनी साहित्याचा आधार घेतला. आपल्या साहित्यकृतीतून हे व्यक्त केले की स्त्री-पुरुष समानता हा स्त्रीचा फक्त अधिकार नाही तर तीचे ते व्यक्तीस्वातंत्र्य आहे.

आजपर्यंत साहित्यांतून स्त्रीची प्रतिमा स्त्री भूमिका ही नेहमीच पुरुषांच्या छायेत, सावलीत रेखाटली गेली. पण आता हे पारंपारिक वळण मोडले जायला पाहिजे असं कुठे तरी प्रत्येकाला वाटत आहे. म्हणून त्याचं प्रत्यक्ष उदाहरण स्त्री लेखनांतून प्रकर्षाने जाणवत आहे.

मनांत असणारी ही खंत, हा अपमान की आपण (स्त्री-पुरुष) दोघेही समानतत्त्वांचे बनले असतांना फक्त स्त्रीलाच दुय्यम वागणूक कां? निसर्गाकडून मिळालेली मातृत्वाची क्षमता असतांना देखील तीला एक 'माणूस' म्हणून जगू न देण्याचा जणू चंगच बांधला आहे समाजाने! नवजीवनाची निर्मिती, त्याचं पालन-पोषण, घरची जबाबदारी आता तर आर्थिक जबाबदारीसुद्धा, सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक अशा अनेक जबाबदाऱ्या समर्थपणे पार पाडणाऱ्या स्त्रियांना आपल्याच जोडीदाराकडून नव्हे तर समस्त पुरुष वर्गाकडून समानतेची वागणूक मिळणे आवश्यक आहे.

मराठी साहित्यांत तर मेघना पेठे यांनी स्त्रीला हवे तेव्हा

आपल्या शारीरिक गरजा पूर्ण करण्याचं स्वातंत्र्य पुरुषांना जसं मिळतं तसंच मिळायला हवं असं देखील वाटतं. कारण आपल्याकडे पवित्रता, पतिव्रता, शुद्धता, चारित्र्य हे सगळं स्त्रीशी निगडित आहे. ज्यांचा पुरुषाला मागमूसही नाही. का? तर तो पुरुष आहे म्हणून. पुरुषाद्वारे बनवल्या गेलेल्या ह्या नियमांना आता फाटा देण्याची वेळ आली आहे.

त्याचबरोबर स्त्री-पुरुषांमधील मुक्त मैत्रीचा भाव देखील समानतेचा एक पैलू होऊ शकतो. आपल्या समाजांत एक स्त्री एक पुरुष चांगले मैत्रीभाव स्थापित करू शकत नाहीत. कारण कां? तर समाजाचा या नात्यांवर, अशा मैत्रीवर विश्वास नाही. गौरी देशपांडे, सानिया, विजया राजाध्यक्ष यासारख्या कथा लेखिकांनी हा विषय खूप जबाबदारीने हाताळला.

सामान्य स्तरावर कुटुंबसंस्था किंवा समाजव्यवस्था यामध्ये वाढणाऱ्या किंवा राहणाऱ्या पुरुषाला कायद्याची भीती देऊन समानता देण्यास लावण्यापेक्षा मुळापासून मनापासून त्याला वाटणे आवश्यक आहे. त्यासाठी स्त्रियांनी आपल्या घरापासून सुरुवात करावी जी आधी केली गेली नाही.

आपल्या मुलांना घरांतूनच हे संस्कार मिळायला हवेत. त्यासाठी पती-पत्नी मध्ये तसे नाते दिसणे आवश्यक आहे. आजच्या काळांत पती-पत्नी दोघेही नोकरी निमित्त बाहेर पडतात. पण जेव्हा ते दोघे घरी येतात तेव्हा मुलं ह्याचं निरीक्षण करतात की घरी आल्याबरोबर आई स्वयंपाकघरात आणि वडील बाहेर सोफ्यावर. का? तर ते थकून आले आहेत. ह्यावेळी दोघांनी मिळून चहापाणी किंवा घरांतील कामे वाटून केली तर मुलांनाही शिकवण मिळेल आणि पती-पत्नीचं नातंही सुदृढ होईल.

सरतेशेवटी एवढीच अपेक्षा केली जाते की, होणारा हा अन्याय, हा असमानतेचा वार कुठेना कुठे तरी थांबेल. कारण आता तिला हा दुजाभाव सहन होत नाही. ह्याचं चित्रण राजस्थानी कवयित्री सावित्री डागा करतात.

“मी ही एक माणूस आहे

मात्र स्त्री असल्याने माझी स्वतःची

ओळखच नष्ट झाली आहे.

मी फक्त एका व्यक्तीची

मालमता बनून राहिले आहे.

जसे शेत आणि पशू

मालकाच्या नावाने ओळखले जातात

तशी माझी ओळख
पुरुषाच्या पायातली वहाण
त्याच्या विलासाचे साधन
शिव्या खाते आणि पाय दाबते
माझे दुःख कोणी जाणत नाही
लाल चुनरी आणि लाल चुडा यांच्यासाठी
किती आटवलेय माझे लाल रक्त!”

अर्थात या सगळ्याचा मतितार्थ असा की, कागदावर
कायद्याद्वारे आलेल्या नियमांपेक्षा मनामनातून आदराच्या भावना

आणि समानतेची वागणूक जी सदिच्छेने मिळेल हीच अपेक्षा
स्त्रियांना आहे आणि ते तिला मिळणं हेच तिचे स्वातंत्र्य आणि
लोकशाहीचे प्रतिक असेल.

संदर्भ ग्रंथ

- (१) साहित्य : रंग आणि अंतरंग : डॉ. निशिकांत मिरजकर
- (२) स्त्रियांची नवकथा : वाटा आणि वळणे : मंगला वरखेडे
- (३) समतेतील नव्या संकल्पना : संपादक : डॉ. मनोहर जाधव
- (४) मराठी कथेची स्थितीगती

Women's Political Participation in India : Issues and Challenges

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Abstract : Women's unequal participation in politics is a violation of her fundamental democratic right. The patriarchal culture and societal norms have always restricted women's participation in public sphere. This is fundamentally responsible for the exclusion of women from politics in brazen defiance of our constitutional obligation to promote gender equality in all spheres. Women are not a homogeneous group and the extent of deprivation they face differ as per their caste, class, region, religious and educational background. Decades of feminist movement has failed in bringing positive changes in respect of women's participation in politics at the macro-level. Ironically, most of the women in India have accessed politics through their family legacy. The exceptions like Sushma Swaraj, Mayawati, Jayalalita and Mamta Banerjee are rare. The representation of women of non-political background is still negligible. In most of the political parties women leaders continue to be confined to the Women's cell of the respective parties. Women's participation in the political life is still unimpressive in India. This is in sharp contrast to the fact that voter turnout in case of women has been quite impressive. To improve the situation of women various committees and commissions have been formed, various legislations have been enacted and proposed including the women's reservation bill which could not get passed due to the lack of political consensus. The issue of women's representation needs to go beyond symbolism. We need to take concrete steps in this regard as no country can progress without the progressive empowerment of its women.

This paper is an attempt to highlight the inequalities suffered by women due to various socio-cultural norms and economic exclusion. It also endeavours to critically analyse the various legislations and proposals which have been proposed to improve the political participation of women.

Keywords: Feminist movement; Patriarchal Culture; Political Participation; Reservation; Women Empowerment; Women's Representation.

Introduction

Article 1, 2 and 3 of the Universal declaration of Human rights affirms the fact that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, birth or other status and that everyone has the right to life, liberty and security" (UNDP, 1948) However, these phrases from the Universal Declaration of Human rights does not hold true with women in almost every society of the world including India. The cumulative impact of tradition, culture and societal norms had always omitted women from the position of power and accorded them an inferior position in the society. Despite sustained protests by the women's movement, very trivial changes have taken place in women's life in India. Norms and rules that restrict women within the boundaries of their homes still prevail in our country. The patrilineal, male-dominated society of India had always curtailed women's rights and freedom. Most of the women in Indian society are tied to reproductive responsibilities more than anything else. They are largely excluded from public affairs and this is the reason that women's participation in the political life is still very nominal in our country.

Although our country had set the precedent of granting universal adult franchise in the very initial year of its independence and had produced women as Prime Minister, President and many Chief Ministers but that is confined with the women belonging to elite section. The

representation of women belonging to non-political background is still negligible. To improve the situation of women various committees and commissions had been formed, various legislations had been enacted and proposed among which most important been the Women's reservation bill. However, the past records of the atrocities and crime committed against the women in India clearly reveal the fact that there is still a long way to go in order to accord women their rightful place in the society.

This paper is an attempt to analyze the various issues and challenges faced by women in the process of political participation in India. It also attempts to throw light and the various measures needed to be taken to overcome this sorry state of affairs.

Importance of Political Participation of Women

Woman constitutes nearly half of the population of the country and is an integral part of the society. The under-representation of such a substantial section of population in the political and democratic regime is not only detrimental to the status of women in society but also for the growth of the country. Any democratic government can be truly representative only when each and every section of its population gets fair representation in its decision making process. This phenomena raises significant question over the legitimacy of the democratic set up of India where women are highly under-represented. Women makes home, who in turn makes society and societies make the state and nation.

Considering the importance of women in the society, they cannot be neglected or sidelined.

The most important aspect which necessitate the political participation of women in India is that India ranks among the ten most dangerous countries of the world for women. Every other day some news related with the physical and sexual abuse, rape, murder, dowry deaths make the headlines of the daily newspapers. In order to make the country gender sensitive and to ensure the needs, safety and security of women it is imperative that women representatives should come forward to participate in politics in large numbers. If women representatives will be there on the higher tables, it is expected that the needs of the women can better be served.

Constitutional and legal Provisions for Women in India

Keeping in view the dismal state of women in the society and the inequality faced by them in their daily state of affairs, the framers of the constitution incorporated many such provisions under the Constitution for the betterment and development of women in every sphere of life. The principle of gender equality, social, economic and political justice to all its citizens and also equality of status and of opportunity to all irrespective of sex, class caste and religion is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles of state Policy.

The Constitution had not only granted equality to women, but also empowered the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women for neutralizing the cumulative socio economic, education and political disadvantages faced by them (Georgekutty,2010). Various laws, development policies and programmes have been formulated aiming at women's advancement in different spheres. From the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) onwards, there has been a marked shift in the approach to women's issues from welfare to development (National Policy for the empowerment of women, 2001).

The National Commission for Women was also set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 with a motive to represent the rights of women and to provide a voice for their issues and concerns such as issues related with dowry, politics, religion, equal representation for women in jobs. Further, the 73rd and 74th constitutional Amendments Act (1993) provided groundwork for the political participation of women in India. In addition to that, National Policy for the Empowerment of Women was formulated in 2001 for the advancement, development and empowerment of women. Not only these, India has also ratified various international conventions and human rights instruments committing to secure equal rights of women. Key among them is the ratification of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1993 (National

Legal Research Desk, n.d.). Further the declaration of the Fourth World Conference on Women held at Beijing states that "Women's equal participation in political life plays a pivotal role in the general process of the advancement of women. Women's equal participation in decision making is a demand for simple justice and necessary condition for women's interest to be taken into account" (Beijing Declaration and Platform For Action, 1995) This declaration also had a magnificent impact on India's commitment towards granting women their rightful place in the society.

All these constitutional provisions and conventions though aimed at gender equality and empowerment for women but the situational reality is very different. There is a yawning gap between the policies and their genuine implementation. The socio- cultural, economic and political set up of the country hardly allows the women to break the barriers of their home, the system and structure of the society. These notions are prevailing in society since time immemorial and to step up in the public/political sphere which is by and large considered as a male domain is a herculean task for women.

Challenges Faced by Women in the Political Participation

Women who want to enter politics, find that the political, cultural and social environment is often unfriendly or even hostile to them (Shvedova, 2002). There are many obstacles prevailing in the society. These obstacles can be categorized into three areas: Socio- cultural, political and economic.

Socio-Cultural Factors

The subordinate position that society had always accorded to woman legitimizes their exclusion from participation in political and decision-making processes. Women have generally been considered as disloyal, disagreeable, untrustworthy, stupid and even gullible (Kabira and Nzioki, 1995) by the patriarchal societies. Thus women have always been confined within the four walls of the house and are culturally expected to remain in background supportive roles as mothers, sister, wives and daughters. Culturally, it is expected from women that they should take care of the home affairs and leave public affairs and decision-making to men. Such social beliefs or stereotypes discourage women from taking part in politics.

In addition to that, the low-level of education among women make them apathetic towards politics. Women from rural areas and even sub urban areas are unaware of who is their President or Prime Minister. They are least concerned about political issues. For them politics is nothing but a quinquennial affair, which gives them at least a chance to feel empowered though for one day only. They often cast their vote according to the whims and fancies of male members of the family without making any rational judgment.

Though the struggle to transform the prevailing socio-cultural system continues but the prevailing socio-cultural discriminatory systems threaten to erode modest inroads made by women with regards to political empowerment in that women are not regarded as equally capable, as their male counterparts, of political and public sector participation (Bawa and Sanyare, 2013). Thus, as soon as women step beyond the bounds of traditional roles and enter public life and politics, patriarchal interests feel threatened and deploy their usual repertoire of demeaning tactics and abuses (Krishnan, 2011). This leads to the creation of an environment which inhibits the participation of women in politics.

Political Factors

The Political culture of India is largely male dominated. It is very difficult for a woman from non-political background to enter in this horizon and to make a place for them. The names of such few exceptional personalities are so limited that can be counted on fingers. Sushma Swaraj, Mayawati, Mamta Banerjee Jayalalitha and few others have entered politics from a non- political background. Other than that only those women can be in politics whose family members have some association with the political parties. Party supremos are very reluctant to field women candidates if they don't belong to their family or their companionship.

Even for the women who get into the parties they don't have much patronage. They always get sidelined within the party sphere. As women are considered morally more ethical, and considerate than their male counterparts (Bawa and Sanyare, 2013) thus they are kept aloof of these male dominated areas. Women are mostly kept as dummies whose opinions don't really matter for them. Even the best women parliamentarians feel sidelined and powerless within their parties except a few. Male party leaders have shown little willingness to include women in party decision making bodies or help to create a conducive atmosphere for women's participation in their own organizations (J. Mahesh 2011).

Economic Factors

Economic factor is another obstacle in the women's path of political participation. In Indian society it is a common phenomena that men are usually the bread earners of the family and women do the household chores. This makes women economically dependent on men. This economic dependence makes women less capable of taking their own decisions. So for women to take part in politics they have to be dependent on their family. Election is an costlier affair if there is no consent of their husband, father or other bread earning member of their family it is not possible for them to fight elections. Further the massive corruption prevailing in the system is another major obstacle for women to join politics.

Apart from these factors the safety and security of

women is the most important factor which discourage them to participate in politics.

Women's Reservation Bill

The above discussion strongly advocates the fact that there is a strong need of reforms on the part of the electoral and parliamentary system of India to facilitate political participation of women on a massive scale (Rathod, 2014). It is with this understanding, quota system seems to be the most feasible means as it has proven to be the fastest and most effective way of ensuring women's adequate representation in parliaments all over the world (DAW, 2010). Though critics of the women's reservation argue that reservation can only benefit women of the political families and to those who belong to the affluent section of the society. However, it can be argued in the favour of reservation that, at least women will get a chance to falsify the conservative perception that politics is a male domain. The increased facilitation of the participation of women in political arena can eradicate the political apathy of women and make this arena much more safe, secure and friendly for women. The women who will succeed in this field can be a role model for millions of other women who can't even think of participating in politics.

To facilitate the participation of women, women's reservation bill came onto the scene. However, for the past 18 years the Women's Reservation Bill in India is still struggling to get a life. The battle for 33% representation to women in Lok Sabha and state assemblies was routinely punctuated by frayed tempers and war of words and high drama. Different governments since 1996 tried to get the Women's Reservation Bill passed in Parliament without success. Though it has got passed in the Rajya Sabha in 2010, but it is still pending in the Lok sabha ((Women's Bill, 2014). This bill since it has come onto discussion has used by the political parties for their own political gains undermining the main objective of the bill.

Conclusion

In order to increase women's political participation and representation in Indian politics we need electoral and parliamentary reforms. The Election Commission has been successful in drawing more Indian women voters to the polling booth. The political parties need to give tickets to more women candidates. The reservation for women has by and large worked well in Panchayats and urban local bodies. It is high time we introduced Women's reservation in state legislative assemblies and Parliament. At the same time it must be kept in mind that there is no automatic link between women's representation and women's empowerment. For example, a reasonably good number of women in legislatures in Pakistan and Bangladesh has not translated into women empowerment in these societies. It has also not affected the existence of many anti-women laws in these countries.

Hence, we need to solve wider systemic issues to address the issue of women empowerment in a holistic way.

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Emancipation of Women in Rig Vedic Period

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Abstract : Women had a very significant position in our ancient Indian society. In fact they were superior to men. The Rig Vedic Women in India enjoyed high status in society. Their condition was good and enjoyed free and esteemed positions in the Rig-Vedic society.

There are literary evidences to suggest that women had power which could destroy kingdoms and mighty rulers. Veda Vyasa in Mahabharata writes how Kauravas cost because they humiliated Draupadi, the wife of Pandavas. Valmiki's Ramyana depicts the sad state of Ravana for abducting Sita forcibly. The worship of Goddesses in ancient period was to inspire public to respect women. In the Vedic society, women participated in religious ceremonies and assemblies. There is no evidence of isolation of women in Vedic period in domestic or social affairs, but they were affectionately dependent on their male relations throughout their lives.

There were women like Matreyi, Gargi, Lopamudra, Ghosha, and Indranni, who were learned souls and have put forth their thought in Upanishads. In the Upanishads, we find two women of outstanding personality who could engage even the great Ya jòavalkya to high philosophical discussion. The one was his wife Maitreyî, and the other, his disputant Gargî, daughter of the sage Vachanknu. In this paper we will focus on one of the Upanishadic women named Maitreyî as found in Bròhadà ranò yakopanishòad. Bròhadaranò yakopanishad is the largest of the eleven extant Upanishòads and forms a part of the Eatapatha Brahmana, of the white-Yajurveda. It is called Bròhadaranò yakopanishad because; it is "Bròhad", big and also because it belongs to the Aranò yaka section.

Place of Women in Upanishads Woman, according to Upanishads, was created to make the man complete. *Atman* was all alone in the beginning. He was afraid and had no delight. He desired a second. He became as large as a woman and a man in close embrace. He caused that self to fall into two parts. From that arose man and wife

philosophical ideas, *Vak* is a female and *Pranò* the male, their coming together gives birth to the syllable 'Om 3The elevated position of the woman is also apparent from the fact that seeing a woman occurs as a good omen in the Chandogya Upanishad. 'After performing the Mantha -rite, if a man sees a woman, let him know that his effort has reached fruition. 'Woman was not considered as an unwanted baby. The Bròhadaranòyaka even prescribes a rite for obtaining a long living and scholarly daughter. (Bròh.Up. VI.4.17).

The debate between Ya jòavalkya and Gargî, indicates that women were given a place of honour and liberty to mix with the people freely and also to engage in debates and philosophical symposiums even in the assembly of learned scholars. Knowledge gave them the status and the power to hold their own individual identity.

Introduction

In the ancient Indian Society, Women had a very significant position. In fact, they were superior to men. The Rig Vedic Women in India enjoyed high status in society. Their condition was good and enjoyed free and esteemed positions in the Rig-Vedic society.

There are literary evidences to suggest that women had power which could destroy kingdoms and mighty rulers. Veda Vyasa in Mahabharata writes how Kauravas lost because they humiliated Draupadi, the wife of Pandavas. Valmiki's Ramyana depicts the sad state of Ravana for abducting Sita forcibly. The worship of Goddesses in ancient period was to inspire public to respect women. In the Vedic society, women participated in religious ceremonies and assemblies. There is no evidence of isolation of women in Vedic period in domestic or social affairs, but they were affectionately dependent on their male relations throughout

their lives. There were women like Matreyi, Gargi, Lopamudra, Ghosha, and Indranni, who were learned souls and have put forth their thought in Upanishads.

In Upanishads, we find two women of outstanding personality, who could engage even the great Yajavalkya to high philosophical discussion. The one was his wife Maitreyî, and the other, his disputant Gargî, daughter of the sage Vachanknu. In this paper, we will focus on one of the Upanishadic women named Maitreyî as found in Bròhadaranòyakopanishòad. Bròhadaranòyakopanishòad is the largest of the eleven extant *Upanishads* and forms a part of the Eatapatha Brahmana, of the white-Yajurveda. It is called Bròhadaranòyakopanishòad because; it is "Bròhad", big and also because it belongs to the Aranòyaka section.¹

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¹Chitrita Devi, Upanishòads For All (New Delhi: S. Chand and Co (pvt.) Ltd., 1973), 329.

delight. He desired a second. He became as large as a woman and a man in close embrace. He caused that self to fall into two parts. From that arose man and wife.²

A philosophical idea, *Vak* is a female and *Pranā* the male, they come together to give birth to the syllable 'Om'.³ The elevated position of the woman is also apparent from the fact that seeing a woman occurs as a good omen in the Chandogya Upanishad. 'After performing the mantha -rite, if a man sees a woman, let him know that his effort has reached fruition.'⁴ Woman was not considering as an unwanted baby. The Brōhadaranōyaka even prescribes a rite for obtaining a long living and scholarly daughter.⁵

The debate between Yajñavalkya and Gargī, indicates that women were given a place of honour and liberty to mix with the people freely and also to engage in debates and philosophical symposiums even in the assembly of learned scholars. Knowledge gave them the status and the power to hold their own in such matters.⁶

In the Upanishads, we meet three chief different types of women: Katyayanī, the women of the world, who is only once mentioned in the Brōhadaranōyaka; Maitreyī, the type of spiritual woman, a fit consort to the philosopher Yajñavalkya; and the Gargī, the Upanishadic Suffragette, who, fully equipped in the art of intellectual warfare, dares to wrangle with Yajñavalkya, and that if he succeeds in shielding in himself against those missiles, he may certainly be declared to be the greatest of the philosophers that had assembled.⁷

Maitreyī, was the wife of the great sage Yajñavalkya and was acquainted with Brahman (i.e. Brahmadatini). In the Brhadaranayaka Upanishads we find the celebrated conversation between Yajñavalkya and Maitreyī while the Yajñavalkya wanted to make a partition of his state between his two wives, Katyayani and Maitreyī on the eve of his renouncing the householder's life.⁸

The teaching of Yajñavalkya to Maitreyī centers round the thought that the 'Atman is the highest object of human's life and that is the reality by knowing which everything is known. Yajñavalkya was delighted at her curiosity, the sage taught her with great tenderness. He taught Maitreyī that this knowledge of Brahman is the means to immortality, which fully recorded, forms the highest teaching of the Upanishads. He informed her that, no being in this world has any capability of being dear to another without the presence of the soul within. Even to enjoy the beauty of

this world has no meaning without the soul within our own body, for the soul is all that we are. Understanding the depths of spiritual knowledge is the way to attain *moksha*, liberation from the continued rounds of birth and death.

In this dialogue his wife/disciple are presented. The dialogue between them is considered to be an arch-model of dialectics in the Upanishadic world, Yajñavalkya declaring to her that he had resolved to bring his householder ship to an end and to go solitarily into the path of the Absolute.

Maitreyī was not an ordinary woman to accept such a decree without knowing exact value the rishi was seeing in the alternative path he was choosing. Finding that this choice was for the immortal and the realization of the truth of truth, she also wanted to seek the one truth. It is with this background in mind that we should read the dialogue between Yajñavalkya and Maitreyī. In this way, Maitreyī showed how all women can achieve the heights of spiritual understanding simply by careful listening and practicing the Vedic path.

In the text of 'Quest for Immortality', Brih. Up.II, 5. Verse 1-4, we see that Yajñavalkya, is about to leave his *Grathaasharam* and proceeding to the next asharam known as *Sanyashrama*. Many scholars underestimate Katyayanī by saying that she possessed knowledge as women possess, but here Upanishad give different message that, historically, male wandered freely (Sannyasin or vanaprashasrama) and the woman was taking care of feeding, grooming and bringing up the children at home. Hence the main brunt of family responsibility was on the woman. That is the source of the platitude. In our own era it is a shame that we entertain such ideas (women is inferior because of worldly affections), about half of the population.

Gargi was the daughter of Vashaknu, and was also called Vachakni. But because she was born in the line of the Garga Gotra or family line, she was also called Gargi, a name by which she became well known. The Brihadaranayaka Upanishad explains that she asked the sage many questions on spiritual science and became highly educated in this way. Once in the court of King Janaka there was arranged to be a debate on the spiritual sciences. He wanted to find out who was the person who knew best the science of the Absolute, and that person would receive 1000 decorated cows with horns plated with gold. None of the local Brahmins complied because they were afraid they would have to prove their knowledge, and may not be up to the

²Brōh.Up. I.4.1-3. Shubhra Sharma, Life In The Upanishads (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1985), 103.

³Chand Up.I, 1.5-6.

⁴Chand.Up.V.2.7-8.

⁵Brōh.Up. VI.4.17 Shubhra Sharma, Life In The Upanishads (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1985), 105.

⁶Jogeswar Sarmah, Philosophy of Education in the Upanishads (New Delhi: Oriental Publishers & Distributors,1978), 113-114.

⁷R. D. Ranade, A Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1968),42-43.

⁸Brōh. Up.II, 4.1-3.

task. However, the sage Yajnavalkya told his disciple to take all the cows to his place, where he started the debate.

Yajnavalkya answered the questions from many scholars who approached him, setting aside all of their concerns and doubts. However, then came Gargi's turn to ask the sage whatever she wanted. But she asked many different and complex questions on the immortality of the soul, the arrangement of the universe, and many other topics. Finally Gargi herself bowed to the sage and proclaimed that there was no one else who was more greatly learned in the Vedic Shastras than Yajnavalkya. In this way, Gargi showed that in Vedic culture it was not unexpected for women to become greatly learned in the Vedic sciences, nor that they could not discuss such topics with wise and kindly sages who also shared their knowledge with them. Thus she is a luminous example of women in the Vedic tradition.

Women had an opportunity to choose their man through a type of marriage called *Swayamvara*. In this type of marriage, the eligible grooms assembled at the bride's place and the bride selected her man. There are many such incidences in epics the Ramayana and Mahabharata. This continued even in the later period in royal families. Women were given more freedom as compared to now. The statements given below to prove that women were given respect in those times as these are from Vedas and other significant scriptures: We can connect this vedic realitis to the famous verse from *Manu Smiriti* which states that, "Yatra Nari Astu Pujyante, Ramante Tatra Devataa", i.e. "Where women are worshiped, there the gods dwell." Or where the women are happy, there will be prosperity. In fact the direct quotes from the *Manusamhita* explain as follows:

"Women must be honored and adorned by her fathers, brothers, husbands, and brothers-in-law, who desire their own welfare. Where women are honored, there the gods are pleased; but where they are not honored, no sacred rite yields rewards. Where the female relations live in grief, the family soon wholly perishes; but that family where they are not unhappy ever prospers. The houses, on which female relations, not being duly honored, pronounce a curse, perish completely, as if destroyed by magic. Hence men, who seek (their own) welfare, should always honor women on holidays and festivals with (gifts of) ornaments, clothes and (dainty) food."⁹ "Women are worthy of worship. They are the fate of the household, the lamp of enlightenment for all in the

household. They bring solace to the family and are an integral part of Dharmic life. Even heaven is under the control of women. The Gods reside in those households where women are worshipped and in households where women are slighted all efforts at improvement go in vain."¹⁰

"O bride! May the knowledge of the Vedas be in front of you and behind you, in your centre and in your ends. May you conduct your life after attaining the knowledge of the Vedas. May you be benevolent, the harbinger of good fortune and health and live in great dignity and indeed be illumined in your husband's home."¹¹

"The wife should do *Agnihotra (yagna)*, *Sandhyavandana* and all other daily religious rituals. If, for some reason, her husband is not present, the woman alone has full rights to do *yajna*."¹²

That women and men are equal in the eyes of dharma is made explicit in a beautiful *shloka* from the Rigveda:

"O women! These mantras are given to you equally (as to men). May your thoughts, too, be harmonious. May your assemblies be open to all without discrimination? Your mind and consciousness should be harmonious. I (the rishi) give you these mantras equally as to men and give you all and equal powers to absorb (the full powers) of these mantras."¹³ Indeed "the virtues of the loyal and virtuous (pativrata) wife are comparable to only those of agnideva (the fire god). This agnideva is pure and worthy of worship just as pativrata women."¹⁴ During Hindu marriage ceremonies the following slokas are read out by the grooms but, these days, little understood. "O bride! I accept your hand to enhance our joint good fortune. I pray to you to accept me as your husband and live with me until our old age. ..."¹⁵

Vedas states, when a woman is invited into the family through marriage, *she enters "as a river enters the sea" and "to rule there along with her husband, as a queen, over the other members of the family."*¹⁶ This kind of equality is rarely found in any other religious scripture. In addition, a woman who is devoted to God is more highly regarded than a man who has no such devotion, as found in the Rig-Veda: "many a woman is more firm and better than the man who turns away from Gods, and offers not."¹⁷

There are many civilizations in the world where respect for women and their role in society are prominent and others

⁹Manu Smriti III.55-59

¹⁰ Manusmriti 3-56

¹¹ Atharva Veda 14-1-64

¹² Rigveda Samhita, part 1, sukta 79, sloka 872.

¹³Rigveda 10-191-3.

¹⁴ Rigveda Samhita, Part -1, sukta 73, sloka 829.

¹⁵ Rigveda Samhit a Part -4, sukta 85, sloka 9702

¹⁶ Atharva-Veda 14.1.43-44

¹⁷ Rig-Veda, 5.61.6

where regard for them and their status should be improved. Yet, the level of civility along with moral and spiritual standards in a society can often be perceived by the respect and regard it gives for its women. Not that it glorifies them for their sexuality and then gives them all the freedom men want so they can be exploited and taken advantage of, but that they are regarded in a way that allows them to live in honor for their importance in society with respect and protection, and given the opportunity to reach their real potential in life.

Among the many societies that can be found in the world, we have seen that some of the most venerating regard for women has been found in Vedic culture. The Vedic tradition has held a high regard for the qualities of women, and has retained the greatest respect within its tradition as seen in the honor it gives for the Goddess, who is portrayed as the feminine embodiment of important qualities and powers. These forms include those of Lakshmi (the goddess of fortune and queen of Lord Vishnu), Sarasvati (the goddess of learning), Subhadra (Krishna's sister and auspiciousness personified), Durga (the goddess of strength and power), Kali (the power of time), and other Vedic goddesses that exemplify inner strength and divine attributes. Even divine power in the form of shakti is considered feminine.

In this way, Vedic culture adorns women and shows the highest level of reverence and respect and also provides freedom and protection as well as safety. Additional quotes can be found in other portions of the Vedic literature. This is the proper Vedic standard. If this standard is not being followed, then it represents a diversion of the genuine Vedic tradition. Due to this tradition, India's history includes many women who have risen to great heights in spirituality, government, literature, education, science, or even as warriors on the battlefield.

In real Vedic culture it is taught that every man should view and respect every woman, except his own wife, as his mother, and every girl with the same concern and care as his own daughter. It is only because of the lack of such training and the social distancing from the high morals as this that this teaching is being forgotten, and the respect that society should have for women has been reduced. This reminds me the teaching of he says, "*O ruler of the earth (Yuddhisthira) the lineage in which daughters and the daughters-in-law are saddened by ill treatment, that lineage is destroyed. When out of their grief these women curse these households, such households lose their charm, prosperity and happiness.*"¹⁸

Mahatma Gandhi once wrote that the way we treat our women is an indicator of our barbarism. Whereas men may have greater physical energy than women, the latter clearly

have more internal and emotional energy. It is not without reason then that women are identified with *shakti* in Vedic civilization. If women are kept suppressed, this *shakti* will be denied to the family and the society, thus weakening all of them.

The change in the attitude toward women in India (and across the globe) was due to a loss of true Vedic standards culture and a lack of understanding true Vedic spiritual knowledge. Thus it should be easy to see the need for organizations that will keep and teach the proper views which were once a basic part of the genuine Vedic traditions.

When the position of women declines, then that society loses its equilibrium and harmony. In the spiritual domain, men and women have an equal position. Men and women are equal as sons and daughters of the same Supreme Father. However, you cannot bring the spiritual domain to this Earth or enter the spiritual strata if your consciousness is focused on the differences of the gender, and thus treat women poorly. One is not superior to the other, spiritually speaking, but each has particular ways or talents to contribute to society and to the service of God. So men should not try to control women by force, but neither should women forcefully try to seize the role of men or try to adopt the masculine nature of men. Otherwise, imbalance results in society, just as a car will not move properly when the tires on one side are too low or out of balance. Of course there are exceptions in which some men are naturally good at feminine roles and some women are talented in masculine occupations. But the point is that women and men must work cooperatively like the twin wings of a bird, together which will raise the whole society. If there is a lack of respect and cooperation, how can society be progressive? After all, how can there be a spirit of cooperation and appreciation between men and women when instead there is a mood of competition or of disrespect for one towards the other? It is this mood in materialistic society that is increasing in both family and corporate life which contributes to social imbalance and not to a smooth and peaceful society.

In Vedic tradition we come across the word use by husband for wife were *Patni* (the one who leads the husband through life), *Dharmapathni* (the one who guides the husband in dharma) and *Sahadharmacharini* (one who moves with the husband on the path of dharma—righteousness and duty). This is how ancient Vedic culture viewed the partnership of husband and wife.

When a husband and wife are willing to be flexible to each other's needs and move forward in love and mutual understanding, the relationship can go beyond equality to one of spiritual union. This means that each one appreciates the talents of the other, and views the other as

¹⁸ Mahabharata, Anushashanparva, 12.14

complimenting what each one already has. This also makes up for the weaknesses or deficiencies of the other. In this way, each can provide support, encouragement and inspiration to the other. This ideal can only be achieved when they properly understand the principles of spirituality. It is also said that where the husband and wife get along well, Lakshmi Devi (the goddess of fortune) herself dwells in that house. It is also considered that a wife who serves a spiritually strong and qualified husband automatically shares in whatever spiritual merit he achieves because she assists him by her service.

Instances from Vedic culture shows that all women should be respected and honored for the potential and talent they can provide to keep the family together. Harmony needs to be restored between the masculine and feminine natures, which are especially exhibited in the relations between men and women. This can be done most effectively through genuine spiritual development, when both masculine and feminine natures become balanced and complimentary rather than competitive. This can harmonize not only the external relations between people but also the feminine and masculine tendencies within each individual, both men and women. By genuine spiritual progress we can rise above our bodily material identities and work with and compliment the talents and abilities of others, regardless of whether they are men or women. We must know that within each body is a spirit soul that is no different than our own. By that I mean that we must recognize that on the platform of spiritual reality there is no difference between one soul and the next, no matter whether the external body is male or female. But while we are in this world and in different types of bodies, we can work cooperatively for our survival and for harmony among us, and use our naturally varied talents together. Women can do what they do best and men can do what they do best. This certainly makes it easier for all to live peacefully than in a mood of competition and aggression, or envy and prejudice. In such a mood of cooperation we can see that we all have something to offer or contribute, and we all have something for which we can be appreciated. We only need the right opportunity to bring that out of each and every one of us. The proper leaders of society or of organizations who promote such situations are those who can arrange for such a harmonious environment to exist.

One difference that we often see between men and women is that there is often nothing harder to penetrate

than the typical male ego, which often causes men to hesitate to show any weakness and to make a show of a tough exterior, while women often respond easily to love with love. However, love and compassion are not meant to be exhibited only by women or mothers. It is a state of being, a level of consciousness. It is an exhibition of one's spiritual development to have care and concern, compassion and love for each and every being. It should be a common interest that everyone should be able to live a life of opportunity, development and progress for their own material and spiritual well being. And this concern is natural for both men and women who have reached this level of spiritual awareness, recognizing in many ways the similarities between us all, regardless of our gender. This is what is needed to help bring more peace and cooperation in the world, and another reason for protecting and emphasizing the traditional standards of spiritual understanding as found in the teachings of *Santana-dharma*.

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Victims of Acid Attack - *Safety and Security of Women*

Ms. Sangeeta Mehta

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Abstract : Acid attacks are a form of violence against women, where the perpetrator splashes a person or object with acid in order to deface or kill them. Although acid throwing, also known as vitriol age, has been a form of violence known to be committed throughout history, there has been a steep rise in the cases documented in recent years, particularly in certain South Asian countries. Some of this increase has been attributed to better documentation of cases and also to the fact that victims of attacks have begun to report an attack more often.

However, there appears to be a substantive increase in the number of acid attacks that are being committed in recent times due to various factors. Acid attacks are seen as one of the most vicious crimes as it causes perpetual suffering to the victim. As acid melts flesh and even the bones of a person, it causes an unparalleled degree of pain to the victim and leaves her mutilated and scarred as well as giving permanent disabilities at times such as blindness.

Victims face lifetime physical, social, psychological and economic consequences. The effects of acid attack are very serious and are almost irreparable. The effect is mental as well as physical which requires clinical monitoring and treatment by experts.

Thus over the years various kinds of acid attacks have been registered under the sections related to hurt, grievous hurt, murder etc. In most of the cases no compensation has been awarded. Those in which compensation has been awarded the sum is minimal and is totally inadequate to meet even the medical expenses. Normally courts just levy fines without even giving these to the victims. The section on Compensation in the Criminal Procedure Code should therefore clearly spell out that the fines levied should be given to the victim or their dependents.

The victims suffer a great deal due to a slow judicial process, inadequate compensation and obviously from the after affect of the acid attack itself. Thus, there is an urgent need to legislate distinct sections in the I.P.C to deal with acid attacks and to setup a Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in India to deal with such cases in an effective and efficient manner, to help the victims of acid attack to get compensation for medical expenses and rehabilitation apart from making Section 357 Criminal Procedure Code mandatory in certain respects. A new Act has been

The Law Commission has proposed to that a law known as "Criminal Injuries Compensation Act" be enacted as a separate Law by the government . This law should provide both interim and final monetary compensation to victims of certain acts of violence like Rape, Sexual Assault, Acid Attacks etc. and should provide for their medical and other expenses relating to rehabilitation, loss of earnings etc. Any compensation already received by the victim can be taken into account while computing compensation under this Act. It was further recommended that the distribution and sale of acid be strictly regulated and the sale of Acid across shop counters be banned. The proposal of the Law Commission is considered and a new law is enacted for the same.

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Consequences of Acid Attack

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The victims suffer a great deal due to a slow judicial process, inadequate compensation and obviously from the after affect of the acid attack itself.

Cases of Acid Attacks.

In 1998, a Maharashtra case¹, where acid was thrown

¹Gulab Sahiblal Shaikh Vs. The State of Maharashtra, (1998 Bom CR(Cri))

on a woman, while she was holding her two and a half year old baby, by her brother-in-law for refusing to give money to maintain her husband's second wife. She sustained acid burns on the left side of her face, left hand and left breast and both she and her infant daughter lost their eyesight. The woman finally died due to burn injuries. In this case, the brother-in-law was sentenced by the Court under Section 302 of IPC, to undergo imprisonment for life and pay a fine of Rs. 1000 and also sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for a month. Under Section 326 of the Indian Penal Code he was awarded 5 years of imprisonment apart from a fine of Rs. 2000/-and 3 months of rigorous imprisonment. Though the accused was found guilty the learned Judge failed to appreciate that he should levy an adequate amount as fine and give this fine to the victim's child, who suffered from the attack in multiple ways. In a 2002 case², the accused was suspicious about the character of his wife and inserted mercuric chloride into her vagina, she died due to renal failure. The accused was charged and convicted under Section 302 and 307 IPC.

In another case³ before the Hon'ble Supreme Court in 1975, acid was poured on a woman by her husband for refusing to grant him divorce. The husband was involved in an extra-marital affair. Due to the attack, the victim suffered multiple acid burns on her face and other parts of her body, leading to her death. The accused was charged and convicted under Section 302 of the IPC. However, life imprisonment was not imposed even though the victim had died. In a case before the Madras High Court⁴, a person suspected his wife had developed an illicit relationship with one of his acquaintances. In that fit of anger he threw acid on her resulting in severe burns and death of the victim. The husband was convicted under Sec 302 IPC and 313 IPC (causing miscarriage of a woman without her consent) with life imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 2000. The fine was thus again a meager amount. In *Devanand Vs. The State*⁵ a man threw acid on his estranged wife because she refused to

cohabit with him. The wife suffered permanent disfigurement and loss of one eye. The accused was convicted under Section 307 and was imprisoned for 7 years.⁶

Conclusion and Suggestion

Thus, there is an urgent need to legislate distinct sections in the I.P.C to deal with acid attacks and to setup a Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in India to deal with such cases in an effective and efficient manner, to help the victims of acid attack to get compensation for medical expenses and rehabilitation apart from making Section 357 Criminal Procedure Code mandatory in certain respects.

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The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013 is an Indian legislation passed by the Lok Sabha on 19 March 2013, and by the Rajya Sabha on 21 March 2013, which provides for amendment of Indian Penal Code, Indian Evidence Act, and Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 on laws related to sexual offences. The Bill received Presidential assent on 2nd April 2013 and deemed to come into force from 3 February 2013. It was originally an Ordinance promulgated by the President of India, Pranab Mukherjee, on 3 February 2013, in light of the protests in the 2012 Delhi gang rape case.

² Marepally Venkata Sree Nagesh Vs. State of A.P (2002 CriLJ3625)

³ Revinder Singh Vs. State of Harayana (AIR 1975 SC 856)

⁴ Balu Vs. State Represented Inspector of police decided on 26/10/2006

⁵ 1987 (1) Crimes 314)

⁶ Veerla Stayanarayna Vs State of A.P 2002(Supp)1 SC 489

A House Wife's Right to the Personal Space- A Case Study of Mumbai City

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Abstract : 'Space' is the central theme of geography and so is 'Gender'. Space has different connotations. With reference to gender, space has been perceived as 'private' or 'domestic' space and 'public' or 'common' space (Phadke, S 2007). Geographers argue that spaces are contested, fluid and uncertain (McDowell, L 1999). Hence, at times one can confine 'space' with a boundary and at other times it could be seamless. This division specially is guided by gender relations. One of the key concerns of gender geography has been to draw attention to the contrast between the lives of women which is centred upon the 'domestic' space which is the sphere of home, family and domestic environment and the lives of men is centred along the 'public' space which is the sphere of work.

Globalisation brought a sea level change in technology and lifestyle of people all over the world, making technology, capital and people mobile at different scales. In spite of these changes in mobility, to a great extent many people all over the world spend majority of their time in everyday life over a restricted geographical locale (McDowell, L 1999). Identities of people are strongly associated with these locales. A locale called 'home' has different meanings in different languages. This space called 'home' does reflect the variations in gender relations.

Hence, the present paper tries to understand the significance of space in the life of a housewife in Mumbai. It also tries to understand the forces that control the space in a 'home' environment.

For the present paper the study area was Mumbai city and suburban districts which have been experiencing a number of changes due to globalisation. A questionnaire survey was conducted and the data collected has been analysed qualitatively as well as quantitatively to understand the dynamics between gender and the home environment.

Keywords: *Gender Geography, House-wife, Public Space, Private Space*

“Women can do all the work, except to propose marriage. Nature does not allow women to marry men, just like nature does not allow men to wash dishes, cook and sweep. People will lose confidence in a man and his wife if they find him in the kitchen.”

~ Older woman, Uganda 1994

“In our culture women tend to feel small. Men have always been the leaders; their voice is final.”

~ South Africa 1998

“Domestic work is usually divided into male and female and is thus performed. Women cook, clean, wash, bring water (where there is no water supply); while men take care of the heating, repairing of the house, and if necessary, help their wives with the children.”

~ Macedonia 1998

'Space' is the central theme of geography and so is 'Gender'. Role played by both the genders in the society is decided by caste, class, religion, economic and political affiliations. In India, qualitative research in Gender Geography did not start until 1980s. The initial researches done in gender geography in India did use orthodox methodologies because use of qualitative data and methods were not widely accepted in the geographical tradition in India (Saraswati, R. and Lahiri-Dutt, K., 2011: xiii).

Space has different connotations. Perception of 'space' and 'place' is directly or indirectly linked with the particular constructions of gender relations (Massey, D, 1994: 2). With reference to gender, space has been perceived as 'private' or 'domestic' space and 'public' or 'common' space (Phadke, S 2007). Geographers argue that spaces are contested, fluid and uncertain (McDowell, L 1999). Hence, at times one can confine 'space' with a boundary and at other times it could be seamless. This division specially is guided by gender relations. One of the key concerns of gender geography has been to draw attention to the contrast between the lives of women which is centred upon the 'domestic' space which is the sphere of home, family and domestic environment and the lives of men is centred along the 'public' space which is the sphere of work.

A 'home' is a place which is known for providing happiness and a secure environment. In the Encyclopaedia of Human Geography by Barney Warf, Peter Somerville has summarised the following characteristics of a place called 'home':

- (a) Shelter: not only protection from the weather outside but also a place of physical security;
- (b) Hearth: a place to relax and to be comfortable (“at home”) and from which to offer welcoming hospitality;

- (c) Heart: emotional security, with the home providing a site of love and affection;
- (d) Privacy: a legal and sociocultural haven in which questions of “who enters” and “what are acceptable practices” can be regulated;
- (e) Roots: a place in which to belong and which can be an expression of our identity.
- (f) Abode: a place to stay and to sleep;
- (g) Paradise: an idealised expression of the emotional pleasures of belonging, being safe, and feeling secure.

However studies in Gender geography and various theorists from Feminist Geographies have challenged these traditional meanings of ‘home’. A ‘home’ is perceived as a ‘woman’s place’ because for majority of men all over the world it is a haven for rest and recreation as they work away from home (McDowell, L, 1999: 74). Secondly, home has been identified as a site of ‘oppression’ characterised by male tyranny in the form of domestic violence and fear contrary to the rosy image of a place providing care, love, security and warmth. Thirdly, home has been recognised as a place of negotiation and contestation (May, J and Cloke, P, 2006: 225-226). From a very tender age, household work becomes a natural responsibility of a woman in many societies. However, it still continues to be an unpaid job without a formal recognition which in a patriarchal society like India is invariably the responsibility of women.

During the phase of industrialisation, in European societies the ‘home’ was associated with a spiritual quality. Women were the angels who had to shoulder the responsibility of domestic work, bearing and nurturing of children and also protect the ‘master’ of the house from the harsh competitive world of capitalism (McDowell, L, 1999: 75).

The Study Area:

Mumbai is located on the west coast in Konkan region. An archival metamorphosis of this city from a group of seven islands (in the pre-British times); to a textile hub to a gentrified commercial capital has made Mumbai a hotspot on the map of India. Under the sway of global restructuration processes, planners and bureaucrats have been designing the built environment of Mumbai to suit the needs of a global city. The make-over of Mumbai began with the mushrooming of fly-overs, expressways-freeways, the Mono and Metro Rail projects and the proliferating development of real estate in the city and in distant suburbs. Impact of these urban renewal schemes is visible in the process of cultural transformation too. The cultural transformation is superficial as people especially from the low income group are being marginalised. It is also noteworthy to study and understand the processes and politics associated with provisions and policies related to female education, employment, nutrition,

health and security because women also has been a marginalised group since ages under the reign of patriarchy.

At the outset, a typical woman from Mumbai appears to be liberal, outgoing and bold. Migrant women do claim that this city is comparatively safer than many other cities and towns in India. This possibly could be because of Maharashtra’s history of social reforms in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and also because a large number of women in the city are a part of the urban workforce (Phadke, S 2007). But it is crucial to understand the extent to which women can enjoy this ‘freedom’. Is the freedom restricted only to working women or is it enjoyed by the women working in ‘domestic spaces’?

Methodology

Based on the population data for females from 2001 census, samples were selected using the non-probability (quota method) sampling technique. A questionnaire survey was conducted to gather information about the demographic, socio-cultural, economic and political aspects that influence the life of women in general and house-wives in particular. Total 200 samples were collected from the 24 wards of Mumbai city and the suburban districts in proportion to the female population of the respective wards.

Who is a ‘house-wife’?

According to the free dictionary, ‘A housewife is a woman who manages her own household as her main occupation’. The oxford dictionaries, defines a house-wife as a married woman whose main occupation is caring for her family, managing household affairs and doing housework’. With the advent of industrialisation and globalisation across the world, females have started taking up paid employment assignments. Hence, in recent times the term ‘Home maker’ has gained popularity instead of ‘house wife’ as it is a gender neutral term and has more of sociological value as it involves the task of voluntarily taking care of one’s home irrespective of gender.

For the present paper, house-wives have been selected for study keeping in mind their unrecognised identity and the significant role which they play not only on the domestic front but also at the social level especially with reference to the socio-cultural setting of our country. This group of house-wives consist of married woman who are staying with their husband and have taken up the responsibility of caring for family, managing household affairs and doing housework. Whether the role of a house-wife is taken rationally, voluntarily or is taken up as a part of socio-cultural factors or is a compulsory decision especially in the Indian context becomes a matter of debate and discussion.

According to Census of India, Who are the non-workers?

- A person who is engaged in household duties in her/

his own house but does no other economically productive work should be treated as a non-worker.

- A person who was a non-worker throughout the reference period, and had been offered work but has not joined yet, is a non-worker.
- Rent receiver or a pensioner or receiver of agricultural or non-agricultural royalty or dividends or interest is a non-worker unless the person was also engaged in some economic activity for part of the year.
- Prostitutes and persons engaged in illicit/unlawful activities such as drug trafficking, smuggling, beggars etc. are non-workers.

Thus from the definition it is very obvious that a 'house wife's active role on the domestic front of a household is not taken into consideration with respect to the economics associated with it and lacks a formal recognition which in a patriarchal society like India is the responsibility of women. From 2001 Census to 2011 Census, the percentage of non-workers in Mumbai city and suburban districts has marginally varied for Males from 41.64 to 39.98 and for Females 85.42 to 81.10.

The findings and results of the current study are summarised in the following tables:

Table 1: The gendering of 'domestic space': who does what, when where and how?

- ❖ Time budgets: 57% of respondent women spend more than five hours on domestic work and remaining 43% spend about two to five hours on the same.
- ❖ Unpaid work: Household work is a full time – unpaid job which consists of a variety of activities like cooking, cleaning, procuring basic necessities for the family (like food, clothing, etc), taking care of the children and elderly members in the family, and so on. In the Indian context because of the socio-cultural heritage girls from a very tender age share these responsibilities with their mothers. This responsibility is not shouldered by men. Women participation rate in this occupation is almost one hundred percent.
- ❖ Length of working life for a house wife is for her lifetime or till she gets a daughter-in-law or she hires a domestic maid servant.
- ❖ Income distribution is nil as this activity is unpaid. The only income is the investment or savings deposited by a husband in his wife's name. About 52% of respondent have savings in their name which have been done by their husband. Remaining 48% have no savings in their name. In such cases then, the difficulty arises at times if the couple applies for a divorce or if the husband experiences an untimely death. v Trade union membership: Not existing as it is not a formal occupation.
- ❖ Proportion covered by social security or insurance schemes: No separate schemes for house-wives.
- ❖ In 85% cases the head of the family is a husband. Hence females enjoy usufruct rights.

The gendering of the sexual contract

- ❖ Legal age and average age of first marriage by gender: In India the legal age of marriage for girls is 18 years. 63% of respondents got married between 18 and 25 years of age, 13% got married above 25 years of age and 24% got married before attaining 18 years of age.
- ❖ Prevalence of common law marriage, arranged marriage: 97% of respondents did not undergo or insisted on an entire medical check up before the marriage was fixed. Although we are living in times where incidences of sexually transmitted diseases like AIDS, etc and psychological problems are increasing in the population still awareness about these aspects is surprisingly lacking.
- ❖ Violence: 12% of respondents have indicated about experience of eve teasing. While 21% of respondents have experienced domestic violence. 47% have a husband addicted to chewing tobacco, drinking liquor, smoking or betting.

The gendering of space

- ❖ Personal space, activity space: 80% of respondents spend about 55% of their time in kitchen. 52% live in a house with an area <250 square feet.
- ❖ Migration, Marital residence and marriage distance: about 40% respondents are migrants of which 25% have migrated because of marriage (a very age old and common practice in India where the bride moves on into the groom's family).

Legal rights

- ❖ Inheritance: 20% respondents have a share in their maternal property.

The gendering of well-being

- ❖ Health care: 60% respondents have reported of suffering from disease/s like stress, diabetes, back pain, knee pain, arthritis, etc. 80% visit to the doctor on account of illness. 40% do their entire health check-up once in a year.

The gendering of biological reproduction

- ❖ Contraception: 70% respondents have adopted family planning techniques and in 50% cases the responsibility is share by both spouses.

Education

- ❖ Rates of literacy: 89% of respondents are literate.
- ❖ Levels of attainment and specialisation: 32% have obtained education less than SSC level, 27% upto SSC, 9% upto HSC, 15% upto graduation and 6% upto post-graduation. Only 22% respondents are computer literates.

Religion

- ❖ Religious adherence: 40% respondent's names were changed after marriage while 88% changed their surnames after marriage. (A common and age old practice in India, where the bride after marriage changes to her husband's surname and in some cases the name too is changed).

Gendered customs

- ❖ Gendered organisation: 20% respondents are members of a mahila mandal.
- ❖ Dowry or bride price: 25% had to give a dowry in their own marriage while 60% own streedhan.

Original Source: J.G.Townsend, 'Towards a regional geography of gender', Geographical Journal, 157 (1991), pp 26-27, table 1 (cited in Linda McDowell's Gender, Identity and Place Understanding Feminist Geographies (1999) Polity Press, UK Page No. 232-233)

Table 2: Role of males and females in the Decision making process in a household:

Male dominated decisions	Female dominated decisions
❖ Daily cooking of food (11.36%)	❖ Daily cooking of food (81.25%)
❖ How many children to have? (49.43%)	❖ How many children to have? (40.34%)
❖ Use of family planning techniques (51.70%)	❖ Use of family planning techniques (30.68%)
❖ Education of children (44.32%)	❖ Education of children (38.07%)
❖ Job of the woman (20.45%)	❖ Job of the woman (55.68%)
❖ Investments (69.89%)	❖ Investments (27.27%)
❖ Division of Property (63.64%)	❖ Division of Property (13.64%)
❖ Any other decisions (64.77%)	❖ Any other decisions (21.59%)

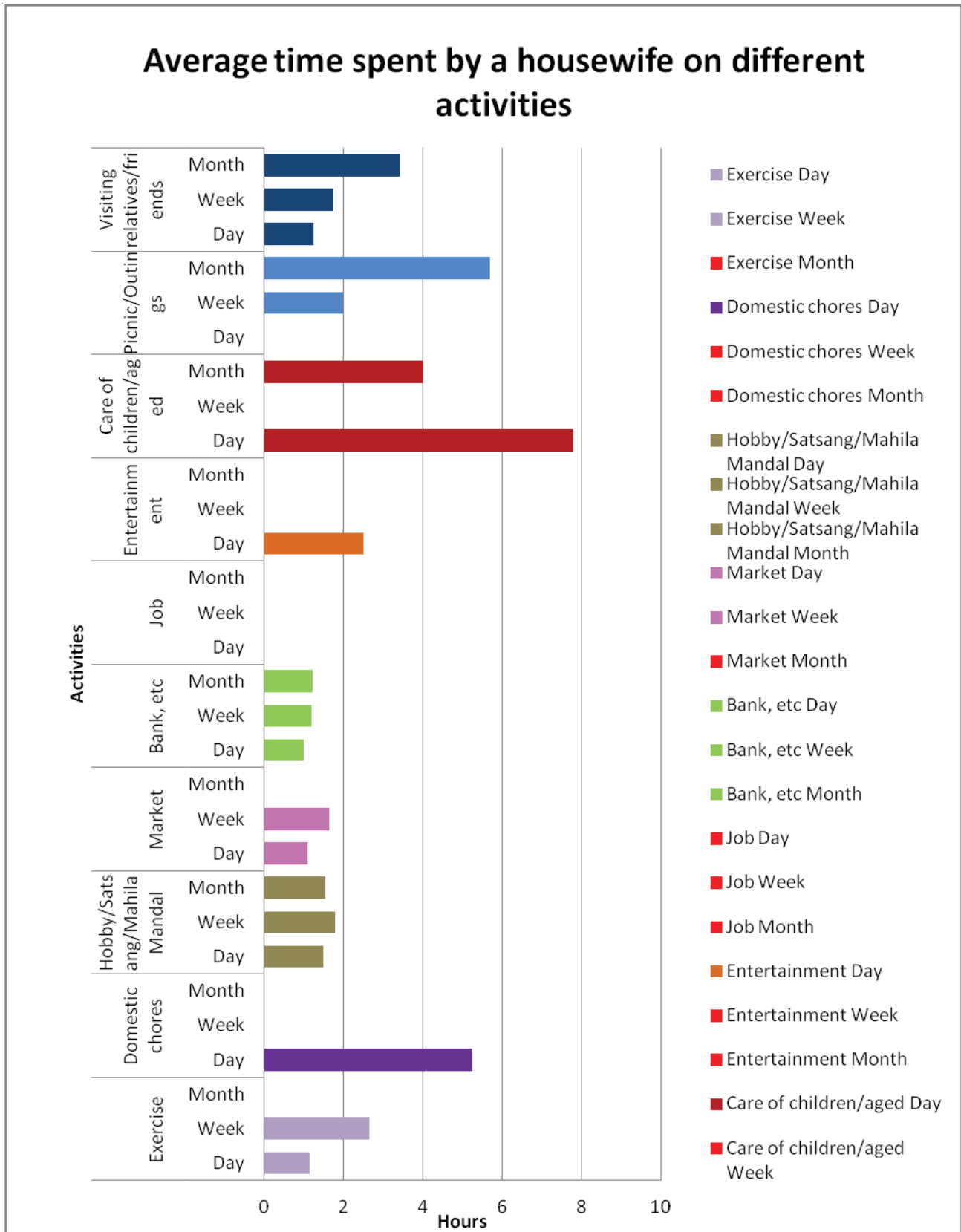


Fig. 1

Table 3: Average Time Spent on Daily Activities

Taking care of children	8 hours
Domestic work	5 hours
Entertainment	2-3 hours
Hobby/Mahila Mandals/Satsangs	1-2 hours
Going to market/banks, etc	1-2 hours
Exercise	<1 hour

Table 4: Level of Satisfaction

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Being born as a woman	60% respondents have rated above 4
Level of education	55% respondents have rated 2 or 1
Life before marriage	More than 90% have rated above 3
Life after marriage	55% respondents have rated above 4
Freedom in decision-making	More than 50% have rated below 3
Material well-being	More than 50% have rated above 3
Respect earned from family members	More than 70% have rated above 3
Community life of a woman	More than 60% have rated below 3
Personal health	More than 60% have rated above 3
Individual security	More than 60% have rated below 3
Practice of social customs	More than 60% have rated below 3

Conclusion :

The ideology that “a woman’s place is in ‘home’” is very strong all over the world (McDowell, L, 1982). The society controls the ‘spaces’ which women can have access to while men enjoy it as a natural right. Society decides about a woman’s access to education, nutrition, health, paid employment, social customs like marriage, freedom in decision-making whether at the individual level or at the family level. The relationship between ‘production’ and ‘reproduction’ varies over time and space with reference to patriarchy. In our country, women do have legal support through various constitutional and legislative provisions like The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 (28 of 1961), The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 (19 of 1929), The Pre-Natal Diagnostic Technique (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994 and many such laws. But a major challenge lies in questioning the worthiness of patriarchal customs and traditions that control the lives of women. Education, social reforms, legal provisions, schemes for empowerment of women have these really changed the social position of women in general and house-wives in particular is a question that remains unanswered.

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Level of Satisfaction

In this study an attempt was made to understand the level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction among house-wives about various aspects that affect or have affected their lives in the transition from being ‘single’ to being ‘married’. For the measurement of satisfaction a scale from 1 to 5 was indicated wherein, 1 indicates a poor level of satisfaction and 5 indicates an excellent level. The results are summarised in the following table:

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Changing Paradigms in the World of Illegal Migration: The Story of Burmese Refugee Women in India

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Abstract : India has never been a party to the global acceptance of the refugee issues. It has, in its unique mode accepted the stateless Asian populace but has however been a party to the laws that safeguard their interests. While age old narratives of the prominent asylum seeking communities speak of the assimilatory nature of the Indian Sub Continent, there is still a bone of contention in the whole debate of this nature.

The term refugees in the context of the contemporary world politics has myriad set of understandings with the term itself being questioned. Subsequently, the using of concepts such as illegal immigrants, asylum seekers are considered more appropriate for the purpose of describing the so called stateless people. It is with this understanding that the terms of reference are used to identify this largely vulnerable section of the population. To further give a microscopically featured account of the refugee conditions in the continent of Asia, I have chosen Burma as my field of study. Burma, as the name suggests is a country facing several challenges not merely at the level politics and government but also at the level of major social upsurge on account of ethnic differences and clashes there of.

The experience of Burmese refugee women in India provide a uniquely interesting angle from which to explore the linkages between the active agency of refugee women in reconstructing their lives and negotiating the possibilities of belonging and the effects of discursive practices and institutional, structural processes that continue to perpetuate their ' outsider' status. The study thus problematizes the very status of Burmese refugee women - conceptualising them as racialised, sexualized displaced "others" both within their "home country" and an "alien" host country which has been hostile to the influx of refugees into their capital city and the state of Mizoram. This paper aims to provide deeper insights into the gendered nature of refugee life the manner in which identities, traditions, cultural and gender roles have been negotiated (and continue to be renegotiated) by the Burmese in the process of reconstruction, integration and recreating a "place/space" for themselves as a refugee community.

The study situates the predicament of the Burmese women refugees in India within the larger global experience of women refugees. This calls for tracing the trajectory of the struggle of (a segment of) Burmese women and their roles in women's activism - whether for human rights or for political agendas. Their experiences - both distinct and universal have resulted in displacement and destabilisation - but has also afforded them new found space in which to represent themselves and their community, to articulated their demands, exercise their rights and engage an international audience.

Key words : Asylum Seekers, Illegal Migrants, Refugees, Burma, Transnational.

Introspecting Indian Policies towards Refugees

Before India was declared independent, the Indian courts under British rule administered the English Common law. India never had a clear policy as to whom to grant refugee status. As early as 1953 the then Prime Minister of India, Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru informed Parliament that India would abide by international standards governing asylum by adopting similar, non-binding domestic policies. According to Article 51 of the non-binding Directive Principles of State Policy, India endeavors to "(a) promote international peace and security; (b) maintain just and honorable relations between nations; (c) foster respect for international law and treaty obligations.....; and (d) encourage settlement of international disputes by arbitration." Since then, the Indian Government has consistently affirmed the right of the state to grant asylum on humanitarian grounds. Based on this policy, India has granted asylum and refugee status to Tibetans and Tamils from Sri Lanka. The 1971 refugees from Bangladesh were officially called "evacuees", but were treated as refugees requiring temporary asylum.

No other community or group has been officially recognized as 'refugees'. However, India claims to observe the principles of non-refoulement and thus never to return or expel any refugee whose life and liberty were under threat in his/her country of origin or residence. While Non-refoulement is an important principle to international refugee law, which acts as a complete prohibition against the forcible return of people to a place where they will be subjected to grave human rights violations or where their life or personal security will be seriously endangered, the principle applies equally to refugees at the border of a state and to those already admitted, and it remains in force until the adverse conditions which prompted people to flee in the first place are alleviated. Refuting this claim, Indian human rights groups do point to specific cases of refoulement, where clear evidence and refugee testimony prove that forcible repatriation has taken place. A closer examination of India's refugee policy reveals a number of intricate problems

Refugee Categories

The plight of refugees in India generally depends upon the extent of protection they receive from either the Indian

Government or the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Below is brief definition of the three primary categories followed by a description of the living conditions faced by each refugee category

- I. Refugees who receive full protection according to standards set by the Government of India;
- II. Refugees whose presence in Indian territory is acknowledged only by UNHCR and are protected under the principle of non-refoulement;
- III. Refugees who have entered India and have assimilated into their communities. Their presence is not acknowledged by either the Indian Government or the UNHCR.

A brief history of Burmese refugee population influx into India and the causes for the same

Burma and one adheres to the story behind Myanmar, perhaps the state has undergone deep trauma throughout Asian history. It has seen a land of religious sincerity going terribly wrong with its Anti-Buddhist status quo and to a larger extent unbelievably larger quantum of misbelief towards the ethnic minorities in the country. In 1988, the Burmese government began suppressing the pro-democracy movement forcing 3,000 refugees to cross the border into India. The increased militarization under the SPDC and its effects continue to cause flight from Burma, especially in the western region. Torture, disappearances, forced labour, rape and extra-judicial killings are among the human rights abuses perpetrated by the military junta against its perceived opponents. Ethnic and religious persecution of the minorities, in particular the Chin Christians in the Chin state is also commonly found. Further the Arakan Muslims also well known as the Rohingyas have been the main targets of the state's ethnic cleansing ideologies.

Places in India where Burmese refugees are found and the details of the refugee camps

Most of Burmese enter India from the northeast and very few asylum seekers who travel to Delhi are recognized as refugees by the UNHCR. The UNHCR in Delhi assists about 2,000 Burmese refugees, the majority of whom are from Chin state. The organization provides the more vulnerable individuals with a small monthly stipend, which is often not enough to cover basic necessities. In addition to the Burmese who are recognized refugees by the UNHCR, there are also a large number of Burmese asylum seekers living in India. The majority live in Mizoram in northeast India; they belong to the same ethnic group and find integration easier. Employment opportunities are also better there. In case of the Rohingya refugees who are found in various parts of the country including Kashmir face severe ostracizing in the places and are victims of dual tragedies,

one being identified as Muslims and the other as stateless in origin.

UNHCR reports on the situations of women in these refugee camps

Great strides have been made in the past in introducing projects that promote the strategic needs of refugee women such as encouraging girls' education, education and skills training of refugee women, rights awareness training, advocacy against female genital mutilation and early marriage, entrepreneurial skills development, income-generation activities etc. These activities, however, have tended to suffer in recent times because of the financial crisis facing the office. It is important that these activities continue to have donor support. Improving opportunities for women is critical for successful voluntary repatriation and reintegration of refugee women. Refugee women form the central force to re-establishing the returnee community. Refugee children and men rely on the refugee women for return to normal life within their own community. Support for the strategic needs of refugee women reinforces their capacity for successful reintegration upon return. Most refugees in camps live in family units, either arriving as such or reuniting after separate arrivals. The ratio of males to females is 51:49 and there are relatively few single mothers. The average family size is 5/4 people. Nearly 6% of households are headed by single women. Women tend to be under-represented in the committees that organize the day-to-day administration of the camps, but are active in areas such as teaching, health care work and home visits to gather information about the daily routine of refugees. Obstacles to increased participation of women in camp administration are lack of education and basic knowledge about their rights. There are various women's groups in all the camps, some focusing on the daily needs and welfare of women and some on the more political aspects of women's rights.

The majority of refugee women come from ethnic minority groups and suffer from a wide range of human rights violations prior to arrival in the camps. Ethnic minority women living in conflict areas are used as forced labor on infrastructure projects and forced porters for the military, are subject to the constant threat of rape and have virtually no personal security. Conditions in the camps vary from place to place, but women have generally suffered from the recent tighter restrictions on movement outside the camps and have seen their ability to be self-sufficient decline. The conditions of refugee women strongly affect children, of whom women are the primary caregivers.

Specific protection issues

Burmese women bear the largest burden among the refugee population. Some women are widows or are the head

of large families. In addition to taking care of their families they must also work to provide for them. Burmese women refugees are regularly harassed at work. Working in the informal sector means that they are often overworked and underpaid. The necessity of providing for their families leads many Burmese refugees to attend the night markets after they close in order to search for left-over vegetables or rummage through the rubbish. In order to provide their families with basic necessities the refugees are often out alone late at night, putting them at greater risk of harassment and assault. Their precarious situation is Report Refugee Populations in India, 2007 compounded by the fact that Burmese refugees are often unable or unwilling to obtain police protection when they are the victims of crimes.

Steps to a Paradigm Shift

The Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network has been the main icebreaker in this endeavor towards refugee law guarantees and strategic legislation process. In its undaunted working process it has defined refugee protection in new dimensions and categories. The areas to be strengthened are:

- Draft domestic legislation in Asia for countries who do not accept the 1951 and the 1967 Refugee law Convention and Protocol.
- Gradual generational shift on refugee rights understanding
- Social media to engage in the debate on refugee issues
- Growing civil society movements
- Growing consciousness of human rights norms and principles
- Judicial activism
- Regular reporting to UN Human Rights bodies
- The role of NHRI has become more prominent
- Academic engagement

Burmese Women Refugees as Activists

Besides challenging the conventional constructions of victimhood in the refugee experience, the case of Burmese refugee women also reveals the need to reconceptualize their identities as multiple and fluid as they regenerate themselves as socio-political and historical actors. As

Frances Tomlinson notes, “the label ‘refugee woman’ is inherently multiple, indicating not only gender and

placement in a category replete with political overtones, but also a position as ‘not from here’, and thus able to be placed in some minority, ethnic or cultural group.” The complexities of the female refugee experience, however, involving both, loss and regeneration, disruption and re-integration, has resulted in providing opportunities for activism, independence, building social interconnectedness in a new location and inculcating a sense of ethnic consciousness and belonging. “‘Regeneration’ can be traced in the resilient ways people work through the effects of trauma by generating counter forces which potentially motivates their agency.” In the case of female Burmese refugees in Delhi, they have training centres for Self Defence activities which further enhances their skills to overcome physical attacks.

National civil society groups have a vital role to play in strengthening refugee protection in Asia. They have unique capacities to influence public opinion and to shape domestic laws and politics. However, strong, locally owned, popular movements of committed refugee advocates are only just emerging in South and Southeast Asia. Local knowledge production still plays a marginal role in shaping global discourses concerning refugees. Only with vibrant national civil society movements will states in South and Southeast Asia be convinced that refugee protection is the desire of its citizenry; only then will there be local ownership of refugee protection in these regions.

Concluding Remarks

Asylum is primarily the responsibility of states, but politicians, community leaders and the media can contribute to a climate of tolerance in which asylum can be properly managed. In many countries, asylum and immigration debates are intertwined and politicians have staked out anti-immigration positions. Negative attitudes are easily fuelled by concerns about the costs of maintaining asylum systems and hosting refugees.

A climate conducive to asylum requires explaining the asylum issue as distinct from immigration in general; focusing on education about forced displacement, including through the media; and acting to combat xenophobia and intolerance.

It is hoped that such a participatory model of refugee protection will go a long way in building and restoring a sense of ‘community’ among otherwise dispersed refugee groups in a complex urban setting like New Delhi. Refugees and asylum seekers will be empowered to make choices about their future, take ownership and bear joint responsibility along with UNHCR and its partners, to implement programmes and policies that affect them both as individuals and as a community.

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Journey of Women in Advertising

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Abstract : Advertising is a powerful tool used by the marketers to persuade, manipulate and shape behavior of the consumers. They sell values, image and concepts of success and worth, love, sexuality, Popularity and normalcy. We are each exposed to over 2000 ads per day. Indian will spend one and one half years of his or her life watching television commercials. The advertising industry as a whole has been subject to controversy over the ethics of propagating factual reality of its contents, sex and gender portrayals, aesthetic values and its fall out on society. The image of the women in advertising has been a matter of debate since long period them basically as a housewife by showing them in the society but advertisements shown them basically as a housewife by showing them in the ads of Gas, Pressure cooker, washing soaps, kitchen appliances, ready to make food packets. Young girls in advertisements are shown mostly beautifying themselves or trying to catch male attention through different kinds of beautifying products. This negatively enhances her image in society. There is an urgent need to initiate changes in the existing portrayal of women in advertisements to make this medium more effective and positive. The content of women's advertisement should be projecting their multiplicity of roles, life styles, achievements, problems and struggles. Women should be shown natural, realistic and emancipated in the advertisements. Women activists can regularly react to the advertisement campaign that is disgustingly insulting the dignity of women in different ways. More people from the public and activist groups in general should take up the watch dog activity.

Keywords : Advertisement, women, portrayal, new trends.

Mass communication media in India, like every modern and advanced country, comprises of the radio, the film, the television, the press and publications along with huge advertisements. The magic persuasiveness of the visual presentation and its admitted superiority over other media for propagation of social and economic objectives has together placed the television in India with great priority.

Advertisement is a form of mass communication. It involves a process of transmission of information by the manufacturer or seller of a product or service to modify or stimulate the behavior of the buyer to buy a particular product.

Advertisement can be in any form of presentation such as sign, symbol or illustration in print media, a commercial on radio or TV, Poster etc. thus advertisement is the communication link between the seller and the buyer. It has made mass selling possible.

The term advertising is derived from the latin word "advertene". It means to turn the mind to advertising diverts the attention of the buyers to product or service.

Advertising in India has created an incredible awareness among the people in the past decade growing in to big industry. It has grown along with the press and today it has found its way into the other two media - Radio and television. Advertising, which was an American concept originally has found its place in a country like India, so much so that the number of commercials have doubled in the media.

Advertising grew in India with growth of the Indian Press. In the initial period, to advertise meant to inform. The early newspapers & magazines announce birth, deaths,

arrivals of ships from England, sale of household furniture etc. In the beginning of nineteenth century new products, discounts & special services got their place in advertisements. Thus, gradually advertising started gaining power. It increased with the growth of trade & commerce.

In early 20th century the advertising agencies such as Indian Advertising Agency & Calcutta Advertising Agency were started. During Second World War, press advertising was used extensively to raise funds for the war. The Indian professionals also learnt how to motivate the masses through advertising. Between 1922-39 many advertising agencies came up.

During pre-independence era, Indian advertisement were mostly about clothes, travelling, eating & entertainment places, Indian hotels, four wheelers, tea, gramophones & tailoring shops for Britishers in India & princely families.

In the post-independence period the focus of advertisements shifted from luxury goods to consumer goods bought mainly for time & labour saving purposes. In 1976, first commercial spot appeared on TV and in 1980, the first advertisement sponsorship was allowed.

We live in a time when advertisements have taken on a completely different meaning than when they were first created. It is no longer a simple black & white ad trying to sell a household product. Now we are bombarded by images selling anything from common household products to vacations in Bahamas. Millions of dollars are spent to research what it is the public wants and how to sell it to them in the most appealing way. Images are in colour, high tech, and sometimes it's even difficult to see exactly what is being sold.

In the beginning, advertisements were once shown to sell a product, however as years passed, advertisements began to objectify women & begin to use women as a way to sell products.

Advertisements began before the 19th century, where advertisements were meant to sell the products in literal terms.

In the early 1900s, advertisements have been a way in solving personal & social problems. Women at this time were placed as the main audience for the products advertised. Products are advertised in a way to make people feel insecure. The particular advertisement, denotatively shows a man walking away from a woman whom is crying, which indicates anger from a man, & sadness from the woman. However, connotatively, the man is shown with control & high status, while the woman is seen as insecure and vulnerable.

Around the 1950's, women began to be more accounted into the domestic role. Women have been placed in advertisements that consumers associate them to. Women are often seen with rough house work such as washing the dishes with the phrase "Get out of the kitchen sooner". Men are often seen "behind the scenes" when it comes to domestic labour such as house cleaning, grocery shopping and advertisement is seen on a couch, having the dominate control to do what he wants.

Often, the differentiation between males & females in advertisements are distinct. Females are often seen with certain products, while men are seen with others. However, when men are seen with "women jobs", they are often struggling or are in need of help.

Today, advertisements are seen as map defining territories. Advertisement shows the audience what they can become if they use the products.

There has been much criticism of television advertising of some commercial products like cigarettes, laxatives or articles of intimate wearing apparel on moral grounds. Comments in newspapers articles have found some of them objectionable and violating the requirements of good taste and sometimes offensive. Some objections have also been made to the appearance of scantily clad women in some commercials. As the tentacles of globalization have trespassed into electronic media, the advertising industry has been swept by the market forces with the result that sexist display depicting women in demeaning manner has become the norm.

Though, it is true that the level of active participation and decision making capability of women in each and every aspect of social and political life in India has increased leaps and bounds, yet the overall conditions of women is not so

good. The depiction woman in Indian media is simply shoddy and at times vulgar.

The advertisements in Indian media are in a horrible condition. This is a portion, which requires immediate attention of media planners. Even the women activists seldom react to the advertisement campaign that is grossly insulting the dignity of women in different ways. In most of the advertisement in Indian media be it newspapers, or magazines, T.V. channels or otherwise, one finds that an essential ingredient is women. There is an advertisement of a premium whisky that shows one man is taking first sip of that particular whisky and the lady sitting in front him appears to be losing some inches of her dress after every drink the process goes on up to three drinks. After three sips of the drink he finds that the breasts of the previously over clad lady have become quite visible and half clad and his own shirt has slipped from his shoulders and the voice smurs – *KUCHH BHI HO SAKTA HAI* (anything can happen). In one advertisement of an after shave lotion, a man comes over after shaving and using the particular lotion and young girls in the vicinity start following him seductively. In one advertisement of bike one individual is shown as moving hand on the body of the bike and the image of a scantily clad lady props up instead of the bike.

In one advertisement of deodorant spray, some young two-piece bikini clad female start flocking the man who has used that spray. In another advertisement, two girls are using telescope to watch, admire and get fainted out of infatuation by looking at the man wearing only a particular brand of underwear. Another advertisement of underwear shows a young man kissed on almost every part of his body by infatuated young girls in the ladies toilet. These are only some examples prevalent in our media. These days, the depiction of women in these and other advertisement is actually insult to the women in general but we are used to enjoy them with little concern about the female respect and dignity, which used to be the salient feature or our ancient tradition. Even the advertisement in hoardings, posters and wall writing etc. are no less offending. India being one of the largest economies of the world and second in world population yielded very few research studies on gender portrayal in advertising which were again very limited in scope.

Mathew (1990) examined Indian male market segmentation and preference of male roleportrayals in each segment. In another study, Munshi (1999) examined the depiction of Indian housewives in Indian television commercials, while Das (2000) reviewed and analyzed the representation of men and women in Indian magazine advertisements. Dwivedy et. al (2009) examined male and female portrayal trends in the advertisements of India's highest read men, women and general interest magazine across various product categories.

An extensive review of literature of last five decades indicate general consensus on gender stereotyping in majority of advertisements where women are mainly depicted as (1) reliant on men (2) as sex-object or an ornamental item, (3) do not make important decisions, (4) as housewife (or a caring mother), and (5) mostly portrayed as house bound whereas men are mainly shown (1) as decision maker, (2) in a commanding role, (3) as an expert, (4) primarily in work setting or (3) as a voice of narrator.

For women born in the early 1980s, sex in the media has been a constant companion. Sex is everywhere, on prime time television programs, movies, and music videos. It is rare to view an hour of television and not see a suggestively dressed or undressed female, whether in a program or a commercial. Sexual imagery appears in magazine, articles and advertisements. A recent issue of *Cosmopolitan* might contain hundreds of half-naked women, stories of sexual mishaps, and even instructions for the ancient art of Kama Sutra.

Conclusion

Without the support of people, there would not have been such advertisements on women. But being human, many are guilty of purchasing and engaging in the images that are shown. However, sometimes it makes people wonder why women do advertisements that degrade themselves. Everyone has their own reasons. For some, it may be money, while for some others it may be enjoyment of basking in the glare of publicity. Overall, from the images shown over the generation, portray the non-existence when it came to advertisements, but now has become an object for the product.

It would seem that a more realistic portrayal of women in advertising is not only desirable but fundamental in a modern marketplace. Women not only want it, they deserve it. If advertisers believe that they are currently depicting women accurately in advertising, they may be advised to rethink their position. It is clear from this research that women do not believe this to be true. It is possible that better pre-testing of advertising is warranted. Obtaining input from the female market may pay dividends, in that better and more progressive advertising may result. A particularly important finding in this study is the fact that the attitudes held by women cut across age, income, education and marital status categories. Therefore, advertisers cannot simply write off complaints about the portrayal of women in advertising to a small group of liberal feminists. The concern appears to be widespread.

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हिंसा, महिलाएं तथा भारतीय विचारों का दृष्टिकोण

रितु शर्मा, पी.एच.डी.

शोध छात्र, राज्यशास्त्र विभाग, जामिया मिलिया इस्लामिया विश्वविद्यालय

भारतीय समाज में महिलाएँ कई प्रकार की हिंसा का सामना करती हैं जैसे बलात्कार, घरेलु हिंसाएँ शारीरिक शोषण, कन्या भ्रूण हत्या, सती हत्या, दहेज के कारण होनेवाले शोषण तथा हत्या, ऑनर किलिंग इत्यादि। महिलाओं पर होनेवाली हिंसाने उनके क्षेत्र को सीमित कर दिया है, इन सबके कारण या तो वो घर में रहती है, या आर्थिक रूप से प्रताड़ित होती है, नहीं तो सामाजिक रूप से उसे दबाया जाता है। वर्तमान समय में महिला, घर, समाज तथा राज्य इन तीनों में से कहीं भी स्वयं को हिंसा से मुक्त नहीं पाता है। प्राचीन समय में देवी तुल्य कहीं जानेवाली स्त्री विवेकानन्द जैसे विचारकों द्वारा भगवान का प्रतिनिधि मानी जानेवाली स्त्री की दशा अब वर्तमान समय में और भी भयावह होती जा रही है। शिक्षा को ज्ञान तथा जागरूकता की मशाल माना जाता है लेकिन ये भारतीय समाज की विडम्बना ही है कि जितना भारतीय समाज शिक्षित तथा उन्नत होता जा रहा है, उतनी ही हिंसा स्त्रियों पर बढ़ती जा रही है। भारतीय समाज में महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा एक चिन्तनीय विषय है। यह लेख मुख्य रूप से भारतीय समाज में हिंसा के रूपों तथा महिलाओं पर पड़नेवाले उनके प्रभावों को दर्शाता है, इसके अतिरिक्त, आधुनिक राजनीति विचारकों ने कैसे भारतीय समाज में महिलाओं की स्थिति को सुधारने का प्रयत्न किया था, उसका भी वर्णन करता है तथा वर्तमान समय में भारतीय शासन व्यवस्था द्वारा हिंसा में सुधारों के लिए किए गए प्रयत्नों तथा उनके सफल ना होने का भी वर्णन करता है।

भारतीय समाज में महिलाएँ कई प्रकार की हिंसा का सामना करती हैं। जैसे बलात्कार, घरेलु हिंसा, शारीरिक शोषण, कन्या भ्रूण हत्या, सती, दहेज के कारण होनेवाले शोषण तथा हत्या, ऑनर किलिंग इत्यादि। महिलाओं पर होनेवाली हिंसा ने उनके क्षेत्र को सीमित कर दिया है। इन सबके कारण या तो वो घर में रहती है, या आर्थिक रूप से प्रताड़ित में महिला, घर, समाज तथा राज्य इन तीनों में से कहीं भी स्वयं को हिंसा से मुक्त नहीं पाती है। प्राचीन समय में देवी तुल्य कही जानेवाली तथा विवेकानन्द जैसे विचारकों द्वारा भगवान का प्रतिनिधि मानी जानेवाली स्त्री की दशा अब वर्तमान समय में और भी भयावह होती जा रही है। शिक्षा को ज्ञान तथा जागरूकता की मशाल माना जाता है। लेकिन ये भारतीय समाज की विडम्बना ही है कि जितना भारतीय समाज शिक्षित तथा उन्नत होता जा रहा है, उतनी ही हिंसा स्त्रियों पर बढ़ती जा रही है।

भारतीय समाज में महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा एक चिन्तनीय विषय है। यह लेख मुख्य रूप से भारतीय समाज में हिंसा के रूपों तथा महिलाओं पर पड़नेवाले उनके प्रभावों की विवेचना करता है। इसके अतिरिक्त, आधुनिक राजनीति विचारकों ने कैसे भारतीय समाज में महिलाओं की स्थिति को सुधारने का प्रयत्न किया था, उसका भी वर्णन करता है तथा वर्तमान समय में भारतीय शासन व्यवस्था द्वारा हिंसा में सुधारों के लिए किए गए प्रयत्नों तथा उनके सफल ना होने की भी समीक्षा करता है।

प्राकथन

हिंसा में शोषण समाहित होता है, चाहे वह आर्थिक, सामाजिक, राजनैतिक या व्यक्तिगत रूप से एक व्यक्ति द्वारा दूसरे

व्यक्ति पर हो या महिलाओं पर हो, या एक राष्ट्र द्वारा अन्य राष्ट्र पर।

महात्मा गांधी :

जैसा कि गांधीजी स्पष्ट करते हैं कि, हिंसा में शोषण समाहित होता है, चाहे वह किसी भी रूप में क्यों न हो। महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा, भारतीय समाज में प्राचीन समय से ही चलती आ रही है तथा वर्तमान प्रगतिशील शिक्षित समाज भी इससे अछूता नहीं है बल्कि शिक्षा तथा प्रगति के साथ-साथ भारतीय समाज में महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा बढ़ती ही चली जा रही है। यह एक सार्वभौमिक घटना है, ऐसा कोई भी धर्म, जाति, गांव, शहर, देश या राष्ट्र नहीं जहां किसी महिला पर सामाजिक कुरीतियों, परम्पराओं एवं परिवार की प्रतिष्ठा के नाम पर किसी भी प्रकार की हिंसा का प्रहार न किया गया हो। महिला एवं हिंसा सामाजिक वातावरण के दो विपरीत स्तम्भ हैं, जहां महिला मानवता का निर्माण करती है, हिंसा विनाश करती है।” महिलाएं अनेक प्रकार की हिंसा का सामना करती हैं, जैसे बलात्कार तथा अन्य शारीरिक उत्पीड़न, कन्या भ्रूण हत्या, सती, दहेज के कारण हत्या, मारपीट इत्यादि। इन्हीं हिंसाओं तथा असुरक्षा की भावना ने महिलाओं को घर तक सामित कर दिया है। वे आर्थिक शोषण तथा सामाजिक पिछड़ेपन का सामना करती हैं। महिलाएं घर, समाज, तथा राज्य तीनों ही स्थानों पर स्वयं को हिंसा से मुक्त नहीं पाती हैं।

महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा नए सामाजिक आंदोलनों का मुख्य विषय रहा है। मानवतावादी सुधारकों ने दहेज हत्या, बलात्कार, कन्या भ्रूण हत्या जैसे महत्वपूर्ण विषयों को उठाया। महिला हिंसा का मुद्दा भारतीय समाज में प्राचीन समय से ही

उठता रहा है। आधुनिक समय में भी राजा राम मोहन रॉय, ईश्वर चन्द्र विद्यासागर, विवेकानंद, गांधी, पंडिता रमाबाई जैसे भारतीय विचारकों ने स्त्रियों के विरुद्ध होनेवाली हिंसा, असमानता के प्रति आवाज उठाई तथा उनकी स्थिति को बदलने का प्रयत्न किया, किन्तु भारतीय समाज की जड़ता के कारण, उन विचारकों को भी अनेक कठिनाइयों का सामना करना पड़ा। जैसे कि जब राजा राम मोहन राय ने सती प्रथा का विरोध किया था तो स्वयं उनकी मां ने उन्हें घर से निकाल दिया था। विडम्बना यह है कि महिलाओं पर होनेवाली हिंसा, भारतीय समाज में एक परम्परा के रूप में स्वीकृति ग्रहण कर चुकी है, इसलिए घरेलु हिंसा जैसे गंभीर मुद्दे को इतना महत्व नहीं दिया जाता है तथा स्वयं महिलाओं द्वारा भी उन पर होनेवाली घरेलु हिंसा तथा जबरन शारीरिक संबंध जैसी घटनाओं के विरुद्ध कोई आवाज नहीं उठाई जाती है।

महिलाओं पर होनेवाली हिंसा को समझने से पहले 'हिंसा' के अर्थ को जानना बहुत महत्वपूर्ण है।

हिंसा का अर्थ - हिंसा शब्द बहुत व्यापक है और इसमें कई अर्थ निहित हैं। लड़कियों के संदर्भ में इसे उनके यौन शोषण और घरेलु हिंसा के संदर्भ में देखा जाता चाहिए। अगर साधारण शब्दों में कहा जाए तो महिलाओं के प्रति हिंसा वह अपराधिक गतिविधि है, जो शारीरिक शक्ति का अवैधानिक उपयोग करने के सार्थक ही सामाजिक-संरचना में शोषण, भेदभाव, आर्थिक असमानता की निरन्तरता, आतंक का वातावरण बनाये रखने में सहयोग देता है। हिंसा को कई रूपों में परिभाषित किया जाता है। विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन ने भी इसकी व्यापक परिभाषा दी है। इसकी परिभाषा में यह निहित है कि अपने शारीरिक बल का सोच समझकर किसी व्यक्ति विशेष या किसी समूह के विपरित प्रयोग करना तथा इसके परिणाम स्वरूप चोट लगना, मृत्यु होना हिंसा कहलाता है। यह परिभाषा शारीरिक, मानसिक, यौन हिंसा को शामिल करती है।

विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन का मानना है कि हिंसा के कारण मानसिक, सामाजिक तथा शारीरिक सभी प्रकार की समस्याएं उत्पन्न होती हैं। हिंसा के कारण ना केवल शारीरिक, मानसिक तथा मनोवैज्ञानिक समस्याएं उत्पन्न होती हैं, बल्कि समाज पर इसका दुष्परिणाम सर्वाधिक असर दिखाता है।

भारत में महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा

भारत में महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा एक ज्वलंत मुद्दा बना हुआ है। नेशनल क्राईम ब्यूरो के अनुसार २०१२ में महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा ६.४ प्रतिशत हो गई तथा महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा की दर प्रति तीन मिनट पर है। २०११ में २,२८,६५० घटनाएं

सामने आई थी जो २०१२ में बढ़कर २४४२७० हो गई ६५ प्रतिशत पुरुषों का ये मानना है कि महिलाएं हिंसा को पारिवारिक एकता के लिए सहन करती हैं। जनवारी २०११ में 'अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय पुरुष तथा लैंगिक समानता सर्वेक्षण' के प्रश्नावली में २४ प्रतिशत भारतीय पुरुषों ने माना कि उन्होंने लैंगिक हिंसा की है।

२००६	१९५६८५६
२००९	२०३६८०४
२०१०	२१३६८५
२०११	२१३६८५
२०१२	२४४२७०

हिंसा के प्रकार

बलात्कार भारत में बलात्कार महिलाओं के विरुद्ध होनेवाली हिंसा का सबसे प्रचलित प्रकार है।

Criminal Law Act 2013, defines rape as "Penile and non penile penetration in bodily offices of a women by men, without a consent of the women."

भारत में हर २९ वें मिनट में एक महिला का बलात्कार होता है - इसके आधार को जोड़िए। यद्यपि भारत में महिलाओं ने अपने विरुद्ध होनेवाले इस अपराध के विरोध न्याय के लिए घरों से बाहर निकलना शुरू किया है। लेकिन उन्हें न्याय मिलने में सदैव परेशानी होती है, क्योंकि जहां एक तरफ ओर पुलिस का व्यवहार निराशाजनक होता है वहीं दूसरी ओर अपराध चिकित्सकीय सबूतों के अभाव में छूट जाते हैं। तुरन्त चिकित्सा सुविधा उपलब्ध नहीं होने से शारीरिक स्वास्थ्य प्रभावित होते हैं और इसका फायदा दोषी को मिलता है।

वैवाहिक बलात्कार - हमारे यहां विवाह के बाद भी स्त्री से जबरदस्ती की जाती है। उनकी इच्छा के विरुद्ध उनसे जबरन सम्बन्ध बनाया जाता है। भारत में २० प्रतिशत पुरुषों का मानना है कि वे अपनी पत्नी को शारीरिक सम्बन्धों के लिए जबरदस्ती करते हैं।

वर्ष	केसेस दर्ज
2008	21,467
2009	21,397
2010	22,172
2011	24,206
2012	24,923

स्त्री भ्रूणहत्या

स्त्री भ्रूणहत्या से अभिप्राय भ्रूण को गर्भ में लिंग निर्धारण कर गर्भपात द्वारा गर्भ में ही खत्म करना है। भारत में पुत्र प्राप्ति की इच्छाने इस अपराध को सर्वाधिक बढ़ा दिया है। 'बेटा' भारत में बूढ़ापे का सहारा माना जाता है वही बेटियों का बोझ माना जाता है। इसका एक कारण 'दहेज' प्रथा भी है। ज्यादातर गर्भपात या तो ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में होते हैं। या उन स्थितियों में जहां पहली सन्तान 'लडकी' हो। यह हमारे यहां विडम्बना है कि बेटों को तलवार की तरह पाला जाता है और बेटियों को सिर पर लटकती तलवार की तरह।

घरेलू हिंसा - घरेलू हिंसा से तात्पर्य एक पार्टनर द्वारा दूसरे पार्टनर के विरुद्ध की जानेवाली हिंसा है। घरेलू हिंसा शारीरिक, मानसिक, आर्थिक, शाब्दिक तथा यौन होती है। भारत में ७० प्रतिशत महिलाएं घरेलू हिंसा का शिकार हैं। प्रति ९वें मिनट में पति या उसके किसी रिश्तेदार द्वारा घरेलू हिंसा की जाती है। यह हिंसा भारतीय समाज में सबसे भयावह रूप में है।

वर्ष	दर्ज क्रूरता
२००८	८१,३४४
२००९	८९,५४६
२०१०	९४,०४९
२०११	९९,१३५
२०१२	१,०६,५२७

ऐसिड फेंकना - तेजाब फेंकना, महिलाओं के विरुद्ध होनेवाली हिंसा के भयावह रूपों में से एक है। तेजाब से हमला मुख्यतः पीड़ित के चेहरे पर किया जाता है। जिसके भयावह परिणाम सामने आते हैं। तेजाब से हमला करने के मुख्य कारण शादी से इन्कार, शारीरिक संबंधों से इन्कार, तथा २० प्रतिशत सम्पत्ति, जमीन इत्यादि कारणों से सम्बन्धित होते हैं। भारत में तेजाब से हमलों की घटनाओं में लगातार वृद्धि हो रहा है और यह खतरे की स्थिति है। जिस स्त्री पर तेजाब फेंका जाता है, वह केवल शारीरिक ही नहीं बल्कि मानसिक तरीके से भी प्रभावित होती है। वह इस मानसिक प्रताड़ना से दीर्घकालिक समय तक उबर नहीं पाती है। सम्बन्ध में सर्वाधिक खतरे की स्थिति में है।

दहेज हत्या - दहेज हत्या का तात्पर्य एक शादीशुदा महिला की दहेज के कारण हुई हत्या है। दहेज हत्या में ज्यादातर महिलाएं

दहेज उत्पीड़न से परेशान होकर आत्महत्या कर लेती है या फिर उसके पति या ससुरालवालों द्वारा उसे दहेज के लिए मार दिया जाता है। भारत में उत्तर प्रदेश में सर्वाधिक २७.३ प्रतिशत दहेज हत्या दर्ज की गई है।

वर्ष	दर्ज दहेज हत्याएँ
२००८	८१७२
२००९	८३८३
२०१०	८३९१
२०११	८६१८
२०१२	८२३३

ऑनर किलिंग : ऑनर किलिंग से तात्पर्य ऐसी व्यक्ति की हत्या से है, जिसको परिवार की इज्जत पर एक कलंक मानकर मार दिया जाता है। ऑनर किलिंग में ज्यादातर कारण समझौता विवाह/ तयशुदा विवाह के लिए मना करना, प्रेम विवाह, अन्तर्जातीय विवाह, बलात्कार का शिकार होना इत्यादी है। ऑनर किलिंग अत्यंत जघन्य अपराध है।, जिसका किसी धर्म में उल्लेख नहीं है। भारत में पंजाब, मध्य प्रदेश, हरियाणा, बिहार, उत्तर प्रदेश, राजस्थान, झारखण्ड तथा हिमाचल प्रदेश में सर्वाधिक ऑनर किलिंग के मामले पाये जाते हैं।

इसके अलावा मानव व्यापार जबरदस्ती वेश्यावृत्ति भी महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा के कुछ और रूप हैं। मानव व्यापार भी भारत में धीरे-धीरे एक गंभीर समस्या बन गया है।

भारतीय दार्शनिकों के विचार तथा महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा -

भारतीय सामाजिक सुधारकों ने भारत को प्रगतीशील तथा आगे बढ़ाने में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभायी है। सामाजिक सुधारकों ने अनेक सामाजिक बुराइयों के खिलाफ आवाज उठाई है। जैसे : सती प्रथा, विधवा पुनर्विवाह, बाल विवाह, स्त्री, शिक्षा, महिला सशक्तीकरण, महिलाओं की राजनीति में भागीदारी इत्यादि।

महिलाएँ परिवार की हर जिम्मेदारी को निभाती हैं, लेकिन फिर भी उन्हें संसाधन ज्ञान, स्वतंत्रता जो कि उन्हें अपनी जिम्मेदारी निभाने के फलस्वरूप मिलना चाहिए नहीं मिल पाता है।

पंडित रमाबाई ने स्त्री शिक्षा तथा समानता अपने पिता से सीखी जिन्होंने अपनी पत्नी को पढ़ाने के लिए गाँव छोड़ दिया

था। रमाबाई ने भी महिला शिक्षा को बढ़ावा दिया तथा लैंगिक समानता की बात की। अपनी बहन से प्रेरणा लेकर रमाबाई ने शारदा सदन नामक विद्यालय, बाल विधवाओं के लिए खोला। 'मुक्ति' नामक सदन जरूरतमंद औरतों के लिए खोला गया। इसमें बाल विश्व, अकाल प्रभावित तथा अन्य जरूरतमंद औरतों की मदद की जाती थी, उन्होंने स्त्री शिक्षा को बढ़ावा दिया, जबकि स्वयं स्कूल नहीं गईं। वे विधवाओं को आत्मनिर्भर बनाने के लिए उन्होंने इसे अपना लक्ष्य बना लिया। रमाबाई ने अपना जीवन महिला उत्थान, खासकर बाल विधवाओं के जीवन को सुधारने में लगाया तथा महिला सुधार संगठनों की शुरुआत की।

ईश्वर चन्द्र विद्यासागर सामाजिक उत्थान के लिए बहुत सारे कार्य किए। विद्यासागर को उनके सामाजिक अन्याय के विरुद्ध किए गए प्रयत्नों के लिए याद किया जाता है। उन्होंने महिला उत्थान, विधवा पुनर्विवाह तथा बहुपत्नी प्रथा के विरुद्ध कार्य किया। विद्यासागर ने विधवा पुनर्विवाह पर सबसे अधिक बल दिया, क्योंकि कम उम्र की विधवाओं के साथ अत्यन्त ही बुरा व्यवहार किया जाता था, उनसे अत्याधिक काम करवाया जाता था, तथा खाना भी नहीं दिया जाता था, तथा इन्हें घर में कैद करके रखा जाता था। इसके परिणामस्वरूप बहुत सी कम उम्र की विधवा महिलाओं ने भागकर घर छोड़ दिए तथा वैश्यावृत्ति को अपनी जीविका का सहारा बनाया विद्यासागर ने स्त्री हितों के लिये बहुत सारा काम किया। यह उनके प्रयासों का ही परिणाम था कि १८५६ में विधवा पुनर्विवाह अधिनियम पारित किया गया। उन्होंने स्त्री शिक्षा पर बहुत बल दिया। उनका मानना था कि अगर स्त्रियाँ शिक्षित होगी तो उनके खिलाफ अन्याय नहीं किया जा सकेगा। स्त्री शिक्षा के प्रति इस प्रतिबंधित के कारण ही उन्होंने १८४९ में हिन्दू नारी शिक्षा केन्द्र 'Hindu Female School' की स्थापना की। उसे आज बैथून स्कूल के नाम से जाना जाता है।

गांधीजी के स्त्रियों के प्रति विचारों ने आजादी के बाद भारतीय व्यवस्था पर काफी प्रभाव डाला है। गांधीजी के पहले के समाज सुधारकों ने जिस तरह के कदम उठाये थे और कोशिशें की थी उससे यह प्रतीत होता था कि स्त्री दीन-हीन है और उसके स्थिति में सुधार की जरूरत है। उसे अबला का रूप समझा जाता था। गांधीजीने पहली बार इस धारणा को चुनौती दी और कहा कि क्षमता के मामले में वे पुरुषों से कम नहीं हैं। उन्होंने सावित्री, सीता, दमयन्ती का उदाहरण दिया और कहा कि स्त्री कभी भी लाचार और दीनहीन नहीं हो सकती। उनका मानना था कि स्त्रियाँ पुरुषों की अपेक्षा ज्यादा नैतिक होती हैं तथा उनमें स्व-बलिदान की भावना पुरुषों से कहीं ज्यादा होती है। हिंसा जिसे गांधीजीने

कायों का हथियार माना था। आज समाज की विडम्बना यह है कि शारीरिक रूप में स्त्री से ज्यादा सक्षम पुरुष, इसी का सहारा लेते हैं। गांधीजी ने महिला स्वास्थ्य, शिक्षा, महिलाओं के नागरिक होने के अधिकार तथा सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र में महिलाओं का योगदान, तथा राष्ट्र निर्माण में उनके योगदान को माना। उन्होंने बाल विवाह तथा बाल विधवा जिनकी शादी अधिक उम्र के लोगों के साथ जाति के आधार पर कर दी जाती थी, उसे निरर्थक बताया। उन्होंने घर से बाहर औरतों पर होनेवाली हिंसा की निन्दा की तथा पुरुषों को अपने व्यवहार में बदलाव लानेको कहा। उन्होंने १९४९ में लिखा 'महिलाओं को पुरुषों की अर्धांगिनी' कहा जाता है। जब तक उन्हें पुरुषों के समान कानूनी अधिकार नहीं मिल जाते। जब तक बेटे के जन्म की खुशी, बेटे के समान नहीं मनाई जाएगी, तब तक हम यही समझेंगे कि हमारा देश पूर्वाग्रह से ग्रसित भेदभाव का सामना कर रहा है। गांधीजी ने दहेज प्रथा की निन्दा की तथा स्त्रियों के विकास के लिये शिक्षा, रोजगार की उपलब्धता तथा सामाजिक व्यवस्था में परिवर्तन पर बल दिया।

विवेकानंद ने प्रारम्भ में महिलाओं को बाधा माना, क्योंकि वे स्वयं एक साधू (Monk) थे। परन्तु जब उन्होंने महसूस हुआ तो उन्हें लगा कि स्त्री तथा पुरुष में कोई भेदभाव नहीं होता है, तभी स्वामी विवेकानन्द ने भारतीय समाज में महिलाओं की स्थिति को सुधारने का प्रयास किया।

विवेकानंद ने माना कि किसी राष्ट्र की प्रगति का अनुभव उस राष्ट्र की महिलाओं के साथ होनेवाले व्यवहार से लगाना चाहिए। विश्व का कल्याण बिना महिला की स्थिति में सुधार के नहीं हो सकता। महिलाओं ने वर्षोंसे अन्याय सहा है तथा उसे हिम्मत के साथ सहा है, परन्तु अब परिस्थिति को बदलना होगा। विवेकानंद ने माना कि ये समझना बहुत मुश्किल है कि भारत में महिला तथा पुरुष में भेदभाव क्यों है। सदैव औरतों की आलोचना की जाती है, परन्तु उनके उत्थान के लिए कुछ नहीं किया जाता। केवल कानूनों द्वारा औरतों को उत्पादन की वस्तु बना दिया गया है। विवेकानंद का मानना था कि जब गार्गी, मैत्रेयी तथा अन्य महिलाएं मिसाल बन सकती थी तो अब महिलाओं को वो सम्मान क्यों नहीं? जो एक बार हुआ वो दुबारा भी हो सकता है इतिहास स्वयं को दोहराता है। जिन देशों ने औरतों को विकास में बराबर हिस्सेदारी दी है तथा उनकी इज्जत की हैं, उनकी विकास ज्यादा बेहतर हुआ है बजाय उनके जिन्होंने स्त्रियों को दोगले दर्जे का बना रखा है। वे देश जो औरतों को सम्मान नहीं देते हैं, महान नहीं बन सकते। जो लोग स्त्री, पुरुष की तुलना करते हैं वह गलत है। सम्पूर्ण ब्रह्माण्ड में संतुलन है। अगर पुरुष शारीरिक रूप से सक्षम है तो स्त्री जितना

प्रेम तथा वात्सल्य रखती है वो पुरुष में नहीं होता है। विवेकानंदजी ने माना कि दोनों को एक समान मानना चाहिए तथा स्त्री को सम्मान देना चाहिए क्योंकि वो मां के रूप में भगवान की प्रतिनिधि है।

राजा राममोहन राय : सती प्रथा एक प्राचीन हिन्दू रिवाज था। जिसके अनुसार एक स्त्री को उसके पति की चिता के साथ जलना होता था। १८११ में राजा राम मोहन राय ने अपनी भाभी को जीवित जलते हुए देखा। इससे उन्हें बहुत आघात पहुँचा तथा उन्होंने सती प्रथा के विरुद्ध आवाज उठाई। वो पहले भारतीय थे, जिन्होंने इस प्रथा का विरोध किया। उनका विरोध अनेक रुढ़िवादी हिन्दुओं ने किया, परन्तु उन्होंने इस प्रथा का विरोध जारी रखा तभी १८२९ में उन्हें सफलता प्राप्त हुई। जब लार्ड विलियम बेन्टिक ने सती प्रथा विरोधी कानून पारित कर दिया। इस कानून के अनुसार सती प्रथा को गैरकानूनी बनाया गया तथा इसके लिए दण्ड का

प्रावधान किया गया। राजाराम मोहन राय ने बाल विवाह का विरोध किया तथा विधवा पुनर्विवाह का समर्थन किया।

इस तरह हम पाते हैं कि प्राचीन समय से ही भारतीय विचारकों ने महिला उत्थान के लिए अनेक कार्य किये तथा महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा को समाप्त करने के अनेक प्रयत्न किए। परन्तु आज की वर्तमान वास्तविकता बहुत अलग है। आज भी महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा एक ज्वलंत मुद्दा है।

महिलाओं से सम्बन्धित कानून सरकारद्वारा महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा को रोकने के लिए अनेकों कदम उठाए गए हैं। जिनमें महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा अधिनियम १९९१, दहेज प्रथा अधिनियम १९६१, लिंग जांच निर्धारण अधिनियम १९९४ तथा बाकी अन्य सम्बन्धित कानून निम्नवत सूची है -

धारा	अपराध	सजा	जमानत योग्य /जमानत योग्य नहीं
228-A-IPC	बलात्कार पीड़ित की पहचान उजागर करना।	२ साल की सजा और जुर्माना	संज्ञेय और जमानत योग्य
294 IPC	अवांछित हरकते और गाना गाना।	३ महीने की सजा, या सजा और जुर्माना दोनों	संज्ञेय और जमानत योग्य
304-B-IPC	विवाह के ७ साल के अन्दर अप्राकृतिक मौत	७ साल से कम सजा नहीं या आजीवन कैद में भी परिवर्तित हो सकता है।	संज्ञेय और जमानत योग्य नहीं
306 IPC	आत्महत्या के लिये उकसाना	१० साल की सजा और जुर्माना	संज्ञेय और जमानत योग्य नहीं
354 IPC	औरत पर अपराधिक हमला करना करना उसका शीलभंग करने हेतु	२ साल तक की सजा या सजा और जुर्माना दोनों	संज्ञेय और जमानत योग्य संज्ञेय और जमानत योग्य
366 IPC	किसी औरत का उपहरण कर उसे कलंकित या अपवित्रा करने का प्रयास	१० साल की सजा और जुर्माना	संज्ञेय और जमानत योग्य नहीं
366-A-IPC	अवयस्क लड़की पर अप्राकृतिक कृत्य हेतु दबाव डालना	१० साल की सजा और जुर्माना	संज्ञेय और जमानत योग्य नहीं
377 IPC	अप्राकृतिक अपराध	आजीवन कैद, १० साल की सजा और जुर्माना	संज्ञेय और जमानत योग्य नहीं
406 IPC	यकीन या विश्वास तोड़ना	३ साल तक की जेल और जुर्माना या दोनों	संज्ञेय और जमानत योग्य नहीं
498-A-IPC	दहेज के लिए विवाहित स्त्री को अधीन रख कर क्रूरता करना	३ साल तक की सजा और जुर्माना	संज्ञेय और जमानत योग्य नहीं

509 IPC	किसी स्त्री या शीलभंग करने हेतु इशारा, संकेत या चेष्टा करना	साधारण १ साल की सजा या जुर्माना या दोनों	संज्ञेय और जमानत योग्य
375&376 IPC	बलात्कार विरुद्ध उसकी इच्छा के विरुद्ध बिना उसकी सहमति के विरुद्ध १६ साल की उम्र से कम	१० साल तक की सजा और जुर्माना	संज्ञेय और जमानत योग्य नहीं

उपसंहार -

पिछले बहुत वर्षोंसे भारत में महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा एक ज्वलंत मुद्दा बना हुआ है। National Crime Records Bureau के अनुसार महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा में २०१२ में ६.४ प्रतिशत की वृद्धि हुई है, तथा प्रत्येक तीसरे मिनट में एक महिला के साथ वारदात होती है। शायद यह एक विडम्बना ही है कि जिस देश में प्राचीन समय से ही इतने महान सुधारकों द्वारा महिलाओं की स्थिति सुधारने के लिए अनेकों प्रयास किए गए हो, उनके प्रयास वर्तमान समय में धुमिल हो चुके हैं। भारत में महिलाओं के विरुद्ध बढ़ती हिंसा ने उन प्रयासों को निरर्थक बना दिया है। जहां एक तरफ महिला सशक्तिकरण नीति के पहत उनके आर्थिक, राजनीतिक, सामाजिक सशक्तिकरण पर बल दिया जाता है। वहीं उसी समाज में महिलाएं हीन स्थिति में आज भी हैं। भारत में महिलाओं के प्रति पुलिस राजनीति सभी कम संवेदनशील दिखाई देते हैं। क्योंकि उनको शिकायत के विरुद्ध उचित कार्यवाही नहीं की जाती। इस स्थिति में परिवर्तन न आने का एक कारण राजनीतिक शून्यता भी है। ज्यादातर नेता पुरुष हैं इसलिए उनकी संवेदनशीलता तथा जागरूकता स्त्री कानूनों के संबंध में उतनी नहीं है जितनी होनी चाहिये। इसलिए राजनीति में महिला प्रतिनिधियों को बढ़ाने के लिए महिला आरक्षण विधायक लागू करने पर बल दिया जा रहा है। आज भारत मंगल ग्रह तक पहुँच चुका है और उसी भारत में महिलाओं की स्थिति को सुधारने के लिए अभी भी कानूनों की आवश्यकता पड़ती है। महिलाओं की स्थिति को सुधारने के लिए सरकार द्वारा अनेकों कानून बनाए गए हैं, परन्तु वे प्रभावहीन हैं। सबसे महत्वपूर्ण मुद्दा ये है कि क्यों ये कानून प्रभावहीन हैं; क्यों महिलाएं हिंसा का शिकार होती हैं?

इस प्रश्नों का उत्तर पाना शायद इतना आसान नहीं है, क्या ये महिला से जुड़ा संबंधित प्रश्न है। मुझे ऐसा लगता है कि ये 'पुरुषों'

से संबंधित समस्या है क्योंकि वे महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा करते हैं। अगर हमें इन परिस्थितियों को बदलना है तो इसे केवल महिला जागरूकता अभियानों से नहीं बदला जा सकता बल्कि पुरुषों को इस प्रक्रिया में सहभागी बना के उनके विचारों में परिवर्तन लाकर इसे बदला जा सकता है। महिलाओं को देवी तुल्य नहीं बनाना है, उन्हें पुरुषों के समान वही इन्सान समझना है, जो पुरुष स्वयं को समझते हैं। जिस दिन पुरुषों ने स्त्रियों की अपनी सोच के समान समझना शुरू कर दिया उस दिन के बाद शायद इस 'मुद्दे' को कभी उठाने की जरूरत ही नहीं पड़ेगी।

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Spirituality: the Need of an Hour

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Abstract: Equality refers to the condition of having equal dignity, rank or privileges with others, the fact of being on an equal footing. It also refers to the condition of being equal in power, ability, achievement or excellence. When we refer to gender equality, it refers to the same rights and opportunities enjoyed by men and women across all sectors of society, including economic participation and decision-making, and when the different behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men are equally valued and favoured.

India, since time immemorial had honoured woman as *shakti* incarnate, the living embodiments of the Universal Supreme Mother. Women, in ancient India, during the Vedic period, enjoyed equal status with men in all aspects of life. The earliest religious texts of Hindus show freedom for women. It is clearly stated in the *Rig Veda* that a woman is free to choose her life partner.

*Bhadra vadhur bhavati yat supesa
Swayam sa mitram vanute jane cit.*

Also we find in the Vedic or Upanishadic Age Maitreyi, Gargi and other ladies of revered memory have taken places of *Rishis* through their skill in discussing about Brahman. In an assembly of a thousand Brahmans who were all erudite in the Vedas, Gargi boldly challenged Yagnavalkya in a discussion about Brahman.

Even *Manusmriti* says, “Where women are respected, there the gods are pleased; but where they are not honoured, no sacred rites yield rewards”.

During the medieval period with the introduction of certain practices like child marriage, sati and so on their position in society deteriorated. In spite of this, women were seen in various fields. For example: Razia Sultan was the only woman monarch, who ruled Delhi, whereas Female saint-poet Mirabai played a significant role in the Bhakti movement. Today women are seen in different fields like education, sports, politics, media, art and culture, service sectors, science and technology, etc. but at the same time one cannot ignore the fact that they continue to face atrocities such as rape, acid throwing, dowry deaths, and the forced prostitution.

Men and Women are the creations of The Supreme God. God has gifted men and women with certain specific qualities in such a way that they both function jointly. They make a complete whole. This unique relationship is described in Indian philosophy as *Shiva* and *Shakti*.

Swami Vivekananda said, “When people are discussing as to what man and woman can do, always the same mistake is made. They think they show man at his best because he can fight, for instance, and undergo tremendous physical exertion; and this is pitted against the physical weakness and non-combating quality of woman. This is unjust. Woman

is as courageous as man. Each is equally good in his or her way. What man can bring up a child with such patience, endurance, and love as the woman can? The one has developed the power of doing; the other, the power of suffering. If woman cannot act, neither can man suffer. The whole universe is one of perfect balance.”

He also said, “It is very difficult to understand why in this country so much difference is made between men and women, whereas the Vedanta declares that one and the same conscious Self is present in all beings. You always criticize the women, but say what have you done for their uplift? Writing down Smritis etc., and binding them by hard rules, the men have turned the women into manufacturing machines! If you do not raise the women, who are living embodiment of the Divine Mother, don’t think that you have any other way to rise.”

If this is the present scenario, how can it be changed? Perhaps what is needed is the introduction of spirituality, which would bring about a change in one’s thinking. Spirituality as understood, is, “devotion to metaphysical matters, as opposed to worldly things”. It also means activities which renew, lift up, comfort, heal and inspire both ourselves and those with whom we interact. Human being is very much a spiritual being. But today he is leaning more towards materialism. Thus, what are required are efforts on each individual’s part to recover his or her own spiritual essence in its purity, which will help him to withdraw from materialistic contaminations and distractions. So spirituality consist in recovering the basic and ontologically ultimate identity, obscured and missed in mundane consciousness, but regained through a process of inward self – discovery. It is one of the ways, which ultimately leads to the discovery of the self. In other words, it consist in elevating oneself by developing the inner strength and qualities of character such as steadfast devotion to duty, spirit of self sacrifice, fortitude; courage, capacity for hard work, presence of mind, perseverance, endurance, thirst for knowledge, wisdom to discriminate between right and wrong and strength to fight against injustice, truth, modesty and forgiveness.

The two most indispensable figures from the epic period Sita and Draupadi exhibit a fully developed spiritual personality. Sita is an integral part of the Indian women psyche. She is considered as one of the *Shreshtha Nari* and

is respected as the epitome of all womanly virtues. Sita, is indeed, the ideal example of a woman, and possesses all the good qualities that a traditional Indian woman is expected to possess. She had to undergo a lot of trials and tribulations in her marital life and it was her courage, chasity and adherence to Dharma (righteousness) that finally made her emerge as the ultimate winner.

Draupadi, the wife of the five Pandava Princes, is a heroine, who is unpredictable, unwavering and who could also possess the austerity of a traditional Hindu wife. Many see Draupadi as an early feminist because of her fearlessness in admonishing those who harmed her or her family. Draupadi was a devoted wife, chaste, religious-minded and adhering to duty. Her integrity and fidelity were admirable. Her opinions were well respected and supported by her family as she was educated and had vast knowledge of many subjects. She possessed the unique qualities of strength, audacity and confidence. She had a great understanding of the balance between being bold and forthright, and being submissive and dutiful. She acted with presence of mind and fearlessness during calamities. Unlike the mythological goddess or the ideal heroines of our ancient literature, Draupadi was quite human with human emotions and feelings like anger, love, hate, happiness and grief. Her life was full of ups and downs but she maintained her dignity in both the situations. Draupadi's fearlessness and uncompromising nature makes her of great importance in the history of mythological women and of women today.

The two formidable enemies of spiritual life are *Kâma* and *Krodha* (desire and anger). This is mentioned in the *Gîtâ* as follows, "When a man broods over the sense objects, attachment to them arises. From attachment, arises desire, and desire breeds anger. From anger comes delusion of mind, and from delusion, the loss of memory; from loss of memory, the destruction of discrimination; and from the destruction of discrimination, man perishes."

So *Kâma* and *Krodha* needs to be curbed by developing a state of mind of constant awareness and reflection through *Viveka* and *Vairâgya*. *Viveka* and *Vairâgya* are the two pillars of spiritual life. The former is the faculty of discrimination- of what is good or bad, beneficial or malefic, eternal or ephemeral, true or false, and so on. *Vairâgya* is the faculty of detachment, desirelessness, and the tendency to renounce worldly life.

Now, how does a common man develop the spiritual qualities?

One of the method of developing the spiritual potential is the ancient yoga system of Patanjali also known as *Râja Yoga*, which helps one to purify the mind and body. According to Patañjali, *Yoga* means spiritual effort to attain perfection through the control of the body, senses and mind, and through right discrimination between *Purusa* and *Prakriti*.

The aim of yoga is set out in the beginning of *Yogasûtra* in its most celebrated and most debated aphorism namely 'yogah cittavrtti nirodhah'. It is the cessation of mental functions or modifications because one has to prevent the self from identifying itself with mental modification. "The task before the *Yogin* is, then, the suppression of the activity of the mind, the 'fluctuations of the mind-stuff are to be restricted.'" A man cannot realize spiritual truth that the self is pure immortal spirit which is quite distinct from the body and the mind unless the mind is purged of all impurities and rendered perfectly calm and serene. For the purification of mind or *chitta*, Yoga advocates control over the body, the senses and the mind with the help of Eight-fold Path of Discipline (*Astanga Yoga*):

- 1) **Yama:** It means the practice of abstinences. It includes non-injury (*Ahimsa*), Truthfulness (*Satya*), non-stealing (*asteya*), Continnence / Celibacy (*brahmacharya*), and non-possession (*aparigraha*).
 - 2) **Niyama:** It is external and internal purification. It includes cleanliness (*shaucha*), contentment (*sontosa*), austerity (*tapas*), Scriptural study (*svadhyaya*) and surrender of one's work to God (*Ishvara – pranidhana*).
 - 3) **Asana:** It means steady and comfortable posture . There are various kinds of postures which are a physical help to meditation. This is the discipline of the body.
 - 4) **Pranayama:** It means control of breath and deals with regulation of inhalation, retention and exhalation of breath. It is beneficial to health and is highly conducive to the concentration of the mind. But it must be performed under expert guidance otherwise it may have negative after – effects.
 - 5) **Pratyahara:** It consists of withdrawing the senses from their respective sense-objects.
- These five are called external aids to yoga (*bahiranga sadhana*), while the remaining three which follows are called internal aids (*antaranga sadhana*).
- (6) **Dharana:** It is fixing the mind on the object of meditation like the tip of the nose or the mid-point of the eyebrows or the lotus of the heart or the image of the deity. The mind must be steadfast like the non-flickering flame of a lamp.
 - (7) **Dhyana:** It means meditation and consists in the undisturbed flow of thought round the object of meditation as the unbroken stream of oil. Here there is still a distinction between the object cognized and the self as the cogniser.
 - (8) **Samadhi:** It means contemplation. This is the final step in yoga. Here the mind is completely absorbed in the object of meditation. The distinction between the object

and the self vanishes. It is a mental state in which all actions of the sense organs and the mind are restrained. It is the ecstatic state in which the connection with the external world is broken and through which one has to pass before obtaining liberation. By following this path it is possible to attain equilibrium of *Satva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* thereby allowing one to do his best.

Thus, the yoga system helps in controlling the fluctuations of the mind and thereby removes evil tendencies. It makes one realize that the same soul resides in all human beings. Soul has no sex, it is neither male nor female. It is only in the body that sex exists. Women too are on equal footing with men. They too are entitled to equal status, rights and opportunities as men are. They should not be merely looked on as object of pleasure, insignificant and weak. Thus spirituality is the need of an hour. If there is to be any change, it is to be in one's thinking and consequently, in the society.

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Bandini to Queen: A Quest for Authenticity, Equality and Modernity

A Search for Thematic Narrative of Authenticity, Equality and Modernity in Hindi Middle Stream Cinema Discourse, with reference to Selected Specific Women Characters

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Abstract: In the past few years, the global intelligentsia has been progressively attracted towards Bollywood, and the popular culture, represented through Bollywood. Even a cursory glance at sheer number of books, written by researchers and scholars on 'Bollywood', in the recent past, can make a case for this claim.

The Dichotomy of Popular film and Art film OR Any New Paradigm?

Hindi cinema once recognized only two categories; namely Popular Cinema and Art Cinema. However, the history of Hundred years of Hindi Cinema is replete with such examples, of films, which are neither strictly Popular nor Art films. In this paper, by transcending the strict categories of Popular and Art films, we would be mainly focusing on 'Middle Stream Cinema'. Middle Stream Cinema (after 1970s) has successfully flourished with film makers like Basu Chatterji, Hrishikesh Mukherjee, Gulzar, Basu Bhattacharya etc. It is neither typically popular, since it does not make the use of proven popular spice (>8>), themes and techniques; nor it can be labeled as completely experimental since it does not depict bold themes using very innovative cinematographic techniques. Rather the discourse of middle stream cinema is 'real life' and familiar themes. The characters seem to be neighborhood characters, without any 'heroine material' or glamour.

The main objective of this paper is to accomplish thematic analysis of selected films with reference to central women characters, Social thinkers and critics have shown their concern over the ironic portrayal of 'woman' in Popular films. She is either depicted as a sex symbol, a typical Western Barbie doll or a pious (nearly Goddess) 'Bahu' image. However, since the earlier times a few middle stream films have consistently made a genuine attempt to depict woman as 'real life characters' and not only as 'real life characters'.

The selected films in this article, to make the case for feministic narratives are *Bandini* (1963), *Guide* (1965), *Mirch Masala* (1985), *English Vinglish* (2012) and *Queen* (2014)

An attempt is made to study how the narrative of 'woman of substance' is co-authored by the creator and viewer of these films and to study the discourse of this narrative, from feminist point of view, the broadest theme of pursuit of 'authenticity', 'equality' and 'modernity'.

The main focus of the article is not the cinematography but the narrative and the discourse of the films- How these films have succeeded in initiating public appeal? Since it is rightly said that the viewer is the 'consumer – co-author' of the media experience, can we say that the image of authentic woman, modern woman is slowly becoming the part of our popular culture? Is it giving way to the stereotypical image of a woman cherished by mainstream and Art film?

Keywords : Bollywood Research, Popular culture, Middle Stream film, Creator and Consumer, media experience, broad feminist themes, Quest for authenticity, equality and modernity, thematic analysis, discourse analysis.

India is regarded as 'Bollywood Nation' across the globe. As Indubala Singh very forcefully states,

*"It is not a co-incident that the film Industry in India is the largest in the world. Whether it is the 'formula' of a Bollywood film or the films produced in different languages in the states of India or the so called 'art films', all these provide a mirror [...], a way a projection of the whole tapestry of Indian culture."*¹

Today, Indian Cinema has greatly contributed towards making of every brick of Indian popular culture. Thus, we see today that the story of Bollywood is the story of continuous progress and development. 'Big B' Amitabh Bachchan, was awarded the World Economic Forum's Crystal Award for 'Outstanding Excellence in the Field of Culture', in the year 2009, is AN indicator of the point, which

I want to bring home at this juncture. Bachchan, while speculating about the honor on his blog, said,

*"...Crystal Award was bestowed on me, an Indian from the world of escapist commercial cinema which 50-60 years ago was not such a bright profession to be in [...] But look how this very escapist cinema had progressed through the years"*²

Thus we see, in the past few years, the global intelligentsia and Art critics have been progressively attracted towards Bollywood, and the popular culture represented through Bollywood. Reflection on the 'film' as a mass medium of Art actually began with the medium itself. Film 'Bollywood' criticism is also progressively enhancing simultaneously with the growth of Bollywood.

¹ Singh Indubala, "Gender Relations And Cultural Ideology In Indian Cinema", pp 1 & 2.

² Ganti Tejaswini, Bachchan Amitabh Qtd. In, "Producing Bollywood: Inside the Contemporary Hindi Film Industry", p 2

As a result of the genuine efforts of critics and researchers, 'film theory' is emerging in India, which is essentially an amalgamation of 'literary criticism', 'social commentary' and 'philosophical speculations', all criticism being rooted in culture.

Aims and Objectives of Research Paper:

On the background of the above discussion, I have made a sincere attempt in this paper to analyze five women characters, from five different films, falling in the broad stream of Middle cinema (spread over the period of 1962-2014). The vantage point for the analysis is gender perspective. The guiding questions which have helped me to decipher the women characters are:

1. How far these characters have been successful in breaking the stereotypes image of an Indian Woman?
2. Have these characters succeeded in creating new benchmarks of feminine behavior?
3. Have they successfully painted the image of authentic modern woman, working towards actualization of her rights?
4. How much impact they have made on the public? Can we say the image of a modern, authentic woman is accepted by the popular culture?

The paper tries to decipher the socio-cultural themes, represented in the films, while answering the above questions.

Literature Review

As mentioned above, a lot of literature is available on 'Bollywood Criticism'. The books which I have extensively used for the present study are as follows:

'Gender Relation' perspective necessarily transcends feminism, which tries to understand a woman and her equal dignity as her counterpart as a human being. How ideologies are imbibed in culture and when they are represented by cinema, how, sometimes this powerful medium bings about changes in ideologies, is beautifully explored by Indubala Singh in her book titled *Gender Relations and Cultural Ideology in Indian Cinema*.

Tejaswini Ganti in *Producing Bollywood Theories of Popular Hindi Cinema* has analyzed Bollywood, from anthropological standpoint, whereby she contends that the rise of 'Bollywood', is a symbol of India's rising as a powerhouse. This has become possible only due to India's acceptance of 'Neo-liberalism ideology', leading to post-modern Indian cultural strands.

Methodology

The main methodological tools used to construct this research article are—

1. Narrative Representation and Narrative Analysis

To understand and evaluate the five women characters from films, method of selected narration and analysis is employed.

2. Lens of Gender and Popular Culture

To make comments on 'gender typification' and 'cultural roles of women', the lens of gender theory and popular culture theory is used.

Popular films v/s. Art film – The Paradigm Transgressed by Middle Stream Cinema

Hindi cinema recognized only two categories: Popular Cinema and Art Cinema

Popular Cinema

Characteristics of Popular Cinema have been studied extensively sometimes contrasting them with Hollywood cinema. At this point, I would only like to highlight one important characteristics of popular cinema; i.e. their repetitive representation of cultural stereotypes, 'Hero', 'Heroine', 'Villian', 'Mother' etc. This is all the more true of women characters.

While commenting on such stereotypes M K. Raghavendra writes,

*"In these films, abstract notions have simple human representations. Good is characteristically a young man, necessarily handsome and exceptionally virile; Good's off shoot, vulnerable innocence, is naturally a young woman, necessarily beautiful, preferably lacking in intelligence and helpless; Evil is usually male also virile and necessarily ugly and sometimes female and, if at all glamorous then necessarily witch like; Evil's off shoot, confusion can be male or female and preferably ugly and also untrustworthy."*³

Film critics have also described Hindi popular cinema (may be rightly), as 'escapist', and 'melodramatic' and very superficial, but most of the times hit on the box office.

Art Films

Indian Cinema, which stood apart from 'popular cinema', in various ways, and which many a times took the form of social Realism, is often regarded as Art film. Satyajit Ray's *Pather Panchali*, may be regarded as a pioneering

³Raghavendra M K, "50 Indian Film Classics", XXII

work in this respect. One very relevant characteristic of Art film is its breaking of established cultural ideologies, and stereotypification of characters.

However, the history of hundred years of Indian/Hindi cinema is replete with examples of such films, which can neither strictly be labeled as ‘Popularistic’, nor as art films. M K. Raghavendra while speculating on the issue recognizes a third category of films which was initially recognized as ‘Minority films’ and later on assimilated by Bollywood by Middle Stream Cinema.

“Middle Cinema, followed successfully thereafter (in the early 1970s) with film makers like Basu Chatterji, Hrishikesh Mukherjee, Gulzar and Basu Bhattacharya breaking away from what was seen as the formula.”⁴

The middle stream cinema is neither typically popular मसाला film, since it does not make the use of proven formula of success, popular themes, stereotypes and repeatedly used techniques; nor it can be labeled as experimental or art film since it does not depict anti-stereotype characters, bold themes, or make use of innovative cinematographic techniques.

The five films and the women characters selected for appraisal fall under the umbrella of middle stream cinema.

Thematic Analysis of selected ‘Women Characters’ from Middle Stream Cinema

Through this paper, I am trying to accomplish thematic analysis of selected women characters mainly from middle stream cinema. Social thinkers and critics of ‘Cinema’, have occasionally shown their concern over the ironic portrayal of women in Hindi cinema. She is either represented as a sex-symbol type or Barbie doll of the West or as unbelievably pious (near Goddess) Bahu, Ma who is sacrifice epitomized. Both the extremes distort her image as a real human being. However, in the history of cinema, we find few middle stream films have made a genuine attempt to pose a woman as an authentic ‘Real Life character’. The selected characters for appraisal in this paper are –

Character	Film	Director	Year
Kalyani	<i>Bandini</i>	Bimal Roy	1963
Rosie	<i>Guide</i>	Vijay Anand	1965
Sonabai	<i>Mirch Masala</i>	Ketan Mehta	1987
Shashi Godbole	<i>English Vinglish</i>	Gauri Shinde	2012
Rani	<i>Queen</i>	Vikas Bahl	2014

⁴Raghavendra M K, “50 Indian Film Classics”, XXVII

⁵Raghavendra M K, “50 Indian Film Classics”, pp 92 & 93.

Kalyani from *Bandini* (1963)

Bimal Roy, may be regarded as one of the founders of middle stream cinema, which is in a way a direct descendent of pre-independence popular cinema. His films, including *Bandini*, stand apart on the then background of escapist tendency of films. The narrative of *Bandini*, takes place in pre-independence era. Quite opposite to the escapist tendency, the film appears to be realistic and Kalyani is out to embrace every responsibility very gracefully.

The stereotypes of heroine as a passive endures, of whatever comes her way is successfully broken by Kalyani’s character. Kalyani responds to each and every demanding situation in her life, very rationally and bravely. Her moral is up even in the face of adversities. Her inner strength and upright moral behavior has endowed spiritual dimension to her character. She appears to be struggling in the face of real challenges of her life. To quote M K. Raghavendra,

“Where *Bandini* really breaks with the conventions of Indian cinema is in the figure of its heroine. The heroine in Indian cinema is conventionally an appendage, who merely responds to an action already initiated. In contrast, it is Kalyani, who initiates the action in *Bandini* and even in the absence of its other virtues, this alone makes the film a landmark.”⁵

Rosie from *Guide* (1965)

Vijay Anand’s film *Guide* was highly acclaimed for various reasons. However, the film is mainly appreciated for its different story lines and Raju *Guide*’s character (Dev Anand), may be, for dances and songs as well. But somehow Rosie’s character (Waheeda Rehman) seems to be shadowed in the film. Rosie suffers emotionally in the whole process. She seems to have taken a stand fought for her right to pursue her breaking career and hollow wedlock. As far as such decisions are concerned Rosie seems to break the typical stereotype of passivity. She comes across as real authentic, responsible, passionate woman. Her tender human side also gets beautifully unwind during the course of narrative when she and Raju’s mother (who share a bad blood) are forced to be together in the face of odd circumstances. However, her relation with Raju is shown to remain at pseudo romantic level throughout the film. In this, it strengthens the critical opinion that ‘Indian Cinema’, is not much happy showing courtesans and widows entering the wedlock. To quote Raghavendra,

“It may be surmised that the Indian popular film prefers to keep widows and courtesans out of wedlock not (as is commonly surmised) on account of its social conservatism but because having conceived of them in

essence as widows and courtesans it is loathe to seeing them change."⁶

In this sense, we may say that the film has succeeded in partially transgressing the stereotypes about women. Though being a very sensitive director, though Vijay Anand has ably transgressed many cultural stereotypes in this film. It also became very popular acclaiming good public and critique appeal. However, Rosie's character could not transgress a particular cultural demand.

Sonabai and village woman from *Mirch Masala* (1985)

Ketan Mehta's film *Mirch Masala* justifies Mehta's reputation as one of the talented Indian film makers. The film unfolds in a western Indian village during the colonial era. The film is often seen as an allegory about colonialism. However, at this juncture, we would prefer to look at it from gender point of view. The story takes place on the background of typical small village set-up, where the economy of the village is bound to the red chilly cultivation, and its conversion into powder.

Sonabai, Mukhia's wife, Kaki and a few more women characters come across as strong, down to earth, responsible and a struggling heralds. The story breaks the stereotype of 'poor village girl'. It very successfully creates a benchmark for solidarity and committed action of women. I suppose, it also underlines one very important truth about women's struggle, and that is with awareness what is most wanted in such situations is inner strength and 'committed action'. The film narrative unwinds how the 'inner strength' is converted into 'collective strength', through solidarity, empowering women to handle such a tricky situation. In fact the depth of this action stands apart more on the background of men's passivity, and fear stricken attitude. The narrative of the film quite successfully and dramatically comments on various gender issues, leaving viewer awe-struck.

Mrs. Shashi Godbole from *English Vinglish* (2012)

Gauri Shinde's film *English Vinglish* depicts a simple story of house wife. Mrs. Shashi Godbole (Sridevi) is a light hearted but emphatic narrative of a typical 'middle class' young urban family woman. Shashi an efficient semi commercial laddu maker suffers an inferiority complex due to her poor English. The typical family comprising of husband, two children and mother in law, somehow do keep her reminding about her lacuna. When Shashi goes to US for her knees' wedding, she thoughtfully decides to overcome this lacuna by studying conversational English. Her French friend showers unconditional affection on her. But being rooted in typical Indian ethos, she is able to hold this relation at a bay and yet understands its value.

In the end of the film, as a result of many climatic situations, the family realizes her committed efforts to learn English, and overcome her inferiority. She appraises herself in totally new situations. Though the narrative is linear and simple, Shashi's character comes across as committed, yet unassuming. Truly rooted in traditionalism, yet embracing modernity. The film helps to transgress the boundaries of the notion of modernity.

Rani from *Queen* (2014)

Rani's character from the film (Kangana Ranaut) has won appraisal from public and critics alike Rani is shown to be a very typical middle-class urban girl, rooted in her family, carrying very typical ethos. For her, 'marriage' means a lot. Her boyfriend means a lot. She mends decisions of her life as per his wish and whim. Vijay, her boyfriend, takes great pleasure in dominating Rani. He refuses to get married with Rani just a night before of their marriage, the reason being that she will not be able to cope up with his foreign returned status. Rani is devastated, but shows great resilience in the face of the situation. Her family is extremely supportive of her. On this background, she makes a little unusual decision of going abroad on her pre-planned honeymoon alone. This decision changes Rani's life totally. She meets people like Vijayalaxmi, whose personality is diagonally opposite to Rani's personality. Eventually, Rani realizes people with different values, different backgrounds, different personalities and different struggles in their lives can love each other. Their humanness is not shadowed by any other mundane details. She is also able to compare this open world with her constricted man centered world view. Her friends coming from totally different backgrounds very soon unassumingly win her heart and she discovers her comfort zone. She also tries and tests her skills as a chef with her friends. Unknowingly Rani is groomed and is transformed as a person. She becomes more self-oriented, open minded, confident. A kind of 'sure of myself', attitude takes place of timid submissions, which she has done many times before, for her boyfriend.

When Vijay realizing his mistake follows Rani at her tour and wants her desperately to come back, she promises to meet him in India when she is back. The climax scene, speaks volumes. Rani goes to meet Vijay, at his home without saying anything she returns his engagement ring, hugs him saying thank you. Now Vijay is flabbergasted but knows in his heart, he won't ever have her in his life.

Again this film, like earlier is transgressing many gender stereotypes and cultural concepts. Rani's going on honeymoon alone, sets the direction of the narrative. Her emerging as a confident person and refusing marriage is not out of any personal feelings of revenge, but as a result of

⁶Raghavendra M K, "50 Indian Film Classics", XXIV

free thinking and realization. Rani like Kalyani, initiates action and assumes responsibility of her decisions and actions, e.g. She bitterly fights with street thief to save her purse. At this juncture, passing reference can be made to the fact that in the earlier generation spice film, in many films, God-like heroes name use to be Vijay. This Vijay in a way demystifies the role of 'Vijay – super hero' of yester years.

In many films, girls are shown to consider fiancée's plea after they professing repentance. Girls are also seen to sacrifice for the sake of family or for the sake of fiancée. But Rani's decision shows how she does not succumb to so-called emotional burden and social pressures. She emerges as a strong human being in the whole process and indeed values that.

Rani, Rosie, Kalyani, Mrs. Godbole and Sonabai:

After deciphering characters from the lens of gender and culture we may say that, all the women characters Rani, Rosie, Kalyani, Mrs. Godbole and Sonabai come across as real characters. We may find them anywhere around us in our neighborhood, or nearby vicinity (with exception of, may be, Rosie). As such viewers find it easy to identify with them.

A few characteristics which can be taken out as themes of their narratives are –

- Assuming responsibility
- Committing oneself to action
- Struggling with the odds of life gracefully
- Fighting to actualize the right towards equality
- Inner strength and Resilience

Following her inner voice, Kalyani leaves home, accepts the burden of her crime, opens all her cards before doctor who is willing to marry her. In spite of facing so many odds never loses sweetness of her temper and goes out of the way to help others. At the end, learning that her fiancée (Bikas Ghosh) really loved her and married another woman out of compassion and compulsion, she denies the bed of roses and runs to nurse and serve her true beloved. Following her inner voice Rosie quits marriage, builds her career, keeps romantic relation with Raju, and takes a stand against Raju, even when she knows she will lose this only relation in her life.

In case of Sonabai the inner voice of village women gets converted into collective voice, and brave collective action.

Following her inner voice Shashi decides to overcome a lacuna in her personality. Understands the value and

limitations of the whole exercise.

Rani, through her decision realizes value of freedom sacrifices so called settled typical life, for the sake of worthy freedom.

None of these characters are dancing dolls, neither they are Sati Savitris. They are women, may be like you and me. The escapist tendency of Hindi films, seem to be totally absent in the narratives of the above characters. On the contrary they help us to be aware of subtle social reality and are shown to take stand, and live their decisions fully.

Conclusion

In 1960s and 1970s, feminist theories really impacted Indian culture, and the western world, reflecting itself in the Art world as well. To quote Indubala Singh in this respect,

“In 1972, the first issue of the short lived American journal, ‘women and film’ was published. The need for transformation of women’s stereotypical image, oppressive ideology and a need for the creation of a feminine, critical aesthetic, was felt.”⁷

On this background, a feminist or gender paradigm may be described as a critical analysis of the dynamic of gender relations, and sexuality. The above mentioned film narratives have succeeded to a very great extent in making such expression about womenfolk, about her duties and rights. The characters have not only succeeded in breaking the established stereotypes but also have succeeded in authentically reframing a woman's image as real, authentic and modern person.

History says, the five films, were highly appreciated by the larger audience. This brings us to the subtle reality of the role of cine-viewers as co-creators of cine-world or cine-reality. Viewers are in a way co-creators of narratives. Cine-goers experience in a way completes the circle of appreciation.

Indubala Singh theorizes in this respect that, often cinema is deeply rooted in the socio-cultural climate. However, sensitive creators, try to build a new ideology on the basis of this subtle or obvious cultural change. The ideologies get represented in the cinema, giving viewers an opportunity to see and feel (identify with this) this new reality. And it catches viewer's nerve. Slowly and gradually, the new ideology gets percolated in the popular culture.

The public appeal and popularity, claimed by characters like Kalyani to Rani, definitely shows a strong strand of realistic depiction of women, transgressing the stereotypical dichotomy of sex symbol and traditionality.

The character of Rani, in the film *Queen* very positively

⁷Singh Indubala, “Gender Relations And Cultural Ideology In Indian Cinema”, p 13.

represents how she is able to initiate and achieve self-transformation and transgress the typical, traditional gender, identity.

Though Shashi's story is little simple and linear, her attempt to overcome her lacuna forgive her loved ones and emerge as a better person becomes appealing, especially in the metropolis where, there are many woman-folk carrying the complex about English language.

Sonabai's character her inner strength opens our minds to the reality of empowerment. The inner strength of woman's personality is her way towards empowerment. Sonabai is illiterate, staying alone, without much support of villagers. But she is able to actualize her right over her own sexuality through this inner strength.

Rosie's character, as stated earlier, is much shadowed in the film. Again her not getting married with a Raju, is strengthening the cultural expectation about courtesans, yet her strength to quit hollow marital relation, vigor to build her passion into career, no succumbing before society or even before Raju, definitely takes Rosie to different heights.

Kalyani's narrative is actually from pre-independence period. One can feel the idealism and climate of freedom struggle at the backdrop of the main narrative. The grace and nobility in the face of all sorts of adversities of Kalyani in spite of her fallibility, somewhere make a statement about the spiritual dimension of her personality.

Moreover all the characters are strongly rooted in their families (Rosie is willing to get rooted but is proved to unlucky due to her circumstances). May be with the exception of Rosie, all other girls seem to be neighborhood girls. All the above films have succeeded in creating this sense of identification, obviously reconstructing 'gender role' and image of a woman.

I would like to conclude the article, by expressing a strong desire to see Kalyani and Rani more often in film narratives. We would be happy to hear voices of Sonabai, Shashi and Rosie in reel life discourses as well as in real life discourses.

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Judiciary Activism towards Protection of Human Dignity of Women

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Meaning and Implications of Judicial Activism

Jurisprudence extended the power of judiciary to go beyond the statutory limit to give better and complicit justice. Arthur Schlesinger Jr. introduced the term judicial activism in a January 1947 Fortune Magazine article titled 'The Supreme Court: 1947.' Judicial Activism may be defined as the proactive role played by the judiciary in ensuring that the rights and liberties of the people are protected. It may be understood as the role of the court in stepping out from its normal interpretative role. When the court moves beyond its normal role of mere adjudicator of disputes and becomes a player in the system of the country laying down principles and guidelines that the Executive must carry out, that role of the court may be said to be judicial activism. According to A.M.Ahmedi, judicial activism is a necessary adjunct of the function since the protection of public interest happens to be its main concern.

Black's Law Dictionary defined Judicial Activism as a *Philosophy of judicial decision –making whereby judges allow their personal views about public policy, among other factors, to guide their decisions.* The process of making law by judges is what Justice V.G. Palshikar calls Judicial Activism. It codifies what was hitherto an un-codified convention, namely, recognition of judge-made law. Judicial Activism as distinguished from Judicial Passivism is an active interpretation of existing legislation by a judge, made with a view to enhance the utility of that legislation for social betterment.

Judicial Activism earned a human face in India by liberalizing access to justice and giving relief to disadvantaged groups and have-nots under the leadership of activist judges. Though there are some sections in the Criminal Procedure Code of 1973 to protect the rights of the victims and for providing compensation, the Criminal Courts at the lower level in India have ignored those provisions for a long time and not utilized them during their sentencing processes. But it is heartening to observe that several judgments in both the High Courts and the Supreme Court in the last two decades or so have come to the rescue of the victims.

Concept of Human Dignity

Human beings are born equal in dignity and rights. Human Rights and Fundamental Freedom are the birth rights of all the human beings. In India, there is no comprehensive legislation on privacy rights, contrary to the contention of

legislation in USA on privacy rights. Supreme Court of India recognize right of privacy under Art.21 of Constitution of India as fundamental right. Human dignity means freedom to live in peace, health and hope. These are moral claims which cannot be empirically ascertainable. Self-perceptions are at the very heart of dignity. 'Privacy' means the individual's right to control dissemination of information about him. It is his personal possession.

This paper seeks to examine the concept of dignity of women that has been interpreted by Indian Judiciary, briefly analyzing some of the landmark judgments shaping the moral fiber of human being. The Supreme Court of India has derived a catalogue of human rights from the notion of 'human dignity' implied by a right to life enshrined in Art.21 of the constitution. Human life and human dignity have been disregarded today in various ways and in different directions. In this context, Indian Judiciary plays the role of savior of human dignity, when such terms can't be codified.

Human rights for women came into sharp focus with the adoption of the *convention on elimination of all forms of discrimination against women* by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 18th December 1997. This is treated as the *Magna Carta of women's human rights*. State parties are required by convention to eliminate discrimination in the exercise and enjoyment of all cultural, civil, political, economic and social rights.

Human Rights and Women: An International Overview

- The Character of the United Nations Organisation (1945)
- *The Immortal Magna Carta (1215)*
- *Petition of Rights (1628)*
- *Bill of Rights (1689)*
- *Act of Settlement (1700) in Great Britain;*
- *The Declaration of Independence (1776),*
- *Bill of Rights (1789) in USA and*
- *Declaration of the Rights of Man (1791) in France*

In the modern context, the UN charter, sundry international and regional declaration, conventions, charters and conferences and national Constitution compose the rich sources of human rights.

The brooding omnipresence of a higher law – a common law to all mankind – was termed as *Just Natural* for the Romans, *Lax Naturalis* for medieval Christians, *Rita* and *Dharma* for ancient Hindus and is christened as *Natural law* by modern jurists. The recognition of such superior law led to the evolution of the *Natural Rights / Human rights*.

The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948*, professes the principle of non – discrimination and proclaims that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, without any distinctions including that of sex.

The *International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966*;

The *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966*;

A number of regional right characters, viz.,

- European Convention for Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms, 1950;
- *African Character on Human and people's Rights 1981*; and
- *American convention inhuman Rights, 1969*. all include provisions for progressive protection and guarantees for women.

The UN General Assembly unanimously adopted a *Declaration of Eliminations of Discrimination Against Women in 1967*, resolving to abolish sex – discriminatory laws and practices, to grant women equal rights with men in matters of Civil law including absolute interest in property and free choice and consent in marriage.

The *Second World Conference on Human Rights* held at Vienna in 1993, called for full and equal participation of women in all aspects of public life.

The United Nations sponsored *First world Conference on Women* was held at Mexico from 19th June to 2nd July 1975;

The *Second World Conference of United Nations Decade for Women* was held at Copenhagen from 14 to 30 July 1980;

The *Third World Conference* was held at Nairobi, from 15th to 26th July 1985, to reviews and appraises the achievements in the U.N. Declarations for Women equality, development and peace.

The *Fourth Conference on Women Action for equality, development and peace* was held at Beijing, China, from Sep.4 to Sep.15, 1995 with a caption: *Look at the world through Women's eyes. Beijing Plus Five* – a special session was held by General Assembly in New York from 5th to 10th June 2000, to assess the progress made by the State parties in the implementation of their Commitment to gender equality.

The status of women is a benchmark of social process and is a very important part of the *human development index* in the human rights jurisprudence.

Human Rights of Women: Indian Scenario

i) Provisions of Constitution Relating to Women's Right

Article 16(4) of the Constitution provided for the Reservation of posts in favour of any Backward Class of any citizens which is in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented in the Services under the State.

Article 243-D of the Constitution contains that not less than 1/3rd of the total number of seats to be filled in direct election in every Panchayat shall be reserved for women. The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution, effected in 1992, provide for reservations of seats to women in elections in the Panchayats and Municipalities.

Same provisions have been made in Article 234-T for reservation of seats to women in the direct elections to every Municipality. Thus, there is a reservation of 33% seats for women in local bodies.

Article 23 provides against exploitation of women under the heading *prohibition of trafficking in Human beings and Forced labour*.

Directive Principles of State Policy regarding women are in Articles 39, Article 42 & Article 44 of the Constitution.

The Indian Constitution directs that the International Character should be interpreted in the same manner as an Act of Parliament (Art 367 (1)).

The Constitution has accepted the principles of gender equality. The Preamble speaks of equality of status and opportunity. Article 14, 15(1), 16 (1) (4) reiterate the principle by assuring equality. Article 21 has provided right to life with dignity.

ii) Women's Rights Under Criminal Laws In India

Various provisions have been made with regard to offences against women under *Indian Penal Code, 1860* (IPC) and *The Indian Evidence Act, 1872*.

The provisions of the IPC:

Sec. 354 of the IPC makes punishable an assault or Criminal force assaults or uses of Criminal force on any women intending to outrage, or knowing it to be likely to that he will thereby outrage, her modesty shall be punishable.

Sec. 312 provides for punishment for causing miscarriage, if such miscarriage is not caused in good faith for the purpose of saving the life of the women.

Sec. 376 provides punishment for rape which has been defined in Sec. 375.

Sec.228-A provides punishment for a person who discloses the names or identity of the rape victim.

Section 493 – 498 deal with offences against marriage.

Section 498 – A provides punishment for cruelty against a women by her husband or his relatives.

iii) Indian Evidence Act

Sec. 114-A of *Indian Evidence Act* incorporates a presumption that where sexual intercourse by the accused with the prosecutrix is proved and if she alleges that she has been raped, the Court shall presume that she did not consent.

Criminal law enactments are passed to preserve the dignity of women and to protect women against social discrimination, violence and atrocities.

Abuses and offences against women are covered under various sections of the *Indian Penal Code*:

- Miscarriages (Sec. 312 to 314)
- *Co-habitation caused by a man deceitfully* (Sec. 493)
- *Offences against bigamy* (Sec. 494)
- *Adultery* (Sec. 497)
- *Enticing or taking away a married women* (Sec. 498)
- *Buying or disposing away a person as slave* (Sec. 370 & 371)
- *Unlawful compulsory labour* (Sec. 373 & 374)
- *Sale of obscene books etc* (272 & 294)
- *Kidnapping or abducting or inducing women to compel her marriage etc.* (Sec. 366 & 366A & B)
- *Outraging the modesty of Women* (Sec. 354)
- Offences against rape (Sec. 375 & 376 A to D).

iv) Other provisions: Various Enactments

India has enacted various laws for the protection of women:

1. The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act 1956
2. *Maternity Benefit Relief Act 1961*
3. *The Dowry Prohibition Act 1961*
4. *The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act 1971*
5. *Equal Remuneration Act 1976*
6. *Factories Act 1948* (Sec : 19, 22(2), 27, 42(b))
7. *The National Commission for Women Act 1990*

8. *The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act 1987*

9. *The Family Court Act, 1984*

10. *The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibitions) Act 1986*

11. *The Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994.*

12. *The Child Marriage (Restraint) Act, 1929*

13. The Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993.

The Government of India constituted the National Human Rights Commission, State Human Rights Commission and Human Rights Court.

The Government declared the year 2001 as the *year of Women Empowerment* and the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women was evolved in 2001.

The development of the law relating to women shows the spectrum of the changing position of the women in the society. Though women enjoyed a dignified status in *Vedic* period, they lost their individuality and status during *Shastric* period and thereafter.

The Reformist Movement during the British regime led to various enactments, viz.,

- Hindu Widows Remarriage Act,
- *Hindu Women's Right to Property Act,*
- *The Female Infanticide Prevention Act,*
- *Removal of Cast Disabilities Act,*
- Child Marriage Restraint Act, etc.,

The law is one of the several key factors that have acted as a catalyst for the reformists to bring about the social changes in pre-Independent India.

v) Women's Rights under the Civil Laws of India

The right to marry and found a family has been protected under the personal and Special Marriage Laws of India. These are:

- The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955,
- *Special Marriage Act, 1954*
- *The Family Courts Act, 1954*
- *Hindu Adoptions & Maintenance Act, 1956*
- *The Dissolution of Muslim Marriage Act, 1939*
- *Muslim Women's (Protection of Rights upon divorce) Act,*
- *The Christian Marriage Act, 1872*

- The Christian Marriage and Matrimonial causes Bill, 1994

Provisions relating to maintenance of married women are provided in the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955. Hindu married or unmarried women can adopt a male or female child under the *Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956*. A Muslim divorced woman is entitled to Mother & other properties to be given at the time of divorce. According to the draft law called *The Christian Marriage and matrimonial causes Bill*, the Christian women will have equal rights of divorce and succession.

vi. Women's Right under the Labour laws of India

Human rights against exploitation, right for maternity benefits, facilities in factories for women workers, equal pay for equal work with men is provided in *The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976*. Maternity benefits to be given to women.

The judicial decisions rendered by the Indian Courts depict the active initiatives of the Judiciary to protect the human dignity of women from exploitation by the at all stages where the legislations are unenforceable due to lack of adequacy of enforcement machinery.

Case Laws

In "*Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan*, (1997) 6 SCC 241) the Supreme Court laid down number of guidelines to remedy the legislative vacuum. In this, Supreme Court referred to the convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and also the resultant violation of gender equality under Art.14, 15 and right to life Article 21 of the constitutions.

The Supreme Court in "*Apparel Export Promotion Council v. A.K.Chopra*" (1991) 1 SCC 759) held that punishment of removal of male employee from service after he has been found guilty of sexual harassment of a female colleague is proper and reasonable on the ground that sexual harassment of a female at the place of work is a form of "gender discrimination against women" and is incompatible with the dignity and honour of a female and needs to be eliminated.

In "*T.K.Gopal v. State of Karnataka*" (AIR 2000 SC 1669) the Supreme Court on the violation of human dignity of the victims of Sex Crime, observed that "rapist not only violates the victim's privacy and personal integrity, but inevitably causes serious psychological as well as physical harm in the process. Rape is not merely a physical assault – it is often destructive of the whole personality of the victim. A murderer destroys the physical body of his victim; a rapist degrades the very soul of the helpless female".

Invading Privacy:

'Privacy' has been defined as "the rightful claim of an individual to determine to which he wishes to share himself with others and control over the time, place and circumstances to communicate with others". It will be accepted that one person's right to know and be informed may violate another's right of privacy.

The Supreme Court in "*State of Maharashtra V.N.Mardikar* (1991 (1) SCC 57), held that "the unchastity of a women does not make her open to any person to violate her person as and when he wishes. She is entitled to protect her person if there is an attempt to violate her person against her wish. She is equally entitled to the protection of law. Therefore merely because she is of easy virtue, her evidence cannot be thrown overboard. In this case, the court observed that "even a woman of easy virtue is entitled to privacy and no one can invade her as and when he wishes.

"Right of privacy" can be said "to be let alone" what is in information to others according to a journalist, could be personal and sensitive information to an individual. "The Lakshman Rekha' or the 'line of control', should be that the publication of comments information should not invade into the privacy of an individual, unless, outweighed by 'bonafide' a genuine public interest" ("*G.Pravina v Shri Narendra Modi*", High Court of Madras, W.P.No.13742 of 2014, 2014 (2) CWC36).

Privacy, liberty and dignity are pillars of gender justice. In several decisions, the Supreme Court of India and several High Courts, it has been reaffirmed. The Supreme Court in a watershed judgment in "*Olga Tellis V. Bombay Municipal Corporation*" (1985 (3) SCC 545), in case declared that a man has not only a right to live with human dignity, consequently all attributes for living with the dignity of a human soul namely education, shelter etc., are to be guaranteed and welfare activities of the State must be directed to ensure socio-economic condition where no one in the country is deprived of the basic requirements to lead a dignified life.

Sexual Exploitation: Women and Children

In *Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan*, (1997) 6 SCC 241), the Supreme Court laid down number of guidelines to remedy the legislative vacuum. In this case, Supreme Court referred to the convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and also the resultant violation of gender equality under Art.14, 15 and right to life Article.21 of the Constitution.

The Supreme Court in *Apparel Export Promotion Council v. A.K.Chopra* ((1999) 1 SCC 759) held that punishment of removal of male employee from service after he has been found guilty of sexual harassment of a female colleague is proper and reasonable on the ground that sexual harassment of a female at the place of work is a form of

“gender discrimination against women” and is incompatible with the dignity and honour of a female and needs to be eliminated.

The role of Public Interest Litigation in respect of education is very commendable: *Gaurav Jain v. Union of India* (AIR 1990 SC 292), the Supreme Court rejected the demand for providing separate schools and hostels for children of prostitutes, as it was not in the interest of such children.

In *Unni Krishnan, J.P. v. State of A.P.* (AIR 1993 SC 2178), Article 21 has been interpreted by the Supreme Court to include the right to live with human dignity and all that goes along with it. “The ‘right to education’ flows directly from right to life”. In other words, ‘right to education’ is concomitant to the fundamental rights enshrined in part III of the Constitution. The State is under a constitutional mandate to provide educational institutions at all levels for the benefit of citizens.” The benefit of education cannot be confined to richer classes.

The question whether the right to education was a fundamental right and enforceable as such was answered by the Supreme Court in the affirmative in *Mohini Jain v. State of Karnataka* ((1992) 3 SCC 666).

The correctness of this court’s decision was examined by a larger bench of judges in *Unnikrishnan J.P. v. State of Andhra Pradesh*. The occasion was the challenge, by the management of private medical and engineering colleges, to State legislation regulating the charging of “capitation” fees from students seeking admission. The court expressly denied this claim and proceeded to examine the nature of the right to education. In *Unnikrishnan J.P. v. State of Andhra Pradesh*, Justice Mohan observed “in educational institutions which are seed – beds of culture, where children in whose hands quiver the destinies of the future, are trained. From their ranks will come out when they grow up statesmen and soldiers, patriots and philosophers, who will determine the progress of the land.

Firing a missile of judicial activism on January 12, 1993, for the rights of the prostitutes’ children the Supreme Court disposed of a petition filed by a Delhi based organization, the Patit Uddar Sabha. According to this revolutionary judgment, it shall now be sufficient to write the name of the mother only in place of child’s father’s name. Now the children of the prostitutes and unknown father would be equally eligible for the admission in the educational institutions, who could not be admitted so far. Such children would now have more self confidence and start finding them on equal footing to the other children of the society.

Right to Inheritance of Illegitimate Children:

In *Santa v. Durga* (AIR 1992 BOM 192), the Supreme Court stated that children of a void marriage (whether

declared void or not) and children of annulled voidable marriages will inherit the property of their parents only and of none else and they have no right to claim partition of the joint family property. The same view has been expressed by the Madras High Court in “*Perumal Gounder v. Panchayapan*” (AIR 1990 Mad 110) and the Bombay High Court in “*Shanaram v. Dugubai* (AIR 1987 Bom 182). In *Smt.P.E.K.Kalliani Amma V.K.Devi*” (AIR 1996 SC 1963), the apex court held that the succession or inheritance by illegitimate children for all practical purposes, is limited to the properties of the parents only.

Another important case in this regard is *Jinia Keotin v. Kumar Sitaram Manjhi* (AIR 2000 SC 735), where the Supreme Court held a similar view. Same view has been approved and followed by the Supreme Court in *Bharatha Matha v. R.Vijaya Renganathan* (AIR 2010 SC 2685), where it was held that a child born of void or voidable marriage is not entitled to claim inheritance in ancestral coparcener property but is entitled only to claim share in self-acquired properties of his/her parents, if any. Illegitimate children are as innocent as any other children and therefore, it is said that the children must not be the sufferers for the fault of their parents. They cannot be discriminated against and they will be on a par with other legitimate children and will be entitled to all the rights in the property of their parents, both self-acquired and ancestral. Here it is relevant to say that the sins of parents ought not to be visited on their offspring.

In this respect, recently in *Revanasiddappa v. Mallikarjun* (2011) 5 MLJ 392 (SC) 1, the Supreme Court of India (decided on 31 March 2011) rules that children born of void marriages or out of wed-lock are entitled to a share of the parent’s property, both ancestral and personal. In this case, the Bench ruled that children from second wife had rights to their father’s ancestral property and said that “a child born in such relationship is innocent and is entitled to all rights, which are given to other children born in valid marriage”.

In this historically ruling, the Supreme Court has dissented from the earlier position held in *Jinia Keotin*, *Bharatha Matha* cases, etc. Right to property is no longer fundamental right but it is a Constitutional right and Article 300 A contains a guarantee against deprivation of property right given by authority of law.

The judgment is significant that seeks to give property rights to illegitimate children, that give live – in partner’s legal safeguards and also that allows maintenance and property rights to second wives. In reality, because of this judgment, now all women are being protected. The judgment is a step in the right direction, since illegitimate children are more vulnerable, guaranteeing their rights can go a long way in making Indian Society a progressive one.

The Supreme Court has brought justice and bestowed a decent level of honour to the child born out of amorous relationships from devoted lovers. It is a correct move to ensure that the “innocent beings” do have a right to property of their parents, whether self attained or ancestral.

In *Rameshwari Devi v. State of Bihar* (AIR 2000 SC 735), the court dealt with a case wherein after the death of a Government employee, children born illegitimately by the women, who had been living with the said employee, claimed the share in pension/gratuity and other death – cum – retiral benefits along with children. The court held that the child of the deceased employee born out of void marriage was entitled to share in the family pension, death-cum-retiral benefits and gratuity.

Trafficking in women and children is the gravest form of abuse and exploitation of human beings. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sex exploitation, forced labour services, slavery, servitude or removal of organs by means of threat or use of force. Trafficked persons survive in brothels, parlours, bars, factories, farms, guesthouses and even in the homes as well. The income generated by human trafficking is comparable to the money generated through trafficking in arms and drugs. Human trafficking is linked to other organized crimes like human smuggling, drug trafficking and money laundering. The Oxford English Dictionary defines traffic as “trade, especially illegal (as in drugs). The word trafficked or trafficking is described as “dealing in something, especially illegally (as in the case of trafficking narcotics)” Though there is not concrete definition of trafficking, it could be said that *trafficking necessarily involves movement/transportation, of a person by means of coercion or deceit, and consequent exploitation leading to commercialization*. The abusers including the traffickers, the recruiters, the transporters the sellers, the buyers, the end-users etc., exploit the vulnerability of the trafficked person.

In India, trafficking in children is on rise and majority of victims of trafficking are below 18 years of age (NCRB, 2005). *Tamil Nadu ranks first in immoral trafficking*, followed by Karnataka among major States, while the national capital New Delhi tops in the chart of union Territories according to Home Ministry data for 2007. Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra expose equally a gloomy picture. Therefore, it would be imperative to take all steps to prohibit prostitution. Right of the child to development hinges upon elimination of prostitution. Success lies upon effective measures to eradicate root and branch of prostitution.

In *Bachpan Bachao Andolan v. Union of India* writ petition was filed by HRLN in 2011 on the issue of abuse and exploitation of children in circus industry and to examine several recommendations aimed at reforming the existing legal and procedural mechanism on child protection. In this

case, the court has ordered Central Government to bring a notification prohibiting employment of children in circus, to conduct raids to rescue children already working in circuses and frame proper scheme for their restoration. This order given by the Supreme Court has made clear its intention to deal with the problem of exploitation of children in a long term systematically.

Conclusion

The brief survey of the above cases shows the activism of the Indian Supreme Court to protect women from various types of exploitation. In this regard, the performance of the Indian Judiciary stands out as a significant contribution to the implementation of human dignity of Women. Although the Supreme Court made laudable directions and suggestions in many instances to protect and promote the human dignity of women, unfortunately these directions and suggestions are not followed and implemented by the Government machinery effectively.

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मराठी वृत्तपत्रांना 'स्त्री' संपादक वर्ज्य

प्रा. विमुक्ता राजे

पत्रकारिता व संपादन विभाग, जोशी-बेडेकर महाविद्यालय, ठाणे

प्रास्ताविक : मुद्रित माध्यमांत दैनिकाचे अपरंपार महत्त्व आहे. किंबहुना संपूर्ण प्रसारमाध्यमांमध्ये दैनिकांचे अर्थात वृत्तपत्रांचे अग्रस्थान अजूनही टिकून आहे. इलेक्ट्रॉनिक माध्यमांचा विस्तार प्रचंड होऊन देखील जगभरातील वृत्तपत्रांचे स्थान ढळलेले नाही. स्वस्त किंमत, सहज उपलब्धता, टिकाऊपणा, संग्राह्यता, विश्वसार्हता, कोठेही व कसेही बसून वाचण्याची शक्यता, विश्लेषणाची सोय आणि आपल्या विचारांची पडताळणी करून घेण्याचे सोपे साधन अशी काही कारणे या माध्यमाचे महत्त्व कायम ठेवून आहेत. वृत्तपत्रांना इतके महत्त्व असल्यामुळे दैनिकांचे संपादकसुद्धा महत्त्वाचे ठरते. मात्र अन्य व्यवसायांसारखाच पत्रकारिता हा व्यवसायदेखील पुरुष वर्चस्ववादीच राहिला. गेल्या २५ वर्षांत स्त्रिया या हळूहळू मराठी पत्रकारितेत आल्या आणि स्थिरावलेल्या दिसतात. त्यास वृत्तपत्रविषयक शिक्षण देणाऱ्या संस्था आणि बदललेले वातावरण बऱ्याच प्रमाणात कारणीभूत आहे. परिणामी मराठी वृत्तपत्रसृष्टीत स्त्रिया मोठ्या संख्येने काम करू लागलेल्या दिसतात. तरीसुद्धा संपादकापर्यंत स्त्री पोहोचण्याची अवस्था अजूनही मराठी वृत्तपत्रांमध्ये आली नाही.

आज एकविसाव्या शतकात स्त्री प्रत्येक क्षेत्रात पुढे आहे. कोणतेही काम तिला अशक्य राहिलेले नाही. स्त्री अतराळात जाऊन पोहचली. राजकारण, समाजकारण, उद्योग, शिक्षण, साहित्य, कला, शास्त्र अशी सर्व क्षेत्रे तिने यशस्वीरित्या पार केली. स्त्री सुविद्य आहे ती जागरूक आहे, तिला आत्मभान आहे. स्त्रीला जबाबादारीची जाणीव आहे. मानवी जीवनातील कोणतेही क्षेत्र तिला आता अशक्य राहिलेले नाही. पुरुषांच्या बरोबरीने ती प्रत्येक क्षेत्रात अगदी रणांगणावरही आपली कर्तबगारी गाजवत आहे.

असे असले तरी एखाद्या मराठी वृत्तपत्राच्या संपादकपदी स्त्रियांना स्थान मिळालेले दिसत नाही. मासिके, साप्ताहिके, नियतकालिके यांचे संपादन स्त्रियांनी केले आणि करतही आहेत. परंतु वृत्तपत्रांचे संपादन करणाऱ्या स्त्रियांची नावे शोधू लागता शिरीष पै आणि वसुंधरा पेंडसे-नाईक हिच आठवतात. तर अलिकडच्या काळातील जयश्री खाडीलकर-पांडे.

श्रीमती पै या 'मराठा' वृत्तपत्राच्या संपादिका होत्या. आचार्य अत्रे यांच्यानंतर त्या 'मराठा' चे संपादन करू लागल्या. श्री. नीळकंठ खाडिलकर यांच्यानंतर जयश्री खाडिलकर 'नवाकाळ' चे संपादन करू लागल्या. दोघीनाही हे पद मिळाले ते वारसा हक्कानेच. दोघीही बुद्धिमान, गुणवान होत्या. आहेत पण अत्रे आणि खाडिलकर ही आडनावे नसती तर त्यांना संपादकपद मिळाले असते काय असा प्रश्न निर्माण होतो. श्रीमती वसुंधरा पेंडसे-नाईक या 'नवशक्ती' च्या संपादक होत्या. त्यांचे वाङ्मयीन कर्तृत्व मोठे होते. संस्कृतचा व्यासंग दांडगा होता. 'मराठा', 'नवशक्ती', 'नवाकाळ' ही तीनही दैनिके मराठी वृत्तपत्रसृष्टीत नाव मिळवून होती व आहेत. तरीही या तिघींची कारकिर्द संपादक म्हणून लक्षात राहिली नाही. प्रत्येक नियमास अपवाद असतो त्याप्रमाणे

सध्याच्या काळात 'पुण्यनगरी' या वृत्तपत्राच्या संपादिका राही भिडे या एकमेव संपादिका दिसतात. हा अपवाद वगळता मराठी वृत्तपत्राच्या संपादकपदी स्त्रिया का आढळत नाही याचा विचार येथे करावयाचा आहे.

गेल्या काही वर्षांत पत्रकारितेत महिला चांगल्या संख्येने येत आहेत. दूरदर्शन, आकाशवाणी, वृत्तपत्रे अशा तिन्ही प्रमुख माध्यमांमध्ये त्यांची उपस्थिती लक्षणीय आहे. पण सूक्ष्मपणे पाहता ही संख्या मोठ्या शहरांतच दिसते. या सगळ्या महिला उच्चशिक्षित आणि जागरूक आहेत.

गेल्या काही वर्षांत बातमीदार, छायाचित्रकार, उपसंपादक, रविवार पुरवणीचे संपादक इत्यादी हुद्दे महिला पत्रकारांना लाभले. त्यांनी ते व्यवस्थित समर्थपणे हाताळले देखील. पण त्यांच्यावर असलेल्या संपादकपदी मात्र त्या पोहचू शकल्या नाहीत किंवा त्यांना ते मिळत नाही. माध्यमे ही समाजापुढे धरलेल्या आरशासारखी असतात. समाजातील स्त्री-पुरुष असमानतेचे प्रतीक माध्यमांतही प्रतिबिंबित होताना दिसते. म्हणून वृत्तपत्रातील सर्वोच्च स्थानी म्हणजे संपादकपदी पुरुषच दिसतो.

मराठी वृत्तपत्रातील संपादकांची ३ नोव्हेंबर २०१४ पर्यंतची यादी

वृत्तपत्राचे नाव	संपादक
महाराष्ट्र टाईम्स	अशोक पानवलकर
लोकसत्ता	गिरीश कुबेर
सामना	संजय राऊत
लोकमत	विनायक पात्रुडकर
सकाळ	पद्मभूषण देशपांडे

या मुख्य वृत्तपत्रांप्रमाणेच महाराष्ट्रातील इतर काही वृत्तपत्रे व त्यांचे संपादक पुढीलप्रमाणे:-

१. 'पुढारी' - विवेक गिरधारी, २. 'प्रहार' - महेश म्हात्रे, ३. 'नवशक्ती' - प्रकाश कुलकर्णी, ४. 'तरुण भारत' - किरण ठाकूर, ५. 'नवाकाळ' - जयश्री खाडिलकर, ६. 'पुण्यनगरी' - राही भिडे तसेच स्थानिक वृत्तपत्रे व त्यांचे संपादक पुढीलप्रमाणे :-

१. 'ठाणे वैभव' - मिलिंद बल्लाळ, २. 'सन्मित्र' - विजय जोशी, ३. 'जनादेश' - कैलाश म्हापदी, ४. 'जनमुद्रा' - दीपक साळवी, ५. 'दिनमान' - अनिल ठाणेकर

संपादकपदी पुरुष असण्याची काही कारणे -

१. संपादक होण्याकरता कोणते गुण लागतात त्याचा आढावा घेतला तर वृत्तपत्रसृष्टीत चौफेर काम करण्याचा अनुभव, उत्तम लेखणी, भरपूर व्यासंग, संघटना कौशल्य, कल्पकता, नेतृत्व करण्याची क्षमता, राजकीय जाण, सामाजिक प्रश्नांबाबत ठाम भूमिका, आर्थिक व्यवहारांची जाण, वृत्तपत्राचा खप वाढविण्यासाठी निरनिराळे उपक्रम व योजना शोधण्याची किमया... असे काही गुण संपादकाच्या ठायी असावे असा रिवाज आहे. ते प्रत्येकाच्या अंगी असतातच असे नाही. पण तरीही केवळ पुरुष आहेत म्हणून या व्यवसायात ते संपादकपदापर्यंत पोचू शकतात.

मराठी पत्रकारितेत स्त्रियांचा शिरकाव उशिरा झाला. तरीही लेखन, वाचन, नेतृत्वक्षमता, संघटनाकौशल्य एवढ्या निकषांवर आज अनेक स्त्रियांनी स्वतःला सिद्ध केले आहे.

२. अनेक क्षेत्रात स्त्रियांनी कर्तृत्व गाजवले, त्यातील एक राजकारण, देशातल्या राजकारणात तर स्त्रिया ग्रामपंचायतीपासून ते विधीमंडळ, लोकसभा अध्यक्ष ते पंतप्रधानपदापर्यंत. वृत्तपत्रात राजकारण हे क्षेत्र सर्वात महत्त्वाचे मानले जाते. पण मुळात स्त्रियांना राजकारणातील काय कळते? हाच समज वृत्तपत्रसृष्टीत रुजलेला असल्याने नव्वद टक्के स्त्रिया तिथेच बाद होतात. वृत्तपत्रांतून राजकीय विषय प्रामुख्याने हाताळले जातात व जाणार यात वाद नाही. त्यामुळे स्त्रिया तिथे कमीच पडणार हे गृहीत धरले जाते.

३. वृत्तपत्रात राजकारणाबरोबरीने येणारे दुसरे क्षेत्र म्हणजे गुन्हेगारी विश्व. या क्षेत्रातही स्त्रियांचा वावर कमी. कारण तिथे जोखीम अधिक. प्रचंड असुरक्षितता. अशा कारणांमुळे स्त्रीला या पदावर बसता येणार नाही असे मानले जाते.

४. खरे तर पुरुषांचे असे असलेले खास व्यवसाय व कौशल्ये स्त्रियांनी आत्मसात केली आहेत. मग संपादनाचा व्यवसाय असा

काय वेगळा ठरावा, की ज्यात अजूनही स्त्रीला शिरकाव नाही. पत्रकारितेत स्त्री आहे पण पत्रकारितेच्या अग्रभागात नाही. असे का व्हावे?

याचे कारण समाजाच्या मानसिकतेत आहे. आज २१ व्या शतकातही स्त्रीला 'Boss' म्हणून स्वीकारणे कठीण जाते. पुरुषप्रधान समाजाची मानसिकता यास कारणीभूत आहे आणि ती परंपरागत आहे. आधुनिक विचार, आधुनिक सुधारणांची मोठी परंपरा सांगणाऱ्या मराठी पत्रकारितेत असा प्रत्यय यावा याचा खेद वाटतो.

५. महाराष्ट्रातून प्रसिद्ध होणाऱ्या इंग्रजी दैनिकांमध्ये स्त्री पत्रकार भरपूर व ठळक जागी दिसतात. पण महाराष्ट्रातील मराठी भाषेत निघणाऱ्या वृत्तपत्रांमध्ये मराठी स्त्रियांना तुटपुंजे स्थान लाभले आहे. मग संपादकपद तर दूरच राहिले.

मराठी पत्रकारितेत आढळून येणारा मराठी समाज हा विशेषतः मध्यमवर्गीय मराठी संस्कृतीतून येणारा. सुसंस्कृत बौद्धिक पण तरीही विशिष्ट चाकोरीबद्ध विचारसरणीतून येणारा आहे. मराठी वृत्तपत्रातील बहुतेक संपादकांची पार्श्वभूमी हीच दिसते. अशा कुटुंबांमध्ये स्त्रियांवर आजही काही अप्रत्यक्ष बंधने दिसतात. ती नोकरी करणारी असावी, पण तिची नोकरी चाकोरीबद्ध असावी, सुरक्षित असावी, विशिष्ट वेळेतील असावी अशीच अपेक्षा असते.

स्त्री संपादक झाल्या तर दीर्घकाळ ऑफिसमध्ये राहू शकत नाही. घर, कुटुंब, मुलं, सणवार, आजारपण हे सर्व 'स्त्री'लाच सांभाळावे लागते.

याउलट इंग्रजी पत्रकारितेत स्त्रिया अशा विशिष्ट चौकटीतून आलेल्या दिसत नाहीत. अनेकदा त्या उच्चभू वर्तुळातून आलेल्या असतात. त्यामुळे त्यांना मध्यमवर्गीय चौकटी आड येत नाहीत.

६. म्हणूनच मग स्त्रिया आपले कर्तृत्व सिद्ध करण्यासाठी मग नियतकालिकांकडे वळलेल्या दिसतात. नियतकालिकांच्या म्हणजेच साप्ताहिके, पाक्षिके, मासिके यांच्या संपादकपदी स्त्रिया दिसतात.

वृत्तपत्राचे जग खूप धावपळीचे असते. रोज अनेक बातम्यांचा रतीब असतो. घडलेल्या घटनेवर भाष्य करावयास फारसा वेळ नसतो. जागाही फारशी उपलब्ध नसते. यामुळेच वृत्तपत्रातील संपादक पद आणि नियतकालिकातील संपादक पद यातील फरक शोधून जाता नियतकालिकांमध्ये हाताशी वेळ उपलब्ध असतो. घडलेल्या घटनेवर सांगोपांग विचार करून विश्लेषण करून संपूर्ण माहिती देणे, त्यास लेखाचे स्वरूप देणे

शक्य होते. यामुळेही स्त्रिया कदाचित नियतकालिकांच्या संपादनाद्वारे आपली ठाम मते मांडत असाव्यात. विशेषतः स्त्रियांसंबंधी, मुलींसंबंधी घडलेल्या घटनांवर या संपादिकाचा विचार करण्याचा दृष्टीकोण हा स्त्रियांच्या मानसिकतेचा विचार करून केलेला असतो.

राजकारण, गुन्हेगारी या क्षेत्रांनी वृत्तपत्राचा बराचसा भाग व्यापलेला असतो. त्या तुलनेत नियतकालिकांमध्ये समाजकारण, साहित्य संस्कृती या विषयांना वाव असतो. म्हणूनही स्त्रिया नियतकालिकांचे संपादकपद स्वीकारत असाव्यात.

प्रतिक्रिया -

या शोध निबंधाचे लेखन करताना अभ्यासाचा भाग म्हणून प्रत्यक्ष वृत्तपत्रसृष्टीत कार्यरत असलेल्या काही जाणत्या मंडळींच्या प्रतिक्रिया या संदर्भात गोळा केल्या.

१. 'लोकसत्ता' वृत्तपत्राचे मुख्य उपसंपादक श्री. असीफ बागवान यांना या विषयासंबंधी सांगितल्यावर त्यांच्या मते वृत्तपत्राचे क्षेत्र अत्यंत धावपळीचे आहे. वेळ किंवा हेडलाईन इथे खूप महत्त्वाची असते. या क्षेत्रात रात्री उशिरापर्यंतही काम करावे लागते. आपल्या समाजाची मानसिकता विशिष्ट प्रकारची आहे. एका विशिष्ट रँकिंगपर्यंत स्त्रिया पोचतात. पुढे मात्र संपादकपदाऐवजी पुरवण्या, साप्ताहिके, मासिके अशा ठिकाणी वळतात. रोजच्या वर्तमानपत्राचे म्हणजे मुख्य अंकाचे वाचक हे संख्येने पुरुष जास्त असतात. बस, ट्रेनमध्ये येता-जाता पाहिले तर पुरुषांच्या हातातच वृत्तपत्रे दिसतात. पुरवण्यांमध्ये सॉफ्ट टारगेटेड विषय असतात. फॅशन, पाककला, मुलांचे विषय, ज्येष्ठ नागरिक, आरोग्य या पुरवण्यांच्या संपादक स्त्रिया दिसतात. कारण पुरवण्याचा वाचकवर्ग मोठ्या प्रमाणात स्त्रिया असतात.

२. 'सामना' वृत्तपत्राचे मुख्य उपसंपादक श्री. राजेश पोवळे यांचे मत असे की, सध्याच्या काळात असा फारसा भेद होऊ शकत नाही. पूर्वी स्त्रिया फार वेळ देऊ शकत नव्हत्या. पण आता परिस्थिती सकारात्मकपणे बदलली आहे. स्त्री पुरवणी संपादक असण्याचे फायदे असे की स्त्रियांकडे उपजतच सौंदर्यदृष्टी असते. त्यामुळे पुरवण्यांची मांडणी, हाताळणी अधिक चांगली होऊ शकते.

या क्षेत्रात सतत लोकांशी संपर्क व संबंध ठेवावा लागतो. स्त्रिया मेहनतीत मागे पडत नाहीत. बुद्धिमत्तेतही त्यांनी स्वतःला सिद्ध केले आहे. पण घराची, कुटुंबाची जबाबदारी सांभाळून वेळ द्यावा लागतो त्यामुळे काही मर्यादा येतात. पुढील काळात एखाद्या

वृत्तपत्राचे संपादकपद स्त्री सांभाळताना पाहणे नक्की आवडेल.

३. 'लोकमत' चे उपमुख्य उपसंपादक श्री. पवन देशपांडे यांच्या मते वृत्तपत्राच्या जगात समाजात थेट घुसावे लागते. वेळ हा महत्त्वाचा घटक या नोकरीत असतो. वेळेच्या मर्यादामुळे असेल कदाचित सर्वोच्च स्थानापर्यंत पोचता येत नसेल. मालक, संपादक नियुक्त करताना आपली सगळी कामे करू शकेल का हे पाहतो. संपादक होण्यासाठी घर, संसार, वेळेची बंधने यामुळे स्त्री काहीशी खचून जाते. मग तिची महत्त्वाकांक्षा उरत नाही.

नोकरीच्या ठिकाणी कराव्या लागणाऱ्या तडजोडीपेक्षा आधी घरातूनच या नोकरीबाबत कधी कधी त्रासाची सुरुवात होते. त्यामुळे अॅडजस्टमेंट करत काहीसे बॅकफूटवर राहणेच त्या स्वतःहून पसंत करतात.

४. 'माझा' वृत्तवाहिनीचे वृत्तनिवेदक श्री. मिलिंद भागवत - सुरुवातीच्या काळात या क्षेत्रात महिलाच नव्हत्या. आता मात्र मोठ्या संख्येने त्या आहेत. वृत्तवाहिनीच्या संदर्भात रोज स्वतःला सिद्ध करावे लागते. नुसते सिद्ध नाही इतर इतरांच्या तुलनेत वरचढ सिद्ध करावे लागते. संपादकपदी रूजू होण्यासाठी राजकारण, सामाजिक, साहित्यिक, क्रीडा, गुन्हेगारी सर्व क्षेत्रांची माहिती असावी लागते.

एखादी स्त्री संपादक झाल्यास स्त्री प्रश्नांकडे अधिक चांगले लक्ष देऊ शकेल. पत्रकारितेच्या क्षेत्रात 'वेळ' हा घटक खूप महत्त्वाचा असतो. तो कदाचित स्त्रियांकडे कमी पडत असावा.

५. ज्येष्ठ पत्रकार इंद्रायणी सावकार - पत्रकारितेचे जग आजही 'मेन्स वर्ल्ड' आहे. अनेक स्त्रिया इतर क्षेत्रांसारख्या या क्षेत्रात निवृत्तीपर्यंत रहात नाहीत. आपली सामाजिक घडणूक यासाठी काहीशी जबाबदार आहे. म्हणून कदाचित स्त्रिया संपादकपदापर्यंत पोचू शकत नाही. 'लेडी बॉस' ही संकल्पना सरकारी माध्यमात म्हणजे दूरदर्शन, आकाशवाणी याठिकाणी काहीशी स्विकारलेली दिसते. परंतु पत्रकारितेच्या खासगी क्षेत्रात मात्र लेडी बॉस सहजासहजी स्वीकारत नाहीत. सामाजिक स्तर असलेला स्त्री-पुरुष भेद या क्षेत्रातही दिसतोच. असे असले तरी पुढील काळात स्त्री संपादक पाहणे आवडेल.

६. 'महाराष्ट्र टाइम्स'च्या खास प्रतिनिधी शर्मिला कलगुटकर - या क्षेत्रामध्ये बाईपणामुळे काही मर्यादा आहेत. कारण २४ तास डिमांडिंग असे करिअर आहे. वृत्तपत्रांच्या धोरणावर त्या वृत्तपत्राचा, त्यातील कर्मचाऱ्यांचा दृष्टिकोण माईड सेट ठरत असतो. वरच्या पदावर जाताना किंवा गेल्यावर तुम्ही

किती वेळ देऊ शकता हे महत्त्वाचे असते. कारण सध्याच्या काळात निखळ पत्रकारिता राहिली नसून तो एक व्यवसाय आहे.

एक गोष्ट अनुभवली स्त्री समान मेहनतीने, कष्टाने काम करते. बौद्धिकदृष्ट्या ती कुठेच कमी पडत नाही. असे असले तरी अंतिम निर्णय प्रक्रियेत मात्र तिला समाविष्ट केले जात नाही याची खंत वाटते. संपादक पदावर स्त्री दिसत नाही, यात समाजाची मानसिकता कारणीभूत आहे. तसेच काम करताना एखादी माहिती काढणे पुरुषास जितके सहज असते तेवढे स्त्रीस सोपे जात नाही.

परंतु जर स्त्री संपादक झाली तर तिचा सर्व स्टाफ हा माणूस म्हणून अधिक अनरिच होईल. कारण स्त्रीकडे उपजतच संवेदनशीलता अधिक असते. त्याचा फायदा ती आपल्या वृत्तपत्रास नक्कीच करून देईल.

भविष्यातील चित्र

मराठी समाजात संपादकास एक वैचारिक व सामाजिक नेत्याची प्रभा लाभते. त्या तोडीचा मान मिळतो. लोक त्यांची भाषणे ऐकायला गर्दी करतात. असंख्य कार्यक्रमांमध्ये मराठी संपादकांना बोलावून मानाचे स्थान दिले आहे.

कधी कधी समाजातील एखाद्या कर्तृत्ववान पुरुषास आवर्जून बोलावून संपादकपद देण्याचे धोरण मराठीत दिसते. काही माजी संपादक मुळचे पत्रकार नव्हते, त्यांचे व्यवसाय वेगळे होते. त्यांच्याप्रमाणे वेगळ्या व्यवसायातून पत्रकारितेत येऊन संपादकपदी विराजमान होण्याची संधी स्त्रियांना आजवर मिळालेली नाही व पुढेही मिळण्याची चिन्हे नाहीत.

वास्तविक तेवढ्या कुवतीच्या मराठी स्त्रिया कितीतरी आहे. डॉ. स्नेहलता देशमुख, डॉ. विजया वाड, नीला मांडके-सत्यनारायण इत्यादी स्त्रियांनी नियतकालिकांचे संपादकपद भूषविलेही आहे. परंतु वृत्तपत्रांचे संपादकत्व मात्र त्यांच्यापासूनच दूरच राहिले.

भविष्यकाळात एखाद्या वृत्तपत्राच्या संपादकपदी स्त्री असणे हा बदल नक्कीच सुखावह असेल. असे म्हटले जाते की एक स्त्री शिकली की संपूर्ण कुटुंब साक्षर होते. ती आपल्या कुटुंबास वळण लावते. तसेच वृत्तपत्राच्या संपादकपदी स्त्री विराजमान झाली तर समाजाला वेगळे वळण लागू शकेल. समाज मनाची घडण करू शकेल. असे नक्कीच वाटते.

लोकशाही, मत स्वातंत्र्य यांचे आविष्करण वृत्तपत्रातून जास्तीत जास्त होते असा आजवरचा अनुभव आहे. असे असताना राजकीय विचार व्यवहारांनी परिलुप्त असलेल्या माध्यमाने स्त्रियांना दूर ठेवावे किंवा त्यांना अव्हेरावे, यामुळे संबंध समाजाचे नुकसान होईल. त्यामुळे स्त्रियांनी पत्रकारितेसह त्यातील सर्वोच्च पद असलेले संपादकत्वही काबीज केले तर ती खऱ्या अर्थाने समानता ठरेल. कारण स्त्रियांकडे बुद्धी आहे फक्त संधी हवी आहे ती मराठी वृत्तपत्रांनी द्यायला हवी.

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शब्दसंख्या - १,९०६

The significance of “female bonding” is underscored through various characters like co-worker, Vimal, her house maid Shantabai and tribal women folk at large. But Sumitra, wife of Sumedh refuses to be part of it and finds escape in suicide. The protagonist conducts variety of seminars to educate women about their political rights. She warns them that the “No confidence motion” on village-heads (Mahila Sarpanch) is one of the ploys in the hands of men and new will keep coming as our system is vulnerable to corruption. It dawns upon her that patriarchal values are institutionalized through family, marriage, and even motherhood hindering natural growth of women.

Assertion of female sexuality is still a taboo in Indian society too. Hence the director very conveniently excluded protagonist’s physical and spiritual attraction towards Dr. Dayal, a dedicated social worker. Except Dr. Dayal and Somnath rest all male characters, i.e. her husband, son, her friend, Sumedh are painted negatively while women are all mute sufferers initially and awakened at the end.

Thus this reel representation depicts the imposition as well as defiance of patriarchal order and a woman’s journey towards self-definition. Without being propagandist the film conveys a message of woman’s empowerment where women not only understand the politics of exploitation but also fight tough against it. The film defy Laura Mulvey’s passive role of women. Tribal women are more vibrant than their urban counter parts. Here they don’t surrender to patriarchy although the film shows how strong patriarchal order is and how long is the journey to achieve equality. Thus it succeeds in giving the “gendered space” and justice to author’s voice. The film celebrates all the incidents to build a positive image of women like, Mukanebai fights back in and out of house to assert herself, Taoobai is given loan by SHG, and Prafulla as well as Vimal continue to work without any institutionalized NGO support. She instills and is instilled by the eternal value of existence, a sense of being and above all humanness behind body and beyond. The film disrupts the conventional and so called wisdom of main stream media and suggests new directions in the future for thinking woman’s image in the new light. New woman will be free of chains of traditions as well as fences of sham culture and morality.

In spite of innumerable constraints such as author’s permission, royalty and the issue of fidelity this cinematic adaptation has tried to do justice to the spirit of the novel as well as its responsibility towards the noble cause of women

empowerment. The story of the film ends but for audience it doesn’t conclude as it is an open-ended one leading multiple possibilities of interpretations. Last but not the least, the film, *Baaimanus*, enjoyed critic’s appreciation in the film festival, still it is yet not released due to unknown reasons and audience is deprived of such a good work of art. Should feminist critics read it as yet another ploy to suppress female voice?

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Sensitization Regarding Safety and Security of Women in Metro Cities

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Abstract : Even though women have achieved a leap and bound progress, practically in every field of life, still a question with major concern arises “Is She Safe”? With this, surveys have been studied by our group by using resources like newspapers, various published articles, statistics released by National Commission for Women (NCW), etc. This has proved that in India, especially in Metro cities, women are more susceptible for vulgar, unwanted, unjustifiable, out of greed and lust attack. Statistics reflects that after more than 65 years of sovereignty, crimes against women still persist.

Most of the working women in metro cities in India, (also in small cities and villages too) feel insecure about their safety, mostly during night shifts. Everyday, there is at least one or more news about shocking incidents of harassment or sexual assault against women. On studying various aspects of this serious problem, it has been understood that among the number of reasons, to some extent weak functioning of administration, self behavior, lack of awareness and alertness of the victim is also responsible.

Though, in attempt of security, our government is making many laws but they are not strictly followed. So women are not safe in the country, hence women laws and amendments which are made for their security, safety and empowerment need to be revised and refined. There should be some organizations, NGO's for protection of women and girls by providing emergency phone numbers, Self defence training programs for women, installation of safety devices at working places, like camera and above all setting up efficient complaint redressal system. Thus, continuous efforts are required to upgrade security system not only to make women safe but also for survival of women fraternity.

Keywords: Metro cities, harassment, security, crime.

The present paper deals with the unequal status of women manifested with reference to safety and security. Safety is the state of being “safe” (from French *sauf*) the condition of being protected against physical, social, spiritual, financial, political, emotional, occupational, psychological, educational or other types or consequences of failure, damage, error, accidents, harm or any other event which could be considered non-desirable. Safety can also be defined to be the control of recognized hazards to achieve an acceptable level of risk. This can take the form of being protected from the event or from exposure to something that cause healthy or economical losses. It can include protection of people or of possessions.

“Safety and security are two sides of the same coin”.

Definition

According to Merriam Webster, the primary definition of safety is “the condition of being free from harm or risk”, which is essentially the same as the primary definition of security which is “the quality or state of being free from danger”

“Stri janma tujhi kahani, hrudyi amrut nayni pani”

A woman is not only a sister, wife, mother. She is an ideal person in society like Jijamata, Ahilyabai Holkar, Rani of -Jhansi, Sarojini Naidu, Kiran Bedi, Medha Patkar, Mother Teresa, P.T. Usha, Lata Mangeshkar, Kalpana Chawla and

we ourself as well. We are part of the society; we develop not only our house but also culture and society. But others think we are a cultural maker. An attack on women is an attack on culture and society. Here is a statistical data of working women mostly in metro cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Hyderabad and Bangalore.

Women Working Data – 2013

Cities	Numbers
Delhi	5.42 lakhs
Mumbai	6.5 lakhs
Kolkata	2.5 lakhs
Chennai	2.6 lakhs
Hyderabad	3.67 lakhs
Bangalore	1.75 lakhs

Following table depicts the record of crimes in cities of Delhi and Chennai in the year 2013.

Crime	Delhi	Chennai
Rape	1559	94
Murder	1014	180
Sexual Harassment	3319	141
Burglary	331	646

(Source: Delhi Police and Chennai Police Annual Report-2013.)

The above data reveals that in the city of Delhi crime against women is at its peak. Delhi is more unsafe for women than any other metro cities. The above stated crime does not prevail only in Delhi but also in Chennai, Mumbai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, and Bangalore.

Women face safety and security problems like rape, gang rape, murder, acid attack, blade attack, sexual harassment, kidnap, burglary, eve-teasing, etc. Our city, Mumbai is not quite safe for women, especially girls, who have to leave the four walls of their house either for work or for studies. The situation becomes worse when the women have to work for late hours at night due to nature of their services. Law gives protection to women in this concern.

Legal Act related to Safety and Security of Women:

❖ 19th July 2007-“Recent Supreme Court Ruling in Dowry Death Case”

The Commission is seriously concerned with the recent Supreme Court Ruling in Dowry- Death case passed in the case of Appasaheb and another v/s State of Maharashtra which has ruled that “Demand for money on account of some financial stingency or for meeting some urgent domestic expenses or for purchasing manure cannot be termed as a demand for dowry. “The Commission held a meeting in this regard on 19/01/2007 which was attended by legal experts and representatives of women’s organizations. The Commission strongly expressed that this judgment restrictively interprets dowry without regard to the intention behind the law, especially Section 2 of the Dowry Prohibition Act, as well as the fact that dowry continues to consume women in our society.”

The group unanimously passed a following resolution which was forwarded to the Women and Child Development Home Department, Law and Judiciary Department, Government of Maharashtra to immediately file Review Petition in the Supreme Court for review of the judgement.

❖ 19th Jan 2007- Resolution

In the meeting held at the Maharashtra State Commission for Women, on 19th January, 2007, strongly condemned the judgement of the Hon. Supreme Court in the matter of Appasaheb and v/s state of Maharashtra in criminal appeal no. 1613 of 2005.

❖ 15th Dec 2006 – Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

The enforcing agencies under the Act are mainly First Class of domestic Judicial Magistrates, Protection officials, Police officials, Service Provider and the aggrieved person herself. The cases of domestic violence are on the rise and timely intervention is essential in such cases as it includes not only physical abuse but also economic, emotional and sexual abuse.

Sexual Harassment at the Workplace

The Maharashtra State Commission for Women has taken steps for ensuring implementing the Vishakha guidelines as well as the direction given in the Medha Kotwal lele case by the Hon. Supreme Court with regard to sexual harassment at the workplace.

Women in the society are protected by various laws framed in the constitutions. Women are the backbone of the society. Safety and security of the women is actually the prime responsibility of society. Physically healthy women is the asset of society. Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Hyderabad, Bangalore are considered as A1 cities. Nowadays in Metro cities women face a lot of problems.

Women should be quite serious about their own problems of safety and security. They should be aware of their own rights. They should have knowledge of the laws framed from them. For the issue of safety and security women should come together and unite. Women should come on a platform of NGOs to discuss their safety issues, problems faced by women of every stratum of the society, and find solutions to overcome them. Striving is the nature of women. Every woman must strive to ensure each of her fellow kind is safe and secure in her own vicinity.

Women who work in night shift using odd mode or odd type of travel should pay special attention for their safety and security.

Measures Related to Safety of Women

- When it comes to working women, particularly those who work till late in the evenings, or do night shifts, certain safety and security measures should be systematized, say experts. The Chennai High Court recently upheld an order declaring unconstitutional Section 66 (1) (b) of the Factories Act, provision of which prohibited the employment of woman in any factory between 7 p.m. and 6 a.m.
- In Metro, cities schools and colleges should arrange some lectures for all age group of students. They should arrange some free seminars, workshops, debates, posters which give information about safety and security for women. Awareness should be started in women from their childhood then only it will germinate in the personality.
- Safety and security of women is the responsibility of the entire society.
- At the work place, women should prefer to remain in group, giving first priority to their safety measures.
- All women should carry police contact number with them.

- Women should take assistance of available connectivity source for their safety and security.
- Women should be careful of hidden cameras while using trial rooms in malls.
- The saying of Adv. N. Rajkumar : “Since 2006, there has been a series of legislation on issues concerning safety and security of women at workplace. Due to poor awareness and cumbersome process in implementation, this legislation has not helped women much. We also need individual guidelines framed by organizations to punish the offenders” are absolutely true till today.
- Our law should be very strict about women safety and security.
- City police should give priority to safety issues related to women.
- In Metro cities, women should also have good security system in their homes. Chennai is largely a safe city for women.
- Women should be personally equipped with tools and techniques to defend themselves.
- Though the safety of women travelling during night by company-arranged cabs is quite ensured by many firms, centralized scrutiny of all office vehicles by a GPS system, assisted by police patrol at night shifts, and details of the drivers should be verified.

Conclusion

Women and girls in metro cities face similar problems; the relative importance of each women’s safety problem will be different in different places. Women’s safety and inclusion against the present background of rapid urban growth, large-scale migration, insecurity of employment and lack of access to essential services. Women’s safety means a safer, healthier community for everyone. This is a participatory process focused on changing community norms, patterns of social interaction, values, customs and

institutions in ways that will significantly improve the quality of life in a community for all of its members.

Though women feel that they do not get support from the police, most still believe that the police have an important role to play. Several other suggestions were made to improve the infrastructure and facilitate the use of public spaces. Proper lighting is a pre-requisite for making public spaces safe, along with regular maintenance. Bus stops are one place where women feel relatively safe to wait and the new design bus stops are more open and well lit.

Many of the women, particularly those with disabilities, talked about the poorly maintained and often non-existent pavements in many parts of the city. Another area of concern was how to make public transport safer and more accessible for all. Working with bus drivers and conductors and appointing more women for these posts are significant policies that could go a long way in addressing the issue of safety in public transport.

Women reported feeling unsafe in both secluded and crowded places, as well as during day and night. While they are afraid of being physically hurt, harassed, molested or raped in deserted spaces, they also fear harassment in crowded spaces, most commonly in crowded public transport. What emerges from the experiences of the women is the fear of violence, feelings of exclusion, and lack of confidence in the agencies that are supposed to ensure their safety.

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An Analysis of Gender Based Violence in Delhi and NCR

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Abstract : In the history of mankind one finds that different and disparate cultures, however distant they may be in time and space have at least one thing in common and that is the disdain of women. In Gandhian era and the decades after independence have seen tremendous changes in the status and the position of the women in the Indian society. Indian constitution has laid down as a fundamental right- the equality of the sexes. But the change from a position of utter degradation of women in the nineteenth century to a position of equality in the middle of the twentieth century is not a simple case of the progress of women in the modern era. The position of women in the Indian society has been a very complicated one. In fact, it could not be an exaggeration to say that the recent changes in the status of women in India is not a sign of progress but it is really a recapturing of the position that they held in the early Vedic period. Yet, the status of women who constitute almost half of the Indian population is not that encouraging. Gender based violence – including rape, domestic violence, mutilation, murder and sexual abuse- is a profound problem for women across the globe. Nonetheless, it is not considered as a public problem of serious concern.

Violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men. Gender based violence is clearly based on unequal power relation between men and women. The status of women in India is not equal to the status of men in terms of access, participation and reward. The issue of gender discrimination manifests itself as violence in the family, community and society. It broadens the definition of violence by including both the physical and psychological harm done towards women, and it includes acts in both private and public life. Violence against women is usually defined as inclusive of all forms of physical and sexual assault, psychological, emotional and verbal abuse, sexual harassment, female foeticide, female infanticide, abuse of the girl child, social harassment, mental torture, physical violence and cruelty affecting the body and mind of the women. This paper analyses the socio-economic profile of women and different types of gender based violence prevalent in the society and consequences/impact of violence on women in terms of personal, familial, social and cultural levels. The paper is based on primary and secondary data. This paper reveals the types of sexual harassment and steps taken by the society, family members, and system and by victims themselves. At the end it suggests the measure to be taken to avoid gender based violence.

Introduction

Around the world, as many as one in every three women has been beaten, coerced into sex, or abused in some other way - most often by someone she knows, including by her husband or another male family member; one woman in four has been abused during pregnancy.

The term “gender based violence” refers to violence that targets individuals or groups on the basis of their gender. Gender-based violence (GBV) is violence that is directed against a person on the basis of gender. It constitutes a breach of the fundamental right to life, liberty, security, dignity, equality between women and men, non-discrimination and physical and mental integrity. Violence against women has profound implications for health but is often ignored. Violence against women has been called “the most pervasive yet least recognized human rights abuse in the world.” Accordingly, the Vienna Human Rights Conference and the Fourth World Conference on Women gave priority to this issue, which jeopardizes women’s lives, bodies, psychological integrity and freedom.

“Gender-based violence (GBV) is the general term used to capture violence that occurs as a result of the normative role expectations associated with each gender, along with

the unequal power relationships between the two genders, within the context of a specific society.” (Bloom 2008, p14).

In 1993, the United Nation General Assembly defined violence against women as “any act of gender based violence that result in, physical, sexual, psychological harm or suffering to women”

“The struggle for women’s rights, and the task of creating a new United Nations, able to promote peace and the values which nurture and sustain it, are one and the same. Today - more than ever - the cause of women is the cause of all humanity.”(United Nations,1993)

Gender-based violence also serves – by intention or effect – to perpetuate male power and control. It is sustained by a culture of silence and denial of the seriousness of the health consequences of abuse. In addition to the harm they exact on the individual level, these consequences also exact a social toll. Because gender-based violence is sustained by silence, women’s voices must be heard. UNFPA puts every effort into enabling women to speak out against gender-based violence, and to get help when they are victims of it.

Literature Review

Felipe Russo Nancy, Pirlott Angela (2006) : The

United Nations has identified gender-based violence against women as a global health and development issue, and a host of policies, public education, and action programs aimed at reducing gender-based violence have been undertaken around the world. This article highlights new conceptualizations, methodological issues, and selected research findings that can inform such activities. In addition to describing recent research findings that document relationships between gender, power, sexuality, and intimate violence cross-nationally, it identifies cultural factors, including linkages between sex and violence through media images that may increase women's risk for violence, and profiles a host of negative physical, mental, and behavioral health outcomes associated with victimization including unwanted pregnancy and abortion. More research is needed to identify the causes, dynamics, and outcomes of gender-based violence, including media effects, and to articulate how different forms of such violence vary in outcomes depending on cultural context.

DCPCR(2014) had studied status of adolescent girls covering slums in 11 districts of Delhi in which 528 girls were interviewed. It has been found that 51 have been victim of child abuse (emotional, physical, sexual and gender based), Girls were deprived of menstrual hygiene. Only 56% girls use sanitary napkins; 30% use cloth or locally made pads; 6% use both. 22% respondents felt they were malnourished; 26% suffered from illness like anaemia and weakness; only 13% had gone for treatment when ill; 2% said to have never consulted a gynaecologist whatsmore 66.6% girls were school going; 19.69% were dropouts

Sara B. Johnson, Shannon Frattaroli, Jacquelyn Campbell, Joseph Wright, Amari S. Pearson-Fields, and Tina L. Cheng.”(2005): In focus groups designed to probe violence and fighting, urban youth emphasized the impact of gender-based violence in their lives. We used this opportunity to qualitatively explore how gender-based violence affects the lives of urban adolescents. Thirteen structured focus group interviews were held with youth from three high violence settings: a large, urban high school, a training center for disadvantaged youth, and a school for adjudicated youth. Participants were 120 urban, predominant African American youth and young adults ages 14–22. Seven focus groups were conducted with females and six with males. Participants did not talk about violence without discussing the gender-based violence they experienced in a number of social roles: as witnesses to family violence, as victims of intimate partner and dating violence, or as peer observers of harassing and violent behaviour. Male participants felt that other males used violence as a way of maintaining a sense of power over their partners. Participants of both genders struggled to identify the boundaries between playing, harassment, and abuse. Female participants suggested that females sometimes wanted males to hit them, interpreting this violence as a sign of commitment.

Similarly, females struggled to determine if gender-based violence could be a reflection of love.

Research Design

The sample of this study consists of 100 women from Delhi and NCR. It includes working, nonworking women and college going students.

Objectives of the study

1. To find out whether women of Delhi NCR region are reeling under sexual harassment
2. To find out the types of sexual harassment.
3. To find the steps taken by harassed women.
4. To find out whether the victim is known to accused.
5. To know the response of family when they come to know about the harassment.
6. To know what were the reasons victim do not disclose the accident to some one.
7. To know what were the reasons victim do not disclose the accident to family.
8. To know the effects of sexual harassment on victim .
9. What steps should be taken to avoid sexual harassment.

Methodology

Simple Random sampling technique was followed to obtain representative sample. The questionnaires were administered personally to all the associates. It is 36–items questionnaire consisting of both positively and negatively keyed items. **The test retest value of the questionnaire is 0.7.** In this questionnaire researcher tried to cover various dimensions like

- Type of sexual violence
- Relationship between victim and accused
- Response of victim to harassment
- Revelation of incidence
- Reasons not to tell about the incidence
- Family response/support
- Police /Legal response
- Impact of harassment on victim

Results and Discussion

The result of the research shows that out of 100 respondents 76% said that they have experienced the sexual

violence at some point of time and only 24% said that they have never faced such type of situation. Out of 76% who faced sexual violence 54% experienced visual types of violence that they face dirty looks in public or in private. 19% faced physical violence. 40% are the victims of physical violence either by their known ones or unknown. 58% are victims of verbal abuse. 16% said that they faced stalking. 8% of victims faced flashing while 15% reported rapes. The 32% victims said that they have never seen the accused before. 5% told that they have seen the accused before but not known. According to this survey 3% are victimized by their spouses and 10% are victimized by their known ones. 6% accepted that their family member is responsible for their agony. 2% are victimized by their friends and 17% by their colleagues. Even former spouses are responsible for abuse. 2% victims accepted that their former spouses harassed them. 6% are victimized by someone who is in caring or supervising role.

After the incidence the victims are so shaken that it took them more courage to take any action against the accused. According to this study 25% of victims have taken action against the accused. Out of these 25%, 54% told about the incidence to their relatives. 11% have gone to health care centers or hospitals. 11% victims approached the police and court. Researcher tried to find out the reasons for not telling the incidence. 11% of victims said that they thought nothing would be achieved by telling the incidence to anyone. This shows the failure of our society and system as our society and system is not able to crop the confidence in half of its members. 18% victims said that they did not want to upset their mothers by revealing the incidence. 8% victims said that they did not find the incidence important to tell to anyone and 10% said that they want to forget about the incidence. 4% were confused whom and how to tell about the incidence. And the most important fact is 6% of victims didn't tell about the incidence to anyone because they were scared of the accused.

Researchers tried to find out the reasons why victims have not told about the incidence to their families. 17% said that their families can't help them they themselves have to handle the situation. 14% were worried that their family will restrict their mobility. 23% victims told that their family might have got worried and would have acted strongly.

We tried to find out the reaction of the family of those who told about the incidence to their families. 31% victim's family discussed the situation on how to deal with such situations. 10% victim's family told them to avoid to put up in such situations. 8% families suggested the victims to be quiet and not to take any action. 3% victim's family reacted strongly and restricted their movement and treated the victims as accused.

We tried to find out the effect of violence on victim. 25% victims told that they have not suffered any long term

effects. 32% suffered psychologically and 17% confessed that they suffered both physical and psychological effects.

Researcher tried to take views of respondents about the steps to be taken to avoid sexual violence. On the basis of survey it has been concluded that 54% said that women should take self-defense training. 50% suggested that family should support the victims. 27% said there is need to change the outlook of the society. 30% suggested that females should carry items to protect themselves. 24% suggested to avoid wearing certain types of clothes. 12% suggested avoiding certain places completely. 14% are of view to avoid going alone all the time. 29% suggested avoiding going alone at night. 35% suggested to take help of police and NGO.

Conclusion

The result of the research shows that women are suffering from gender based violence in Indian society but it is really shocking that majority of victims are not reporting the incidence to anyone this shows the failure of our society and system to create the trust in half of its population. This is the time to take necessary steps to prevent such gender based violence. We should not treat the victims as accused. They already are the sufferers. As called up by the Honorable Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi that instead of restricting the girls we should tell/teach our boys to behave in dignified manner with girls. It's the responsibility of whole society to make it safe for everyone.

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Gender Disparity in Assertiveness and Academic Performance of Professional College Students : The Case of Kerala Agricultural University

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Abstract : Several studies have been reported in India and other developing countries, on determinants of gender disparities in academic performance, at various levels of education; particularly in professional colleges which follow internal evaluation system. A research was conducted recently among professional college students under Kerala Agricultural University to see how levels of assertiveness contribute to personal stress and academic performance, particularly among girls. The University has students enrolled from all over the state through Competitive Entrance Examinations and female students constitute a large majority. The study used a pre tested structured questionnaire, to survey a randomly selected sample of 192 students of College of Horticulture, College of Forestry and College of Cooperation, Banking and Management located in the main campus of the university. 68% of the respondents were female students. The colleges follow a semester system which has an internal evaluation pattern along with residential learning in campus, through practical and library assignments. Focused Group Discussions and Key Informant Interviews were also conducted to elicit more qualitative data and for triangulation. The study revealed that female students had declined rates in academic performance compared to males in the initial semesters of campus life, contributed by higher levels of personal stress and lower assertiveness. Statistically significant differences were observed in levels of assertiveness and stress between male and female students. Regression analyses indicated that assertiveness levels are being influenced by rural-urban background of the family, size of the family, birth order, self esteem, language difficulties, parental education, and parental occupation. The study also showed that low assertiveness restricted the female students to clarify doubts in learning, limited seeking help from others, pleasing friends and others for the sake of pleasing, and even being exploited or abused sexually.

Keywords : Gender Disparity, Academic Performance, Assertiveness, Professional Education

Background and Rationale

The world today is progressing towards Universal Education.

The current trends, however say that the goal will not be reached by the 2015, target date decided over 160 countries as one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) at the Millennium Summit in September, 2000. Already, the pledge to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005 has been missed out by about 70 countries. The goal to improve adult literacy rates remains illusive: although literacy is central to achieving the 'Education For All' (EFA) goals, over 800 million adults, of which almost two-third are women, who are illiterates (Cynthia, 2005).

Education has been used as a vehicle for a nation's economic development as well as for an individual's progress. The evidence from third world countries show a close link between women's education, and saw economic development, and between the sizes of the gender gap in education and national development (King and Hill, 1993).

Education influences people's lives through several channels. It increases access to knowledge, information, and new ideas. It enhances overall efficiency, market opportunities, and social status. It also changes attitudes and behaviours, among other things, bringing about openness to new ideas and experiences, an increasing independence from traditional authority, and a questioning of passivity and fatalism. These effects apply to both sexes.

However, men are exposed to new ideas through their wide contacts with the world outside home and local community, as well as through formal schooling. In contrast, many women in the developing world have few contacts with the outside world; and for them, formal schooling remains perhaps the primary channel for the transmission of new ideas (Shireen, 1995).

The relationship between gender and education is complex and dynamic. Therefore, issues of gender inequality in education and related factors within developing countries have been gaining increased attention globally over the last three decades, especially since the 1990 World Conference on 'Education for All' in Jomtien, Thailand (Janigan, 2008).

Historical Glance on Female Education

Many studies have shown that the foundation for the development of education was religious-worship (Pankhurst, 1968). The church provided basic education for their male and female followers, particularly how to read and write the Bible. The other themes of their education were closely related to their domestic role with an emphasis on housewife roles and other domestic subjects so that they would become good maids and mothers (UNICEF, 1982). This implied that women were not involved in all types of educational programs and course of study in the earliest times. The educational opportunities for girls remained distinctly below than those open to boys. The report of UNESCO (1970) indicated that this is true not only in qualitative terms, but

also in quantitative terms of education. Nearly everywhere in the world, school age-girls are given fewer educational opportunities than boys. Without exception, the majority of illiterates are females.

In developing nations, it is believed that education of females contributes towards population control; family health and nutrition; receptivity to innovations and educational motivation of school-age girls (Coombs, 1985). According to him, in many developing countries, a remarkable expansion has taken place in girls' educational access in recent years. However, inequalities still persisted in educational access as well as in educational experiences mainly on reaching the upper levels.

British rule brought about substantial progress in terms horizontal and vertical expansion of education system in India, and it has become one of the top development strategy in post independence period in the country. Technical and professional education has also assumed great importance, and agricultural universities, medical and engineering colleges were established across the nation. In the recent decades, India witnessed faster expansion of professional education to cater to the needs of human resource development to support technological advances of the country. The number of females on rolls increased tremendously, and it marked the narrowing down of the gaps of gender mainstreaming in higher education sector in the country.

Several studies in the past in different countries have indicated that levels of assertiveness will influence the academic performance of students in their class rooms, since it contributes to their self esteem, self confidence and ability to clarify doubts and learn the lessons well. Regardless of age, course program and location, there was difference between males and females in the levels of assertiveness. Ramazan and Galin (2005) observed in their study on the relationship between self-assertiveness and school's attitude that there were significant differences in school's attitude as well as levels of assertiveness between boys and girls. As reported by Mohebi *et al* (2012), provision of assertiveness training could reduce the academic anxiety of pre college students, in turn improving their performance. Mahmoud and Rania (2013) in their study on, 'Effectiveness of Assertiveness Training Programme on Self Esteem and Academic Achievement' in adolescent girls at secondary school at Abha city found a positive association among the variables. The same authors (2014) again in another study reported that assertiveness was contributing to psychological well being and self efficacy of first year female student nurses.

Same is true particularly in the most literate state of Kerala, where participation of females in professional education overtakes that of males in many fields, but performance is influenced by multiple factors. Whatever be

the case, being a part of the gendered society, several social and psychological factors related to gender disparities still influence the participants of professional learning, affecting the females adversely.

Generally, most of the observations and studies conducted in all gendered societies of the world show that females are generally lower or deprived of certain traits of empowerment such as assertiveness, self esteem, self confidence, mobility, freedom of expression, participation in decision making in household and community affairs and even in self destiny issues. This might result in lower performance in vocations, and in roles of leadership that might come as a part of any career. Only very few empirical studies have been conducted in India so far on determinants of gender equality in the process of learning and shaping of professionals in higher education. It is probably with the assumptions of equal opportunities assured in the higher learning institutions by law and by norms. Hence, a study was undertaken to address this knowledge gap, especially in the context of Kerala where several social, political and economic reforms have taken place in the past several decades.

Objectives of the study

The research was undertaken with an aim to analyze the academic performance of professional college students of Kerala Agricultural University, as influenced by their levels of assertiveness and its determinants. The specific objectives were:

- To assess the variations in academic performance of the students in different stages of campus life in professional education;
- To study the gender disparities in levels of assertiveness and personal stress among the professional college students in relation to their academic performance; and
- To analyze the factors influencing their levels of assertiveness resulting in differential academic performance.

Methodology

This research was conducted among the students of Kerala Agricultural University during March – May, 2014, since all the constituent colleges of this university offer professional degree programs of four years duration. The university has students enrolled from all over the state through competitive entrance examinations and female students constitute the large majority. The current trend is to have about 70-75 percent girl students on rolls, after good performance in the state level entrance examinations, probably except in Forestry degree program due to less preference for it among girls. The education is in semester

system with internal evaluation and residential learning in campus with much practical and library assignments. All undergraduate students of the three colleges, in the main campus at Vellanikkara, namely College of Horticulture, College of Forestry and College of Cooperation, Banking and Management were included in the sampling frame. The sample respondents were drawn using stratified random sampling with probability proportional allocation method to decide year wise and program wise distribution. Total sample size was 192, in which 131 (68%) were female students based on the allocation mentioned.

The study used a pre-tested structured questionnaire for distribution among the respondents to elicit the needed quantitative data, while Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were also conducted to gather more qualitative data and for triangulation. Major psychological variables like assertiveness, personal stress and self esteem were measured using standardized scales with suitable modifications. The quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS computer software with statistical tools such as ‘Percentages’, ‘Frequencies’, ‘Chi square test’, and ‘Multiple Linear Regression Analysis’. Qualitative data was analyzed with descriptions, narrations and interpretations.

Results and Discussion

The results obtained from the data analysis are presented below according to the sequence of objectives.

Verification of secondary data available in the office records of the colleges indicated that girl students had lower

performance levels in the initial semesters of the degree programs in all constituent colleges, which showed enhancing trends in the later semesters. In the case of boys, such a remarkable trend was not obvious, with variations irrespective of year of study. The probable reasons might be the higher levels of personal stress observed among females in the initial stages of campus life, which declined along with adaptation in the later years. Similarly, the level of assertiveness was lower among females, compared to males and it also might have contributed to lower academic performance due to inability to openly discuss with peer groups, and seek clarifications from teachers and others.

A perusal of Table 1 illustrates that the levels of assertiveness had a difference between girls and boys at statistically significant level of less than 1%. It was also found that the assertiveness of boys and girls had significant association with their academic performance. The lower assertiveness of girls adversely affected their academic performance, while it was not very obvious in the case of boys. The ways of upbringing of females in this gendered society, and the social norms inhibiting open discussions and interactions with the teachers might have influenced this result. The Table further shows that boys had better assertiveness levels than girls, and those who had higher levels of assertiveness in both categories had better academic performance. This implies that measures to improve the assertiveness of students might help in better performance in learning, for which trainings or special sessions can be thought of by the concerned authorities.

Table 1. Association between levels of assertiveness and academic performance of the respondents (n= 192)

Academic Performance Category	Levels of assertiveness			
	Low	Medium	High	Chi square
Boys (61)	14 (22.95)	22 (36.07)	25 (40.98)	
Low	07 (11.48)	10 (16.39)	03 (04.92)	
Medium	04 (06.57)	06 (09.84)	08 (13.11)	
High	03 (04.92)	06 (09.84)	14 (22.95)	
Girls (131)	54 (41.22)	53 (40.46)	24 (18.32)	51.287***
Low	32 (24.43)	13 (09.93)	03 (02.29)	
Medium	16 (12.21)	18 (13.74)	05 (03.82)	
High	06 (04.58)	22 (16.79)	16 (12.21)	
Total	68 (35.42)	75 (39.06)	49 (25.52)	

Figures in brackets indicate percentages *** significant at less than 0.01 level

P value = 0.000

Personal stress was also higher among girls in the initial semesters, due to transplanting shocks from changing the environment of living with supportive parents to the hostel atmosphere, with full autonomy and independence. Boys have enough exposure and mobility outside home even before joining the campus, and the change of living environment might not create personal stress to such an extent. In a gendered society, free mobility outside home is curtailed for girls by various means and the change itself creates the stress. Moreover, the self responsibility to take care of personal security, career prospects and locating trustworthy friendships also add to good amount of stress

for girls, compared to boys. Results presented in Table 2 reveals that personal stress also had negative and significant association with academic performance of professional college students, and it was more evident in the case of girls. The results also indicated significant difference between girls and boys in the levels of personal stress. The Table explains that the lower the levels of personal stress, the better were the academic performance of the respondents. The Chi Square Test showed a significant association between personal stress and academic performance of the professional college students.

Table 2. Association between levels of personal stress and academic performance of the respondents (n= 192)

Academic Performance Category	Levels of personal stress			
	Low	Medium	High	Chi square
Boys (61)	19 (31.15)	25 (40.98)	17 (27.87)	
Low	04 (06.56)	11 (18.03)	09 (14.75)	
Medium	05 (08.20)	05 (08.20)	06 (09.84)	
High	10 (16.39)	09 (14.75)	02 (03.28)	
Girls (131)	36 (27.48)	46 (35.11)	49 (37.40)	46.719***
Low	04 (03.05)	12 (09.16)	29 (22.14)	
Medium	12 (09.16)	16 (12.21)	18 (13.74)	
High	20 (15.27)	18 (13.74)	02 (01.53)	
Total	55 (28.65)	71 (36.98)	66 (34.38)	

Figures in brackets indicate percentages *** significant at less than 0.01 level

P value = 0.000

Further analysis was done to identify the major factors influencing the assertiveness levels of the professional college student respondents of the study and the results are presented in Table 3 below. A perusal of the results show that self esteem and parental occupation of the students has significant influence on their assertiveness at less than 1% level, where as rural-urban background, birth order, language difficulties and parental education had significant influence at less than 5% level. This implies that self esteem (the value one attaches on oneself) of the student has to be considered and means to improve it through supplementary

trainings might help to improve the academic achievement of the students of higher learning programs. The other factors being easily non manipulable cannot be modified and the results throw limelight to the need of supplementary trainings for the students coming from rural areas, those with lower parental education, having English language difficulties, lower birth order, and with parents with rural occupations. The total contribution of all selected eight variables was 71% to make changes in the dependent variable assertiveness and it gives important clues to make the above mentioned inferences.

Table 3. Multiple Linear Regression on the effect of selected independent variables on levels of assertiveness of the respondents (n = 192)

Sl. No.	Variables	Coefficients			Sig.
		B	Std. Error	T	
	(Constant)	.460	.208	2.209	.029
	Sex	.034	.057	.593	.554
	Rural-urban background	.118**	.050	2.351	.020
	Birth order	.061**	.026	2.392	.018
	Self esteem	.011***	.003	3.535	.001
	Proximity of home to town	.066	.035	1.885	.061
	Language difficulties	.116**	.049	2.374	.019
	Parental education	.010**	.005	2.140	.034
	Parental occupation	.050***	.016	3.078	.002

***Sig. at less than 0.01 level **sig. at less than 0.05 level, $R^2=0.710$, Adj. $R^2=0.704$

B: Coefficient (intercept) of the linear equation, R^2 : Coefficient of determination

Conclusions

The findings of the study indicate that the levels of assertiveness of girls in this gendered society is lower than that of boys and it exerts significant influence on their academic achievements as well as in many aspects of personal life and career. This can be inferred from the importance of personal stress in academic achievement and the higher stress seen among girls. The situation can be much improved if special supplementary trainings are designed for girls with the background factors revealed by the study. It also tells us that whatever be the modernization and improvements taking place in social life, the gender prescriptions and roles and behavior are also to be considered

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Constitutional and Legal Provisions for Women in India

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Abstract : This paper tries to cover the status of women during the pre-independent period, the post-Independence period and since then women advancement in the various spheres .Since then there is a paradigm shift in the approach to women issues from Welfare to Development. Women empowerment is considered as a central issue in determining the status of women. Some of the provisions are discussed in this paper.

- Constitutional Provisions For Women:
- Legal Provisions
- Special Initiatives for Women

 1. National Commission for Women
 2. Reservation for Women in Local Self -Government
 3. The National Plan of Action for the Girl Child (1991-2000)
 4. National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001

The Department of Women & Child Development in the Ministry of Human Resource Development has prepared a “National Policy for the Empowerment of Women” in the year 2001. The goal of this policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women.

Verma Committee Report

A three-member Commission, headed by former Chief Justice of India, Justice J.S. Verma which was assigned to review laws for sexual crimes submitted its report to the Government during January 2013. The Commission has recommended comprehensive changes in criminal laws to deal with crimes and atrocities against women which are as under:

- Punishment for Rape
- Punishment for other sexual offences
- Registering complaints and medical examination
- Marriages to be registered
- Amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure
- Bill of Rights for women
- Review of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act
- Police reforms
- Role of the judiciary
- Political Reforms

Women in India have come a long way by carving a niche for themselves in various fields in our male dominated society. Over the years they have won more rights and freedom to choose the way they want to live their lives without being discriminated against.

She no longer prefers to be called a ‘hermit crab’. She has come out of the four walls and now she is everywhere... in army, battlefield, in business, in courts, in office, in outdoorspace, on television, in the university, flying planes, fighting wars, running offices, ruling countries and she is doing it well. She has tasted success.

Pre Independent India

The reason behind this social transformation has been the constant efforts by the government through various policy programmes to empower women. Looking back during the pre independence period, though there were no positive contributions made by the British government, yet, freedom

strugglers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy’s efforts to abolish *Sati* (a practice of a wife burning herself alive in her husband’s pyre) under the Governor general Lord William Cavendish Bentinck 1829, Ishwar Chand Vidyasagar’s crusade for improving situations of women led to women remarriage act

Women freedom fighters like Kittur Rani Channama of the princely state of Kittur in Karnataka opposed the Doctrine of lapse, Rani Laxmi Bai – Queen of Jhansi led Indian rebellion in 1857, Begum Hazrat Mahal, co-ruler of Avadh led to the revolt of 1857.

In 1917, the first women’s delegation met the Secretary of the state to demand women political rights supported by Indian National Congress. The All India Women Education Congress was held in Pune which became a major organisation for the movement of social change. In 1929, Child Marriage Restrain Act was passed stipulating 14 years as the minimum age of marriage for a girl.

Post- Independence period

The greatest advantage of participation of women in political nationalism had an indirect effect. It brought women into the forefront of thought and action. India is proud to have to its archives Mrs Indira Gandhi as the first lady Prime Minister of independent India. to add feather in the cap, Mrs Pratibatai Patil, the first women President and Miera Kumar the first women Speaker of the Lok Sabha.... the list continues.

The principle of gender and equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. Policies, programmes and systems are established to ensure mainstreaming of women's perspectives in all developmental processes, as catalysts, participants and recipients. Wherever there are gaps in policies and programmes, women specific interventions are undertaken to bridge these. Coordinating and monitoring mechanisms is also devised to assess from time to time the progress of such mainstreaming mechanisms. Women's issues and concerns as a result are specially addressed and reflected in all concerned laws, sectoral policies, plans and programmes of action.

Women advancement in the various spheres started since the inception of the Fifth Five Year Plan(1974-78). Since then there is a paradigm shift in the approach to women issues from Welfare to Development. Women empowerment is considered as a central issue in determining the status of women.

Constitutional provisions for Women

1. Equality before law for women (Article 14)
2. The State not to discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them (Article 15 (i))
3. The State to make any special provision in favour of women and children (Article 15 (3))
4. Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State (Article 16)
5. The State to direct its policy towards securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood (Article 39(a)); and equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Article 39(d))
6. To promote justice, on a basis of equal opportunity and to provide free legal aid by suitable legislation or scheme or in any other way to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities

(Article 39 A)

7. The State to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief (Article 42)
8. The State to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Article 46)
9. The State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people (Article 47)
10. To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51(A) (e))
11. Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat (Article 243 D(3))
12. Not less than one- third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level to be reserved for women (Article 243 D (4))
13. Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality (Article 243 T (3))
14. Reservation of offices of Chairpersons in Municipalities for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women in such manner as the legislature of a State may by law provide (Article 243 T (4))

Legal Provisions

To uphold the Constitutional mandate, the State has enacted various legislative measures intended to ensure equal rights, to counter social discrimination and various forms of violence and atrocities and to provide support services especially to working women.

Although women may be victims of any of the crimes such as 'Murder', 'Robbery', 'Cheating' etc, the crimes, which are directed specifically against women, are characterized as 'Crime against Women'. These are broadly classified under two categories.

- (1) The Crimes Identified Under the Indian Penal Code (IPC)
 1. Rape (Sec. 376 IPC)

2. Kidnapping & Abduction for different purposes (Sec. 363-373)
3. Homicide for Dowry, Dowry Deaths or their attempts (Sec. 302/304-B IPC)
4. Torture, both mental and physical (Sec. 498-A IPC)
5. Molestation (Sec. 354 IPC)
6. Sexual Harassment (Sec. 509 IPC)
7. Importation of girls (up to 21 years of age)

(2) The Crimes identified under the Special Laws (SLL)

Although all laws are not gender specific, the provisions of law affecting women significantly have been reviewed periodically and amendments carried out to keep pace with the emerging requirements. Some acts which have special provisions to safeguard women and their interests are:

1. The Employees State Insurance Act, 1948
2. The Plantation Labour Act, 1951
3. The Family Courts Act, 1954
4. The Special Marriage Act, 1954
5. The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955
6. The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 with amendment in 2005
7. Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956
8. The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 (Amended in 1995)
9. Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
10. The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971
11. The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1976
12. The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976
13. The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006
14. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 1983
15. The Factories (Amendment) Act, 1986
16. Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986
17. Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987
18. *The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005*

1. Special Initiatives for Women

National Commission for Women

In January 1992, the Government set-up this statutory body with a specific mandate to study and monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and legal safeguards provided for women, review the existing legislation to suggest amendments wherever necessary, etc.

Reservation for Women in Local Self -Government

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Acts passed in 1992 by Parliament ensure one-third of the total seats for

women in all elected offices in local bodies whether in rural areas or urban areas.

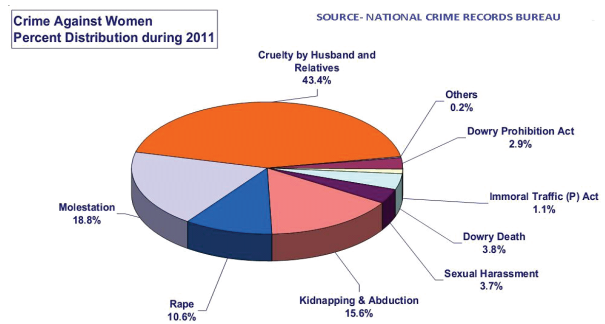
The National Plan of Action for the Girl Child (1991-2000)

The plan of Action is to ensure survival, protection and development of the girl child with the ultimate objective of building up a better future for the girl child.

National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001

The Department of Women and Child Development in the Ministry of Human Resource Development has prepared a “National Policy for the Empowerment of Women” in the year 2001. The goal of this policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women.

Though there are a lot of policy initiatives, there is incidence of crime against women



It is clear from the above pie chart that though there are a lot of legal, constitutional and legislative policies for women empowerment, there is a rise in the rate of crime and injustice against women. In order to prevent the incidence of crime against women along with legislations, committees have been appointed one such committees report is mentioned below.

Verma Committee Report

A three-member Commission, headed by former Chief Justice of India, Justice J.S. Verma which was assigned to review laws for sexual crimes submitted its report to the Government during January 2013. The Commission has recommended comprehensive changes in criminal laws to deal with crimes and atrocities against women which are as under:

Punishment for Rape: The panel has not recommended the death penalty for rapists. It suggests that the punishment for rape should be rigorous imprisonment or RI for seven years to life. It recommends that punishment for causing death or a “persistent vegetative state” should be RI for a term not less than 20 years, but may be for life also, which shall mean the rest of the person’s life. Gang-rape, it suggests should entail punishment of not less than 20 years, which may also extend to life and gang-rape followed by death, should be punished with life imprisonment.

Punishment for other sexual offences: The panel recognised the need to curb all forms of sexual offences and recommended - Voyeurism be punished with upto seven years in jail; stalking or attempts to contact a person repeatedly through any means by upto three years. Acid attacks would be punished by upto seven years if imprisonment; trafficking will be punished with RI for seven to ten years.

Registering complaints and medical examination: Every complaint of rape must be registered by the police and civil society should perform its duty to report any case of rape coming to its knowledge. "Any officer, who fails to register a case of rape reported to him, or attempts to abort its investigation, commits an offence which shall be punishable as prescribed," the report says. The protocols for medical examination of victims of sexual assault have also been suggested. The panel said, "Such protocol based, professional medical examination is imperative for uniform practice and implementation."

Marriages to be registered: As a primary recommendation, all marriages in India (irrespective of the personal laws under which such marriages are solemnized) should mandatorily be registered in the presence of a magistrate. The magistrate will ensure that the marriage has been solemnized without any demand for dowry having been made and that it has taken place with the full and free consent of both partners.

Amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure: The panel observed, "The manner in which the rights of women can be recognised can only be manifested when they have full access to justice and when the rule of law can be upheld in their favour." The proposed Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2012, should be modified, suggests the panel. "Since the possibility of sexual assault on men, as well as homosexual, transgender and transsexual rape, is a reality the provisions have to be cognizant of the same," it says. A special procedure for protecting persons with disabilities from rape, and requisite procedures for access to justice for such persons, the panel said was an "urgent need."

Bill of Rights for Women : A separate Bill of Rights for women that entitles a woman a life of dignity and security and will ensure that a woman shall have the right to have complete sexual autonomy with respect to her relationships.

Review of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act: The panel has observed that the "impunity of systematic sexual violence is being legitimised by the armed forces Special Powers Act." It has said there is an imminent need to review the continuance of AFSPA (Armed Forces Special Power Act) in areas as soon as possible. It has also recommended posting special commissioners for women's safety in conflict areas.

Police Reforms : To inspire public confidence, the panel said, "police officers with reputations of outstanding ability

and character must be placed at the higher levels of the police force." All existing appointments need to be reviewed to ensure that the police force has the requisite moral vision. The panel strongly recommended that "law enforcement agencies do not become tools at the hands of political masters." It said, "Every member of the police force must understand their accountability is only to the law and to none else in the discharge of their duty."

Role of the Judiciary : The judiciary has the primary responsibility of enforcing fundamental rights, through constitutional remedies. The judiciary can take suo-motu cognizance of such issues being deeply concerned with them both in the Supreme Court and the High Court. An All India strategy to deal with this issue would be advisable. The Chief Justice of India could be approached to commence appropriate proceedings on the judicial side. The Chief Justice may consider making appropriate orders relating to the issue of missing children to curb the illegal trade of their trafficking etc.

Political Reforms: The Justice Verma committee observed that reforms are needed to deal with criminalisation of politics. The panel has suggested that, cognizance has been taken by a magistrate of a criminal offence, the candidate ought to be disqualified from participating in the electoral process. Any candidate who fails to disclose a charge should be disqualified subsequently. It suggested lawmakers facing criminal charges, who have already been elected to Parliament and state legislatures, should voluntarily vacate their seats.

Conclusion

No doubt the principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women for neutralizing the cumulative socio economic, education and political disadvantages faced by them. But it is quiet disheartening that the survey shows that incident of crime against women over the years has been increasing at an alarming rate. Crime against women irrespective of various legislations are at a higher level.

Only legislation and law enforcement agencies cannot prevent incidents of crime against women. There is need of social awakening and change in the attitude of masses, so that due respect and equal status is given to women. Youth have to actively participate in the campaign of prevention of crime against women and proper implementation of various policies enshrined for women. Mass media can play an active role here as in the present days it has reached every corner of the nation. Women organisations, NGO's and women themselves have to take a positive initiative and implement the policies.

Dissenting Voices : Analytical Study of the Transition of Socio-Cultural-Legal Situation of Women in India

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Abstract : It is often said that the Universe is a depiction of femininity. The feminine reflection of nature occupies a very important role in the religious history of India. The Earth has always been celebrated by holy texts of Hindus as Prithvi, Dharatimata, Dharitri. From Vedas down to Puranas the “female form” of nature is celebrated. Indian mythology has no dearth of “Goddesses” which are sacred and hold high places in the tradition of Hindu Religion; hence a “positive” inference can easily be derived even by a lay man from the Mythological and Theological research concerning the Mytho-theological status of women in India. However, when a focus of research shifts from mytho-theological investigations to the socio-legal examination; the curtain of illusions starts falling down to reveal the naked, painful truth of the situation of women in India. On one hand, this country celebrates the “feminine power” and on the other the cultural dominance of male species evidently reduced the social existence of women to that of an animal. The sexist mentality of male-dominated society has been a major cause for the deteriorating condition of women, and to tackle this menace, the constitution of India has provided strong measures to establish gender justice and equality. Enactments of Central Laws for women have further strengthened the protection mechanism of women's rights. The Government of India has shown its sensitivity towards seriousness of the issues of women's rights violations by ratifying important International conventions like CEDAW. The purpose of this Research Paper is not only to analyze the socio-cultural-legal transition of situation of women out also to expose the socio-legal contradictions present in Indian society that from time to time has brutally challenged the fundamental existence of women.

Key words : India, Women, Law, Legal, Rights.

Introduction

The history of India is a history of social contradictions, revolutions and counter-revolutions. History of Indian women is a saga of glory, struggle, survival and success. In ancient Indian society, male species has always had a dominant hand. The socio-cultural status of women was comparatively lower than their male counterparts. The masculine ignorance mistook delicate feminine body as a sign of weakness and feminine beauty and sexuality always considered as threatening, damaging and challenging to the ‘Tower of Power’ of traditional male dominance. What is threatening should either have to be destroyed or brought under the absolute control. This is exactly what happened with women all over the world and therefore most of the civilizations in the world including Indian civilization had always been male dominated societies.

Medical science has established the fact very long ago that female sexuality is far more powerful than male sexuality. Estrogen is far more powerful on female sexual desire than testosterone could ever hope to be.¹ This truth of nature changed the entire course of fate of male-female relationship. There was a time in pre-historic era when no family system was in existence, no concept of formal relationship was in existence. Matriarchal autocratic system of clan was in existence which would be entirely controlled by the supreme matriarch (matriarchal system is still prevalent in numerous tribal societies all over the world and there are still tribes where concept of formal relationships does not

exist). Gradually the realization of the truth of “threatening” female sexuality compelled male-species to create a system that not only cut the wings of women but also suppressed her socio-sexual status from erstwhile matriarch to slave.

From the eternal phobia of ‘female supremacy’ institution of marriage was invented which further evolved as a foundation of family system where man is given full control over woman and offspring. Family system, a system of social division of labor and exploitation where man is considered traditionally as a head of the family further completely controlled the ‘sexual energy’ of woman which was flowing freely in the early ages of the evolution of human civilization. After the invention of family system numerous other social systems were also invented. Though it is claimed that the social systems like family system was created to stabilize the nomadic life of human beings however sociological facts indicates something else. That was an era from where the historic downfall of women started. That was an era when man started to control the society. That was an era when the status of women reduced from head of the clan to that of sexual slave of man who owned her in the sweet name of marriage. Invention of family system as a ‘political unit’ controlled the natural, open, illimitable, wise socio-sexual behavior of women and freedom of their choice of sexual partners to a great extent which further resulted in the rise of suppressive behavior of men towards them which increased with the evolution of society.

¹ Dr. Trina Read and Dr. Brian Parker, Who wants sex more, men or women? Retrieved from <http://www.hitchedmag.com/article.php?id=741>

However, In Indian-subcontinent during Vedic period it was seen that the status of women was bit improved compared with pre-vedic era of Indian Civilization. The evidence in this regard can only be found in vedic literature. There was a 'time and space' somewhere far back in history during the early vedic era wherein women enjoyed the status almost at par with men. It is an old saying "where women are honored, gods resides there". She was considered as a "Ardhangini", one half of her husband's body. Though the early vedic family was of patriarchal nature women had some amount of control over the entire household. A *Rigvedic* hymn describes how a maiden could take a soma twig and offer herself as a sacrifice to Indra.² It is observed that the patriarchal system of Vedic era never denied women their rights and privileges which did not directly challenge the Patriarchy. It is an availability of education opportunities, women in those days were able to devote themselves to education. In vedic society the concept of child marriage was not in existence.³ Therefore, women had opportunity to acquire education. If they wanted to pursue knowledge without getting married they were allowed to do so. The educators divided women into two groups namely *Bramhavadinis* and *Sadyovahas*. *Bramhavadinis* were lifelong students of theology and philosophy, and *Sadyovahas* used to continue their studies till their marriage at the age of 15 or 16.⁴ Many educated women became teachers and upadhyayinis. The history of India witnessed many capable and wise women like *Visvavara*, *Apala* and *Ghosha* even composed mantras and rose to the ranks of rishis.⁵ Once a liberal Indian society of Vedic era that gave liberty and a sense (false?) of equality to women, a society that once celebrated social, political, economic, cultural and sexual liberation of women gradually declined into closed, rigid, sexist and male dominated society that rejected basic human rights to women. Once celebrated in the Vedas, women later on reduced to the level of beasts in the "smriti era" by the smritis like "*Manusmriti*". Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in his article "The Rise and Fall of Hindu Women" argues that Hindu religion through its religious texts, such as the Manusmriti always degraded women.⁶ Even celebrated 17th century saint-poet Tulsidas could not refrain from condemning the women when he quoted- Dhol, Ganwar, Shudra, Pashu, Naari, *ye sab hain tadan ke adhikari*" in his celebrated book "*Ramacharitmanas*", which means Dhol (a musical instrument), ganwar (an illiterate person), shudra (low caste person), Pashu (animal), Naari (Woman) deserve to be beaten up. There are numerous documentary evidences

available in ancient and medieval literature to examine the position of women which indicates the gradual decline of their socio-cultural status in every walk of life in India. The historical conspiracy to control, suppress and destroy the "feminist power" achieved great success when evil customs like sati, purdah, child marriage, enforced widowhood, Devdasi system, Dowry system eclipsed the society which further caused to decline women's status.

During the last few decades the incidents of sexual harassment at work place, eve teasing, abduction, prostitution, rape, honor killing, female infanticide and caste-atrocities (against women from Dalit communities) against women are on rise. Many women in India are still living a life without any self-identity. The quest for gender justice that has been continuing since ages has still not reached the destination. For centuries women have been subjugated by male dominated society in the name of religion and religious morality. The status of women in India further deteriorated during the medieval period with the advent of Muslims. In Mughal and British era the situation of women got worsen, as they were made victims to numerous brutal customs, traditions that by then became an integral part of Hindu and Muslim culture. Some great-women rulers like Razia Sultana who was the only women-Empress to rule the throne of Delhi, Nur Jahan, Gond queen Durgavati who ruled for fifteen years were the examples of women power that shined in the dark age. In spite of these powerful women, the condition of women remained unchanged. Efforts of social reformers like Mahatma Jyotirao Phule and Savitri Baai Phule for emancipation and education of women brought revolutionary change in the life of Indian women however, today's woman of 21st century, who is smart, beautiful, elegant, educated, independent, socio-psycho-sexually liberated still suffering from the hot iron of 'sexist-mentality'. It is often seen that deeply rooted religious traditions and social institutions had always played a major role in determining the status of women. If religious scriptures like Smritis and verses of Holy Quoran that openly condemned the women take a place of law they are bound to affect their social existence.

The Midnight of 15th August, 1947 was not an ordinary midnight. It was a night that was impregnated with a dream of freedom. India achieved its independence from British Raj at a stroke of 12 O'Clock at midnight of 15th August, 1947. A new era began. A long cherished dream of "Free India" was at last realized. The festival of light of freedom

² A.S. Altekar, Position of women in Hindu civilization (1938; New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1959, p. 10.

³ P.S. Joshi, Cultural History of Ancient India (New Delhi: S.Chand, 1978, p. 7.

⁴ A.S. Altekar, Position of women in Hind Civilization (1938; New Delhi, Motilal Banarsidas, 1959, p.11.

⁵ R.C. Mujumdar, Ancient India (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1964), p. 64.

⁶ Ambedkar, B.R. (1951), "The Rise and Fall of the Hindu Woman: Who was Responsible for it?", originally published in the journal, The Mahabodhi(Calcutta), Vol.59, May-June, 137-51, Reprinted in BAWs, Vo.17, Part2, Section 4, (Mumbai: Government of Maharashtra), 109-23. The text used here is the BAWs version reproduced in, Rege, Sharmila (2013), Against Madness of Manu: B R Ambedkar's Writings on Brahmanical Patriarchy, Navayana Publishing, New Delhi.

brought new light of hopes to women. As a first Parliament of Independent India the “constituent assembly” was elected to write its Constitution. The Constitution of India was drafted by Drafting Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. B.R.Ambedkar which was adopted by Constituent assembly on November 26, 1949, and it took effect on January 26, 1950.

Constitutional and Legal Protection Mechanism for Women in India

The Constitution of India became savior of women. It has become a source of revolutionary laws that challenged and destroyed the archaic, traditional laws sanctioned by the male-dominated Indian civilization. Principle of gender justice and equality enshrined in the Indian constitution in its preamble, fundamental rights, fundamental duties and directive principles of state policy. Constitution not only grants equality and equal protection of law to women but also equip the state to adopt measures of protective discrimination in favor of women. Within the democratic, constitutional framework our protective laws, gender justice policies, plans and programs have aimed at women’s emancipation and empowerment in all walks of life. India has also ratified various international human rights conventions to safeguard the rights of women. CEDAW (Convention on Elimination of All forms of discrimination against women) has proved to be a revolutionary convention that was ratified by India in 1993.

Constitutional Provisions for Women

Fundamental Rights, among others, ensure equality before the law and equal protection of law; prohibits discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, and guarantee equality of opportunity to all citizens in matters relating to employment. Articles 14, 15, 15(3), 16, 39(a), 39(b), 39(c) and 42 of the Constitution are of specific importance in this regard.

Following are the Constitutional Rights, Privileges and safeguards granted to women by virtue of constitution of India:

- (i) Equality before law for women (Article 14)
- (ii) The State not to discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them (Article 15 (i))
- (iii) The State to make any special provision in favor of women and children (Article 15 (3))
- (iv) Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State (Article 16)
- (v) The State to direct its policy towards securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of

livelihood (Article 39(a)); and equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Article 39(d))

- (vi) To promote justice, on a basis of equal opportunity and to provide free legal aid by suitable legislation or scheme or in any other way to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities (Article 39 A)
- (vii) The State to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief (Article 42)
- (viii) The State to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Article 46)
- (ix) The State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people (Article 47)
- (x) To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51(A) (e))
- (xi) Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat (Article 243 D(3))
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- (xiv) Reservation of offices of Chairpersons in Municipalities for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women in such manner as the legislature of a State may by law provide (Article 243 T (4))

Legal Provisions

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 - (iv) Torture, both mental and physical (Sec. 498-A IPC)
 - (v) Molestation (Sec. 354 IPC)
 - (vi) Sexual Harassment (Sec. 509 IPC)
 - (vii) Importation of girls (up to 21 years of age)
- (B) Some acts which have special provisions to safeguard women and their interests are:
- (i) The Employees State Insurance Act, 1948
 - (ii) The Plantation Labour Act, 1951
 - (iii) The Family Courts Act, 1954
 - (iv) The Special Marriage Act, 1954
 - (v) The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955
 - (vi) The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 with amendment in 2005
 - (vii) Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956
 - (viii) The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 (Amended in 1995)
 - (ix) Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
 - (x) The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971
 - (xi) The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1976
 - (xii) The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976
 - (xiii) The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006
 - (xiv) The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 1983
 - (xv) The Factories (Amendment) Act, 1986
 - (xvi) Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986
 - (xvii) Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987
 - (xviii) The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

Despite of having strong protection mechanism, it is seen that the entire legal system has miserably failed to create a sense of faith and confidence in the heart of woman. Therefore, it is necessary not only to strengthen the laws but also their execution mechanism.

Conclusion

The journey of thousands of years in search of the light of equality has come a long way. It was quite an arduous journey. From prehistoric era of power-liberty to the post vedic era of perpetual slavery and oppression thousands of generations of women gone through the unspeakable pain and suffering. The constitution of India, the Dharma of Modern India has now become the savior of women. By virtue of Constitution of India, women are now granted their basic fundamental rights and the status as a human which was denied to them for generations. To defend the ideals of constitution various laws were made to bring women in the light of justice and equality, however, it is seen that the atrocities against women are continuously increasing. Modern woman who is technosavy, independent and strong; still lives in the dark shadow of fear in Indian society. The nature of offences against women are changing with the time, for e.g., with the advent of internet technology Pornography was introduced which is the highest form of exploitation of women. Newspapers are still filled with the news of Rapes, Incest Rapes, Dowry Deaths, Sex Scandals, Forced Prostitution, Abduction, Female Infanticides, Honor killings.

India is blessed to have enough Constitutional and Legal protection for her women, however, merely laws will never be sufficient. It is important to sensitize modern young male generation about the existence of women. It is a responsibility of Mothers to teach their Sons to respect the sacred femininity. Woman is another name of Love, Passion and Sacrifice. She is both, the creator and the destroyer. Happy woman creates a happy world.

It is important to break the barriers of genders. The time has come to recognize each other beyond the gender identities. The time has come to recognize each other as fellow human beings.

Considering the wide spread practice of 'Gender Discrimination' and the violations of Constitutional and Legal rights by crazy 'Male-chauvinists' of 21st century, it is necessary that India should undertake in-depth review and reform of the existing laws, policies, practices that caused the extreme discrimination and oppression of women. Just and fair struggle against Gender- Discrimination will have to continue. The world will evolve, the dissenting voices shall be heard, and that evolution one day will bring the light of wisdom that will break the chains of slavery once and for all.

महिला समानतेची हमी देण्याबाबत धोरणात्मक पुढाकार आणि महिला सबलीकरणामध्ये समाजाची भूमिका

सौ. स्वराजी राजन शिंदे

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महिला सबलीकरणाच्या संदर्भात घेतलेले धोरणात्मक निर्णय - महिलांचा विकास होण्याच्या दृष्टीने १९९४ रोजी पहिले महिला धोरण जाहीर केले गेले. ७ मार्च २००१ रोजी नव्या धोरणाला मान्यता देवून महिलांचे सबलीकरण, विकास, आरक्षणात वाढ, संरक्षण इत्यादी अनेक गोष्टींचा विचार करून सदर वर्ष महिला सबलीकरण म्हणून साजरे केले गेले. त्या निमित्ताने विविध उपक्रम राबवून महिला कायद्यात दुरुस्ती व सुधारणा करण्यात आल्या. धोरणात्मक निर्णय - १९९४ पहिले महिला धोरण महाराष्ट्राचे मुख्यमंत्री श्री. शरदचंद्र पवार यांच्या पुढाकाराने धोरण बनविणारे अग्रेसर राज्य म्हणून महाराष्ट्राची ओळख निर्माण झाली. केवळ कल्याणकारी योजना राबवून स्त्री सक्षम होणार नाही तर महिलांचा समग्र निर्णय प्रक्रियेत सहभाग अत्यावश्यक, या विचारातून, कालानुरूप बदलाला स्वीकारून दुसरे महिला धोरण २००१ तत्कालीन मुख्यमंत्री श्री. विलासराव देशमुख यांच्या पुढाकाराने आले गेले. महिलांच्या समानतेची हमी देण्याची भूमिका वरील दोन्हीही धोरणात घेतली गेली. उदा. महिलांवरील अत्याचार, महिला विषयक कायदे, त्यांच्या आर्थिक दर्जात सुधारणा, प्रसार माध्यमाची भूमिका महिलांना केंद्रस्थानी ठेवून नियोजन, स्वयंसेवी संस्थांचा सहभाग, स्वयंसहाय्यक बचत गटांचा विकास, महिला विषयक हक्क व कायदे या सर्वांमुळे महिलांची शिक्षणातील प्रगती, आरोग्य सुधारणा, मालमत्तेवरील हक्क, महिला विषयक कायद्यांची जनजागृती, नोकरीमधील ३०% आरक्षण, राजकीय क्षेत्रात स्थानिक स्वराज्य संस्थेत ३३% महिला आरक्षण, आता हेच आरक्षण ५०% झाले आहे. या धोरणानंतर जवळपास एक तपाने तिसरे महिला धोरण - ८ ऑगस्ट २०१३ मुख्यमंत्री - श्री.पृथ्वीराजजी चव्हाण व मान्यवर यांच्या पुढाकाराने सामाजिक, आर्थिक, मानसिक परिवर्तनाचा वेध घेवून - महिलांना सन्मान- प्रतिष्ठा, शिक्षण - सुरक्षा, आरक्षण - संरक्षण एकूणच समान हक्काचा न्याय देणाऱ्या या तिसऱ्या धोरणात आधुनिक महिलांपासून ते देवदासी, तृतीयपंथीय महिलांसाठी समान हक्कांचे धोरण उदा. महिला संपत्तीत समान हक्क, महिलांसाठी सनद, जेंडर बजेट, जाणीव जागृती वा संनियंत्रण पर्यवेक्षण, महिला वसतिगृह पाळणाघर. भारतीय संविधानामध्ये स्त्रियांना समान अधिकार (कलम १४) देश व राज्याकडून होणाऱ्या भेदभावापासून संरक्षण कलम १५(1) समान संधी (कलम १६) समान कामासाठी समान वेतन (कलम ३९ डी) या खेरीज विशेष कायदे अधिकार सरकारला देण्यात आले आहेत. कलम १५(क) स्त्रियांच्या प्रतिष्ठेला हानी पोहोचवणाऱ्या प्रथा बंद करणे (कलम ५१ (ए) (ई) कामाच्या ठिकाणी न्याय व सुरक्षित परिस्थिती आणि प्रसूति सहाय्य देण्याची सोय (कलम ४२) अशा अनेक कायदेशीर तरतुदीही आहेत. वरील सर्व धोरणे सरकारकडून समाजासाठी राबवली गेली आहेत. पण केवळ धोरण करून स्त्री सक्षम होईल? धोरणातली मानसिकवृत्ती प्रत्येक माणसाच्या मनातून उदयास येणे, वृद्धिंगत होणे, हेच समाजाचे या संदर्भातील पुरेपुर उत्तरदायित्व ठरेल. (याबाबतचे सविस्तर स्पष्टीकरण)

‘सक्षम, सबल महिला म्हणजेच संपूर्ण देशाचा विकास’ हे सूत्र लक्षात घेऊन महाराष्ट्र सरकारने सन १९९४ साली तत्कालीन मुख्यमंत्री श्री. शरदचंद्र पवार यांच्या पुढाकाराने महिलांसाठी स्वतंत्र अशा धोरणाची निर्मिती केली गेली. पण केवळ उपक्रमशीलता आणि योजना राबवून स्त्री पूर्ण अर्थाने सामर्थ्यवान होणार नाही ही ऋणात्मक बाजू लक्षात घेऊन उपक्रमाबरोबरच महिलांना निर्णय प्रक्रियेत सक्रिय करणारे, कालानुरूप झालेल्या बदलांचा स्वीकार करणारे दुसरे महिला धोरण तत्कालीन मुख्यमंत्री श्री. विलासराव देशमुख यांच्या नेतृत्वाखाली अस्तित्वात आले.

वरील दोन्ही धोरणांचा परामर्श घेता असे दिसते की, महिलांच्या समानतेची हमी देण्याची भूमिका अनेक धोरणात्मक निर्णयातून घेतली गेली. उदाहरणार्थ, महिलांवरील अत्याचार, महिला विषयक कायदे, त्यांच्या आर्थिक दर्जात सुधारणा, प्रसार माध्यमांची भूमिका, स्वयंसहाय्यक बचत गटांचा विकास अशा विविध अंगानी स्त्री समानतेचा आणि उत्कर्षाचा विचार करण्यात आला.

महिला विषयक हक्क व कायदे या सर्वांमुळे महिलांची शिक्षणातील प्रगती उंचावली. आरोग्य विषयक मानसिकतेत सुधारणा झाली. महिलांचा मालमत्तेतील हक्क, महिला विषयक कायदयामुळे झालेली जनजागृती, शासकीय तसेच विविध क्षेत्रातील उपलब्ध झालेल्या नोकरीच्या संधी या स्थित्यंतरामुळे स्त्रीचे अवकाश अधिक विस्तीर्ण होऊ लागले आहे. स्वर्गीय राजीव गांधींच्या प्रेरणेतून नोकरीमधील ३० टक्के आरक्षण, राजकीय क्षेत्रात स्थानिक स्वराज्य संस्थेत ३३ टक्के आरक्षण, राजकीय क्षेत्रातील सहभाग वाढविण्याच्या दृष्टीने ५० टक्के आरक्षण या सारख्या गोष्टी स्त्री विकासाला पोषक आणि पूरक व्यासपीठ मिळवून देणाऱ्या आहेत. एका बाजूला शिक्षणाचे आणि अर्थाजनाचे हे धवल चित्र आपल्या समोर असले तरी बदललेल्या काळानुसार, बदललेल्या सामाजिक स्थितीगतीनुसार महिलांसमोरील आव्हाने ही सातत्याने वाढत आहेत. वाढत्या हिंसाचाराच्या घटना चिंतनीय आहेत आणि म्हणूनच महिलांच्या संरक्षणाचा विचार अनिवार्य होतो आहे.

दुसरे महिला धोरण होऊन एक तप लोटले. तब्बल बारा वर्षांनी बदललेल्या परिस्थितीशी सुसंगत, आणि स्त्रीला एक माणूस म्हणून निर्भयतेने जगता यावे, निसर्गाने आणि कायदयाने दिलेले अधिकार सक्षमतेने वापरता यावेत यासाठी सर्वकष पातळीवर विचार होऊन विविध विषय आणि उपसमित्या यांच्या संयुक्त अभ्यासातून महिलांच्या सक्षमीकरणाला गतिशील करणारे, महिलांना सन्मान-प्रतिष्ठा, शिक्षण-सुरक्षा, आरक्षण-संरक्षण अशा बहुस्तरीय परीघाचे तिसरे महिला धोरण जागतिक महिला दिनाच्या निमित्ताने ८ मार्च २०१३ रोजी जाहीर झाले.

स्त्रियांच्या मानसिक परिवर्तनाला पूरक आणि प्रगतीला वर्ध्निष्णू करणाऱ्या समानतेला पोषक असे वातावरण निर्माण करणाऱ्या, तिसऱ्या महिला विषयक धोरणामध्ये एकूण २५ प्रकरणांचा समावेश आहे. स्त्री शक्तीला आणि स्त्री अस्मितेला सकतेने फुलण्याची, बहुआयामी प्रयत्नांची जाणीव सदर धोरणात निदर्शनास येते. देवदासी, संगीतबारी, तमाशा कलावंत, पुरुष कैद्यांच्या पत्नी, तृतीयपंथी यांना सन्मानपूर्वक जीवन प्रदान करणाऱ्या योजना शासनाने सदर धोरणात आल्या आहेत. त्याचबरोबर सर्व स्तरांतील महिलांसाठी स्त्री केंद्रित अर्थसंकल्प, जाणीव जागृती, संनियंत्रण पर्यवेक्षण, शिक्षण संशोधन, आरोग्य, व्यसनमुक्ती, पर्यावरण, सांस्कृतिक धोरण, महिलांसाठी पाळणाघरे, महिलांसाठी सनद, महिला लोकप्रतिनिधी, बचतगट, असंघटित कामगार, अपंग आणि मतिमंद महिला, लैंगिक शोषण झालेल्या महिलांना आधार देणाऱ्या विविध योजनांची निर्मिती या धोरणाद्वारे केली गेली.

भारतीय संविधानामध्ये सर्व भारतीय स्त्रियांना समान अधिकार (कलम १४) देश व राज्याकडून होणाऱ्या भेदभावापासून संरक्षण (कलम १५(१)), समान संधी (कलम १६) समान कामासाठी समान वेतन (कलम ३१ डी) यांची हमी देण्यात आली आहे. याबरोबरच स्त्रिया व मुले यांच्यासाठी विशेष कायदे करण्यात आलेले आहेत. (कलम १५)(क) स्त्रियांच्या प्रतिष्ठेला हानी पोहोचविणाऱ्या प्रथा बंद करणे (कलम ५१ (ए) (इ)) आणि कामाच्या ठिकाणी न्याय व सुरक्षित परिस्थिती आणि प्रसूति साहाय्य देण्याची सोय (कलम ४२) अशा वेगवेगळ्या कायद्यांची संविधानामध्ये सोय आहे आणि ही कायदेशीर तरतूद स्त्रियांच्या समान न्यायासाठी आणि अन्यायकारक परिस्थितीमध्ये उपकारक अशा स्वरूपाची आहे.

या तिसऱ्या धोरणातील विविध योजनांचा अभ्यास केला तर असे दिसून येते की, महिलांच्या उन्नतीसाठी, सर्वांगीण विकासासाठी, सुढ मानसिक आणि शारीरिक स्वास्थ्यासाठी व्यापक अशी उद्दिष्टे अंतर्भूत असलेले हे तिसरे धोरण आहे. यामध्ये मुलींचे

घटते प्रमाण कमी करण्याच्या प्रभावी उपायोजनांची तजवीज दिसते आहे. स्त्रीच्या पारंपारिक प्रतिमेला धक्का देऊन आधुनिक स्वरूपाची स्वबळावर उभी राहणारी नवी प्रतिमा निर्माण करण्याचा प्रयत्न आहे. धर्म, वंश जात, सत्ता प्रदेश या कारणांमुळे वाढत्या हिंसाचाराचा प्रतिकार करण्यासाठी आवश्यक ते पाठबळ व तशा प्रकारच्या हिंसा घडणार नाहीत यासाठी उपाययोजनांवर भर आहे.

स्त्रीला समानता प्रदान होण्यासाठी पुरुष मानसिकता बदलवण्यावर भर देऊन स्त्री-पुरुष संबंधाची निकोप वाढ होण्यासाठीचे ही प्रयत्न या धोरणात आहेत. त्यामुळे सर्व क्षेत्रातील समान संधीची उपलब्धता निर्माण करण्याचे उद्दिष्ट गाठता येऊ शकते. सर्व क्षेत्रातील स्त्रियांच्या हितांचे संवर्धन होण्याच्या दृष्टीने नियोजनातील आणि निर्णय प्रक्रियेतील त्यांचा जाणीवपूर्वक सहभाग हे महत्वाचे उद्दिष्ट अंतर्भूत आहे. मुळ प्रवाहापासून दूर गेलेल्या अनेक घटकांच्या पुनर्वसनाबरोबरच अन्यायकारक व अनिष्ट प्रथांपासून मुक्तता करणारे प्रतिबंधक उपाय अशा गुणवत्तापूर्ण उद्दिष्टांनी हे धोरण परिपूर्ण दिसते.

समान संधीच्या प्रदानातून सबलीकरण प्रक्रियेचा आपण विचार करतो त्यावेळी सबलीकरण या संकल्पनेतील अंतर्भूत गोष्टींचा परामर्श अनिवार्य ठरतो. सबलीकरणामध्ये स्वतः निर्णय घेण्याचे सामर्थ्य आवश्यक आहे आणि योग्य निर्णय घेण्यासाठी माहिती आणि इतर साधने वापरस उपलब्ध असणे गरजेचे ठरते. निर्णय करण्यासाठीचा विस्तृत पर्याय असणे, सामूहिक स्वरूपाचा निर्णय घेताना दृढ निश्चय घेण्याची क्षमता, परिवर्तन घडवून आणण्याच्या योग्यतेबाबत सकारात्मक विचारसरणी असणे नितांत गरजेचे आहे. वैयक्तिक किंवा सामूहिक सामर्थ्यामध्ये सुधारणा घडविण्याचे कौशल्य आत्मसात करण्याची योग्यता याच प्रक्रियेत मोडते. लोकशाही पध्दतीने इतरांचे दृष्टिकोन बदलण्याचे कौशल्य या प्रक्रियेत महत्वाचे ठरते. अखंड आणि स्व-पुरस्कृत विकास प्रक्रिया आणि परिवर्तनात सहभाग घेणे, स्वतःची सकारात्मक प्रतिमा तयार करणे आणि नकारात्मक जाणिवांवर ताबा मिळविणे अशा अनेक गोष्टी सबलीकरणात अनुस्यूत आहे. स्त्रियांचे आध्यात्मिक, राजनैतिक, सामाजिक किंवा आर्थिक सामर्थ्य वाढविणे यामध्ये स्वतःच्या क्षमतांसंबंधी असलेला आत्मविश्वास वाढविणे अपेक्षित आहे.

या सर्व धोरणात्मक प्रवाहात एक मुद्दा अधोरेखित करावा लागतो तो असा की, १९४८ साली संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघाने मानवी हक्कांची सनद तयार केली त्यातही स्त्रियांचे काही वेगळे प्रश्न आहेत ही विचारप्रणाली अस्तित्वात नव्हती. या वैचारिक उगमासाठी ही

१९७५ साल उजाडावे लागले. स्त्री उन्नत झाली नाही तर समाजही उन्नत होणार नाही. ही जाणीव होऊन संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघाने प्रथम आंतरराष्ट्रीय महिला वर्ष जाहीर केले आणि त्याचे औचित्य साधून भारत सरकारने डॉ. नीरा देसाई यांच्या नेतृत्वाखालील समस्येकडे वाटचाल स्त्रीपरिस्थिती हा दर्शन विषयक अहवाल तयार केला. त्याच्या पाठोपाठ डॉ. इला भट यांनी श्रमशक्ती अहवाल तयार केला. स्व. राजीव गांधी यांच्या पुढाकाराने प्रॉस्पेक्टिव प्लॅन तयार झाला. संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघाने एका लयीत स्त्रियांना विकास साधण्यासाठी आंतरराष्ट्रीय संकेत तयार केले. १९७९ मधील सीडॉ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against women हा एक महत्वाचा दस्तऐवज आहे. भारताने त्यातील काही मुद्दे वगळून त्यावर सही केली आहे.

एकूणच महिला समानता धोरणात्मक तरतुदींवर वरील सर्व उपरोक्त घटनांचे आणि इतिहासाचे संस्कार आहेत आणि त्यातूनच स्त्री समानतेची ही धोरणे उदयास आली आहेत. सन १९९४ मध्ये संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघात झालेल्या घडामोडी या पार्श्वभूमीवरच पहिले महिला धोरण अस्तित्वात आले. २००१ साली दुसरे धोरण कार्यान्वित झाले. महत्वाची गोष्ट ही की, महिला धोरण बनवित असताना प्रत्येक तीन वर्षांनी महिला धोरणाचा पाठपुरावा करण्याची व प्रत्येक तीन वर्षांनी महिला धोरणाचे मूल्यांकन करून नवीन धोरण तयार करण्याची प्रक्रिया अमलात आणावी अशी योजना होती. महिला सबलीकरणामध्ये समाजाची भूमिका या विषयाच्या अंतर्भूत जो उपविषय आहे त्यामध्ये महिला सबलीकरण प्रक्रियेत समाजाचे नेमके उत्तरदायित्व कोणते ? असा विचार करताना या सामाजिक उत्तरदायित्वाचे पहिले अपयश या ठिकाणी माझ्या निदर्शनास येते.

या धोरण निर्मिती प्रक्रियेत दुसऱ्या धोरणानंतर तिसरे महिला धोरण आले जाण्यासाठी, कार्यान्वित होण्यासाठी तब्बल १२ वर्षांचा कालावधी जातो, ही बाब चिंतनीय आहे. कारण समाजाचे उत्तरदायित्व ही संकल्पना सरकारी यंत्रणांनाही लागू पडते. एखादी यंत्रणा राबविली जाते, कार्यप्रवण होते म्हणजे तरी काय होते तर त्या यंत्रणेमधली माणसे कार्यप्रवण होतात. अनेक व्यक्तींच्या समूहातून समाज नावाची एक व्यापक संकल्पना आकाराला येत असते. आणि म्हणूनच, एखाद्या यंत्रणेला हे धोरणात्मक निर्णय घेण्यासाठी १२ वर्षे जावी लागतात, याचाच अर्थ हा की त्यामध्ये अंतर्भूत मानवी घटकांकडून प्रस्थापित विषयाबद्दल अनास्था असते किंवा विशेष औत्सुक्य नसते आणि अशा प्रकारची उदासीनता ही कोणत्याही व्यवस्थापनासाठी चांगली नसते. कारण कार्यप्रणाली निर्माण करणारी माणसे, ती राबवणारी माणसे आणि ज्यांच्यासाठी

या योजना किंवा धोरणे अस्तित्वात येतात तो घटक यांची त्या कार्याबद्दलची आस्था, तत्परता आणि आनंद या तीन गोष्टी असणे आत्यंतिक गरजेचे असते. तरच समाजातील विविध घटकांसाठी निर्माण होणाऱ्या योजना, धोरणे खऱ्या अर्थाने समाजापर्यंत पोहोचतात आणि फलश्रुत होतात.

व्यवस्थापनातील सामूहिक उत्तरदायित्वांमध्ये अतिशय महत्वाचा भाग, म्हणजे धोरणातील उद्दिष्टांबद्दल असलेली अंतःस्थ तळमळ! विविध योजना तळागाळा-वाड्यावास्त्यांपर्यंत पोचवणाऱ्या प्रशासनामध्ये जे मानवी घटक कार्यरत आहेत, त्यांच्याकडून परस्पर सहकार्य आणि उद्दिष्टपूर्तीबद्दलची प्रामाणिक तळमळ यातून स्वच्छ आणि भ्रष्टाचारविरहित कार्यप्रणालीची अंमलबजावणी होऊ शकते आणि ही गोष्ट धोरणांच्या यशस्वितेसाठी ही बाब महत्वाची ठरते.

यानंतर विचार करावा लागतो तो ज्या स्त्रियांसाठी या बहुआयामी योजना आल्या गेल्या आहेत त्यांच्या मानसिकतेचा. कारण केवळ शहरातील स्त्री सक्षम होवून राष्ट्र सशक्त होत नाही, तर खेड्यापाड्यातील, दुर्गम भागातील स्त्री सबल होणं हेच खरे परिवर्तन होय आणि त्या स्त्रीला मिळणारी शिक्षणाची संधी, स्वतःला सिध्द करण्याची संधी, वेगळे काही करून दाखवताना मिळणारे प्रोत्साहन आणि त्या अनुषंगाने आवश्यक ठरणारे नैतिक पाठबळ या मध्ये महत्वाचा आणि गुणवत्तापूर्ण सहभाग हवा तो तिच्या जवळच्या नातेसंबंधातील माणसांचा तसेच तिच्या कार्यक्षेत्रात संबंधित असणाऱ्या माणसांचा. एकूणच तिच्या परिघातील मानवी घटकांची तिच्या प्रगतीकडे पहाण्याची निकोप दृष्टी, आणि मदत करता आली नाही तरी किमान अडसर होणार नाही अशी वर्तनपध्दती ही या उत्तरदायित्वांमधली एक विशेष गोष्ट आहे. कारण विविध धोरणांच्या माध्यमातून स्त्री जेव्हा विकास करू पाहते. त्यावेळी तिची अर्धी ताकद तिच्या जवळच्या लोकांकडून होणाऱ्या अडसराना बाजूला करण्यातच खर्च होते, त्यातून विकास प्रक्रिया मंद होते आणि उद्दिष्टपूर्तीचा आवश्यक तो उच्चांक गाठला जाऊ शकत नाही. जवळच्या व्यक्तींच्या सौहार्दपूर्ण सहकारानंतर अपेक्षित आहे तो समाजातील लोकांचा स्त्री जगताशी असणारा वर्तनव्यवहार. विविध धोरणांच्या मदतीने कोणत्याही स्तरावरील स्त्री मग ती सधन असो वा निर्धन. सुविद्य असो वा निरक्षर, सौंदर्यवती असो वा सुमार व्यक्तिमत्त्वाची-तिच्या व्यक्तिमत्व विकासामध्ये एकूण समाजाची भूमिका फार महत्वाची ठरते. यामध्ये सर्वात महत्वाची गोष्ट घडणे आवश्यक आहे ती म्हणजे स्त्री, स्त्रीची सखी झाली पाहिजे. समस्त स्त्री वर्गामध्ये

एकसंघत्वाची भावना वाढीस लागली पाहिजे. असूया, ईर्ष्या, या भावनांचे उच्चाटन होणं फार गरजेचे आहे. महिला सबल होताना समग्र स्त्रीशक्ती संघटित होणे गरजेचे आहे. त्यामुळे विकासाला पूरक अशी पार्श्वभूमी तर तयार होईल त्याखेरीज निकोप संबंध प्रस्थापित झाल्यामुळे सामाजिक आरोग्यही वाढीस लागेल.

एकूण स्त्री सबल आणि सक्षम होत असताना भारतीय पुरुष प्रधान संस्कृतीला छेद देऊन एक उदारमतवदी दृष्टीकोण वृद्धिंगत होणे गरजेचे आहे. अर्थात पूर्वी इतके कोणत्याही क्षेत्रात पुरुषाचे दृष्टिकोण आता स्त्रीविश्वासासाठी संकुचित राहिलेले नाहीत. पण त्या दृष्टिकोणामध्ये अजून सशक्तता आणि खोली येणे अपेक्षित आहे आणि त्याबरोबर सर्वात महत्वाचा आहे. तो तिच्या अस्मितेचा आदर किंवा उचित सन्मान! 'मी स्त्री आहे' या सहानुभूतीच्या अपेक्षेत आता स्त्रिया राहिलेल्या नाहीत. शिक्षण, कायदा आणि समान अधिकाराने त्यांना निर्भयता आणि आत्मविश्वासाचे कोंदण नक्कीच दिले आहे पण तरीही प्रगतीच्या या वाटेवर समाजाच्या मानसिकतेमध्ये परिवर्तनाची आवश्यकता आहे. समाजामधील सर्वसाधारण स्त्रीविषयी आता दृष्टिकोणात निकोपता आहे. परंतु देवदासी, संगीतबारी, तमाशा कलावंत, तृतीयपंथी यांच्या विषयी आजही अज्ञान आणि गैरसमजुती यांचे प्राबल्य दिसून येते. अपंग, मतिमंद महिला, लैंगिक शोषण झालेल्या महिला यांच्या पुनर्वसनासाठी समाजाचा कृतियुक्त सहभाग अपेक्षित आहे. या सहभागासाठी आवश्यक ठरते ती स्वयंप्रेरणा आणि स्वयंप्रेरित होण्यासाठी व्यक्तींची पूरक अशी मनोवृत्ती आणि मानसिकता तयार होणे अतिशय महत्त्वाचे आणि गरजेचे आहे. सामूहिक मतपरिवर्तन किंवा समूहाच्या जडणघडणीचा आपण जेव्हा विचार करतो त्यावेळी एक गोष्ट प्रकर्षाने लक्षात घ्यावी लागते ती म्हणजे समूहाचे मन तयार होणे किंवा परिवर्तन होणे ही गोष्ट एका दिवसात किंवा थोड्या कालावधीत घडणारी गोष्ट नव्हे. बाल्यावस्थेपासून तशा प्रकारच्या वैचारिक संस्कारांची पेरणी होणे आवश्यक

आहे. कारण अनेक व्यक्तींच्या समूहातून समाज बनतो आणि म्हणूनच सामाजिक उत्तरदायित्व ही संकल्पना व्यापक आहे. आणि त्या उत्तरदायित्वाच्या यशस्वी फलश्रुतीसाठी घरात जन्माला येणाऱ्या पुल्लिंगी घटकावर स्त्रीविषयक दृष्टिकोनाचे आवश्यक ते संस्कार होणे ही मूलभूत बाब आहे. स्त्रीचे घरातील अस्तित्व, सामाजिक स्थान, तिला मिळणारी वागणूक, तिच्या कर्तृत्वाचा आदर, मुळात एक माणूस म्हणून तिचे हक्क अशा अनेक गोष्टींचा संस्कार घरात मूल जन्माला आल्यानंतर बाल्यावस्थेपासूनच होणे गरजेचे आहे. मुलगा म्हणून वाढवत असताना स्त्री विषयक, उदार, सशक्त दृष्टिकोनाचे

बीज पुरुषात रुजले पाहिजे. मुलीला घडवत असताना सबल, सक्षम स्त्रीच्या संस्कारांच्या अवगुंठनातूनच मुलीची वाढ आणि विकास केला पाहिजे. म्हणजे मग आपोआपच तद्विचारानुसारी समाजप्रवृत्ती तयार होईल आणि 'समाजाचं उत्तरदायित्व काय ?' असा विचार आपोआप थांबेल. स्त्रीच्या सबलीकरणासाठी, सक्षमीकरणासाठी समाजाने काही वेगळे प्रयत्न करायचे ही भूमिकाच नसेल. सबल स्त्री अगदी बालपणापासूनच घडवली जाईल, आणि त्या प्रक्रियेसाठी उपकारक अशा जाणिवांची निर्मिती ही समाजाकडून सहजभाव अशा स्वरूपात असेल. त्यासाठी वेगळे काही करण्याची गरजच निर्माण होणार नाही. नातेसंबंधात संपर्कात येणाऱ्या प्रत्येक स्त्री रुपासाठी मग ती मुलगी, बहीण, मैत्रीण, प्रेयसी, पत्नी, आई तसेच कोणत्याही स्तरातील स्त्री साठी तिच्या व्यक्तित्वाला पूरक, पोषक अशी मनोभूमी प्रत्येक माणसाकडून आपोआपच तयार होईल.

स्त्री विकासासाठी, सक्षमीकरणासाठी आवश्यक असणारी मानसिकता ही आमच्या आयुष्याचा एक भाग असणे आणि श्वासाइतक्या संथ लयीत तो सहजतेने समाजाकडून आविष्कृत होणे हीच उत्तम सामाजिक दायित्वाची परिपूर्तीच नव्हे काय ?

Constitutional and Legal Safeguards for Women to Ensure Equality

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Abstract : As we all know that India was famous for its male dominating society but today it has become female oriented. The Indian Constitution has granted equality to women in all fields. Every policies, plans, programs aim at development of Women. Indian Government has taken vital measures for working women. Some special initiatives are made to protect women. National Commission for Women was established in February 1992 to receive the provision related to the constitutional and legal safeguards for women. In 1992, the 73rd constitutional amendment were passed by the parliament in which one-third seats are reserved for women in both rural and urban areas. The national plan of action for the girl child was established in 1991-2000 to ensure survival, protection and development of the girl and aiming to brighten up their future. The department of women and child development has prepared a National Policy for the employment of women in the year 2001. The aim of this policy was about development, advancement and empowerment of women. For the sake of protection, IPC has identified crimes like :- Rape Section under 375 of IPC, sexual harassment under section 509 of IPC, etc. There are also some crimes, which are identified under special laws. They are - The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, The Special Marriage Act, 1954 so on and so forth. After introducing so many laws and provisions for women to protect them and their interest, still we find women are harmed, assaulted, disrespected in the "so called society" where women are seen as an 'object'. We can see Nirbhaya's case; how brutally she was raped and killed but the rapist who got the punishment after one and half year. Indian Constitution needs to introduce more laws and apply them strictly, so that innocent women can have justice.

Introduction

This paper will focus on constitutional and legal rights for women, which are introduced for women to ensure them equality in the society and provide them better opportunities. The research shows how women were being treated in the earlier centuries and how they improved their position in the society.

Constitutional Rights

Constitutional rights are those rights, which are granted by the government to their citizens so that they can lead a disciplined and chaos-free life. It consists 395 Articles in 22 parts and 8 schedules, 80,000 words and took only two years, eleven months and eighteen days to build. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was the father of Indian constitution. He was pragmatic and visionary in his approach.

Historical Background of India

In the 18th century, we have seen how women were being treated. The cases like *zamindari* system, *Sati*, Child marriage, *Pardah pratha* forced government to introduce laws for women.

In 1829, "*Sati Pratha*" was abolished by Raja Ram Mohan Roy. In this system, widows were burned with their demised husband. In the past, people never thought about re-marriage. They treated widows very badly as if she were "untouchable".

Child marriage was one of the cause of ruining

women's life. At the age of seven, little girls used to get married as at that time women were seen as a burden.

"*Pardah Pratha*" was another issue, where women are not allowed to show their face to any outsider and only allowed to talk to their husband and children.

India today is known for its Secularism, Democratic, Sovereign, Diversity and Culture. But there was a time in India, where women were not even educated as the society believed that education will turn woman into an uncultured person. Women at that time was dependent upon their families. They did not have their own identity. Women in the past struggled a lot to get equality, education, better opportunity and political positions.

Present Situation

In the 21st century, we can see that women are progressing in every field. After the introduction of constitutional laws, they are getting their position in the society yet many more steps need to be taken. 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments provide access to women in decision making process. Now 49% of votes are drawn by women. Right to education plays an important role in removing gender inequality, gives equal access to resource, power, decision making and strengthen the position of women. Violence, sex ratio, high literacy rate, infant mortality was a decline after the rights are established. In all these issues we saw qualitative change.

To enhance the position of women many

programmes have been directed and many private NGO's are coming forward to help. Courses like -personality development, skill training , self- defense are introduced as a part of these programmes .In rural areas too NGO's involved in work with women and provided them with livelihood and education.

Some Constitutional Provisions Made to Protect Rights for Women and Dignity

1. Article 15 ensures that no discrimination be made against its citizen on the basis of caste , class , creed , race , sex , place of birth or region.
2. Article 16 says no discrimination be made by the state against its citizen including women while providing jobs.
3. Article 39 to pursue a policy of providing the minimum necessities of life of the citizen without discriminating between men and women .
4. Article 42 to provide human condition for the citizens to fulfill their occupational obligations . The state take it as its responsibility to provide maternity benefits for its women employees .
5. Article 24 ensures reservation of seats in gram panchayat for women and to improve social condition of women .

Problems Which Need to be Rectified

1. In rural areas proper sanitation is needed.
2. Reservation without empowerment would not help women to achieve their objective.
3. Inequality is still present in the society. The way men see women should be changed .
4. Lack of political will .
5. Lack of awareness.
6. Lack of social and economic empowerment .

Government should stress on equal work and elimination of discrimination in employment. Universal education for women should be provided- "Educate a man and you educate an individual , educate a woman and you educate a family " .

Legal Safeguards for Women

To uphold the Constitutional mandate, the State has enacted various legislative measures intended to ensure equal rights, to counter social discrimination and various forms of violence and atrocities and to provide support services especially to working women.

Although women may be victims of any of the crimes

such as 'Murder', 'Robbery', 'Cheating' etc, the crimes, which are directed specifically against women, are characterized as 'Crime against Women'. These are broadly classified under two categories.

(1) The Crimes Identified Under the Indian Penal Code (IPC)

- Rape (Sec. 376 IPC)
- Sexual Harassment (Sec. 509 IPC)
- Homicide for Dowry, Dowry Deaths or their attempts (Sec. 302/304-B IPC)

(2) The Crimes identified under the Special Laws (SLL)

Although all laws are not gender specific, the provisions of law affecting women significantly have been reviewed periodically and amendments carried out to keep pace with the emerging requirements. Some acts which have special provisions to safeguard women and their interests are:

- (i) The Special Marriage Act, 1954
- (ii) The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955

RAPE (Section 376 of Indian Penal Code)

It is commonly agreed that rape is a crime of violence, and sex is the weapon used. It directly or indirectly affects more than a million people in an year. Rape destroys the entire psychology of a woman and pushes her into deep emotional crisis. The physical scars may heal up, but the mental scar will always remain. Both women and men are victims. Some victims feels that they were to blame for their attack, that they were in the wrong place at the wrong time, they should not have dressed in such a provocative fashion, because they were intoxicated they could not ward off their attackers and many other such reasons. There are many circumstances of rape such as date rape, stranger-to-stranger rape, jail and prison rapes. To create a charge of rape the following must be established :

- (i) There must be a sexual intercourse by a man with a woman and;
- (ii) sexual intercourse must be under circumstances falling under any of the six clauses of section 375 of Indian Penal Code.

Rape cases in India increased by 3.6% to 22,172 in 2010 from 21,397 cases the previous year, according to figures from the National Crime Records Bureau. Nearly 68,000 rape cases were registered across the country during 2009-11 but only 16,000 rapist were sentenced to prison, presenting a dismal picture of conviction of sexual offenders. There were 24,270 victims of rape, out

of 24,206 reported. Rape case in country, 10.6% of total victim of rape were girls under 14 years of age, while 19% were teen-age girls, 54.7% were women in the age group 18-30 years. However, 15% victims were in the age group of 30-50 years while 0.6% were over 50 years of age. Reasons why rape doesn't get reported included many reasons, primary reason being the anonymity desired by the family.

Sexual Harassment (Section 509 of Indian Penal Code)

One of the evils of the modern society is the sexual harassment caused to the women, particularly the working by their male counterparts and other members of the society.

Sexual harassment is a criminal offence which can destroy human dignity and freedom. The legal definition of 'sexual harassment' varies from country to country; however, the broad definition of sexual harassment is that of unwelcome sexual advances or verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, which has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with the individual's work performance, or creating an intimidating, hostile, abusive or offensive working environment.

Sexual harassment affects women's mental health and self-esteem, often because of the general tendency to blame the victim based on the belief that it was her inability to handle the situation that led to the harassment. The number of such cases has decreased (8,570 cases) by 14.0% during the year 2011 over the previous year (9,961 cases). Andhra Pradesh has reported 42.7% (3,658 cases) followed by Maharashtra 12.5% (1,071 cases) of total incidences during the year 2011. Andhra Pradesh has reported the highest crime rate (4.3) as compared to the National average of 0.7.

Homicide for Dowry, Dowry Deaths or their attempts (Section. 302/304-B of Indian Penal Code)

Dowry remains the major reason for discrimination and injustice towards women in India. When dowry demands are not met, it precipitates into serious consequence for the young bride. The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 marks the first attempt by the Government of India to recognize dowry as a social evil and to curb its practice. The act was modified with the Dowry Prohibition Amendment Act of 1984, which has again been modified with Dowry Prohibition Bill 1986. Women's organization have played key role in this process of change. The 1961 Act define dowry and makes the practice of dowry- giving and taking, a punishable offence. However, it is ridiculous to see that even among highly educated

sections, the articles of dowry are proudly exhibited in the marriage as a status symbol. The dowry abuse is increasing in India. The most severe is 'bride burning', the burning of women whose dowries were not considered sufficient by their husband or in-laws. Most of these incidents are reported as accidental burns in the kitchen or are disguised as suicide. Dowry is one of those social evils that no educated woman will own up with pride; still many are adhering to it. Practices of dowry tend to subordinate women in the society. Women should be more economically empowered and should be educated properly regarding the various legal provisions; only then this evil menace could possibly be eradicated from Indian social system.

Conclusion

Though the status of women in India, both historically and socially, has been one of respect and reverence, but the hard truth is that even today, they are struggling for their own identity, shouting for diffusion of their voices and fighting for their own esteem. Every day, they cross among the fears and fraught for individuality. Despite the constitutional guarantee of equality of sexes, rampant discrimination and exploitation of women in India continues. The incidence of bride-burning, woman battering, molestation and ill-treatment of women are on increase. It is high time now that women should get a respectable and dignified position in the Indian society. Awareness in the women as well as society should be created and their equal rights should be effectively implemented. Crimes against women should be made punishable and a research should be done on every crime which comes to the light.

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Constitutional and Legal Safeguards for Women to Ensure Equality with Special Reference to Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal Act, 9/12/2013)

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Abstract : Women in our male dominated society are subjected to various types of ill treatment of which sexual harassment is the worst. It is an attack not only on the body of woman but on her mind; in fact on her identity as a whole. Very little is spoken about sexual harassment and very little is done. The present day legislations for the protection of women are inadequate and are half heartedly implemented. To create awareness and to sensitise the academicians and students about the contemporary legislations. Generally instances of sexual harassment go unnoticed or are covered under the veil of eve-teasing or banter. The Indian Constitution has extensively incorporated provisions to ensure the equal status of women in Fundamental rights, Directive Principles of State Policy and Fundamental Duties.

To deal with the cases of harassment of women as they come out of their *protected* environment, special legislation was made to that effect. The Act has extensively defined 'aggrieved woman', workplace, and sexual harassment. It will be helpful for women to fight against the harassment. Internal Complaints Committee is functional at the organizational level and the Local Complaints Committee is working at the district level.

Fear of losing the economic freedom and income, fear of disbelief, lack of power of the victim vis-à-vis the harasser and lack of awareness about sexual harassment and its grievance mechanisms are deterrence to complaints.

Introduction

Women in our male dominated society are subjected to various types of ill treatment of which sexual harassment is the worst. It is an attack not only on the body of woman but on her mind; in fact on her identity as a whole. Very little is spoken about sexual harassment and very little is done.

According to study of International Labour Organisation conducted in 1992 sexual harassment is closely linked with power and takes place in society which often treat women as sex objects and second class citizens.

Women have entered the workplace much later compared to men challenging the notion of patriarchal division of labour. Generation of habits considering the workplace as a male domain confronts the emergence of new women workforce resulting in major shifts. Because of this outlook of the workplace, men women are often made to feel that they are being *allowed* to be there, puts women at the receiving end of the professional hostility which is expressed through the harassment of female colleagues and subordinates.

Hypothesis: - The present day legislations for the protection of women are inadequate and are half heartedly implemented.

Need for Study: - To create awareness and to sensitise the academicians and students about the contemporary legislations. Generally instances of sexual harassment go unnoticed or are covered under the veil of eve-teasing or banter.

Legal Provisions / Background

Constitutional Provisions: - The Indian Constitution has

extensively incorporated following provisions to ensure the equal status of women.

Fundamental rights - Right to Equality, Article 14 and 15, Right to Freedom, Article 19 and 21

Directive Principles of State Policy – Article 39 and 42

Fundamental Duties – Part IVA Article 51A (e)

International Conventions: - Various provisions of the international organizations have highlighted the equal status of women. The most important of those is Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women that is CEDAW(1979) which was ratified by India in 25th June 1993 provides for the elimination of discrimination against women in the field of employment because the right to work is an inalienable right of all human beings, same employment opportunities and free choice of profession and employment (Article 11).

Landmark Judgments:-

Vishakha and others V/s State of Rajasthan 13th August 1997

The Supreme Court in this famous judgement represented a landmark legal decision. For the first time Sexual harassment was defined in an official legal context and outlined specific, mandatory provisions to ensure the health and safety of women at workplace. It places the onus of responsibility for the protection against sexual harassment on the employer. Failure on the part of the employer to comply with the mandatory creation of organizational setup to counter sexual harassment constitutes a contempt of court.

The guidelines interpret sexual harassment as that behavior which constitutes “unwelcome or uninvited

attention or the imposition of behaviour with sexual overtones on women co-workers". So sexual harassment is determined not by the perpetrator but by the victim.

Medha Kotwal Lele and others v/s Union of India 26th April 2004

In the years after the *Vishakha* ruling there has been significant ambiguity surrounding the exact implementation of *Vishakha* guidelines. In the letter by Medha Kotwal Lele which was converted to writ Petition by the Supreme Court in 2001, following issues were brought into light - *Vishakha* guidelines were not being uniformly and extensively implemented throughout the country and there are government failures in its implementation. There is need to have specific measures. *Vishakha* guidelines did not address all workplace relationship with the third parties and servicetakerse.g. students in college/university, patient in hospital.

The Supreme Court in its various interim orders cleared up the ambiguities in the implementation process. At the same time directed the Union Legislature to be "extremely serious" about getting a law passed on the subject of sexual harassment at workplace.

Ordinary Law: - To deal with the issues of the sexual harassment both the civil and criminal laws have been passed by the Indian parliament. The civil law to that effect is the Sexual Harassment of Women At Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act. And the criminal law with the amendment in the Indian Penal Code Section 354A:-

354A.(1) A man committing any of the following acts—

- (i) physical contact and advances involving unwelcome and explicit sexual overtures; or
 - (ii) a demand or request for sexual favours; or
 - (iii) showing pornography against the will of a woman; or
 - (iv) making sexually coloured remarks, shall be guilty of the offence of sexual harassment.
- (2) Any man who commits the offence specified in clause (i) or clause (ii) or clause (iii) of sub-section (1) shall be punished with rigorous imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine, or with both.
- (3) Any man who commits the offence specified in clause (iv) of sub-section (1) shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to one year, or with fine, or with both.

The Sexual Harassment Of Women At Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition And Redressal) Act, 9/12/2013.

To deal with the cases of harassment of women as they come out of their *protected* environment, special

legislation was made to that effect. The details of it are as follows-

Provisions of the Act

The Act has extensively defined 'aggrieved woman', workplace, and sexual harassment. It will be helpful for women to fight against the harassment.

Aggrieved woman:- A woman who is in relation to the workplace and who is of any age- employed or not, who alleges to be subjected to the act of sexual harassment. The domestic servants, agricultural labourers and unorganized working sectors women are also included. In the other category female students of college and university and patients of hospitals who are not employed but they are in the ambit of sexual harassment. The complaint can be raised by the women employees against the clients of service industry like banks and airlines.

Sexual harassment:- The conduct of a sexual nature or based on sex affecting the dignity of a woman which is unwelcome, unreasonable and offensive to the recipient. This conduct could be physical, verbal, non-verbal or display of objects.

There are two types of sexual harassment *quid pro quo* and hostile environment.

Quid pro quo means 'this for that' or 'something for something'. It refers to a demand by a person in authority, such as supervisor. It is a type of exchange to give or take away employment benefit for the sexual demands. It is an abuse of authority and power.

Hostile environment refers to unwelcome physical contact and sexually coloured remarks. It interferes with a woman's work performance and creates an abusive and offensive work environment. It can be by any member of the organization.

Workplace:- The workplace is not limited to the 'geographical workplace'. For the purposes of Act it means either in the context of workplace relationships or while performing professional duties. This means that if the harassment takes place outside the working hours and outside the premises of the organization, it is considered to be the sexual harassment of the workplace.

Grievance Handling Mechanism

Internal Complaints Committee – Every employer of a workplace, where more than 10 workers are employed, should constitute an 'Internal Complaint Committee.' It shall consist of the following members-

- a senior woman as Presiding officer.
- two members amongst the employees who have experience of social work and have legal knowledge.

- one member of the NGO committed to the cause of women.

Local Complaints Committee

The Collector or Deputy Collector of for every district to exercise powers and functions under this Act. It should deal with the complaints from establishments where the ICC has not constituted or if the complaint is against the employer himself.

LCC shall consist of-

- The chairperson, who is the eminent woman in the field of social work.
- One member to be nominated from amongst the women working in the block or ward
- two members from NGOs
- One woman nominee belonging to SC/ST or OBC or minority community.
- One ex-officio member dealing with social welfare or women development.

The complaint committee has to inquire into the complaint, with principles of natural justice. The respondent has to file his reply within 10 working days. The complaint committee should send one copy to the respondent within 7 working days to get a reply. A complaint shall include 6 copies with supporting documents.

Limitations on Action:-

The women who are vulnerable to such offences are generally new recruits, widows, divorcees, single women, those appointed on contract or other women who have got jobs on compassionate grounds. Such women are those who are not so senior in hierarchy, experience and authority. Also the women belonging to minority communities – either religious or social, disabled are vulnerable to the sexual harassment. As these women are not so senior they prefer not to complain against the harassment.

Deterrence to complain:-

There is a fear of losing employment particularly to the migrants and domestic workers. There is a fear of losing the economic freedom and income. At some work places there is a fear of transfer.

The reporting of crime does not take place because there is a fear of disbelief. The woman may be labeled as a woman who provokes men. The woman could be labeled as frigid and who doesn't understand compliments. The women who complain about sexual harassment are often branded as 'trouble makers', 'mentally unstable' or incompetent.

There is lack of power of the victim vis-à-vis the harasser. Also there is lack of awareness about sexual harassment and its grievance mechanisms.

Effects of Sexual Harassment

During the course of harassment the woman suffers the range of emotional and physical effects. The physical effects could be nausea, loss of appetite, headaches, and fatigue. The emotional effects could be humiliation, anxiety, depression and loss of motivation. The overall impact could be absenteeism, decrease in productivity, and a loss of confidence in one's ability.

Conclusion

After the outrage of Nirbhaya Case, and also the explosion of Tarun Tejpal and Justice A.K. Ganguly scandals the reforms were introduced in the women's laws. The Verma Committee was constituted to rethink about the penalties in wide ranging sexual crimes against women. The Draft Proposal of this Sexual Harassment Bill (2010) was passed, but it has certain limitations.

Procedural limitations of the Act.

1. *Gender specific* – The protection under this Act is available only to women. The gays and lesbians are not covered under the provisions of this law.
2. *Conciliation process* – Section 10 of the Act provides for settling the matter between the aggrieved woman and the respondent through the conciliation process. But the sexual harassment cases usually have a power imbalance between the victim and accused which is implicit in the nature of offence. So the victim will be in a disadvantageous position. The stipulation of conciliation as the first step would end up the woman to give up legal remedies. Certain acts of sexual harassment are violation of woman's body and dignity which ought not be subject matter of compromise.
3. *Secrecy* - Section 16 of the Act prohibits the publication or making known contents of complaint and inquiry proceedings but because of such secrecy the wrong doer may affect the workplace.
4. *Victimisation* – No protection against the retaliation and victimization which is a very common consequence faced by individuals upon making a complaint of sexual harassment.
5. *No Suo moto Action by the Court* – The aggrieved woman has to lodge a complaint about the incident, in case of her physical and mental incapacity a complaint can be filed on behalf of her. This provision does not allow the court to take an action on its own.
6. *Non compliance to the rules* - It is mandatory for every

workplace which has more than 10 workers to constitute an ICC, but 90% of the workplaces have either not formed the committee or the formation is not as per the requirement. There has been non communication of these rules to the women employees. Most companies look at it as a legal mode, not as a resolution mode.

The discrimination against women violates the principle of equality of sexes, rights and respect for human dignity. It is an obstacle to the participation of women, and it hampers the prosperity, growth and development of society at large. Women have a right of stress free work environment.

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India Centre for Human Rights and Law

Representation of Women in Media

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Abstract: Although feminist activists and academicians concerned with the women's question have critically analyzed negative portrayal of women in media, research literature related to developing countries is uneven across regions. This paper focuses on the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986 and also to give a picture of representation of women in India of developing countries. Indian scholarship has been given far more attention than any other country.

With the introduction of new communication technologies, the power of mass media has grown in nature. This paper attempts to give a global picture of representation of women in the mass media—films, television and print media (newspapers and magazines).

Introduction

Indecency relates to public morals. It is related to state of mind. Random House Dictionary defines the word 'decency' as 'the state or quality of being decent, conformity to the recognized standard of propriety, good taste, modesty, etc.'

To prohibit indecent representation of women through advertisements or in publications, writing, painting, figures or in any other manner, the Parliament enacted the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986.

"Indecent Representation of Women" means the depiction in any manner of the figure of a woman, her form or body or any part thereof in such a way as to have the effect of being indecent, or derogatory to or denigrating women, or is likely to deprave, corrupt or injure the public morality or morals.

According to Section 3, no person shall publish or caused to be published, or arrange or take part in publication or exhibition of, any advertisement which contains indecent representation of women in any form.

Section 4 prohibits the production, sale and distribution of books, pamphlets, papers, slides, films, writings, drawings, paintings, photographs, representations, figures, etc. which present women in an indecent manner.

In *Chandra Kumari v/s Commissioner of Police, Hyderabad*¹ it was held that the dignity of women is protected by the Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

Section 7 provides that, 'A poster shall be deemed "obscene" if—

- a) Its effect is to tend to debase and corrupt persons who are likely, having regard to all relevant circumstances, to read or see the matter contained or embodied in it;
- b) It holds out or recommends to the public anything to be used as, or suggestive of, a sexual stimulant;

- c) It undermines the accepted canons of decency or encourages vicious or immoral acts;
- d) It lowers the sacredness of the institution of marriage or depicts scenes of rape, criminal assault on women or other immoralities;
- e) It exhibits the human form in a state of nudity or indecorous or sexual posture; or
- f) It encourages lasciviousness or arouses impure and lecherous thoughts.

Section 10 provides that every person who contravenes the provisions of the Act shall on conviction, be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to six months or with fine which shall not be less than Rs.2000/- or which may extend to Rs.5000/- or with both.

Recent feminist media criticism that has drawn from cultural studies shifts our attention from the text to the context of reception in which the audience plays an effective role in producing and negotiating textual meanings. Construction of textual meanings is an integral part of social and power relations in society, which are constantly contested and negotiated by the audience. Gallagher argues that in the recent years feminist media criticism, heavily influenced by post-structuralist and post-modern theory, places far more emphasis on autonomy of audience reading of the text and validating audience "pleasures" and ignores the fact that women as audience are positioned within a cultural system which reproduces particular representations of "femininity" and "masculinity".

The ways in which women are portrayed in media has emerged as an important area of research and action among feminist researchers and activists in developing countries since the 1980s. It was the comprehensive study on the portrayal of women in the mass media that drew our attention to demeaning and derogatory media images of women across the world. Except in the case of government controlled media in "socialist" countries, for example China, media

¹ A.I.R.1998 AP 302

under represent or misrepresent women and their concerns, use them in advertising as a commodity and present traditional stereotyped images of women as passive, dependent and subordinate to men.

The Kerala High Court asked the Director General of Police to pay serious attention to 113 cases registered by the Kerala state police against indecent representation of women in advertisement and films.

Disposing of a petition filed by Saju Pulluvazhy of Rayamangalam in Ernakulam, the division bench comprising of Chief Justice Manjulla Chellur and Justice K Vinod Chandran directed the DGP and the State Government to act according to the provisions mandated in the Indecent Representation of Women Prohibition Act, 1986. The court held that the Act should be implemented in letter and spirit. "There is truth in the contention of the petitioner that there was laxity on the part of the implementing agency."

The government had issued a circular in 2012 and the agency has failed to implement those provisions in its letter and spirit, the court observed. According to the petitioner, the Act imposed a ban on advertisements which represented women indecently. It also prohibited the publication and circulation of books and pamphlets containing such representations. He said that advertisements of textile shops, jewellery and films carried indecent pictures of women in violation of the Act.

Though the police were bound to prevent a cognizable offence under section 149 of the Criminal Procedure Code and the Police Act, they allowed to let go the criminals scot free.

The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Amendment Bill, 2012 was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on 13th December, 2012. The bill sought to enlarge the scope of Indecent Representation Act, 1986 and intended to bring new forms of communication like internet, mobile etc within the ambit of the Act so as to regulate indecent representation of women in the country.

A Parliamentary panel has suggested the setting up of a central regulatory body to monitor indecent representation of women. The creation of such an authority as envisaged by the National Commission of Women would be quite appropriate in effectively dealing with such cases. The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Amendment Bill, 2012, seeks to broaden the scope of the law to cover the audio-visual media and content in electronic form prescribing stringent penalties which would act as a deterrent to violation of the law. It was strongly advocated before the committee that there was an urgency to review, evaluate and regulate the content of the serials and shows on television due to its reach and penetration in Indian homes. It was admitted that there was no ambiguity in bringing the film makers, directors and trade bodies under the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act. The committee accordingly, recommended that these issues be taken up by the Ministry in right earnest.

Perception of Women towards Entrepreneurship and its Avenues with respect to Thane City

Ms. Mohini Nadkarni

Abstract : Indian society is a masculine society, where fraternity and equality are said to be a way of life. But even in 21st century, women are not given equal opportunities as men. Even entrepreneurial ideas of successful and talented women in cities are not given due consideration mainly due to gender bias. We can only imagine the loss of talent and opportunity at lower socio-economic levels.

Women are neither weaker nor a minority section of the society. Empowerment of women refers not to provision of help but to provision of equal opportunity to women in all facets of life. Women are born managers, the best example of this is a housewife.

One of the important ways of empowering women is making them financially independent. This can be done through opening of entrepreneurial avenues to women of all sections of society and of all age groups.

Before providing the facilities it is essential to understand the prevailing situation of the society. This can be clearly understood through a questionnaire method which can reach even remote sections of the society.

Introduction

A woman is a wife, mother, daughter, sister and even grandmother. But that doesn't limit her scope of action. The daily chores of a woman at home are best examples of multitasking. But this quality is in-built in women. If they can manage a household efficiently, then why are these talented section of society tagged as a weaker and helpless section?

Women are born managers. But in our present society, their innovative thinking and valuable ideas are suppressed by judgmental views like, "women are not meant to step out of their house", "women can't understand business", etc.

This dignity and respect can be attained by women only through recognition of their talent and empowerment. Empowerment need not imply just providing donations to this section of society and considering them weak. Empowerment in the true sense refers to making this section independent and giving them an equal status in all facets of life by respecting their views and providing them opportunities which they are denied just because of gender bias.

One of the ways of empowerment is financial independence. A financially independent woman can support herself and if needed her entire family. One of the sources of such independence is 'Entrepreneurship'. In a common man's language making them "business women" will provide a greater window for them to implement their ideas and strategies. Starting or even maintaining a currently functioning enterprise is not a child's play. It has many aspects such as Finance, handling inventories, technological know-how, market information, etc., which can be made available by Government, NGO's, Financial Institutions, through family support or even by obtaining training in the required field.

Before providing these facilities and services to this section it is necessary to understand the awareness regarding entrepreneurship and its avenues. Anything that

is true for one may not be true for all. The perception of various women towards entrepreneurship differs with age group and income levels with respect to the risk taking aspect of enterprise.

Objectives

1. To obtain perception of women of different age groups and income levels about entrepreneurship.
2. To identify the needs of women entrepreneurs to start an enterprise.
3. To identify hurdles being faced by established women entrepreneurs.
4. To find possible solutions for such problems.

Sample design

1. A sample unit of 35 women has been chosen from Thane city.
2. Simple Random Sampling is used. These samples include women from various strata of life.
3. Personal interview method has been used with a specific questionnaire.
4. The responses are tabulated according to the pre-determined categories.

Hypothesis

1. a) H_1 : age group and perception of women towards entrepreneurship are not independent of each other
b) H_0 : age group and perception of women towards entrepreneurship are independent of each other
2. a) H_1 : income levels and perception of women towards entrepreneurship are not independent towards each other.
b) H_0 : income levels and perception of women towards entrepreneurship are independent towards each other.

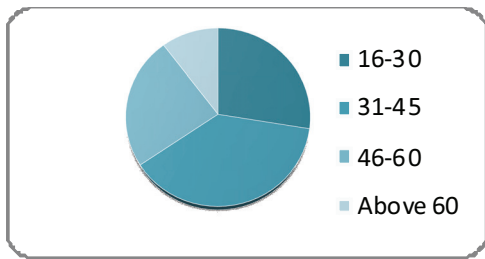
Findings

Table 1

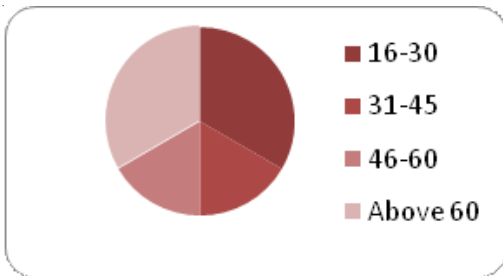
Interrelationship between age group of women and their willingness to take risk as an entrepreneur

Age Group (in years)	Perception towards entrepreneurship		
	Positive	Negative	Total
16-30	08	02	10
31-45	11	01	12
46-60	07	01	08
60 above	03	02	05
TOTAL	29	06	35

Positive



Negative



From this data it can be observed that women’s choice of taking up the option of entrepreneurship is largely affected by their age group. From the data we can get following inferences:

1. Women belonging to age group 16-30 years are willing to take maximum risk. This is so mainly because of the fresh ideas which they are willing to implement. They have many role models in front of them to get inspired from. Moreover they have relatively more time in life to explore and experiment with their career options. Hence nearly 80% of women in this age group have a positive approach towards entrepreneurship.
2. Women belonging to the age group 31-45 years are mainly women who wish to support their family and are either dependent class or are burdened with financial and other responsibilities of a family. Hence

any avenue opened in front of them to earn is welcomed by them. Nearly 90% of women from this class are willing entrepreneurs or are establishing entrepreneurs who have found their enterprise. These women want to be independent and require “invisible hand” to inspire and promote them.

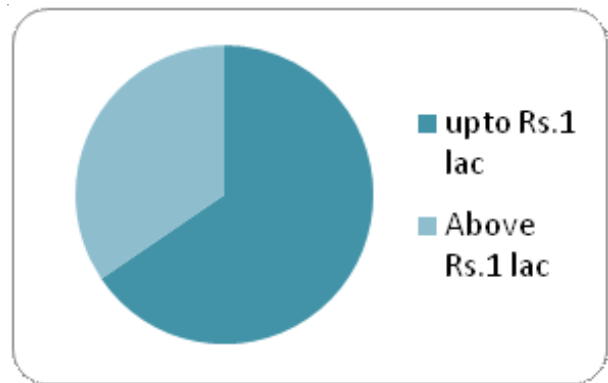
3. Women from age group 46-60 years are either entrepreneurs with an established business or are experience entrepreneurs who due to age and health are not active entrepreneurs any more. It is observed that in these entrepreneurs, 60% of women entrepreneurs took up the enterprise already established by their family and not by their choice. They learnt everything required from their family. At present these women do want to become an entrepreneur but of the enterprise they wanted to own. The only hurdle they feel now is their age and health due to which they cannot give required amount of time to a new enterprise.
4. This group includes women who are above 60 years of age. They have traditional ideas with an innovative approach, but cannot implement it due to age and age related problems. They are willing to take up entrepreneurship if are provided with efficient and sufficient man power.

Table 3

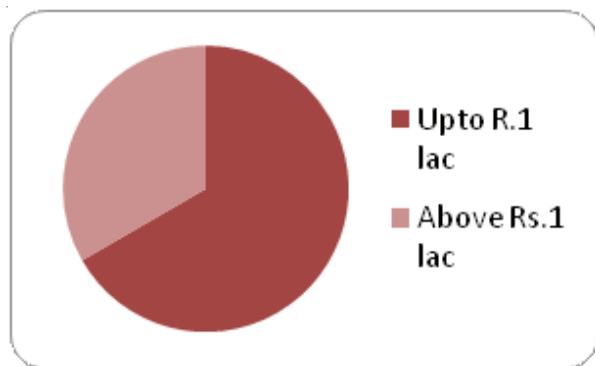
Interrelationship between Level of income of women and entrepreneurship

Annual income	Perception towards entrepreneurship		
	Positive	Negative	Total
Upto Rs.1 lac	19	04	23
Above Rs.1 lac	10	02	12
TOTAL	29	06	35

Positive



Negative



Following are the findings derived from the data

1. Women with annual income upto Rs. 1 lac are relatively more inclined to be an entrepreneur since they shoulder a greater financial burden of supporting their family and fulfilling their day to day needs. The hurdles faced by them are mainly financial and technological. Family many a times supports and is ready to help these women in setting up an enterprise. They are willing to take up entrepreneurial options which are available to them while they are at home, like those of food catering service providers, tailoring, beautification or starting a child day care centre.
2. Women in the income group above Rs.1 lac p.a. are relatively less enthusiastic since their monetary requirements are well met. But they wish to become an entrepreneur in order to be self-sufficient and independent financially. This class includes women from various sections of society running and willing to run variety of enterprises ranging from practicing as a Medical professional or owning a printing enterprise to being a head of a Self-help group.

Testing of hypothesis

Hypotheses were tested with the help of Chi Square Method.

- Age group and perception of women towards entrepreneurship.

Chi-square value for **table 1** is **2.6736111** calculated at 5% with 3 degrees of freedom. The H_0 : age group and perception of women towards entrepreneurship are independent of each other has been accepted.

From the data it can be followed that women residing in city areas of Thane region are enthusiastic entrepreneurs who if channelized appropriately can run an enterprise efficiently. They are willing to take risk of running an enterprise irrespective of their age group.

- Income level and perception of women towards entrepreneurship.

Chi-square value for **table 2** is **0.175095** calculated at 5% with 1 degree of freedom. The H_0 : income level and perception of women towards entrepreneurship are independent of each other has been accepted.

From the data it can be followed that women residing in city belonging to various income groups have positive perception towards entrepreneurship. They are willing to take up entrepreneurship irrespective of their annual incomes.

Conclusions

1. Perception of women in Thane city towards entrepreneurship is independent of their age group.
2. Perception of women in Thane city towards entrepreneurship is independent of their annual income.
3. Since the data is independent ANOVA TEST and YULE'S coefficient are not to be used on data.

Solutions

1. Various schemes can be initiated by Government in collaboration with NGO's.
2. Financial help is to be provided to those who deserve it rather than to those who ask for it.
3. Infrastructural facilities such as Wi-fi connectivity, subsidised transportation facility, adequate power supply, etc are to be made available.
4. Training programs after taking up aptitude tests are to be provided according to the requirement and ability of an individual.
5. Investments rather than donations are to be encouraged in women run enterprises. This helps in maintaining the sense of responsibility and the burden of repayment acts as a guiding force to enhance performance of an enterprise.

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Effect of Location and Marital Status on the Social Freedom of Female Undergraduates

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Abstract : Women constitute about half of the population of the world. But since time immemorial they are subjected to hegemony by the male counterparts who have made them suffer a lot of biasness. Time and again they are also denied equal opportunities in different parts of the world. The need for women's empowerment arises from the inferior position they have been bestowed for a long time. The empowerment is an important tool which can bring changes in their socio-economic condition. On the part of both nation and individual, women are considered as the major constituent of society and no society can progress till they are left behind. Women empowerment refers to providing women with equal opportunities in all the fields.

To empower herself women must begin to participate in all spheres of life. Their economic empowerment is being given prime importance for country's progress. To achieve empowerment women have to be aware of their rights and privileges in a modern society. It is education which can bring about awareness in them related to their status, social injustice and prejudice done towards them. The progress although is very slow towards empowering women but the impact of today's women in decision making and their presence in respective fields outside home can be clearly seen now.

In the present study the effect of location and marital status on the social freedom of female undergraduates has been seen. The study was carried out on sample of 110 undergraduate female students studying in Aligarh undergraduate colleges. The revealed results have been presented and discussed in the paper.

Keywords: Empowerment, Location, Marital status.

Introduction

Women Empowerment means to empower women not only in any single facet of life but in each and every aspect of their lives. It means to let them understand their true identity. And, for it the first and foremost thing is to let them make their own decisions which can fill them with a sense of independence or we can rather say a sense of social freedom. The 10th plan document of India (2002-2007) has defined social freedom and empowerment of women as creating an enabling environment through various affirmative developmental policies and programmes for the development of women besides providing them easy and equal access to all the basic minimum services so as to enable them to realize their full potential. Empowerment as a concept was first brought into notice at the International Conference at Nairobi in 1985. The conference concluded that it is the redistribution of power and control over resources in favor of women through positive intervention. Women Empowerment has been a critical issue in India in the sense that it has been talked about with great enthusiasm from the past few centuries. Numerous studies have shown that most of the problems of women contribute because of the lack of their education. It is the need of the hour to raise our voice for the women empowerment not only in India but in the whole world. According to Kabeer (1994) there are three important factors included in women empowerment resources, agency and achievements. Education is the most

important concern in this regard according to the opinions of both the social reformers and the educationists. It is already known that for the upliftment and empowerment of the women, education is the sole criteria. Education helps a person to become critically aware of his /her capabilities, strengths, realities and weaknesses. Women education not only promotes personal benefits but also social, economic and familial benefits. Lancuster (1965) conducted study on housewives who weren't going college and reported that women gave evidence of uncertainty in decision making towards their families.

Kalpna Shah (1984) in her study in Surat found that majority of women believed that women had lower status than men. All of them believed that main responsibility of women was to look after her family. In her spare time she should develop her independent personality which should not be in conflict with her husband.

Caplan (1985) said it is the urban, educated, working class women who are the real beneficiaries and are in vanguard positions. The rural, uneducated lower class housewives remain by and large unaffected by it. Channa (1989) found that according to older age respondents the position of wife has moved from complete subservience to have an upper hand over husband. Kantamma (1990) conducted the study on status of women in relation to education, employment and marriage and it was found that higher the education of women, greater the participation in

decision making and communication with spouse and progressive opinion in different issues. Kamath (2007) underlined the reason for relative low number of women reaching top levels in the organizations. Many women leave the work typically when they have a child and later many of them do not find suitable avenues to get back to work. Kamath suggested that while creating a gender neutral workplace we must not lose the sight of the fact that women do have special responsibilities and therefore special needs at time. He stressed the need to understand the phenomenon properly and look at the ways to ensure that we do not loose talented women because we are not supportive of their special needs. J. Muzamil and S. Akhtar (2008) revealed that 60% unmarried women hold non specific decision making power for participation in local government as compared to 54% married women. They also found that 54% married women bear masculine decision making power for participation in income generating activity as compared to 38% unmarried women.

Objectives of Study

1. To analyse the relationship of Women Empowerment awareness of total sample of undergraduate female students with respect to marital status (married and unmarried).
2. To analyse the relationship of Women Empowerment awareness of total sample of undergraduate female students with respect to location (rural and urban).
3. To compare married and unmarried undergraduate female students from rural and urban backgrounds with regards to their level of women empowerment awareness.

Hypothesis of Study

1. There would be no significant difference in the women awareness level of total sample of undergraduate female

students with respect to marital status (married and unmarried).

2. There would be no significant difference in the women awareness level of total sample of undergraduate female students with respect to location (rural and urban).
3. There would be no significant difference in the women empowerment awareness of married and unmarried female students from rural and urban background.

Method and Design of Study

In the present study the target population was the undergraduate female students studying in government and private colleges of Aligarh city. A list of all the graduation courses of Aligarh Muslim University and nearby Private Colleges was prepared and care was taken to ensure due representation of married unmarried and rural urban background female students. In the second phase 110 students were randomly selected as sample for the study. Out of these 110 students 42 were married girls and 68 were unmarried while 37 were from rural background and 72 were from urban background.

Tool Used

For the present investigation a standardised test “Women Empowerment opinnionaire” developed by S. Amani in 2009 was used. The test is reliable as its reliability coefficient is 0.88.

Statistical Techniques Used

The main statistical techniques used for the data analysis were One Way ANOVA and ‘t’ test for knowing the significance of difference between the means of different comparative groups. The data was analyzed with the help of computer by using SPSS to get accurate results and also to save time.

Groups	N	Mean	S.D	d.f	‘t’ value	Remark
<i>Married Undergraduates</i>	42	100.45	12.357	108	2.380*	<i>Significant at 0.01 level</i>
<i>Unmarried Undergraduates</i>	68	107.51	16.585			

Analysis and Interpretation of Results

Table 1: Comparison of mean scores of Women Empowerment awareness of Total Sample of undergraduate Girls with respect to their Marital Status

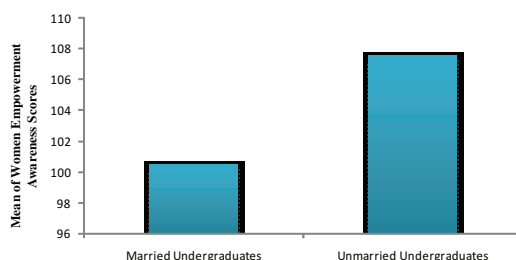


Figure 1

Table 1 shows scores of women empowerment for married undergraduate females as 100.45 and S.D as 12.357 while for unmarried female undergraduates it was found to be 107.51 and 16.585 respectively. When the mean scores were put to t test the t value came to be 2.380 which were

significant at 0.01 level of significance, implying that the unmarried undergraduate girls were more free socially and had more awareness about women empowerment as compared to married girls. Hence the Hypothesis 1 is rejected.

Table 2: Comparison of mean scores of Women Empowerment awareness of Total Sample of undergraduate girls with respect to their place of residence

Groups	N	Mean	S.D	d.f	't' value	Remark
<i>Rural Undergraduates</i>	37	92.95	10.609	108	6.843*	<i>Significant at 0.01 level</i>
<i>Urban Undergraduates</i>	73	110.84	13.981			

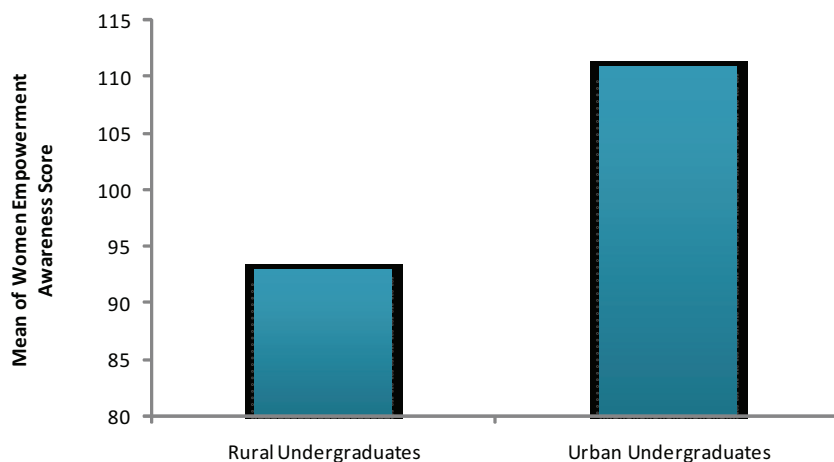


Figure 2

When the mean women empowerment scores were compared for rural and urban undergraduate females 't' value came out to be 6.843 inferring that girls from urban background felt more free socially having high awareness towards women empowerment as compared to their counterparts coming from rural areas. Thus hypothesis 2 is also rejected.

Table 3: Comparison of Women Empowerment Awareness of Married and Unmarried Under Graduate Girls with Rural and Urban Background.

<i>Rural Married Undergraduates (N=16)</i>		<i>Rural Unmarried Undergraduates (N=21)</i>		<i>Urban Married Undergraduates (N=26)</i>		<i>Urban Unmarried Undergraduates (N=47)</i>		<i>F value</i>	<i>Remark</i>
<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>18.303*</i>	<i>significant at 0.01 level</i>
<i>91.44</i>	<i>5.831</i>	<i>94.10</i>	<i>13.187</i>	<i>106.00</i>	<i>12.083</i>	<i>113.51</i>	<i>14.356</i>		

T value comparison of Women Empowerment awareness of married and unmarried undergraduate girls with rural and urban background.

<i>Groups</i>	<i>Rural Married Undergraduates</i>	<i>Rural Unmarried Undergraduates</i>	<i>Urban Married Undergraduates</i>	<i>Urban Unmarried Undergraduates</i>
<i>Rural Married Undergraduates</i>	-	2.66	14.56*	22.07*
<i>Rural Unmarried Undergraduates</i>		-	11.90*	19.42*
<i>Urban Married Undergraduates</i>			-	7.51

* = significant at 0.05 level of significance

When the mean scores of women empowerment awareness of four groups of married and unmarried females from rural and urban background were compared by F test, the F value came to be 18.303 which is significant at 0.01 level of significance. On further application of t test it was seen that both urban married and non married girls were more socially aware about women empowerment w.r.t rural sample while no significant difference was found between the rural married and unmarried girls' awareness and between urban married and unmarried groups. Thus hypothesis 3 is partially accepted.

Conclusion

The present study reveals that both marital status and locality had an influence on the women empowerment awareness among girls. Results shows that unmarried undergraduate girls were more free socially and showed more awareness about women empowerment than unmarried girls. Also, girls from urban background were found to be more free socially and having more awareness towards women empowerment than rural girls.

Awareness about women empowerment is very important for girls. Marital status or locality must not pose a hindrance in the social freedom of girls. Education is an important tool that can help in women empowerment. Education helps the women to become aware of their own strengths, responsibilities, rights etc.

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Declining Sex Ratio in India

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Abstract : The paper analyses the causes of declining sex ratio in India. An attempt is made to suggest measures that can be taken to check this decline in sex ratio.

A Report Commissioned by the UN Resident Coordinator in India points out that women in India are outnumbered by men. There are an estimated 39 million missing women. They face nutritional discrimination. They have little control over own fertility and reproductive health. Women are less literate with high dropouts.

The objectives of the study are:

1. To understand the reason for declining sex ratio in the age group 0-6 year.
2. The girl child is excluded even before birth-Why?
3. What measures should be taken to improve child sex ratio?

2011 census showed that there is a dramatic decline in 0-6 yrs sex ratio in many States of India, The census commissioner at that time. J.K.Banthia, took proactive step of publicizing data by calling a meeting in New Delhi 2003 an presenting the facts in the report title “Missing Girls-mapping the adverse child sex ratio in India” he set out the extent to which the girls were Missing.

26th June 2011 Sunday Hindustan Times. Indore.

“Girls are being ‘converted’ into boys” - by the hundred every year - at ages far below they can even imagine giving consent for their life-changing operation. This shocking, unprecedented trend, catering to the fetish for a son, is unfolding at conservative Indore’s well-known clinics and hospitals on children who are 1-5 years old. The process being used to ‘produce’ a male child from a female is known as genitoplasty, each surgery costs Rs. 1.5 lakh. these children are pumped with hormonal treatment as part of the sex change procedure that may be irreversible.

The low cost of surgery and the relatively easy and unobtrusive way of getting it done in this city attracts parents from Delhi and Mumbai to get their child surgically ‘corrected’. While genitoplasty is relatively common - it is used to correct genital abnormality in fully-grown patients - the procedure is allegedly being misused rampantly to promise parents a male child even though they have a female child. The parents press for these surgeries despite being told by doctors that the ‘converted’ male would be infertile. With this, girl child discrimination in India graduated from discreet murder in fetes to brazen medical tampering with child’s gender and future. If that’s not bad enough, Indian law which has encountered nothing like this so far, allows this is surgery by its silence and grey areas.

The objectives of the study are

Declining Sex Ratio in India:

2011 census showed that there is a dramatic decline in the 0-6 yrs. sex ratio in many states of India. The census commissioner at that time. J.K. Banthia, took the proactive step of publicizing that data by calling a meeting in New Delhi in 2003 and presenting the facts. In the report titled: - ‘Missing girls’ – mapping the adverse child sex ratio in India’ ,he set out the extent to which the girls were missing. For, while the overall sex ratio for women to every 1000 men had risen from 927 in 1921 to 933 in 2001, the sex ratio in 0-6 yrs. Age group had fallen dramatically from 945 in 1991 to shockingly low of 927 in 2001.

The other reality that the census data revealed was that the sex ratio was worse in the most prosperous district. Of the 10 district with the lowest sex ratio, 8 were in Punjab, one of India’s richest states and 2 were in Haryana, also better off than most other states. The 10 states with the most adverse sex ratio were Punjab, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Gujarat, Himachalpradesh, U.P, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan & Maharashtra. As is evident from this list, the majority of these states are not economically backward. There is no denying the fact the decline in the child sex ratio is the reflection of the prevalence of the gender biases in the society. At that all India level, in opposition to the biologically & medically known robustness of a girl child, a higher infant mortality rate among female is noted the compared with that of the males. The discriminating treatment in spheres of health and nutrition has adversely affected girls, increasing their mortality during infancy and childhood.

In a pioneering contribution, Amartya Sen captured the cumulative impact of multiple forms of deprivation that women face in an intuitively appealing measure of ‘missing women’. It measures women’s adversity in mortality and seeks to better understand the quantitative difference between actual number of women and number expected the absence of a significant bias against women in term of health care & other resources for survival. After computing the differences between the sex ratio and norm of women per thousand males & the actual sex ratio, it is multiplied by the

number of males to obtain the number of missing women. In the same way, estimates of missing girls are computed.

The sex ratio rose between 2001 & 2011. Using the same norm that Sen did estimates of missing women increased from 46.35 million 2001 to 49.73 million in 2011. Although the increase in missing women despite a higher sex ratio may seem surprising, it is explained by the fact that the number of men grew rapidly to compensate for the smallest difference between the norm & the actual sex ratio in 2011. The child sex ratio depends on two factors: sex ratio at birth, and gender specific mortality rates among children born. While preventing the abortion of female foetuses reduces a skewed sex ratio at birth, it has the likely consequence that 'unwanted' girl foetuses grow into girls who are deprived of nutrition and health care. These unwanted girls will then be more vulnerable to infant and child mortality.

In his maiden Independence day speech P.M. Modi lamented the neglect of daughters, restriction on their movement, parental attitude that favoured sons, shameful rapes of girls and women, lack of toilets facilities and sanitation. In a populist view he urged presents to treat sons and daughter equally, doctor to refrain from female foeticide & every school to have separate toilets for girls. Undoubtedly, these add up to a bold and ambitious vision of social development in which men and women are equal participants. The complexities of gender inequity, however, cannot be resolved by the rhetoric of a "change of heart". Thus the goal of gender equality cannot be achieved merely by a change of heart.

As girls account for a large share of 'unwanted' fertility that is about 60% in northern India, pre-natal sex-selection technologies have thrived despite legal restrictions. The PNDT Act of 1994 & its tightening in 2014. In more than 15 years of the enactment of this law, a little over 600 cases have been lodged across the country, but the total number of convictions is an abysmal 20. Not surprisingly, selective abortions of girls ranged between 4-12 million during 1980-2010 and the practice has spread to most regions. The market for sex determination & selective abortion is large & growing.

Female education has ambiguous effects, it weakens son preference at a given family size, but it also results in a decline in fertility and a strong son preference.

Do financial incentives make a difference? The Devirupak programmes in Haryana reward parents if they have either fewer children or a larger fraction of girls. Perversely, this lowered fertility & led to a more male-skewed sex ratio. Resting on the premise that changes in material condition can seriously undermine an existing normative order such as patriarchy, recent evidence from villages in Punjab, Haryana & H.P points to reshaping of entrenched practices through a marriage squeeze – string

marriage norms, patrilineal inheritance & patrilocal residence, old age support of parents by sons, and lack of autonomy of women – as a consequence the skewed sex ratio.

It is of course constable whether this process of social transformation and gender equity is likely to be rapid & extensive without strict enforcement of legal provision and advocacy and awareness activities that showcase women's successes and the contribution to the family's wellbeing. Simplistic traditions of a "change of heart" are not just rhetorical but raise expectations that are unlikely to be fulfilled.

Policy

Analysis of secondary data from census, special studies undertaken by registrar general's office and sample registration system support the observation that the decline in CSR over the 1990's could be attributed to sex selection abortion (SSA). Decline in CSR between 1991 and 2001 was concerned in states. Those are economically developed. Data on socio-economic profile of women in these states, available from the census, suggests that they were victims of gender-discrimination and enjoyed a subordinate status. This decline in CSR was concentrated in urban areas. Not only had CSR fallen but sex ratio at birth has increased substantially in some of these states. The decline in CSR was likely to be concentrated in the higher socio-economic groups that had knowledge as well as access to prenatal sex determination test. With the adoption of small family norm even if couples were to opt for just one child, in the absence of their resorting to sex determination test, one could expect the CSR to be much more balanced than what was revealed in various studies in reality.

The subservient status of young women within the family, irrespective of whether nuclear or extended, combined with urgency to bare a son, forces women to undergo sex determining prenatal test. The role assigned to them is nearly that of bearing and rearing children. Education of women along with their work participation in economic activity could help immensely in reducing the preference for a male child among women. Their economic independence probably could give them the strength to defy family pressure to bare a son.

All efforts need to be made to change the social attitude and values and improve the status of women. It is their inferior status in Indian society i.e., the root cause of gender bias and resulting gender discrimination. Hence it is necessary ...

1. To make women conscious of the discrimination that is currently prevailing against them, and then empowers them to protest against it.
2. To reduce gender discrimination against girls within the household by increasing their access to education

and employment which could go a long way in reducing the gender bias that currently threatens society.

Suggestions

In short run, implementation of pre natal diagnostic test (PNDT) Act, prevention and regulation of misuse these tests much more forcefully than in past is called for. Effective implementation of the act demands constant policing. In the long run, education and employment of women is considered to be the best solution to the old problem of gender bias in India.

1. The lower status that women have in the family and society has created a vicious cycle where women also prefer son and look themselves as inferior.
2. All social practices especially dowry that are derogatory and discriminatory to women that emphasize the importance of son would have to go,
3. The concept of son as insurance against illness and old age needs to be replaced by health insurance and old age security must be provided by the government.
4. Change of attitude among both elite and middle classes.

The 1991 census showed that sex ratio divide in women deficient pocket were deepening and newer pocket were not known for pronounced male bias. However, academia, civil society and the status refuse to believe that it could partly be campaigning against sex selection abortion, and that this trend needs to be arrested urgency. The activists campaigning against sex collection, abortion were afraid that we wait for sufficient data in terms of marked demographic changes the national level, the damage would be almost irreversible.

2011 census showed that there is a dramatic decline in the 0-6 yrs. Sex ratio is many states of India. The census commissions at those times. J.K. barthia, Took the proactive step of publicizing that data by calling a meeting in new Delhi in 2003 & presenting the facts. In the report titled in : - 'missing girls' – mapping the advance child sex ratio in India", he set out the extent to which the girls were missing. For, while the overall sex ratio for women to every 1000 men had risen from 927 in 1921 to 933 in 2001, the sex ratio in 0-6 yrs. Age group had fallen dramatically from 945 in 1991 to shockingly low of 927 in 2001.

The other reality that the census data revealed was that the sex ratio was worse in the most prosperous district. Of the 10 district with the lowest sex ratio, 8 were in Punjab, one of India's richest states & 2 were in Haryana, also better off than most other states. The 10 states with the most adverse sex ratio were Punjab, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Gujarat ,himachalpradesh, U.P, uttarakhand, rajasthan&

Maharashtra.

As is evident from this list, the majority of these states are not economically backward. There is no denying the fact the decline in the child sex ratio is the reflection of the prevalence of the gender biases in the society. At that all India level, opposition to the biologically & medically known robustness of a girl child, a higher infant mortality rate among female is noted the compared with that of the males. the discriminating treatment in spheres of health and nutrition has adversely affected girls, increasing their mortality during infancy and childhood.

When viewed overtime, mortality rates for the country seen to have been improving, as they have continuously moved downwards. Nevertheless this decline has not bridged gender disparities. The female IMR continue to remain higher than that of male infants. Continued presence of a smaller number of women in population has posed a challenge to demographer's social scientist and women's study researchers. A number of reason have been provided by researchers for reduction in mortality in younger age group mainly in boys namely son reference, gender bias against girls in health care, nutrition, food allocation and so on. The desired family size and the gender composition of children under the prevalent regime of male preference work towards the elimination of girls in the initial stages through the fatal stages through intervention of advanced scientific technology and at the infancy stage through neglect and discrimination.

Sex ratio in states and union territories of India:

States with highest female sex ratio	Kerala	1058
State with lowest female sex ratio	Haryana	861
UT- with highest female sex ratio	Pondicherry	1001
UT- with lowest female sex ratio	daman & diu	710

The social pressure for marriage for girls has been spread to community and regions where They were previously less prevalent. The rising probability of male children is growing attractiveness Just as the mounting social compulsion of having to provide for dowry is serving as a factor to prevent girls being born into families. The use of available techniques to determine the sex of child and doing away with the birth of girls is implicit within this. It is therefore presented as a safe guard against future calamities and hardship that are bound to befall on the household when it is time to get daughters married. The social menace of dowry has indeed become a major factor against children

especially among the relatively better off section of the population, since they are the ones who have to safeguard and in some even enhance their social status by investing heavily in their daughter's dowries.

Poorer economic position has been responsible for anti-girl child stance as factors like getting proper marriage alliances, payment of dowry etc., weigh heavily. However research across different economic group has highlighted different picture. A more advance sex ratio was noted among the better off and relatively economically prosperous regions as compared to the poorer communities and region, thus exposing the gender bias among the economically better off- ' Prosperity Effect' on sex ratio.

In 2001 census, the government of India officially acknowledge the role of sex selection abortion (SSA) in declining CSR in the Indian Population. According the registrar general of census, the declining CSR during 1991-2001 can be attributed to:

1. Demand for sons as old age security and as escape from dowry
2. Unregulated use of pre natal diagnostic test
3. Failure of state laws, policies and programs to comprehensively address issued of female survivals.

Sr no.	India/ state/union territories	1991	2001	2011
	INDIA	927	933	940
1	Jammu & Kashmir	896	900	883
2	Himachal Pradesh	976	970	974
3	Panjab	882	874	893
4	Chandigarh	790	773	818
5	Utternchal	936	964	963
6	Haryana	865	861	877
7	Delhi	827	821	866
8	Rajasthan	910	922	926
9	Utterpradesh	876	898	908
10	Bihar	907	921	916
11	Sikkim	878	875	889
12	Arunachal Pradesh	859	901	920
13	Nagaland	886	909	931
14	Manipur	958	978	887
15	Mizoram	921	938	975
16	Tripura	945	950	961

17	Meghalaya	955	975	986
18	Assam	923	932	954
19	West Bengal	917	934	947
20	Jharkhand	922	941	947
21	Odhisa	971	972	978
22	Chattisgardh	985	990	991
23	Madhya Pradesh	912	920	930
24	Gujrat	934	921	918
25	Daman & diu	969	709	618
26	Dadra & nagarhaweli	952	811	775
27	Maharashtra	934	922	946
28	Andhra Pradesh	927	978	922
29	Karnataka	960	964	968
30	Goa	967	966	968
31	Lakshadweep	943	947	946
32	Kerala	1036	1058	1084
33	Tamilnadu	974	986	995
34	Pondicherry	979	1001	1038
35	Andaman & nicobar ISI	818	846	878

The above table shows that in Jammu and Kashmir the sex ratio has declined from 900 in 2001 to 883 in 2011, Uttaranchal from 964 to 963, Bihar 921 to 916, Gujarat 921 to 918, daman and diu from 709 to 618, dadra and nagarhaveli from 811 to 775, Lakshadweep 947 to 946. Though himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra show a marginal improvement in the sex ratio, a detailed study district wise would help to unravel the causes responsible for it.

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स्त्री पुरुष समानता : मराठी स्त्रीलेखिकांच्या साहित्यिक कृती संदर्भात

सुवर्णा पुंडले

सेंट मीराज कॉलेज फॉर गर्ल्स, पुणे

स्त्री-पुरुष निसर्गाच्या उत्क्रांतीतून निर्माण झालेले एक वास्तविक सत्य. दोन्ही जीवांची गरज सारखीच. जगण्याचा नियम दोघांनाही सारखाच. जन्मतः शारीरिक वेगळेपणामुळे आलेल्या जबाबदाऱ्या फक्त वेगवेगळ्या. त्यांना मिळालेली विचारशक्ती, विचारातील तारतम्य, स्मरणातील अभूतपूर्व गोष्टी या नर-मादी अर्थात स्त्री-पुरुषात समान असतात. इतिहासात वळून बघतांना स्त्रियांच्या जीवनात आलेली स्थित्यंतरे बघितल्यावर त्यांच्या भूतकाळातील स्थानाची व वर्तमानकाळातील स्थानाशी तफावत नक्कीच दिसून येते. त्यामुळे असे म्हणणे वावगे ठरणार नाही की, स्त्रियांना समान हक्क मिळवून देणे म्हणजे हिमालयाचे एव्हरेस्ट शिखर चढून जाण्यापेक्षासुद्धा अवघड काम झाले आहे. देशात चाललेल्या विविध चळवळींमधून सहभागी होणारी स्त्री आपल्यासाठी (स्वतःसाठी) समानतेचा हक्क मिळविण्यासाठी आजही लढत आहे. भारतीय संस्कृतीत पहिल्यापासून पितृसत्ताक (पितृप्रधान) संस्कृतीच्या परंपरेने नेहमीच स्त्रियांना दुय्यम स्थान दिले. भारतात होवून गेलेले मोठ-मोठे विचारवंतही संपूर्ण समाजाला जागृतावस्थेत आणण्याचा प्रयत्न करण्यात यशस्वी झाले नाहीत. महत्वाचे म्हणजे स्त्री समानता हा कायदा येऊन किंवा तो लागू करून नव्हे तर वैचारिक पार्श्वभूमीवर तो स्वीकारण्याची मानसिकता निर्माण होणे अत्यंत आवश्यक आहे. कारण स्त्रीला दास करून घेण्याची वृत्ती ठेवणारा समाज तिला समानता देण्याचा विचारच काय पण कल्पनाही करू शकत नाही. स्त्री स्वातंत्र्य किंवा स्त्री मुक्तीच्या आधुनिक चळवळीचे श्रेय युरोपियन संस्कृतीला दिले गेले पाहिजे. त्याचबरोबर जॉन स्टुअर्ट मिलने व्यक्ती स्वातंत्र्याचा जोरदार पुरस्कार केला. याच व्यक्तीस्वातंत्र्याच्या तत्त्वज्ञानामधून स्त्री स्वातंत्र्याची, समानतेची पहाट झाली. स्त्री समानता या विषयांशी संबंधित असे कितीतरी साहित्य आपल्याला विविध भाषांमध्ये दिसून येते. मुख्यतः हे साहित्य स्त्रियांकडूनच लिहिले गेले आहे. कारण समानता न मिळणे या सारखे अपमानास्पद तिला दुसरे काही वाटत नाही. त्याचाही उल्लेख करणे तेवढेच महत्वाचे आहे. त्याचबरोबर प्रगतीशील विकसित देशातील परिस्थितीचा आढावा आणि तुलना हा मुख्य उद्देश ठेऊन विविध दृष्टीकोनातून त्यांचा अभ्यास होणे आवश्यक आहे. ताराबाई शिंदे, विभावरी शिरकरांपासून सुरुवात होऊन स्त्री-पुरुष समानतेचा पुरस्कार आजतागायत तो मेघना पेठे, सानिया यांच्यापर्यंत येऊन ठेपला आहे. अत्यंत प्रभावी आणि समर्पक पध्दतीने आपल्या साहित्यातून समानतेचा उद्घोष केला आहे. यांच्या साहित्यातून तो फक्त मतस्वातंत्र्यापर्यंत मर्यादित राहिला नाही तर लैंगिक स्वातंत्र्य, समानतेपर्यंत येऊन पोहोचला आहे. कागदावर कायद्यातून आलेल्या नियमांपेक्षा मना-मनातून आदराच्या भावना आणि सदृच्छेने मिळणारी समानता स्त्रियांना अपेक्षित आहे. जी तिला मिळणे हेच तिचे स्वातंत्र्य व लोकशाहीचे प्रतिक असेल.

स्त्री-पुरुष निसर्गाच्या उत्क्रांतीतून निर्माण झालेले एक वास्तविक सत्य. दोन्ही जीवांची गरज सारखीच. जगण्याचा नियम दोघांनाही सारखाच. जन्मतः शारीरिक वेगळेपणामुळे आलेल्या जबाबदाऱ्या फक्त वेगवेगळ्या. त्यांना मिळालेली विचारशक्ती, विचारातील तारतम्य, स्मरणातील अभूतपूर्व गोष्टी या नर-मादी अर्थात स्त्री-पुरुषात समान असतात. इतिहासात वळून बघतांना स्त्रियांच्या जीवनात आलेली स्थित्यंतरे बघितल्यावर त्यांच्या भूतकाळातील स्थानाची वर्तमानकाळातील स्थानाशी तफावत नक्कीच दिसून येते. भारतामध्ये स्त्री-पुरुषसमानता येण्याआधी किंवा त्यासाठी कराव्या लागणाऱ्या संघर्षा आधी युरोपात अत्यंत प्रभावीपणे व्यक्तिस्वातंत्र्य आणि समता या उदारमतवादी मूल्यांच्या उदयाबरोबरच तत्कालीन स्त्रीच्या अवस्थेची जाणीव तेथील विचारवंतांना झाली. स्त्रीला स्वातंत्र्य व विकासाचा अधिकार मिळाला पाहिजे असा विचार युरोपात मांडला जाऊ लागला. सन १७९२ मध्ये मेरी बोल्स्टन क्राफ्ट यांनी “ए विंडीकेशन ऑफ दि राइट्स ऑफ वुमन” या ग्रंथाद्वारे तत्कालीन स्त्रीच गुलामगिरी व शोषण स्पष्ट करून स्त्रीविषयीच्या पारंपारिक कल्पनांना नकार देते. त्यांतून फक्त एवढेच प्रतिपादित करावयाचे होते की स्त्रीला सर्व

अधिकार मिळाले पाहिजेत. जॉन स्टुअर्ट मिल यांनीही सन १८६९ मध्ये “दि सब्जेक्शन ऑफ वुमन” हे पुस्तक प्रसिद्ध करून विवाहसंस्था आणि कुटुंबसंस्था स्त्रीच्या व्यक्तिस्वातंत्र्याला - विकासाला बाधक कशा आहेत ते स्पष्ट केले. १८४८ मध्ये अमेरिकेतील गुलामगिरी विरुद्धच्या लढ्यात सहभागी झालेल्या स्त्रियांनी स्त्रियांच्या हक्कांचा जाहिरनामा घोषित करून मालमत्तेत समानवाटा, शिक्षण व रोजगाराच्या समान संधीची मागणी केली. १८९० मध्ये ‘सफ्रेजेट’ चळवळीने स्त्रियांना मतदानाच्या अधिकाराची मागणी केली गेली. ज्याची पूर्तता १९२० साली झाली.

भारतामध्ये १९व्या शतकात स्त्रियांच्या परवशतेला पुरुषनिर्मित मूल्यव्यवस्थाच कशी जबाबदार आहे याचा उहापोह करणारा ‘स्त्री-पुरुष तुलना’ हा निबंध ताराबाई शिंदे यांनी लिहिला. या निबंधात स्त्रीपुरुष विषमतेची सोदाहरण चर्चा करून स्त्री-पुरुष समानत्वाची विवेकवादी भूमिका मांडली. विसाव्या शतकाच्या उत्तरार्धात स्त्री मुक्ती / स्त्री समानता ह्यांच्या लढ्याला गती मिळाली. १९४९ साली सिमॉन द बोव्हा यांनी ‘दि सेकंड सेक्स’ या ग्रंथातून

स्त्रीत्वाची वेगळी ओळख स्पष्ट केली. त्या म्हणतात, “स्त्री जन्मतः स्त्री नसते तर संपूर्ण समाजव्यवस्था तिला स्त्री म्हणून घडवते.”

अर्थात हा समाज एखाद्या स्त्रीला तू स्त्री म्हणून कशी निकृष्ट किंवा पुरुषापेक्षा निम्न स्तरांवर आहेस हे सतत सांगत राहतो. जन्म घेतल्यापासून तिच्या मनावर सतत बिंबवले जाते ते तिचे स्त्रीपण!

यापूर्वी १९२९ मध्ये व्हर्जिनिया वुल्फ या ब्रिटिश लेखिकेनेही समानतेचा मुद्दा मांडला होता. त्याचं म्हणणं होत की, स्त्रियांना जर सर्व क्षेत्रांत पुरुषांच्या बरोबरीने वाव मिळाला असता तर शेक्सपिअर सारखी लेखिका पुढे येणे अशक्य नव्हते. जीवनाच्या सर्वच क्षेत्रात पुरुष सत्तांतर केंद्रवर्ती राहिल्याने स्त्रियांच्या सर्जनशीलतेला व्यक्त होण्यासाठी अवकाशच कसा उरला नाही हे व्हर्जिनिया वुल्फ यांनी या Room of one's own ग्रंथातून स्पष्ट केले आहे.

स्त्रियांच्या वाट्याला आलेल्या दुय्यमत्वाचा विचार हळूहळू साहित्याकडून पण घेतला जाऊ लागला. त्याचं मुख्य कारण होतं स्त्रियांचं शिक्षण. स्त्रिया पदवीधर झाल्या. त्यामुळे स्त्रिया पुरुषांच्या बरोबरीने, विशिष्ट उद्दिष्टासाठी कटिबद्ध होऊन घराबाहेर पडू लागल्या. समानतेबाबत कृष्णभामिनी यांनी “स्त्रीलोकओ पुरुषं” या शीर्षकांतर्गत ठणकावून म्हणतात, “स्त्री व पुरुष स्वभावतःच समान आहेत. स्त्रिया फक्त पुरुषाची सेवा करण्यासाठी निर्माण झालेल्या आहेत. या खेरीज त्यांच्या जीवनाचा दुसरा काही हेतू नसतो असे म्हणणे “खोटे व निषेधाह्व” आहे. जेव्हा स्त्री व पुरुष यांना कर्तव्यांच्या व हक्कांच्या बाबतीत समानता प्राप्त होईल तेव्हाच मानवतेला खरे तेज प्राप्त होईल.”

पुरुषसत्ताक व्यवस्थेत स्त्रीला लिहिण्यावाचण्याचे सुद्धा स्वातंत्र्य नीटपणे मिळाले नाही. पण त्या काळांतही काही स्त्रियांनी लिहिण्या-वाचण्याचे स्वातंत्र्य प्राप्त केले. त्यांतील एक काशिबाई कानिटकर यांनी आपला लेख ‘सुबोध पत्रिके’त छपायला दिला. पण आपण खूप मोठा अपराध करत आहोत ही भावना आपल्या मनांत दाटून आली असे त्या आत्मचरित्रांत स्पष्ट करतात.

पुरुष प्रधान संस्कृतीत तेव्हा मोठमोठ्या लेखकांची नावे घेतली जात होती, तेव्हा शेवटी विवेचन करतांना स्त्रियांच्या नावाचा उल्लेख होत असे.

स्त्रियांच्या जडणघडणीचा जो काळ होता. त्यावेळी त्यांची अभिव्यक्ती होणं अत्यावश्यक होतं. त्यामुळे १८९०-१९०० मध्ये ज्या स्त्रियांनी लेखन केलं त्यांत त्यावेळच्या स्त्रियांच्या परिस्थितीचे समाजांत त्यांना मिळत असलेल्या वागणूकीचे सर्वोत्तम चित्रण

मिळेल. त्यामध्ये शांताबाई, लक्ष्मीबाई अभ्यंकर यांचे लेखन दिसून येईल.

याच कालखंडांत काशीबाई कानिटकर, गिरिजाबाई केळकर, आनंदीबाई शिर्के यांचे लेखन दिसून येते. पण साहित्यिक क्षेत्रांत ही पुरुष-स्त्री असमानता आपल्याला दिसून येईल. कारण तिथेही त्यांच्या कामाचा उल्लेख सर्वसाधारणपणे न होता ‘स्त्री लेखिका’ असा केला जातो.

विभावरी शिरूरकर यांनी आपल्या लेखनाद्वारे स्त्रियांचा कोंडमारा करणाऱ्या सामाजिक रुढी व प्रथा यांना कथाविषय बनविले. पुरुष केवळ स्त्रीच्या शरीर सौंदर्याकडे पाहतो आणि आत्मिक सौंदर्य लाथाडतो यांवर त्यांनी कथेद्वारे भाष्य केले.

त्यानंतर कुसुमावती देशपांडे, वसुंधरा पटवर्धन, शिरीष पै आदींनी विविध साहित्यांतून स्त्री-पुरुष समानतेचा पुरस्कार केला. वैचारिक पातळीवर स्त्री दास्याच्या मुक्तीची चळवळ विसाव्या शतकानंतर सुरू झाली. त्याच बरोबर विद्या बाळ यांनी लिंगभेदावर आधारित स्त्री-पुरुषांची प्रतिमा घडविणाऱ्या संस्कार व्यवस्थेला आव्हान दिल्याशिवाय स्त्रीचे ‘माणूस’ म्हणून जगणे शक्य होणार नाही ही वस्तुस्थिती लक्षात आणून दिली. स्त्री-पुरुष प्रवृत्तीचा समतोल साधल्याशिवाय माणूसपण निर्माण होणार नाही यासाठी मानसिक संवादाची गरज आहे.

स्त्री-पुरुष असमानता ही अजून मुख्यतः दिसून येते ती म्हणजे संसारांत घेतल्या जाणाऱ्या अपत्यांच्या निर्णयमध्ये. कारण शरीर हे स्त्रीचे जरी असले तरी त्यावर सर्वस्वी अधिकार तिचा नसतो. जेव्हा तिचे लग्न होते, तिचे मातृत्व हेदेखील तिला ऐच्छिक रहात नाही. सानिया यांची ‘रिच्युअल’ कथाही हेच दाखवते. लग्नसंस्थेमुळे अपरिहार्यपणे आणि सक्तीचे आलेले मातृत्व पुरुष-स्त्री समानता यावर मोठं प्रश्नचिन्ह उपस्थित करत आहे.

आपल्या शरीरावरही आपला अधिकार राहू नये यापेक्षा असमानता अजून कुठे बघायला मिळेल. समाजात पसरलेली असमानता स्त्री लेखिकेकडून अशा प्रकारे साहित्यांच्या माध्यमांतून व्यक्त होतांना दिसते.

साहित्यांतून प्रत्येक वेळी हीच गोष्ट स्पष्ट करण्याचा प्रयत्न केला गेला आहे की लोकशाही पद्धतीने चालविल्या जाणाऱ्या आपल्या देशात कायदेकानून बनवून सगळ्यांचा समानता आणि स्वातंत्र्याचा अधिकार तर दिला पण लिंगभेद आणि आर्थिक विषमता यामुळे तो कार्यरत झालेला दिसून येत नाही. त्याचबरोबर पुरुषांच्या मानसिकतेमध्ये खूप प्रमाणात बदल होणे आवश्यक आहे.

मेघना पेठे आणि गौरी देशपांडे यांनी लिंगभेदावरून होणाऱ्या असमानतेचा कडाडून विरोध केला. स्त्री स्वातंत्र्याच्या प्रश्नाचा धीटपणे आविष्कार आपल्या कथांमधून केला. लहानपणापासून एक 'मुलगी' म्हणून नाही तर 'व्यक्ती' म्हणून वागणूक मिळावी हीच अपेक्षा त्यांच्या कथांमधून मुक्त स्त्रीच्या नाना छटा आपल्याला दिसून येतात.

त्यांच्या कथा नायिका पुरुषांच्या तालावर नाचणाऱ्या नाहीत. ती पुरुषी वर्चस्वापासून मुक्त आहे. नेहमीच चुचकारून, लाडीगोडी करून पुरुष आपल्या मनाप्रमाणे स्त्रियांना वागायला भाग पाडतो पण गौरी देशपांडे ह्यांच्या नायिका पुरुषांच्या या पद्धतीला नकारात्मक पद्धतीने चपराक देतात.

गौरी देडपांडे यांनी तर बंडखोरपणे कथेतील पुरुष पात्रे बिनचेहऱ्याची वाटावीत इतकी चित्रित केली आहेत. त्यांच्या कथांमधून बिनचेहऱ्याचा प्रियकर दिसून येतो. त्यांच्यासाठी त्या नावापेक्षाही सर्वनामाचा वापर करताना दिसतात. कारण त्यांना नेहमीच असे वाटत राहिले की स्त्रीने स्वतःच्या आयुष्यांचे सगळे संदर्भ 'मी नवऱ्याची बायको, बापाची मुलगी' यापेक्षा 'स्त्री' आहे यावर लावावेत. तिने एक 'स्त्री' म्हणून स्वतःच्या अस्तित्वाचे सत्व टिकवायला हवे आहे. स्त्री-पुरुष समानतेचा पुरस्कार करण्यासाठी त्यांनी साहित्याचा आधार घेतला. आपल्या साहित्यकृतीतून हे व्यक्त केले की स्त्री-पुरुष समानता हा स्त्रीचा फक्त अधिकार नाही तर तीचे ते व्यक्तीस्वातंत्र्य आहे.

आजपर्यंत साहित्यांतून स्त्रीची प्रतिमा स्त्री भूमिका ही नेहमीच पुरुषांच्या छायेत, सावलीत रेखाटली गेली. पण आता हे पारंपारिक वळण मोडले जायला पाहिजे असं कुठे तरी प्रत्येकाला वाटत आहे. म्हणून त्याचं प्रत्यक्ष उदाहरण स्त्री लेखनांतून प्रकर्षाने जाणवत आहे.

मनांत असणारी ही खंत, हा अपमान की आपण (स्त्री-पुरुष) दोघेही समानतत्त्वांचे बनले असतांना फक्त स्त्रीलाच दुय्यम वागणूक कां? निसर्गाकडून मिळालेली मातृत्वाची क्षमता असतांना देखील तीला एक 'माणूस' म्हणून जगू न देण्याचा जणू चंगच बांधला आहे समाजाने! नवजीवनाची निर्मिती, त्याचं पालन-पोषण, घरची जबाबदारी आता तर आर्थिक जबाबदारीसुद्धा, सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक अशा अनेक जबाबदाऱ्या समर्थपणे पार पाडणाऱ्या स्त्रियांना आपल्याच जोडीदाराकडून नव्हे तर समस्त पुरुष वर्गाकडून समानतेची वागणूक मिळणे आवश्यक आहे.

मराठी साहित्यांत तर मेघना पेठे यांनी स्त्रीला हवे तेव्हा

आपल्या शारीरिक गरजा पूर्ण करण्याचं स्वातंत्र्य पुरुषांना जसं मिळतं तसंच मिळायला हवं असं देखील वाटतं. कारण आपल्याकडे पवित्रता, पतिव्रता, शुद्धता, चारित्र्य हे सगळं स्त्रीशी निगडित आहे. ज्यांचा पुरुषाला मागमूसही नाही. का? तर तो पुरुष आहे म्हणून. पुरुषाद्वारे बनवल्या गेलेल्या ह्या नियमांना आता फाटा देण्याची वेळ आली आहे.

त्याचबरोबर स्त्री-पुरुषांमधील मुक्त मैत्रीचा भाव देखील समानतेचा एक पैलू होऊ शकतो. आपल्या समाजांत एक स्त्री एक पुरुष चांगले मैत्रीभाव स्थापित करू शकत नाहीत. कारण कां? तर समाजाचा या नात्यांवर, अशा मैत्रीवर विश्वास नाही. गौरी देशपांडे, सानिया, विजया राजाध्यक्ष यासारख्या कथा लेखिकांनी हा विषय खूप जबाबदारीने हाताळला.

सामान्य स्तरावर कुटुंबसंस्था किंवा समाजव्यवस्था यामध्ये वाढणाऱ्या किंवा राहणाऱ्या पुरुषाला कायद्याची भीती देऊन समानता देण्यास लावण्यापेक्षा मुळापासून मनापासून त्याला वाटणे आवश्यक आहे. त्यासाठी स्त्रियांनी आपल्या घरापासून सुरुवात करावी जी आधी केली गेली नाही.

आपल्या मुलांना घरांतूनच हे संस्कार मिळायला हवेत. त्यासाठी पती-पत्नी मध्ये तसे नाते दिसणे आवश्यक आहे. आजच्या काळांत पती-पत्नी दोघेही नोकरी निमित्त बाहेर पडतात. पण जेव्हा ते दोघे घरी येतात तेव्हा मुलं ह्याचं निरीक्षण करतात की घरी आल्याबरोबर आई स्वयंपाकघरात आणि वडील बाहेर सोफ्यावर. का? तर ते थकून आले आहेत. ह्यावेळी दोघांनी मिळून चहापाणी किंवा घरांतील कामे वाटून केली तर मुलांनाही शिकवण मिळेल आणि पती-पत्नीचं नातंही सुदृढ होईल.

सरतेशेवटी एवढीच अपेक्षा केली जाते की, होणारा हा अन्याय, हा असमानतेचा वार कुठेना कुठे तरी थांबेल. कारण आता तिला हा दुजाभाव सहन होत नाही. ह्याचं चित्रण राजस्थानी कवयित्री सावित्री डागा करतात.

“मी ही एक माणूस आहे

मात्र स्त्री असल्याने माझी स्वतःची

ओळखच नष्ट झाली आहे.

मी फक्त एका व्यक्तीची

मालमता बनून राहिले आहे.

जसे शेत आणि पशू

मालकाच्या नावाने ओळखले जातात

तशी माझी ओळख
पुरुषाच्या पायातली वहाण
त्याच्या विलासाचे साधन
शिव्या खाते आणि पाय दाबते
माझे दुःख कोणी जाणत नाही
लाल चुनरी आणि लाल चुडा यांच्यासाठी
किती आटवलेय माझे लाल रक्त!”

अर्थात या सगळ्याचा मतितार्थ असा की, कागदावर
कायद्याद्वारे आलेल्या नियमांपेक्षा मनामनातून आदराच्या भावना

आणि समानतेची वागणूक जी सदिच्छेने मिळेल हीच अपेक्षा
स्त्रियांना आहे आणि ते तिला मिळणं हेच तिचे स्वातंत्र्य आणि
लोकशाहीचे प्रतिक असेल.

संदर्भ ग्रंथ

- (१) साहित्य : रंग आणि अंतरंग : डॉ. निशिकांत मिरजकर
- (२) स्त्रियांची नवकथा : वाटा आणि वळणे : मंगला वरखेडे
- (३) समतेतील नव्या संकल्पना : संपादक : डॉ. मनोहर जाधव
- (४) मराठी कथेची स्थितीगती

Women's Political Participation in India : Issues and Challenges

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Abstract : Women's unequal participation in politics is a violation of her fundamental democratic right. The patriarchal culture and societal norms have always restricted women's participation in public sphere. This is fundamentally responsible for the exclusion of women from politics in brazen defiance of our constitutional obligation to promote gender equality in all spheres. Women are not a homogeneous group and the extent of deprivation they face differ as per their caste, class, region, religious and educational background. Decades of feminist movement has failed in bringing positive changes in respect of women's participation in politics at the macro-level. Ironically, most of the women in India have accessed politics through their family legacy. The exceptions like Sushma Swaraj, Mayawati, Jayalalita and Mamta Banerjee are rare. The representation of women of non-political background is still negligible. In most of the political parties women leaders continue to be confined to the Women's cell of the respective parties. Women's participation in the political life is still unimpressive in India. This is in sharp contrast to the fact that voter turnout in case of women has been quite impressive. To improve the situation of women various committees and commissions have been formed, various legislations have been enacted and proposed including the women's reservation bill which could not get passed due to the lack of political consensus. The issue of women's representation needs to go beyond symbolism. We need to take concrete steps in this regard as no country can progress without the progressive empowerment of its women.

This paper is an attempt to highlight the inequalities suffered by women due to various socio-cultural norms and economic exclusion. It also endeavours to critically analyse the various legislations and proposals which have been proposed to improve the political participation of women.

Keywords: Feminist movement; Patriarchal Culture; Political Participation; Reservation; Women Empowerment; Women's Representation.

Introduction

Article 1, 2 and 3 of the Universal declaration of Human rights affirms the fact that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, birth or other status and that everyone has the right to life, liberty and security" (UNDP, 1948) However, these phrases from the Universal Declaration of Human rights does not hold true with women in almost every society of the world including India. The cumulative impact of tradition, culture and societal norms had always omitted women from the position of power and accorded them an inferior position in the society. Despite sustained protests by the women's movement, very trivial changes have taken place in women's life in India. Norms and rules that restrict women within the boundaries of their homes still prevail in our country. The patrilineal, male-dominated society of India had always curtailed women's rights and freedom. Most of the women in Indian society are tied to reproductive responsibilities more than anything else. They are largely excluded from public affairs and this is the reason that women's participation in the political life is still very nominal in our country.

Although our country had set the precedent of granting universal adult franchise in the very initial year of its independence and had produced women as Prime Minister, President and many Chief Ministers but that is confined with the women belonging to elite section. The

representation of women belonging to non-political background is still negligible. To improve the situation of women various committees and commissions had been formed, various legislations had been enacted and proposed among which most important been the Women's reservation bill. However, the past records of the atrocities and crime committed against the women in India clearly reveal the fact that there is still a long way to go in order to accord women their rightful place in the society.

This paper is an attempt to analyze the various issues and challenges faced by women in the process of political participation in India. It also attempts to throw light and the various measures needed to be taken to overcome this sorry state of affairs.

Importance of Political Participation of Women

Woman constitutes nearly half of the population of the country and is an integral part of the society. The under-representation of such a substantial section of population in the political and democratic regime is not only detrimental to the status of women in society but also for the growth of the country. Any democratic government can be truly representative only when each and every section of its population gets fair representation in its decision making process. This phenomena raises significant question over the legitimacy of the democratic set up of India where women are highly under-represented. Women makes home, who in turn makes society and societies make the state and nation.

Considering the importance of women in the society, they cannot be neglected or sidelined.

The most important aspect which necessitate the political participation of women in India is that India ranks among the ten most dangerous countries of the world for women. Every other day some news related with the physical and sexual abuse, rape, murder, dowry deaths make the headlines of the daily newspapers. In order to make the country gender sensitive and to ensure the needs, safety and security of women it is imperative that women representatives should come forward to participate in politics in large numbers. If women representatives will be there on the higher tables, it is expected that the needs of the women can better be served.

Constitutional and legal Provisions for Women in India

Keeping in view the dismal state of women in the society and the inequality faced by them in their daily state of affairs, the framers of the constitution incorporated many such provisions under the Constitution for the betterment and development of women in every sphere of life. The principle of gender equality, social, economic and political justice to all its citizens and also equality of status and of opportunity to all irrespective of sex, class caste and religion is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles of state Policy.

The Constitution had not only granted equality to women, but also empowered the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women for neutralizing the cumulative socio economic, education and political disadvantages faced by them (Georgekutty,2010). Various laws, development policies and programmes have been formulated aiming at women's advancement in different spheres. From the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) onwards, there has been a marked shift in the approach to women's issues from welfare to development (National Policy for the empowerment of women, 2001).

The National Commission for Women was also set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 with a motive to represent the rights of women and to provide a voice for their issues and concerns such as issues related with dowry, politics, religion, equal representation for women in jobs. Further, the 73rd and 74th constitutional Amendments Act (1993) provided groundwork for the political participation of women in India. In addition to that, National Policy for the Empowerment of Women was formulated in 2001 for the advancement, development and empowerment of women. Not only these, India has also ratified various international conventions and human rights instruments committing to secure equal rights of women. Key among them is the ratification of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1993 (National

Legal Research Desk, n.d.). Further the declaration of the Fourth World Conference on Women held at Beijing states that "Women's equal participation in political life plays a pivotal role in the general process of the advancement of women. Women's equal participation in decision making is a demand for simple justice and necessary condition for women's interest to be taken into account" (Beijing Declaration and Platform For Action, 1995) This declaration also had a magnificent impact on India's commitment towards granting women their rightful place in the society.

All these constitutional provisions and conventions though aimed at gender equality and empowerment for women but the situational reality is very different. There is a yawning gap between the policies and their genuine implementation. The socio- cultural, economic and political set up of the country hardly allows the women to break the barriers of their home, the system and structure of the society. These notions are prevailing in society since time immemorial and to step up in the public/political sphere which is by and large considered as a male domain is a herculean task for women.

Challenges Faced by Women in the Political Participation

Women who want to enter politics, find that the political, cultural and social environment is often unfriendly or even hostile to them (Shvedova, 2002). There are many obstacles prevailing in the society. These obstacles can be categorized into three areas: Socio- cultural, political and economic.

Socio-Cultural Factors

The subordinate position that society had always accorded to woman legitimizes their exclusion from participation in political and decision-making processes. Women have generally been considered as disloyal, disagreeable, untrustworthy, stupid and even gullible (Kabira and Nzioki, 1995) by the patriarchal societies. Thus women have always been confined within the four walls of the house and are culturally expected to remain in background supportive roles as mothers, sister, wives and daughters. Culturally, it is expected from women that they should take care of the home affairs and leave public affairs and decision-making to men. Such social beliefs or stereotypes discourage women from taking part in politics.

In addition to that, the low-level of education among women make them apathetic towards politics. Women from rural areas and even sub urban areas are unaware of who is their President or Prime Minister. They are least concerned about political issues. For them politics is nothing but a quinquennial affair, which gives them at least a chance to feel empowered though for one day only. They often cast their vote according to the whims and fancies of male members of the family without making any rational judgment.

Though the struggle to transform the prevailing socio-cultural system continues but the prevailing socio-cultural discriminatory systems threaten to erode modest inroads made by women with regards to political empowerment in that women are not regarded as equally capable, as their male counterparts, of political and public sector participation (Bawa and Sanyare, 2013). Thus, as soon as women step beyond the bounds of traditional roles and enter public life and politics, patriarchal interests feel threatened and deploy their usual repertoire of demeaning tactics and abuses (Krishnan, 2011). This leads to the creation of an environment which inhibits the participation of women in politics.

Political Factors

The Political culture of India is largely male dominated. It is very difficult for a woman from non-political background to enter in this horizon and to make a place for them. The names of such few exceptional personalities are so limited that can be counted on fingers. Sushma Swaraj, Mayawati, Mamta Banerjee Jayalalitha and few others have entered politics from a non- political background. Other than that only those women can be in politics whose family members have some association with the political parties. Party supremos are very reluctant to field women candidates if they don't belong to their family or their companionship.

Even for the women who get into the parties they don't have much patronage. They always get sidelined within the party sphere. As women are considered morally more ethical, and considerate than their male counterparts (Bawa and Sanyare, 2013) thus they are kept aloof of these male dominated areas. Women are mostly kept as dummies whose opinions don't really matter for them. Even the best women parliamentarians feel sidelined and powerless within their parties except a few. Male party leaders have shown little willingness to include women in party decision making bodies or help to create a conducive atmosphere for women's participation in their own organizations (J. Mahesh 2011).

Economic Factors

Economic factor is another obstacle in the women's path of political participation. In Indian society it is a common phenomena that men are usually the bread earners of the family and women do the household chores. This makes women economically dependent on men. This economic dependence makes women less capable of taking their own decisions. So for women to take part in politics they have to be dependent on their family. Election is an costlier affair if there is no consent of their husband, father or other bread earning member of their family it is not possible for them to fight elections. Further the massive corruption prevailing in the system is another major obstacle for women to join politics.

Apart from these factors the safety and security of

women is the most important factor which discourage them to participate in politics.

Women's Reservation Bill

The above discussion strongly advocates the fact that there is a strong need of reforms on the part of the electoral and parliamentary system of India to facilitate political participation of women on a massive scale (Rathod, 2014). It is with this understanding, quota system seems to be the most feasible means as it has proven to be the fastest and most effective way of ensuring women's adequate representation in parliaments all over the world (DAW, 2010). Though critics of the women's reservation argue that reservation can only benefit women of the political families and to those who belong to the affluent section of the society. However, it can be argued in the favour of reservation that, at least women will get a chance to falsify the conservative perception that politics is a male domain. The increased facilitation of the participation of women in political arena can eradicate the political apathy of women and make this arena much more safe, secure and friendly for women. The women who will succeed in this field can be a role model for millions of other women who can't even think of participating in politics.

To facilitate the participation of women, women's reservation bill came onto the scene. However, for the past 18 years the Women's Reservation Bill in India is still struggling to get a life. The battle for 33% representation to women in Lok Sabha and state assemblies was routinely punctuated by frayed tempers and war of words and high drama. Different governments since 1996 tried to get the Women's Reservation Bill passed in Parliament without success. Though it has got passed in the Rajya Sabha in 2010, but it is still pending in the Lok sabha ((Women's Bill, 2014). This bill since it has come onto discussion has used by the political parties for their own political gains undermining the main objective of the bill.

Conclusion

In order to increase women's political participation and representation in Indian politics we need electoral and parliamentary reforms. The Election Commission has been successful in drawing more Indian women voters to the polling booth. The political parties need to give tickets to more women candidates. The reservation for women has by and large worked well in Panchayats and urban local bodies. It is high time we introduced Women's reservation in state legislative assemblies and Parliament. At the same time it must be kept in mind that there is no automatic link between women's representation and women's empowerment. For example, a reasonably good number of women in legislatures in Pakistan and Bangladesh has not translated into women empowerment in these societies. It has also not affected the existence of many anti-women laws in these countries.

Hence, we need to solve wider systemic issues to address the issue of women empowerment in a holistic way.

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Emancipation of Women in Rig Vedic Period

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Abstract : Women had a very significant position in our ancient Indian society. In fact they were superior to men. The Rig Vedic Women in India enjoyed high status in society. Their condition was good and enjoyed free and esteemed positions in the Rig-Vedic society.

There are literary evidences to suggest that women had power which could destroy kingdoms and mighty rulers. Veda Vyasa in Mahabharata writes how Kauravas cost because they humiliated Draupadi, the wife of Pandavas. Valmiki's Ramyana depicts the sad state of Ravana for abducting Sita forcibly. The worship of Goddesses in ancient period was to inspire public to respect women. In the Vedic society, women participated in religious ceremonies and assemblies. There is no evidence of isolation of women in Vedic period in domestic or social affairs, but they were affectionately dependent on their male relations throughout their lives.

There were women like Matreyi, Gargi, Lopamudra, Ghosha, and Indranni, who were learned souls and have put forth their thought in Upanishads. In the Upanishads, we find two women of outstanding personality who could engage even the great Ya jòavalkya to high philosophical discussion. The one was his wife Maitreyî, and the other, his disputant Gargî, daughter of the sage Vachanknu. In this paper we will focus on one of the Upanishadic women named Maitreyî as found in Bròhadà ranò yakopanishòad. Bròhadaranò yakopanishad is the largest of the eleven extant Upanishòads and forms a part of the Eatapatha Brahmana, of the white-Yajurveda. It is called Bròhadaranò yakopanishad because; it is "Bròhad", big and also because it belongs to the Aranò yaka section.

Place of Women in Upanishads Woman, according to Upanishads, was created to make the man complete. *Atman* was all alone in the beginning. He was afraid and had no delight. He desired a second. He became as large as a woman and a man in close embrace. He caused that self to fall into two parts. From that arose man and wife

philosophical ideas, *Vak* is a female and *Pranò* the male, their coming together gives birth to the syllable 'Om 3The elevated position of the woman is also apparent from the fact that seeing a woman occurs as a good omen in the Chandogya Upanishad. 'After performing the Mantha -rite, if a man sees a woman, let him know that his effort has reached fruition. 'Woman was not considered as an unwanted baby. The Bròhadaranòyaka even prescribes a rite for obtaining a long living and scholarly daughter. (Bròh.Up. VI.4.17).

The debate between Ya jòavalkya and Gargî, indicates that women were given a place of honour and liberty to mix with the people freely and also to engage in debates and philosophical symposiums even in the assembly of learned scholars. Knowledge gave them the status and the power to hold their own individual identity.

Introduction

In the ancient Indian Society, Women had a very significant position. In fact, they were superior to men. The Rig Vedic Women in India enjoyed high status in society. Their condition was good and enjoyed free and esteemed positions in the Rig-Vedic society.

There are literary evidences to suggest that women had power which could destroy kingdoms and mighty rulers. Veda Vyasa in Mahabharata writes how Kauravas lost because they humiliated Draupadi, the wife of Pandavas. Valmiki's Ramyana depicts the sad state of Ravana for abducting Sita forcibly. The worship of Goddesses in ancient period was to inspire public to respect women. In the Vedic society, women participated in religious ceremonies and assemblies. There is no evidence of isolation of women in Vedic period in domestic or social affairs, but they were affectionately dependent on their male relations throughout

their lives. There were women like Matreyi, Gargi, Lopamudra, Ghosha, and Indranni, who were learned souls and have put forth their thought in Upanishads.

In Upanishads, we find two women of outstanding personality, who could engage even the great Yajavalkya to high philosophical discussion. The one was his wife Maitreyî, and the other, his disputant Gargî, daughter of the sage Vachanknu. In this paper, we will focus on one of the Upanishadic women named Maitreyî as found in Bròhadaranòyakopanishòad. Bròhadaranòyakopanishòad is the largest of the eleven extant *Upanishads* and forms a part of the Eatapatha Brahmana, of the white-Yajurveda. It is called Bròhadaranòyakopanishòad because; it is "Bròhad", big and also because it belongs to the Aranòyaka section.¹

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¹Chitrita Devi, Upanishòads For All (New Delhi: S. Chand and Co (pvt.) Ltd., 1973), 329.

delight. He desired a second. He became as large as a woman and a man in close embrace. He caused that self to fall into two parts. From that arose man and wife.²

A philosophical idea, *Vak* is a female and *Pranòda* the male, they come together to give birth to the syllable 'Om'.³ The elevated position of the woman is also apparent from the fact that seeing a woman occurs as a good omen in the Chandogya Upanishad. 'After performing the mantha -rite, if a man sees a woman, let him know that his effort has reached fruition.'⁴ Woman was not considering as an unwanted baby. The Bròhadaranòyaka even prescribes a rite for obtaining a long living and scholarly daughter.⁵

The debate between Yajòavalkya and Gargî, indicates that women were given a place of honour and liberty to mix with the people freely and also to engage in debates and philosophical symposiums even in the assembly of learned scholars. Knowledge gave them the status and the power to hold their own in such matters.⁶

In the Upanishads, we meet three chief different types of women: Katyayanî, the women of the world, who is only once mentioned in the Bròhadaranòyaka; Maitreyî, the type of spiritual woman, a fit consort to the philosopher Yajnavalkya; and the Gargî, the Upanishadic Suffragette, who, fully equipped in the art of intellectual warfare, dares to wrangle with Yajnavalkya, and that if he succeeds in shielding in himself against those missiles, he may certainly be declared to be the greatest of the philosophers that had assembled.⁷

Maitreyî, was the wife of the great sage Yajnavalkya and was acquainted with Brahman (i.e. Brahmadatî). In the Brhadaranyaka Upanishads we find the celebrated conversation between Yajnavalkya and Maitreyî while the Yajnavalkya wanted to make a partition of his state between his two wives, Katyayani and Maitreyî on the eve of his renouncing the householder's life.⁸

The teaching of Yajnavalkya to Maitreyî centers round the thought that the 'Atman is the highest object of human's life and that is the reality by knowing which everything is known. Yajnavalkya was delighted at her curiosity, the sage taught her with great tenderness. He taught Maitreyî that this knowledge of Brahman is the means to immortality, which fully recorded, forms the highest teaching of the Upanishads. He informed her that, no being in this world has any capability of being dear to another without the presence of the soul within. Even to enjoy the beauty of

this world has no meaning without the soul within our own body, for the soul is all that we are. Understanding the depths of spiritual knowledge is the way to attain *moksha*, liberation from the continued rounds of birth and death.

In this dialogue his wife/disciple are presented. The dialogue between them is considered to be an arch-model of dialectics in the Upanishadic world, Yajnavalkya declaring to her that he had resolved to bring his householder ship to an end and to go solitarily into the path of the Absolute.

Maitreyî was not an ordinary woman to accept such a decree without knowing exact value the rishi was seeing in the alternative path he was choosing. Finding that this choice was for the immortal and the realization of the truth of truth, she also wanted to seek the one truth. It is with this background in mind that we should read the dialogue between Yajnavalkya and Maitreyî. In this way, Maitreyî showed how all women can achieve the heights of spiritual understanding simply by careful listening and practicing the Vedic path.

In the text of 'Quest for Immortality', Brih. Up.II, 5. Verse 1-4, we see that Yajòavalkya, is about to leave his *Grathaasharam* and proceeding to the next asharam known as *Sanyashrama*. Many scholars underestimate Katyayanî by saying that she possessed knowledge as women possess, but here Upanishad give different message that, historically, male wandered freely (Sannyasin or vanaprashasrama) and the woman was taking care of feeding, grooming and bringing up the children at home. Hence the main brunt of family responsibility was on the woman. That is the source of the platitude. In our own era it is a shame that we entertain such ideas (women is inferior because of worldly affections), about half of the population.

Gargi was the daughter of Vashaknu, and was also called Vachakni. But because she was born in the line of the Garga Gotra or family line, she was also called Gargi, a name by which she became well known. The Brihadaranayaka Upanishad explains that she asked the sage many questions on spiritual science and became highly educated in this way. Once in the court of King Janaka there was arranged to be a debate on the spiritual sciences. He wanted to find out who was the person who knew best the science of the Absolute, and that person would receive 1000 decorated cows with horns plated with gold. None of the local Brahmins complied because they were afraid they would have to prove their knowledge, and may not be up to the

²Bròh.Up. I.4.1-3. Shubhra Sharma, Life In The Upanishads (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1985), 103.

³Chand Up.I, 1.5-6.

⁴Chand.Up.V.2.7-8.

⁵Bròh.Up. VI.4.17 Shubhra Sharma, Life In The Upanishads (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1985), 105.

⁶Jogeswar Sarmah, Philosophy of Education in the Upanishads (New Delhi: Oriental Publishers & Distributors,1978), 113-114.

⁷R. D. Ranade, A Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1968),42-43.

⁸Bròh. Up.II, 4.1-3.

task. However, the sage Yajnavalkya told his disciple to take all the cows to his place, where he started the debate.

Yajnavalkya answered the questions from many scholars who approached him, setting aside all of their concerns and doubts. However, then came Gargi's turn to ask the sage whatever she wanted. But she asked many different and complex questions on the immortality of the soul, the arrangement of the universe, and many other topics. Finally Gargi herself bowed to the sage and proclaimed that there was no one else who was more greatly learned in the Vedic Shastras than Yajnavalkya. In this way, Gargi showed that in Vedic culture it was not unexpected for women to become greatly learned in the Vedic sciences, nor that they could not discuss such topics with wise and kindly sages who also shared their knowledge with them. Thus she is a luminous example of women in the Vedic tradition.

Women had an opportunity to choose their man through a type of marriage called *Swayamvara*. In this type of marriage, the eligible grooms assembled at the bride's place and the bride selected her man. There are many such incidences in epics the Ramayana and Mahabharata. This continued even in the later period in royal families. Women were given more freedom as compared to now. The statements given below to prove that women were given respect in those times as these are from Vedas and other significant scriptures: We can connect this vedic realitis to the famous verse from *Manu Smiriti* which states that, "Yatra Nari Astu Pujiyante, Ramante Tatra Devataa", i.e. "Where women are worshiped, there the gods dwell." Or where the women are happy, there will be prosperity. In fact the direct quotes from the *Manusamhita* explain as follows:

"Women must be honored and adorned by her fathers, brothers, husbands, and brothers-in-law, who desire their own welfare. Where women are honored, there the gods are pleased; but where they are not honored, no sacred rite yields rewards. Where the female relations live in grief, the family soon wholly perishes; but that family where they are not unhappy ever prospers. The houses, on which female relations, not being duly honored, pronounce a curse, perish completely, as if destroyed by magic. Hence men, who seek (their own) welfare, should always honor women on holidays and festivals with (gifts of) ornaments, clothes and (dainty) food."⁹ "Women are worthy of worship. They are the fate of the household, the lamp of enlightenment for all in the

household. They bring solace to the family and are an integral part of Dharmic life. Even heaven is under the control of women. The Gods reside in those households where women are worshipped and in households where women are slighted all efforts at improvement go in vain."¹⁰

"O bride! May the knowledge of the Vedas be in front of you and behind you, in your centre and in your ends. May you conduct your life after attaining the knowledge of the Vedas. May you be benevolent, the harbinger of good fortune and health and live in great dignity and indeed be illumined in your husband's home."¹¹

"The wife should do *Agnihotra (yagna)*, *Sandhyavandana* and all other daily religious rituals. If, for some reason, her husband is not present, the woman alone has full rights to do *yajna*."¹²

That women and men are equal in the eyes of dharma is made explicit in a beautiful *shloka* from the Rigveda:

"O women! These mantras are given to you equally (as to men). May your thoughts, too, be harmonious. May your assemblies be open to all without discrimination? Your mind and consciousness should be harmonious. I (the rishi) give you these mantras equally as to men and give you all and equal powers to absorb (the full powers) of these mantras."¹³ Indeed "the virtues of the loyal and virtuous (pativrata) wife are comparable to only those of agnideva (the fire god). This agnideva is pure and worthy of worship just as pativrata women."¹⁴ During Hindu marriage ceremonies the following slokas are read out by the grooms but, these days, little understood. "O bride! I accept your hand to enhance our joint good fortune. I pray to you to accept me as your husband and live with me until our old age. ..."¹⁵

Vedas states, when a woman is invited into the family through marriage, *she enters "as a river enters the sea" and "to rule there along with her husband, as a queen, over the other members of the family."*¹⁶ This kind of equality is rarely found in any other religious scripture. In addition, a woman who is devoted to God is more highly regarded than a man who has no such devotion, as found in the Rig-Veda: "many a woman is more firm and better than the man who turns away from Gods, and offers not."¹⁷

There are many civilizations in the world where respect for women and their role in society are prominent and others

⁹Manu Smriti III.55-59

¹⁰ Manusmriti 3-56

¹¹ Atharva Veda 14-1-64

¹² Rigveda Samhita, part 1, sukta 79, sloka 872.

¹³Rigveda 10-191-3.

¹⁴ Rigveda Samhita, Part -1, sukta 73, sloka 829.

¹⁵ Rigveda Samhit a Part -4, sukta 85, sloka 9702

¹⁶ Atharva-Veda 14.1.43-44

¹⁷ Rig-Veda, 5.61.6

where regard for them and their status should be improved. Yet, the level of civility along with moral and spiritual standards in a society can often be perceived by the respect and regard it gives for its women. Not that it glorifies them for their sexuality and then gives them all the freedom men want so they can be exploited and taken advantage of, but that they are regarded in a way that allows them to live in honor for their importance in society with respect and protection, and given the opportunity to reach their real potential in life.

Among the many societies that can be found in the world, we have seen that some of the most venerating regard for women has been found in Vedic culture. The Vedic tradition has held a high regard for the qualities of women, and has retained the greatest respect within its tradition as seen in the honor it gives for the Goddess, who is portrayed as the feminine embodiment of important qualities and powers. These forms include those of Lakshmi (the goddess of fortune and queen of Lord Vishnu), Sarasvati (the goddess of learning), Subhadra (Krishna's sister and auspiciousness personified), Durga (the goddess of strength and power), Kali (the power of time), and other Vedic goddesses that exemplify inner strength and divine attributes. Even divine power in the form of shakti is considered feminine.

In this way, Vedic culture adorns women and shows the highest level of reverence and respect and also provides freedom and protection as well as safety. Additional quotes can be found in other portions of the Vedic literature. This is the proper Vedic standard. If this standard is not being followed, then it represents a diversion of the genuine Vedic tradition. Due to this tradition, India's history includes many women who have risen to great heights in spirituality, government, literature, education, science, or even as warriors on the battlefield.

In real Vedic culture it is taught that every man should view and respect every woman, except his own wife, as his mother, and every girl with the same concern and care as his own daughter. It is only because of the lack of such training and the social distancing from the high morals as this that this teaching is being forgotten, and the respect that society should have for women has been reduced. This reminds me the teaching of he says, "*O ruler of the earth (Yuddhisthira) the lineage in which daughters and the daughters-in-law are saddened by ill treatment, that lineage is destroyed. When out of their grief these women curse these households, such households lose their charm, prosperity and happiness.*"¹⁸

Mahatma Gandhi once wrote that the way we treat our women is an indicator of our barbarism. Whereas men may have greater physical energy than women, the latter clearly

have more internal and emotional energy. It is not without reason then that women are identified with *shakti* in Vedic civilization. If women are kept suppressed, this *shakti* will be denied to the family and the society, thus weakening all of them.

The change in the attitude toward women in India (and across the globe) was due to a loss of true Vedic standards culture and a lack of understanding true Vedic spiritual knowledge. Thus it should be easy to see the need for organizations that will keep and teach the proper views which were once a basic part of the genuine Vedic traditions.

When the position of women declines, then that society loses its equilibrium and harmony. In the spiritual domain, men and women have an equal position. Men and women are equal as sons and daughters of the same Supreme Father. However, you cannot bring the spiritual domain to this Earth or enter the spiritual strata if your consciousness is focused on the differences of the gender, and thus treat women poorly. One is not superior to the other, spiritually speaking, but each has particular ways or talents to contribute to society and to the service of God. So men should not try to control women by force, but neither should women forcefully try to seize the role of men or try to adopt the masculine nature of men. Otherwise, imbalance results in society, just as a car will not move properly when the tires on one side are too low or out of balance. Of course there are exceptions in which some men are naturally good at feminine roles and some women are talented in masculine occupations. But the point is that women and men must work cooperatively like the twin wings of a bird, together which will raise the whole society. If there is a lack of respect and cooperation, how can society be progressive? After all, how can there be a spirit of cooperation and appreciation between men and women when instead there is a mood of competition or of disrespect for one towards the other? It is this mood in materialistic society that is increasing in both family and corporate life which contributes to social imbalance and not to a smooth and peaceful society.

In Vedic tradition we come across the word use by husband for wife were *Patni* (the one who leads the husband through life), *Dharmapathni* (the one who guides the husband in dharma) and *Sahadharmacharini* (one who moves with the husband on the path of dharma—righteousness and duty). This is how ancient Vedic culture viewed the partnership of husband and wife.

When a husband and wife are willing to be flexible to each other's needs and move forward in love and mutual understanding, the relationship can go beyond equality to one of spiritual union. This means that each one appreciates the talents of the other, and views the other as

¹⁸ Mahabharata, Anushashanparva, 12.14

complimenting what each one already has. This also makes up for the weaknesses or deficiencies of the other. In this way, each can provide support, encouragement and inspiration to the other. This ideal can only be achieved when they properly understand the principles of spirituality. It is also said that where the husband and wife get along well, Lakshmi Devi (the goddess of fortune) herself dwells in that house. It is also considered that a wife who serves a spiritually strong and qualified husband automatically shares in whatever spiritual merit he achieves because she assists him by her service.

Instances from Vedic culture shows that all women should be respected and honored for the potential and talent they can provide to keep the family together. Harmony needs to be restored between the masculine and feminine natures, which are especially exhibited in the relations between men and women. This can be done most effectively through genuine spiritual development, when both masculine and feminine natures become balanced and complimentary rather than competitive. This can harmonize not only the external relations between people but also the feminine and masculine tendencies within each individual, both men and women. By genuine spiritual progress we can rise above our bodily material identities and work with and compliment the talents and abilities of others, regardless of whether they are men or women. We must know that within each body is a spirit soul that is no different than our own. By that I mean that we must recognize that on the platform of spiritual reality there is no difference between one soul and the next, no matter whether the external body is male or female. But while we are in this world and in different types of bodies, we can work cooperatively for our survival and for harmony among us, and use our naturally varied talents together. Women can do what they do best and men can do what they do best. This certainly makes it easier for all to live peacefully than in a mood of competition and aggression, or envy and prejudice. In such a mood of cooperation we can see that we all have something to offer or contribute, and we all have something for which we can be appreciated. We only need the right opportunity to bring that out of each and every one of us. The proper leaders of society or of organizations who promote such situations are those who can arrange for such a harmonious environment to exist.

One difference that we often see between men and women is that there is often nothing harder to penetrate

than the typical male ego, which often causes men to hesitate to show any weakness and to make a show of a tough exterior, while women often respond easily to love with love. However, love and compassion are not meant to be exhibited only by women or mothers. It is a state of being, a level of consciousness. It is an exhibition of one's spiritual development to have care and concern, compassion and love for each and every being. It should be a common interest that everyone should be able to live a life of opportunity, development and progress for their own material and spiritual well being. And this concern is natural for both men and women who have reached this level of spiritual awareness, recognizing in many ways the similarities between us all, regardless of our gender. This is what is needed to help bring more peace and cooperation in the world, and another reason for protecting and emphasizing the traditional standards of spiritual understanding as found in the teachings of *Santana-dharma*.

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Victims of Acid Attack - *Safety and Security of Women*

Ms. Sangeeta Mehta

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Abstract : Acid attacks are a form of violence against women, where the perpetrator splashes a person or object with acid in order to deface or kill them. Although acid throwing, also known as vitriol age, has been a form of violence known to be committed throughout history, there has been a steep rise in the cases documented in recent years, particularly in certain South Asian countries. Some of this increase has been attributed to better documentation of cases and also to the fact that victims of attacks have begun to report an attack more often.

However, there appears to be a substantive increase in the number of acid attacks that are being committed in recent times due to various factors. Acid attacks are seen as one of the most vicious crimes as it causes perpetual suffering to the victim. As acid melts flesh and even the bones of a person, it causes an unparalleled degree of pain to the victim and leaves her mutilated and scarred as well as giving permanent disabilities at times such as blindness.

Victims face lifetime physical, social, psychological and economic consequences. The effects of acid attack are very serious and are almost irreparable. The effect is mental as well as physical which requires clinical monitoring and treatment by experts.

Thus over the years various kinds of acid attacks have been registered under the sections related to hurt, grievous hurt, murder etc. In most of the cases no compensation has been awarded. Those in which compensation has been awarded the sum is minimal and is totally inadequate to meet even the medical expenses. Normally courts just levy fines without even giving these to the victims. The section on Compensation in the Criminal Procedure Code should therefore clearly spell out that the fines levied should be given to the victim or their dependents.

The victims suffer a great deal due to a slow judicial process, inadequate compensation and obviously from the after affect of the acid attack itself. Thus, there is an urgent need to legislate distinct sections in the I.P.C to deal with acid attacks and to setup a Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in India to deal with such cases in an effective and efficient manner, to help the victims of acid attack to get compensation for medical expenses and rehabilitation apart from making Section 357 Criminal Procedure Code mandatory in certain respects. A new Act has been

The Law Commission has proposed to that a law known as "Criminal Injuries Compensation Act" be enacted as a separate Law by the government . This law should provide both interim and final monetary compensation to victims of certain acts of violence like Rape, Sexual Assault, Acid Attacks etc. and should provide for their medical and other expenses relating to rehabilitation, loss of earnings etc. Any compensation already received by the victim can be taken into account while computing compensation under this Act. It was further recommended that the distribution and sale of acid be strictly regulated and the sale of Acid across shop counters be banned. The proposal of the Law Commission is considered and a new law is enacted for the same.

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Consequences of Acid Attack

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The victims suffer a great deal due to a slow judicial process, inadequate compensation and obviously from the after affect of the acid attack itself.

Cases of Acid Attacks.

In 1998, a Maharashtra case¹, where acid was thrown

¹Gulab Sahiblal Shaikh Vs. The State of Maharashtra, (1998 Bom CR(Cri))

on a woman, while she was holding her two and a half year old baby, by her brother-in-law for refusing to give money to maintain her husband's second wife. She sustained acid burns on the left side of her face, left hand and left breast and both she and her infant daughter lost their eyesight. The woman finally died due to burn injuries. In this case, the brother-in-law was sentenced by the Court under Section 302 of IPC, to undergo imprisonment for life and pay a fine of Rs. 1000 and also sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for a month. Under Section 326 of the Indian Penal Code he was awarded 5 years of imprisonment apart from a fine of Rs. 2000/-and 3 months of rigorous imprisonment. Though the accused was found guilty the learned Judge failed to appreciate that he should levy an adequate amount as fine and give this fine to the victim's child, who suffered from the attack in multiple ways. In a 2002 case², the accused was suspicious about the character of his wife and inserted mercuric chloride into her vagina, she died due to renal failure. The accused was charged and convicted under Section 302 and 307 IPC.

In another case³ before the Hon'ble Supreme Court in 1975, acid was poured on a woman by her husband for refusing to grant him divorce. The husband was involved in an extra-marital affair. Due to the attack, the victim suffered multiple acid burns on her face and other parts of her body, leading to her death. The accused was charged and convicted under Section 302 of the IPC. However, life imprisonment was not imposed even though the victim had died. In a case before the Madras High Court⁴, a person suspected his wife had developed an illicit relationship with one of his acquaintances. In that fit of anger he threw acid on her resulting in severe burns and death of the victim. The husband was convicted under Sec 302 IPC and 313 IPC (causing miscarriage of a woman without her consent) with life imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 2000. The fine was thus again a meager amount. In *Devanand Vs. The State*⁵ a man threw acid on his estranged wife because she refused to

cohabit with him. The wife suffered permanent disfigurement and loss of one eye. The accused was convicted under Section 307 and was imprisoned for 7 years.⁶

Conclusion and Suggestion

Thus, there is an urgent need to legislate distinct sections in the I.P.C to deal with acid attacks and to setup a Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in India to deal with such cases in an effective and efficient manner, to help the victims of acid attack to get compensation for medical expenses and rehabilitation apart from making Section 357 Criminal Procedure Code mandatory in certain respects.

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The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013 is an Indian legislation passed by the Lok Sabha on 19 March 2013, and by the Rajya Sabha on 21 March 2013, which provides for amendment of Indian Penal Code, Indian Evidence Act, and Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 on laws related to sexual offences. The Bill received Presidential assent on 2nd April 2013 and deemed to come into force from 3 February 2013. It was originally an Ordinance promulgated by the President of India, Pranab Mukherjee, on 3 February 2013, in light of the protests in the 2012 Delhi gang rape case.

² Marepally Venkata Sree Nagesh Vs. State of A.P (2002 CriLJ3625)

³ Revinder Singh Vs. State of Harayana (AIR 1975 SC 856)

⁴ Balu Vs. State Represented Inspector of police decided on 26/10/2006

⁵ 1987 (1) Crimes 314)

⁶ Veerla Stayanarayna Vs State of A.P 2002(Supp)1 SC 489

A House Wife's Right to the Personal Space- A Case Study of Mumbai City

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Abstract : 'Space' is the central theme of geography and so is 'Gender'. Space has different connotations. With reference to gender, space has been perceived as 'private' or 'domestic' space and 'public' or 'common' space (Phadke, S 2007). Geographers argue that spaces are contested, fluid and uncertain (McDowell, L 1999). Hence, at times one can confine 'space' with a boundary and at other times it could be seamless. This division specially is guided by gender relations. One of the key concerns of gender geography has been to draw attention to the contrast between the lives of women which is centred upon the 'domestic' space which is the sphere of home, family and domestic environment and the lives of men is centred along the 'public' space which is the sphere of work.

Globalisation brought a sea level change in technology and lifestyle of people all over the world, making technology, capital and people mobile at different scales. In spite of these changes in mobility, to a great extent many people all over the world spend majority of their time in everyday life over a restricted geographical locale (McDowell, L 1999). Identities of people are strongly associated with these locales. A locale called 'home' has different meanings in different languages. This space called 'home' does reflect the variations in gender relations.

Hence, the present paper tries to understand the significance of space in the life of a housewife in Mumbai. It also tries to understand the forces that control the space in a 'home' environment.

For the present paper the study area was Mumbai city and suburban districts which have been experiencing a number of changes due to globalisation. A questionnaire survey was conducted and the data collected has been analysed qualitatively as well as quantitatively to understand the dynamics between gender and the home environment.

Keywords: *Gender Geography, House-wife, Public Space, Private Space*

“Women can do all the work, except to propose marriage. Nature does not allow women to marry men, just like nature does not allow men to wash dishes, cook and sweep. People will lose confidence in a man and his wife if they find him in the kitchen.”

~ Older woman, Uganda 1994

“In our culture women tend to feel small. Men have always been the leaders; their voice is final.”

~ South Africa 1998

“Domestic work is usually divided into male and female and is thus performed. Women cook, clean, wash, bring water (where there is no water supply); while men take care of the heating, repairing of the house, and if necessary, help their wives with the children.”

~ Macedonia 1998

'Space' is the central theme of geography and so is 'Gender'. Role played by both the genders in the society is decided by caste, class, religion, economic and political affiliations. In India, qualitative research in Gender Geography did not start until 1980s. The initial researches done in gender geography in India did use orthodox methodologies because use of qualitative data and methods were not widely accepted in the geographical tradition in India (Saraswati, R. and Lahiri-Dutt, K., 2011: xiii).

Space has different connotations. Perception of 'space' and 'place' is directly or indirectly linked with the particular constructions of gender relations (Massey, D, 1994: 2). With reference to gender, space has been perceived as 'private' or 'domestic' space and 'public' or 'common' space (Phadke, S 2007). Geographers argue that spaces are contested, fluid and uncertain (McDowell, L 1999). Hence, at times one can confine 'space' with a boundary and at other times it could be seamless. This division specially is guided by gender relations. One of the key concerns of gender geography has been to draw attention to the contrast between the lives of women which is centred upon the 'domestic' space which is the sphere of home, family and domestic environment and the lives of men is centred along the 'public' space which is the sphere of work.

A 'home' is a place which is known for providing happiness and a secure environment. In the Encyclopaedia of Human Geography by Barney Warf, Peter Somerville has summarised the following characteristics of a place called 'home':

- (a) Shelter: not only protection from the weather outside but also a place of physical security;
- (b) Hearth: a place to relax and to be comfortable (“at home”) and from which to offer welcoming hospitality;

- (c) Heart: emotional security, with the home providing a site of love and affection;
- (d) Privacy: a legal and sociocultural haven in which questions of “who enters” and “what are acceptable practices” can be regulated;
- (e) Roots: a place in which to belong and which can be an expression of our identity.
- (f) Abode: a place to stay and to sleep;
- (g) Paradise: an idealised expression of the emotional pleasures of belonging, being safe, and feeling secure.

However studies in Gender geography and various theorists from Feminist Geographies have challenged these traditional meanings of ‘home’. A ‘home’ is perceived as a ‘woman’s place’ because for majority of men all over the world it is a haven for rest and recreation as they work away from home (McDowell, L, 1999: 74). Secondly, home has been identified as a site of ‘oppression’ characterised by male tyranny in the form of domestic violence and fear contrary to the rosy image of a place providing care, love, security and warmth. Thirdly, home has been recognised as a place of negotiation and contestation (May, J and Cloke, P, 2006: 225-226). From a very tender age, household work becomes a natural responsibility of a woman in many societies. However, it still continues to be an unpaid job without a formal recognition which in a patriarchal society like India is invariably the responsibility of women.

During the phase of industrialisation, in European societies the ‘home’ was associated with a spiritual quality. Women were the angels who had to shoulder the responsibility of domestic work, bearing and nurturing of children and also protect the ‘master’ of the house from the harsh competitive world of capitalism (McDowell, L, 1999: 75).

The Study Area:

Mumbai is located on the west coast in Konkan region. An archival metamorphosis of this city from a group of seven islands (in the pre-British times); to a textile hub to a gentrified commercial capital has made Mumbai a hotspot on the map of India. Under the sway of global restructuration processes, planners and bureaucrats have been designing the built environment of Mumbai to suit the needs of a global city. The make-over of Mumbai began with the mushrooming of fly-overs, expressways-freeways, the Mono and Metro Rail projects and the proliferating development of real estate in the city and in distant suburbs. Impact of these urban renewal schemes is visible in the process of cultural transformation too. The cultural transformation is superficial as people especially from the low income group are being marginalised. It is also noteworthy to study and understand the processes and politics associated with provisions and policies related to female education, employment, nutrition,

health and security because women also has been a marginalised group since ages under the reign of patriarchy.

At the outset, a typical woman from Mumbai appears to be liberal, outgoing and bold. Migrant women do claim that this city is comparatively safer than many other cities and towns in India. This possibly could be because of Maharashtra’s history of social reforms in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and also because a large number of women in the city are a part of the urban workforce (Phadke, S 2007). But it is crucial to understand the extent to which women can enjoy this ‘freedom’. Is the freedom restricted only to working women or is it enjoyed by the women working in ‘domestic spaces’?

Methodology

Based on the population data for females from 2001 census, samples were selected using the non-probability (quota method) sampling technique. A questionnaire survey was conducted to gather information about the demographic, socio-cultural, economic and political aspects that influence the life of women in general and house-wives in particular. Total 200 samples were collected from the 24 wards of Mumbai city and the suburban districts in proportion to the female population of the respective wards.

Who is a ‘house-wife’?

According to the free dictionary, ‘A housewife is a woman who manages her own household as her main occupation’. The oxford dictionaries, defines a house-wife as a married woman whose main occupation is caring for her family, managing household affairs and doing housework’. With the advent of industrialisation and globalisation across the world, females have started taking up paid employment assignments. Hence, in recent times the term ‘Home maker’ has gained popularity instead of ‘house wife’ as it is a gender neutral term and has more of sociological value as it involves the task of voluntarily taking care of one’s home irrespective of gender.

For the present paper, house-wives have been selected for study keeping in mind their unrecognised identity and the significant role which they play not only on the domestic front but also at the social level especially with reference to the socio-cultural setting of our country. This group of house-wives consist of married woman who are staying with their husband and have taken up the responsibility of caring for family, managing household affairs and doing housework. Whether the role of a house-wife is taken rationally, voluntarily or is taken up as a part of socio-cultural factors or is a compulsory decision especially in the Indian context becomes a matter of debate and discussion.

According to Census of India, Who are the non-workers?

- A person who is engaged in household duties in her/

his own house but does no other economically productive work should be treated as a non-worker.

- A person who was a non-worker throughout the reference period, and had been offered work but has not joined yet, is a non-worker.
- Rent receiver or a pensioner or receiver of agricultural or non-agricultural royalty or dividends or interest is a non-worker unless the person was also engaged in some economic activity for part of the year.
- Prostitutes and persons engaged in illicit/unlawful activities such as drug trafficking, smuggling, beggars etc. are non-workers.

Thus from the definition it is very obvious that a 'house wife's active role on the domestic front of a household is not taken into consideration with respect to the economics associated with it and lacks a formal recognition which in a patriarchal society like India is the responsibility of women. From 2001 Census to 2011 Census, the percentage of non-workers in Mumbai city and suburban districts has marginally varied for Males from 41.64 to 39.98 and for Females 85.42 to 81.10.

The findings and results of the current study are summarised in the following tables:

Table 1: The gendering of 'domestic space': who does what, when where and how?

- ❖ Time budgets: 57% of respondent women spend more than five hours on domestic work and remaining 43% spend about two to five hours on the same.
- ❖ Unpaid work: Household work is a full time – unpaid job which consists of a variety of activities like cooking, cleaning, procuring basic necessities for the family (like food, clothing, etc), taking care of the children and elderly members in the family, and so on. In the Indian context because of the socio-cultural heritage girls from a very tender age share these responsibilities with their mothers. This responsibility is not shouldered by men. Women participation rate in this occupation is almost one hundred percent.
- ❖ Length of working life for a house wife is for her lifetime or till she gets a daughter-in-law or she hires a domestic maid servant.
- ❖ Income distribution is nil as this activity is unpaid. The only income is the investment or savings deposited by a husband in his wife's name. About 52% of respondent have savings in their name which have been done by their husband. Remaining 48% have no savings in their name. In such cases then, the difficulty arises at times if the couple applies for a divorce or if the husband experiences an untimely death. v Trade union membership: Not existing as it is not a formal occupation.
- ❖ Proportion covered by social security or insurance schemes: No separate schemes for house-wives.
- ❖ In 85% cases the head of the family is a husband. Hence females enjoy usufruct rights.

The gendering of the sexual contract

- ❖ Legal age and average age of first marriage by gender: In India the legal age of marriage for girls is 18 years. 63% of respondents got married between 18 and 25 years of age, 13% got married above 25 years of age and 24% got married before attaining 18 years of age.
- ❖ Prevalence of common law marriage, arranged marriage: 97% of respondents did not undergo or insisted on an entire medical check up before the marriage was fixed. Although we are living in times where incidences of sexually transmitted diseases like AIDS, etc and psychological problems are increasing in the population still awareness about these aspects is surprisingly lacking.
- ❖ Violence: 12% of respondents have indicated about experience of eve teasing. While 21% of respondents have experienced domestic violence. 47% have a husband addicted to chewing tobacco, drinking liquor, smoking or betting.

The gendering of space

- ❖ Personal space, activity space: 80% of respondents spend about 55% of their time in kitchen. 52% live in a house with an area <250 square feet.
- ❖ Migration, Marital residence and marriage distance: about 40% respondents are migrants of which 25% have migrated because of marriage (a very age old and common practice in India where the bride moves on into the groom's family).

Legal rights

- ❖ Inheritance: 20% respondents have a share in their maternal property.

The gendering of well-being

- ❖ Health care: 60% respondents have reported of suffering from disease/s like stress, diabetes, back pain, knee pain, arthritis, etc. 80% visit to the doctor on account of illness. 40% do their entire health check-up once in a year.

The gendering of biological reproduction

- ❖ Contraception: 70% respondents have adopted family planning techniques and in 50% cases the responsibility is share by both spouses.

Education

- ❖ Rates of literacy: 89% of respondents are literate.
- ❖ Levels of attainment and specialisation: 32% have obtained education less than SSC level, 27% upto SSC, 9% upto HSC, 15% upto graduation and 6% upto post-graduation. Only 22% respondents are computer literates.

Religion

- ❖ Religious adherence: 40% respondent's names were changed after marriage while 88% changed their surnames after marriage. (A common and age old practice in India, where the bride after marriage changes to her husband's surname and in some cases the name too is changed).

Gendered customs

- ❖ Gendered organisation: 20% respondents are members of a mahila mandal.
- ❖ Dowry or bride price: 25% had to give a dowry in their own marriage while 60% own streedhan.

Original Source: J.G.Townsend, 'Towards a regional geography of gender', Geographical Journal, 157 (1991), pp 26-27, table 1 (cited in Linda McDowell's Gender, Identity and Place Understanding Feminist Geographies (1999) Polity Press, UK Page No. 232-233)

Table 2: Role of males and females in the Decision making process in a household:

Male dominated decisions	Female dominated decisions
❖ Daily cooking of food (11.36%)	❖ Daily cooking of food (81.25%)
❖ How many children to have? (49.43%)	❖ How many children to have? (40.34%)
❖ Use of family planning techniques (51.70%)	❖ Use of family planning techniques (30.68%)
❖ Education of children (44.32%)	❖ Education of children (38.07%)
❖ Job of the woman (20.45%)	❖ Job of the woman (55.68%)
❖ Investments (69.89%)	❖ Investments (27.27%)
❖ Division of Property (63.64%)	❖ Division of Property (13.64%)
❖ Any other decisions (64.77%)	❖ Any other decisions (21.59%)

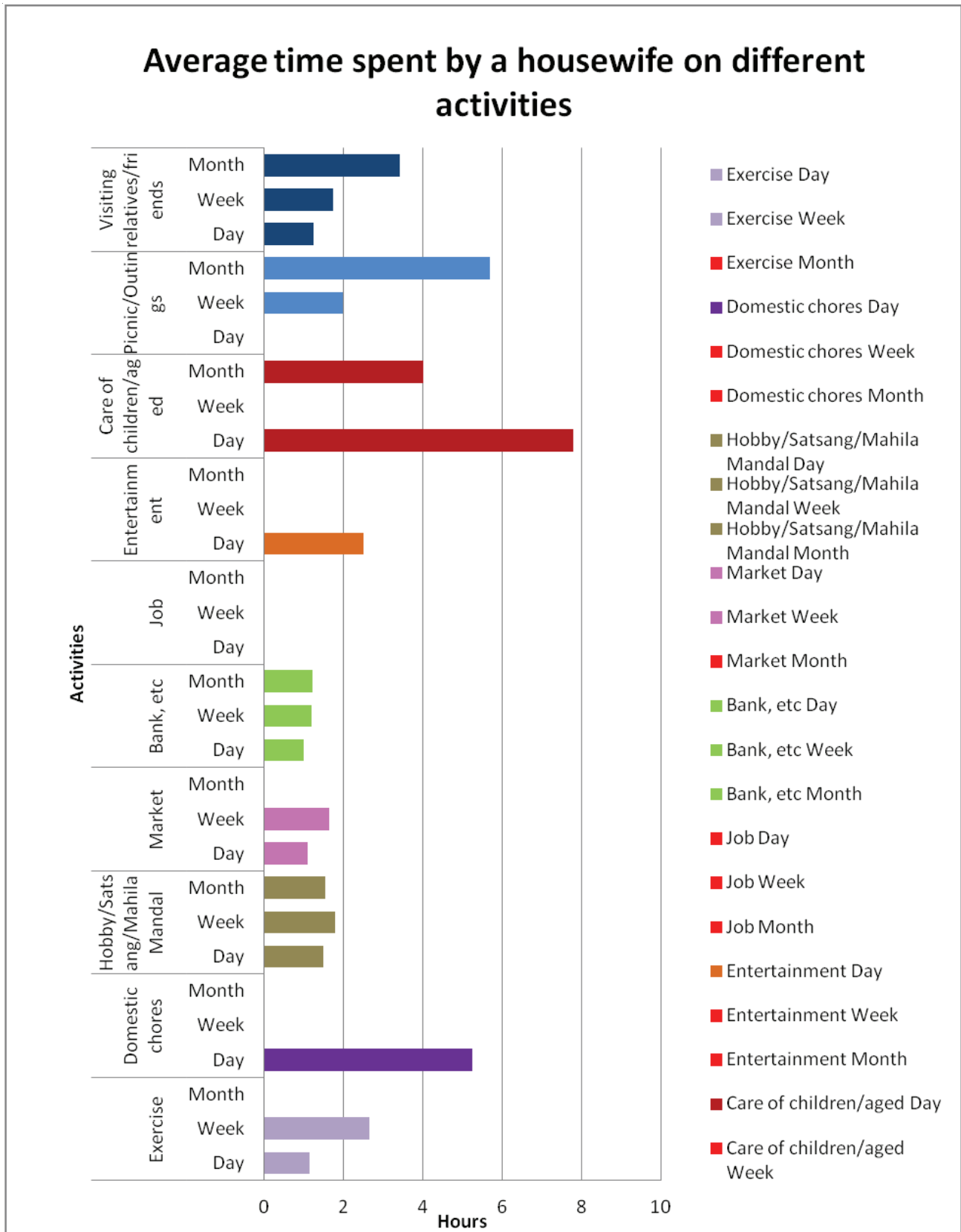


Fig. 1

Table 3: Average Time Spent on Daily Activities

Taking care of children	8 hours
Domestic work	5 hours
Entertainment	2-3 hours
Hobby/Mahila Mandals/Satsangs	1-2 hours
Going to market/banks, etc	1-2 hours
Exercise	<1 hour

Table 4: Level of Satisfaction

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Being born as a woman	60% respondents have rated above 4
Level of education	55% respondents have rated 2 or 1
Life before marriage	More than 90% have rated above 3
Life after marriage	55% respondents have rated above 4
Freedom in decision-making	More than 50% have rated below 3
Material well-being	More than 50% have rated above 3
Respect earned from family members	More than 70% have rated above 3
Community life of a woman	More than 60% have rated below 3
Personal health	More than 60% have rated above 3
Individual security	More than 60% have rated below 3
Practice of social customs	More than 60% have rated below 3

Conclusion :

The ideology that “a woman’s place is in ‘home’” is very strong all over the world (McDowell, L, 1982). The society controls the ‘spaces’ which women can have access to while men enjoy it as a natural right. Society decides about a woman’s access to education, nutrition, health, paid employment, social customs like marriage, freedom in decision-making whether at the individual level or at the family level. The relationship between ‘production’ and ‘reproduction’ varies over time and space with reference to patriarchy. In our country, women do have legal support through various constitutional and legislative provisions like The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 (28 of 1961), The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 (19 of 1929), The Pre-Natal Diagnostic Technique (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994 and many such laws. But a major challenge lies in questioning the worthiness of patriarchal customs and traditions that control the lives of women. Education, social reforms, legal provisions, schemes for empowerment of women have these really changed the social position of women in general and house-wives in particular is a question that remains unanswered.

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Level of Satisfaction

In this study an attempt was made to understand the level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction among house-wives about various aspects that affect or have affected their lives in the transition from being ‘single’ to being ‘married’. For the measurement of satisfaction a scale from 1 to 5 was indicated wherein, 1 indicates a poor level of satisfaction and 5 indicates an excellent level. The results are summarised in the following table:

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Changing Paradigms in the World of Illegal Migration: The Story of Burmese Refugee Women in India

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Abstract : India has never been a party to the global acceptance of the refugee issues. It has, in its unique mode accepted the stateless Asian populace but has however been a party to the laws that safeguard their interests. While age old narratives of the prominent asylum seeking communities speak of the assimilatory nature of the Indian Sub Continent, there is still a bone of contention in the whole debate of this nature.

The term refugees in the context of the contemporary world politics has myriad set of understandings with the term itself being questioned. Subsequently, the using of concepts such as illegal immigrants, asylum seekers are considered more appropriate for the purpose of describing the so called stateless people. It is with this understanding that the terms of reference are used to identify this largely vulnerable section of the population. To further give a microscopically featured account of the refugee conditions in the continent of Asia, I have chosen Burma as my field of study. Burma, as the name suggests is a country facing several challenges not merely at the level politics and government but also at the level of major social upsurge on account of ethnic differences and clashes there of.

The experience of Burmese refugee women in India provide a uniquely interesting angle from which to explore the linkages between the active agency of refugee women in reconstructing their lives and negotiating the possibilities of belonging and the effects of discursive practices and institutional, structural processes that continue to perpetuate their ' outsider' status. The study thus problematizes the very status of Burmese refugee women - conceptualising them as racialised, sexualized displaced "others" both within their "home country" and an "alien" host country which has been hostile to the influx of refugees into their capital city and the state of Mizoram. This paper aims to provide deeper insights into the gendered nature of refugee life the manner in which identities, traditions, cultural and gender roles have been negotiated (and continue to be renegotiated) by the Burmese in the process of reconstruction, integration and recreating a "place/space" for themselves as a refugee community.

The study situates the predicament of the Burmese women refugees in India within the larger global experience of women refugees. This calls for tracing the trajectory of the struggle of (a segment of) Burmese women and their roles in women's activism - whether for human rights or for political agendas. Their experiences - both distinct and universal have resulted in displacement and destabilisation - but has also afforded them new found space in which to represent themselves and their community, to articulated their demands, exercise their rights and engage an international audience.

Key words : Asylum Seekers, Illegal Migrants, Refugees, Burma, Transnational.

Introspecting Indian Policies towards Refugees

Before India was declared independent, the Indian courts under British rule administered the English Common law. India never had a clear policy as to whom to grant refugee status. As early as 1953 the then Prime Minister of India, Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru informed Parliament that India would abide by international standards governing asylum by adopting similar, non-binding domestic policies. According to Article 51 of the non-binding Directive Principles of State Policy, India endeavors to "(a) promote international peace and security; (b) maintain just and honorable relations between nations; (c) foster respect for international law and treaty obligations.....; and (d) encourage settlement of international disputes by arbitration." Since then, the Indian Government has consistently affirmed the right of the state to grant asylum on humanitarian grounds. Based on this policy, India has granted asylum and refugee status to Tibetans and Tamils from Sri Lanka. The 1971 refugees from Bangladesh were officially called "evacuees", but were treated as refugees requiring temporary asylum.

No other community or group has been officially recognized as 'refugees'. However, India claims to observe the principles of non-refoulement and thus never to return or expel any refugee whose life and liberty were under threat in his/her country of origin or residence. While Non-refoulement is an important principle to international refugee law, which acts as a complete prohibition against the forcible return of people to a place where they will be subjected to grave human rights violations or where their life or personal security will be seriously endangered, the principle applies equally to refugees at the border of a state and to those already admitted, and it remains in force until the adverse conditions which prompted people to flee in the first place are alleviated. Refuting this claim, Indian human rights groups do point to specific cases of refoulement, where clear evidence and refugee testimony prove that forcible repatriation has taken place. A closer examination of India's refugee policy reveals a number of intricate problems

Refugee Categories

The plight of refugees in India generally depends upon the extent of protection they receive from either the Indian

Government or the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Below is brief definition of the three primary categories followed by a description of the living conditions faced by each refugee category

- I. Refugees who receive full protection according to standards set by the Government of India;
- II. Refugees whose presence in Indian territory is acknowledged only by UNHCR and are protected under the principle of non-refoulement;
- III. Refugees who have entered India and have assimilated into their communities. Their presence is not acknowledged by either the Indian Government or the UNHCR.

A brief history of Burmese refugee population influx into India and the causes for the same

Burma and one adheres to the story behind Myanmar, perhaps the state has undergone deep trauma throughout Asian history. It has seen a land of religious sincerity going terribly wrong with its Anti-Buddhist status quo and to a larger extent unbelievably larger quantum of misbelief towards the ethnic minorities in the country. In 1988, the Burmese government began suppressing the pro-democracy movement forcing 3,000 refugees to cross the border into India. The increased militarization under the SPDC and its effects continue to cause flight from Burma, especially in the western region. Torture, disappearances, forced labour, rape and extra-judicial killings are among the human rights abuses perpetrated by the military junta against its perceived opponents. Ethnic and religious persecution of the minorities, in particular the Chin Christians in the Chin state is also commonly found. Further the Arakan Muslims also well known as the Rohingyas have been the main targets of the state's ethnic cleansing ideologies.

Places in India where Burmese refugees are found and the details of the refugee camps

Most of Burmese enter India from the northeast and very few asylum seekers who travel to Delhi are recognized as refugees by the UNHCR. The UNHCR in Delhi assists about 2,000 Burmese refugees, the majority of whom are from Chin state. The organization provides the more vulnerable individuals with a small monthly stipend, which is often not enough to cover basic necessities. In addition to the Burmese who are recognized refugees by the UNHCR, there are also a large number of Burmese asylum seekers living in India. The majority live in Mizoram in northeast India; they belong to the same ethnic group and find integration easier. Employment opportunities are also better there. In case of the Rohingya refugees who are found in various parts of the country including Kashmir face severe ostracizing in the places and are victims of dual tragedies,

one being identified as Muslims and the other as stateless in origin.

UNHCR reports on the situations of women in these refugee camps

Great strides have been made in the past in introducing projects that promote the strategic needs of refugee women such as encouraging girls' education, education and skills training of refugee women, rights awareness training, advocacy against female genital mutilation and early marriage, entrepreneurial skills development, income-generation activities etc. These activities, however, have tended to suffer in recent times because of the financial crisis facing the office. It is important that these activities continue to have donor support. Improving opportunities for women is critical for successful voluntary repatriation and reintegration of refugee women. Refugee women form the central force to re-establishing the returnee community. Refugee children and men rely on the refugee women for return to normal life within their own community. Support for the strategic needs of refugee women reinforces their capacity for successful reintegration upon return. Most refugees in camps live in family units, either arriving as such or reuniting after separate arrivals. The ratio of males to females is 51:49 and there are relatively few single mothers. The average family size is 5/4 people. Nearly 6% of households are headed by single women. Women tend to be under-represented in the committees that organize the day-to-day administration of the camps, but are active in areas such as teaching, health care work and home visits to gather information about the daily routine of refugees. Obstacles to increased participation of women in camp administration are lack of education and basic knowledge about their rights. There are various women's groups in all the camps, some focusing on the daily needs and welfare of women and some on the more political aspects of women's rights.

The majority of refugee women come from ethnic minority groups and suffer from a wide range of human rights violations prior to arrival in the camps. Ethnic minority women living in conflict areas are used as forced labor on infrastructure projects and forced porters for the military, are subject to the constant threat of rape and have virtually no personal security. Conditions in the camps vary from place to place, but women have generally suffered from the recent tighter restrictions on movement outside the camps and have seen their ability to be self-sufficient decline. The conditions of refugee women strongly affect children, of whom women are the primary caregivers.

Specific protection issues

Burmese women bear the largest burden among the refugee population. Some women are widows or are the head

of large families. In addition to taking care of their families they must also work to provide for them. Burmese women refugees are regularly harassed at work. Working in the informal sector means that they are often overworked and underpaid. The necessity of providing for their families leads many Burmese refugees to attend the night markets after they close in order to search for left-over vegetables or rummage through the rubbish. In order to provide their families with basic necessities the refugees are often out alone late at night, putting them at greater risk of harassment and assault. Their precarious situation is Report Refugee Populations in India, 2007 compounded by the fact that Burmese refugees are often unable or unwilling to obtain police protection when they are the victims of crimes.

Steps to a Paradigm Shift

The Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network has been the main icebreaker in this endeavor towards refugee law guarantees and strategic legislation process. In its undaunted working process it has defined refugee protection in new dimensions and categories. The areas to be strengthened are:

- Draft domestic legislation in Asia for countries who do not accept the 1951 and the 1967 Refugee law Convention and Protocol.
- Gradual generational shift on refugee rights understanding
- Social media to engage in the debate on refugee issues
- Growing civil society movements
- Growing consciousness of human rights norms and principles
- Judicial activism
- Regular reporting to UN Human Rights bodies
- The role of NHRI has become more prominent
- Academic engagement

Burmese Women Refugees as Activists

Besides challenging the conventional constructions of victimhood in the refugee experience, the case of Burmese refugee women also reveals the need to reconceptualize their identities as multiple and fluid as they regenerate themselves as socio-political and historical actors. As

Frances Tomlinson notes, “the label ‘refugee woman’ is inherently multiple, indicating not only gender and

placement in a category replete with political overtones, but also a position as ‘not from here’, and thus able to be placed in some minority, ethnic or cultural group.” The complexities of the female refugee experience, however, involving both, loss and regeneration, disruption and re-integration, has resulted in providing opportunities for activism, independence, building social interconnectedness in a new location and inculcating a sense of ethnic consciousness and belonging. “‘Regeneration’ can be traced in the resilient ways people work through the effects of trauma by generating counter forces which potentially motivates their agency.” In the case of female Burmese refugees in Delhi, they have training centres for Self Defence activities which further enhances their skills to overcome physical attacks.

National civil society groups have a vital role to play in strengthening refugee protection in Asia. They have unique capacities to influence public opinion and to shape domestic laws and politics. However, strong, locally owned, popular movements of committed refugee advocates are only just emerging in South and Southeast Asia. Local knowledge production still plays a marginal role in shaping global discourses concerning refugees. Only with vibrant national civil society movements will states in South and Southeast Asia be convinced that refugee protection is the desire of its citizenry; only then will there be local ownership of refugee protection in these regions.

Concluding Remarks

Asylum is primarily the responsibility of states, but politicians, community leaders and the media can contribute to a climate of tolerance in which asylum can be properly managed. In many countries, asylum and immigration debates are intertwined and politicians have staked out anti-immigration positions. Negative attitudes are easily fuelled by concerns about the costs of maintaining asylum systems and hosting refugees.

A climate conducive to asylum requires explaining the asylum issue as distinct from immigration in general; focusing on education about forced displacement, including through the media; and acting to combat xenophobia and intolerance.

It is hoped that such a participatory model of refugee protection will go a long way in building and restoring a sense of ‘community’ among otherwise dispersed refugee groups in a complex urban setting like New Delhi. Refugees and asylum seekers will be empowered to make choices about their future, take ownership and bear joint responsibility along with UNHCR and its partners, to implement programmes and policies that affect them both as individuals and as a community.

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Journey of Women in Advertising

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Abstract : Advertising is a powerful tool used by the marketers to persuade, manipulate and shape behavior of the consumers. They sell values, image and concepts of success and worth, love, sexuality, Popularity and normalcy. We are each exposed to over 2000 ads per day. Indian will spend one and one half years of his or her life watching television commercials. The advertising industry as a whole has been subject to controversy over the ethics of propagating factual reality of its contents, sex and gender portrayals, aesthetic values and its fall out on society. The image of the women in advertising has been a matter of debate since long period them basically as a housewife by showing them in the society but advertisements shown them basically as a housewife by showing them in the ads of Gas, Pressure cooker, washing soaps, kitchen appliances, ready to make food packets. Young girls in advertisements are shown mostly beautifying themselves or trying to catch male attention through different kinds of beautifying products. This negatively enhances her image in society. There is an urgent need to initiate changes in the existing portrayal of women in advertisements to make this medium more effective and positive. The content of women's advertisement should be projecting their multiplicity of roles, life styles, achievements, problems and struggles. Women should be shown natural, realistic and emancipated in the advertisements. Women activists can regularly react to the advertisement campaign that is disgustingly insulting the dignity of women in different ways. More people from the public and activist groups in general should take up the watch dog activity.

Keywords : Advertisement, women, portrayal, new trends.

Mass communication media in India, like every modern and advanced country, comprises of the radio, the film, the television, the press and publications along with huge advertisements. The magic persuasiveness of the visual presentation and its admitted superiority over other media for propagation of social and economic objectives has together placed the television in India with great priority.

Advertisement is a form of mass communication. It involves a process of transmission of information by the manufacturer or seller of a product or service to modify or stimulate the behavior of the buyer to buy a particular product.

Advertisement can be in any form of presentation such as sign, symbol or illustration in print media, a commercial on radio or TV, Poster etc. thus advertisement is the communication link between the seller and the buyer. It has made mass selling possible.

The term advertising is derived from the latin word "advertene". It means to turn the mind to advertising diverts the attention of the buyers to product or service.

Advertising in India has created an incredible awareness among the people in the past decade growing in to big industry. It has grown along with the press and today it has found its way into the other two media - Radio and television. Advertising, which was an American concept originally has found its place in a country like India, so much so that the number of commercials have doubled in the media.

Advertising grew in India with growth of the Indian Press. In the initial period, to advertise meant to inform. The early newspapers & magazines announce birth, deaths,

arrivals of ships from England, sale of household furniture etc. In the beginning of nineteenth century new products, discounts & special services got their place in advertisements. Thus, gradually advertising started gaining power. It increased with the growth of trade & commerce.

In early 20th century the advertising agencies such as Indian Advertising Agency & Calcutta Advertising Agency were started. During Second World War, press advertising was used extensively to raise funds for the war. The Indian professionals also learnt how to motivate the masses through advertising. Between 1922-39 many advertising agencies came up.

During pre-independence era, Indian advertisement were mostly about clothes, travelling, eating & entertainment places, Indian hotels, four wheelers, tea, gramophones & tailoring shops for Britishers in India & princely families.

In the post-independence period the focus of advertisements shifted from luxury goods to consumer goods bought mainly for time & labour saving purposes. In 1976, first commercial spot appeared on TV and in 1980, the first advertisement sponsorship was allowed.

We live in a time when advertisements have taken on a completely different meaning than when they were first created. It is no longer a simple black & white ad trying to sell a household product. Now we are bombarded by images selling anything from common household products to vacations in Bahamas. Millions of dollars are spent to research what it is the public wants and how to sell it to them in the most appealing way. Images are in colour, high tech, and sometimes it's even difficult to see exactly what is being sold.

In the beginning, advertisements were once shown to sell a product, however as years passed, advertisements began to objectify women & begin to use women as a way to sell products.

Advertisements began before the 19th century, where advertisements were meant to sell the products in literal terms.

In the early 1900s, advertisements have been a way in solving personal & social problems. Women at this time were placed as the main audience for the products advertised. Products are advertised in a way to make people feel insecure. The particular advertisement, denotatively shows a man walking away from a woman whom is crying, which indicates anger from a man, & sadness from the woman. However, connotatively, the man is shown with control & high status, while the woman is seen as insecure and vulnerable.

Around the 1950's, women began to be more accounted into the domestic role. Women have been placed in advertisements that consumers associate them to. Women are often seen with rough house work such as washing the dishes with the phrase "Get out of the kitchen sooner". Men are often seen "behind the scenes" when it comes to domestic labour such as house cleaning, grocery shopping and advertisement is seen on a couch, having the dominate control to do what he wants.

Often, the differentiation between males & females in advertisements are distinct. Females are often seen with certain products, while men are seen with others. However, when men are seen with "women jobs", they are often struggling or are in need of help.

Today, advertisements are seen as map defining territories. Advertisement shows the audience what they can become if they use the products.

There has been much criticism of television advertising of some commercial products like cigarettes, laxatives or articles of intimate wearing apparel on moral grounds. Comments in newspapers articles have found some of them objectionable and violating the requirements of good taste and sometimes offensive. Some objections have also been made to the appearance of scantily clad women in some commercials. As the tentacles of globalization have trespassed into electronic media, the advertising industry has been swept by the market forces with the result that sexist display depicting women in demeaning manner has become the norm.

Though, it is true that the level of active participation and decision making capability of women in each and every aspect of social and political life in India has increased leaps and bounds, yet the overall conditions of women is not so

good. The depiction woman in Indian media is simply shoddy and at times vulgar.

The advertisements in Indian media are in a horrible condition. This is a portion, which requires immediate attention of media planners. Even the women activists seldom react to the advertisement campaign that is grossly insulting the dignity of women in different ways. In most of the advertisement in Indian media be it newspapers, or magazines, T.V. channels or otherwise, one finds that an essential ingredient is women. There is an advertisement of a premium whisky that shows one man is taking first sip of that particular whisky and the lady sitting in front him appears to be losing some inches of her dress after every drink the process goes on up to three drinks. After three sips of the drink he finds that the breasts of the previously over clad lady have become quite visible and half clad and his own shirt has slipped from his shoulders and the voice smurs – *KUCHH BHI HO SAKTA HAI* (anything can happen). In one advertisement of an after shave lotion, a man comes over after shaving and using the particular lotion and young girls in the vicinity start following him seductively. In one advertisement of bike one individual is shown as moving hand on the body of the bike and the image of a scantily clad lady props up instead of the bike.

In one advertisement of deodorant spray, some young two-piece bikini clad female start flocking the man who has used that spray. In another advertisement, two girls are using telescope to watch, admire and get fainted out of infatuation by looking at the man wearing only a particular brand of underwear. Another advertisement of underwear shows a young man kissed on almost every part of his body by infatuated young girls in the ladies toilet. These are only some examples prevalent in our media. These days, the depiction of women in these and other advertisement is actually insult to the women in general but we are used to enjoy them with little concern about the female respect and dignity, which used to be the salient feature or our ancient tradition. Even the advertisement in hoardings, posters and wall writing etc. are no less offending. India being one of the largest economies of the world and second in world population yielded very few research studies on gender portrayal in advertising which were again very limited in scope.

Mathew (1990) examined Indian male market segmentation and preference of male roleportrayals in each segment. In another study, Munshi (1999) examined the depiction of Indian housewives in Indian television commercials, while Das (2000) reviewed and analyzed the representation of men and women in Indian magazine advertisements. Dwivedy et. al (2009) examined male and female portrayal trends in the advertisements of India's highest read men, women and general interest magazine across various product categories.

An extensive review of literature of last five decades indicate general consensus on gender stereotyping in majority of advertisements where women are mainly depicted as (1) reliant on men (2) as sex-object or an ornamental item, (3) do not make important decisions, (4) as housewife (or a caring mother), and (5) mostly portrayed as house bound whereas men are mainly shown (1) as decision maker, (2) in a commanding role, (3) as an expert, (4) primarily in work setting or (3) as a voice of narrator.

For women born in the early 1980s, sex in the media has been a constant companion. Sex is everywhere, on prime time television programs, movies, and music videos. It is rare to view an hour of television and not see a suggestively dressed or undressed female, whether in a program or a commercial. Sexual imagery appears in magazine, articles and advertisements. A recent issue of *Cosmopolitan* might contain hundreds of half-naked women, stories of sexual mishaps, and even instructions for the ancient art of Kama Sutra.

Conclusion

Without the support of people, there would not have been such advertisements on women. But being human, many are guilty of purchasing and engaging in the images that are shown. However, sometimes it makes people wonder why women do advertisements that degrade themselves. Everyone has their own reasons. For some, it may be money, while for some others it may be enjoyment of basking in the glare of publicity. Overall, from the images shown over the generation, portray the non-existence when it came to advertisements, but now has become an object for the product.

It would seem that a more realistic portrayal of women in advertising is not only desirable but fundamental in a modern marketplace. Women not only want it, they deserve it. If advertisers believe that they are currently depicting women accurately in advertising, they may be advised to rethink their position. It is clear from this research that women do not believe this to be true. It is possible that better pre-testing of advertising is warranted. Obtaining input from the female market may pay dividends, in that better and more progressive advertising may result. A particularly important finding in this study is the fact that the attitudes held by women cut across age, income, education and marital status categories. Therefore, advertisers cannot simply write off complaints about the portrayal of women in advertising to a small group of liberal feminists. The concern appears to be widespread.

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हिंसा, महिलाएं तथा भारतीय विचारों का दृष्टिकोण

रितु शर्मा, पी.एच.डी.

शोध छात्र, राज्यशास्त्र विभाग, जामिया मिलिया इस्लामिया विश्वविद्यालय

भारतीय समाज में महिलाएँ कई प्रकार की हिंसा का सामना करती हैं जैसे बलात्कार, घरेलु हिंसाएँ शारीरिक शोषण, कन्या भ्रूण हत्या, सती हत्या, दहेज के कारण होनेवाले शोषण तथा हत्या, ऑनर किलिंग इत्यादि। महिलाओं पर होनेवाली हिंसाने उनके क्षेत्र को सीमित कर दिया है, इन सबके कारण या तो वो घर में रहती है, या आर्थिक रूप से प्रताड़ित होती है, नहीं तो सामाजिक रूप से उसे दबाया जाता है। वर्तमान समय में महिला, घर, समाज तथा राज्य इन तीनों में से कहीं भी स्वयं को हिंसा से मुक्त नहीं पाती है। प्राचीन समय में देवी तुल्य कहीं जानेवाली स्त्री विवेकानन्द जैसे विचारकों द्वारा भगवान का प्रतिनिधि मानी जानेवाली स्त्री की दशा अब वर्तमान समय में और भी भयावह होती जा रही है। शिक्षा को ज्ञान तथा जागरूकता की मशाल माना जाता है लेकिन ये भारतीय समाज की विडम्बना ही है कि जितना भारतीय समाज शिक्षित तथा उन्नत होता जा रहा है, उतनी ही हिंसा स्त्रियों पर बढ़ती जा रही है। भारतीय समाज में महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा एक चिन्तनीय विषय है। यह लेख मुख्य रूप से भारतीय समाज में हिंसा के रूपों तथा महिलाओं पर पड़नेवाले उनके प्रभावों को दर्शाता है, इसके अतिरिक्त, आधुनिक राजनीति विचारकों ने कैसे भारतीय समाज में महिलाओं की स्थिति को सुधारने का प्रयत्न किया था, उसका भी वर्णन करता है तथा वर्तमान समय में भारतीय शासन व्यवस्था द्वारा हिंसा में सुधारों के लिए किए गए प्रयत्नों तथा उनके सफल ना होने का भी वर्णन करता है।

भारतीय समाज में महिलाएँ कई प्रकार की हिंसा का सामना करती हैं। जैसे बलात्कार, घरेलु हिंसा, शारीरिक शोषण, कन्या भ्रूण हत्या, सती, दहेज के कारण होनेवाले शोषण तथा हत्या, ऑनर किलिंग इत्यादि। महिलाओं पर होनेवाली हिंसा ने उनके क्षेत्र को सीमित कर दिया है। इन सबके कारण या तो वो घर में रहती है, या आर्थिक रूप से प्रताड़ित में महिला, घर, समाज तथा राज्य इन तीनों में से कहीं भी स्वयं को हिंसा से मुक्त नहीं पाती है। प्राचीन समय में देवी तुल्य कहीं जानेवाली तथा विवेकानन्द जैसे विचारकों द्वारा भगवान का प्रतिनिधि मानी जानेवाली स्त्री की दशा अब वर्तमान समय में और भी भयावह होती जा रही है। शिक्षा को ज्ञान तथा जागरूकता की मशाल माना जाता है। लेकिन ये भारतीय समाज की विडम्बना ही है कि जितना भारतीय समाज शिक्षित तथा उन्नत होता जा रहा है, उतनी ही हिंसा स्त्रियों पर बढ़ती जा रही है।

भारतीय समाज में महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा एक चिन्तनीय विषय है। यह लेख मुख्य रूप से भारतीय समाज में हिंसा के रूपों तथा महिलाओं पर पड़नेवाले उनके प्रभावों की विवेचना करता है। इसके अतिरिक्त, आधुनिक राजनीति विचारकों ने कैसे भारतीय समाज में महिलाओं की स्थिति को सुधारने का प्रयत्न किया था, उसका भी वर्णन करता है तथा वर्तमान समय में भारतीय शासन व्यवस्था द्वारा हिंसा में सुधारों के लिए किए गए प्रयत्नों तथा उनके सफल ना होने की भी समीक्षा करता है।

प्राकथन

हिंसा में शोषण समाहित होता है, चाहे वह आर्थिक, सामाजिक, राजनैतिक या व्यक्तिगत रूप से एक व्यक्ति द्वारा दूसरे

व्यक्ति पर हो या महिलाओं पर हो, या एक राष्ट्र द्वारा अन्य राष्ट्र पर।

महात्मा गांधी :

जैसा कि गांधीजी स्पष्ट करते हैं कि, हिंसा में शोषण समाहित होता है, चाहे वह किसी भी रूप में क्यों न हो। महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा, भारतीय समाज में प्राचीन समय से ही चलती आ रही है तथा वर्तमान प्रगतिशील शिक्षित समाज भी इससे अछूता नहीं है बल्कि शिक्षा तथा प्रगति के साथ-साथ भारतीय समाज में महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा बढ़ती ही चली जा रही है। यह एक सार्वभौमिक घटना है, ऐसा कोई भी धर्म, जाति, गांव, शहर, देश या राष्ट्र नहीं जहां किसी महिला पर सामाजिक कुरीतियों, परम्पराओं एवं परिवार की प्रतिष्ठा के नाम पर किसी भी प्रकार की हिंसा का प्रहार न किया गया हो। महिला एवं हिंसा सामाजिक वातावरण के दो विपरीत स्तम्भ हैं, जहां महिला मानवता का निर्माण करती है, हिंसा विनाश करती है।” महिलाएं अनेक प्रकार की हिंसा का सामना करती हैं, जैसे बलात्कार तथा अन्य शारीरिक उत्पीड़न, कन्या भ्रूण हत्या, सती, दहेज के कारण हत्या, मारपीट इत्यादि। इन्हीं हिंसाओं तथा असुरक्षा की भावना ने महिलाओं को घर तक सामित कर दिया है। वे आर्थिक शोषण तथा सामाजिक पिछड़ेपन का सामना करती हैं। महिलाएं घर, समाज, तथा राज्य तीनों ही स्थानों पर स्वयं को हिंसा से मुक्त नहीं पाती हैं।

महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा नए सामाजिक आंदोलनों का मुख्य विषय रहा है। मानवतावादी सुधारकों ने दहेज हत्या, बलात्कार, कन्या भ्रूण हत्या जैसे महत्वपूर्ण विषयों को उठाया। महिला हिंसा का मुद्दा भारतीय समाज में प्राचीन समय से ही

उठता रहा है। आधुनिक समय में भी राजा राम मोहन रॉय, ईश्वर चन्द्र विद्यासागर, विवेकानंद, गांधी, पंडिता रमाबाई जैसे भारतीय विचारकों ने स्त्रियों के विरुद्ध होनेवाली हिंसा, असमानता के प्रति आवाज उठाई तथा उनकी स्थिति को बदलने का प्रयत्न किया, किन्तु भारतीय समाज की जड़ता के कारण, उन विचारकों को भी अनेक कठिनाइयों का सामना करना पड़ा। जैसे कि जब राजा राम मोहन राय ने सती प्रथा का विरोध किया था तो स्वयं उनकी मां ने उन्हें घर से निकाल दिया था। विडम्बना यह है कि महिलाओं पर होनेवाली हिंसा, भारतीय समाज में एक परम्परा के रूप में स्वीकृति ग्रहण कर चुकी है, इसलिए घरेलु हिंसा जैसे गंभीर मुद्दे को इतना महत्त्व नहीं दिया जाता है तथा स्वयं महिलाओं द्वारा भी उन पर होनेवाली घरेलु हिंसा तथा जबरन शारीरिक संबंध जैसी घटनाओं के विरुद्ध कोई आवाज नहीं उठाई जाती है।

महिलाओं पर होनेवाली हिंसा को समझने से पहले 'हिंसा' के अर्थ को जानना बहुत महत्त्वपूर्ण है।

हिंसा का अर्थ - हिंसा शब्द बहुत व्यापक है और इसमें कई अर्थ निहित हैं। लड़कियों के संदर्भ में इसे उनके यौन शोषण और घरेलु हिंसा के संदर्भ में देखा जाता चाहिए। अगर साधारण शब्दों में कहा जाए तो महिलाओं के प्रति हिंसा वह अपराधिक गतिविधि है, जो शारीरिक शक्ति का अवैधानिक उपयोग करने के सार्थक ही सामाजिक-संरचना में शोषण, भेदभाव, आर्थिक असमानता की निरन्तरता, आतंक का वातावरण बनाये रखने में सहयोग देता है। हिंसा को कई रूपों में परिभाषित किया जाता है। विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन ने भी इसकी व्यापक परिभाषा दी है। इसकी परिभाषा में यह निहित है कि अपने शारीरिक बल का सोच समझकर किसी व्यक्ति विशेष या किसी समूह के विपरित प्रयोग करना तथा इसके परिणाम स्वरूप चोट लगना, मृत्यु होना हिंसा कहलाता है। यह परिभाषा शारीरिक, मानसिक, यौन हिंसा को शामिल करती है।

विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन का मानना है कि हिंसा के कारण मानसिक, सामाजिक तथा शारीरिक सभी प्रकार की समस्याएं उत्पन्न होती हैं। हिंसा के कारण ना केवल शारीरिक, मानसिक तथा मनोवैज्ञानिक समस्याएं उत्पन्न होती हैं, बल्कि समाज पर इसका दुष्परिणाम सर्वाधिक असर दिखाता है।

भारत में महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा

भारत में महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा एक ज्वलंत मुद्दा बना हुआ है। नेशनल क्राईम ब्यूरो के अनुसार २०१२ में महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा ६.४ प्रतिशत हो गई तथा महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा की दर प्रति तीन मिनट पर है। २०११ में २,२८,६५० घटनाएं

सामने आई थी जो २०१२ में बढ़कर २४४२७० हो गई ६५ प्रतिशत पुरुषों का ये मानना है कि महिलाएं हिंसा को पारिवारिक एकता के लिए सहन करती हैं। जनवारी २०११ में 'अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय पुरुष तथा लैंगिक समानता सर्वेक्षण' के प्रश्नावली में २४ प्रतिशत भारतीय पुरुषों ने माना कि उन्होंने लैंगिक हिंसा की है।

२००६	१९५६८५६
२००९	२०३६८०४
२०१०	२१३६८५
२०११	२१३६८५
२०१२	२४४२७०

हिंसा के प्रकार

बलात्कार भारत में बलात्कार महिलाओं के विरुद्ध होनेवाली हिंसा का सबसे प्रचलित प्रकार है।

Criminal Law Act 2013, defines rape as "Penile and non penile penetration in bodily offices of a women by men, without a consent of the women."

भारत में हर २९ वें मिनट में एक महिला का बलात्कार होता है - इसके आधार को जोड़िए। यद्यपि भारत में महिलाओं ने अपने विरुद्ध होनेवाले इस अपराध के विरोध न्याय के लिए घरों से बाहर निकलना शुरु किया है। लेकिन उन्हें न्याय मिलने में सदैव परेशानी होती है, क्योंकि जहां एक तरफ ओर पुलिस का व्यवहार निराशाजनक होता है वहीं दूसरी ओर अपराध चिकित्सकीय सबूतों के अभाव में छूट जाते हैं। तुरन्त चिकित्सा सुविधा उपलब्ध नहीं होने से शारीरिक स्वास्थ्य प्रभावित होते हैं और इसका फायदा दोषी को मिलता है।

वैवाहिक बलात्कार - हमारे यहां विवाह के बाद भी स्त्री से जबरदस्ती की जाती है। उनकी इच्छा के विरुद्ध उनसे जबरन सम्बन्ध बनाया जाता है। भारत में २० प्रतिशत पुरुषों का मानना है कि वे अपनी पत्नी को शारीरिक सम्बन्धों के लिए जबरदस्ती करते हैं।

वर्ष	केसेस दर्ज
2008	21,467
2009	21,397
2010	22,172
2011	24,206
2012	24,923

स्त्री भ्रूणहत्या

स्त्री भ्रूणहत्या से अभिप्राय भ्रूण को गर्भ में लिंग निर्धारण कर गर्भपात द्वारा गर्भ में ही खत्म करना है। भारत में पुत्र प्राप्ति की इच्छाने इस अपराध को सर्वाधिक बढ़ा दिया है। 'बेटा' भारत में बूढ़ापे का सहारा माना जाता है वही बेटियों का बोझ माना जाता है। इसका एक कारण 'दहेज' प्रथा भी है। ज्यादातर गर्भपात या तो ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में होते हैं। या उन स्थितियों में जहां पहली सन्तान 'लडकी' हो। यह हमारे यहां विडम्बना है कि बेटों को तलवार की तरह पाला जाता है और बेटियों को सिर पर लटकती तलवार की तरह।

घरेलू हिंसा - घरेलू हिंसा से तात्पर्य एक पार्टनर द्वारा दूसरे पार्टनर के विरुद्ध की जानेवाली हिंसा है। घरेलू हिंसा शारीरिक, मानसिक, आर्थिक, शाब्दिक तथा यौन होती है। भारत में ७० प्रतिशत महिलाएं घरेलू हिंसा का शिकार हैं। प्रति ९वें मिनट में पति या उसके किसी रिश्तेदार द्वारा घरेलू हिंसा की जाती है। यह हिंसा भारतीय समाज में सबसे भयावह रूप में है।

वर्ष	दर्ज क्रूरता
२००८	८१,३४४
२००९	८९,५४६
२०१०	९४,०४९
२०११	९९,१३५
२०१२	१,०६,५२७

ऐसिड फेंकना - तेजाब फेंकना, महिलाओं के विरुद्ध होनेवाली हिंसा के भयावह रूपों में से एक है। तेजाब से हमला मुख्यतः पीड़ित के चेहरे पर किया जाता है। जिसके भयावह परिणाम सामने आते हैं। तेजाब से हमला करने के मुख्य कारण शादी से इन्कार, शारीरिक संबंधों से इन्कार, तथा २० प्रतिशत सम्पत्ति, जमीन इत्यादि कारणों से सम्बन्धित होते हैं। भारत में तेजाब से हमलों की घटनाओं में लगातार वृद्धि हो रहा है और यह खतरे की स्थिति है। जिस स्त्री पर तेजाब फेंका जाता है, वह केवल शारीरिक ही नहीं बल्कि मानसिक तरीके से भी प्रभावित होती है। वह इस मानसिक प्रताड़ना से दीर्घकालिक समय तक उबर नहीं पाती है। सम्बन्ध में सर्वाधिक खतरे की स्थिति में है।

दहेज हत्या - दहेज हत्या का तात्पर्य एक शादीशुदा महिला की दहेज के कारण हुई हत्या है। दहेज हत्या में ज्यादातर महिलाएं

दहेज उत्पीड़न से परेशान होकर आत्महत्या कर लेती है या फिर उसके पति या ससुरालवालों द्वारा उसे दहेज के लिए मार दिया जाता है। भारत में उत्तर प्रदेश में सर्वाधिक २७.३ प्रतिशत दहेज हत्या दर्ज की गई है।

वर्ष	दर्ज दहेज हत्याएँ
२००८	८१७२
२००९	८३८३
२०१०	८३९१
२०११	८६१८
२०१२	८२३३

ऑनर किलिंग : ऑनर किलिंग से तात्पर्य ऐसी व्यक्ति की हत्या से है, जिसको परिवार की इज्जत पर एक कलंक मानकर मार दिया जाता है। ऑनर किलिंग में ज्यादातर कारण समझौता विवाह/ तयशुदा विवाह के लिए मना करना, प्रेम विवाह, अन्तर्जातीय विवाह, बलात्कार का शिकार होना इत्यादी है। ऑनर किलिंग अत्यंत जघन्य अपराध है।, जिसका किसी धर्म में उल्लेख नहीं है। भारत में पंजाब, मध्य प्रदेश, हरियाणा, बिहार, उत्तर प्रदेश, राजस्थान, झारखण्ड तथा हिमाचल प्रदेश में सर्वाधिक ऑनर किलिंग के मामले पाये जाते हैं।

इसके अलावा मानव व्यापार जबरदस्ती वेश्यावृत्ति भी महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा के कुछ और रूप हैं। मानव व्यापार भी भारत में धीरे-धीरे एक गंभीर समस्या बन गया है।

भारतीय दार्शनिकों के विचार तथा महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा -

भारतीय सामाजिक सुधारकों ने भारत को प्रगतीशील तथा आगे बढ़ाने में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभायी है। सामाजिक सुधारकों ने अनेक सामाजिक बुराइयों के खिलाफ आवाज उठाई है। जैसे : सती प्रथा, विधवा पुनर्विवाह, बाल विवाह, स्त्री, शिक्षा, महिला सशक्तीकरण, महिलाओं की राजनीति में भागीदारी इत्यादि।

महिलाएँ परिवार की हर जिम्मेदारी को निभाती हैं, लेकिन फिर भी उन्हें संसाधन ज्ञान, स्वतंत्रता जो कि उन्हें अपनी जिम्मेदारी निभाने के फलस्वरूप मिलना चाहिए नहीं मिल पाता है।

पंडित रमाबाई ने स्त्री शिक्षा तथा समानता अपने पिता से सीखी जिन्होंने अपनी पत्नी को पढ़ाने के लिए गाँव छोड़ दिया

था। रमाबाई ने भी महिला शिक्षा को बढ़ावा दिया तथा लैंगिक समानता की बात की। अपनी बहन से प्रेरणा लेकर रमाबाई ने शारदा सदन नामक विद्यालय, बाल विधवाओं के लिए खोला। 'मुक्ति' नामक सदन जरूरतमंद औरतों के लिए खोला गया। इसमें बाल विश्व, अकाल प्रभावित तथा अन्य जरूरतमंद औरतों की मदद की जाती थी, उन्होंने स्त्री शिक्षा को बढ़ावा दिया, जबकि स्वयं स्कूल नहीं गईं। वे विधवाओं को आत्मनिर्भर बनाने के लिए उन्होंने इसे अपना लक्ष्य बना लिया। रमाबाई ने अपना जीवन महिला उत्थान, खासकर बाल विधवाओं के जीवन को सुधारने में लगाया तथा महिला सुधार संगठनों की शुरुआत की।

ईश्वर चन्द्र विद्यासागर सामाजिक उत्थान के लिए बहुत सारे कार्य किए। विद्यासागर को उनके सामाजिक अन्याय के विरुद्ध किए गए प्रयत्नों के लिए याद किया जाता है। उन्होंने महिला उत्थान, विधवा पुनर्विवाह तथा बहुपत्नी प्रथा के विरुद्ध कार्य किया। विद्यासागर ने विधवा पुनर्विवाह पर सबसे अधिक बल दिया, क्योंकि कम उम्र की विधवाओं के साथ अत्यन्त ही बुरा व्यवहार किया जाता था, उनसे अत्याधिक काम करवाया जाता था, तथा खाना भी नहीं दिया जाता था, तथा इन्हें घर में कैद करके रखा जाता था। इसके परिणामस्वरूप बहुत सी कम उम्र की विधवा महिलाओं ने भागकर घर छोड़ दिए तथा वैश्यावृत्ति को अपनी जीविका का सहारा बनाया विद्यासागर ने स्त्री हितों के लिये बहुत सारा काम किया। यह उनके प्रयासों का ही परिणाम था कि १८५६ में विधवा पुनर्विवाह अधिनियम पारित किया गया। उन्होंने स्त्री शिक्षा पर बहुत बल दिया। उनका मानना था कि अगर स्त्रियाँ शिक्षित होगी तो उनके खिलाफ अन्याय नहीं किया जा सकेगा। स्त्री शिक्षा के प्रति इस प्रतिबंधित के कारण ही उन्होंने १८४९ में हिन्दू नारी शिक्षा केन्द्र 'Hindu Female School' की स्थापना की। उसे आज बैथून स्कूल के नाम से जाना जाता है।

गांधीजी के स्त्रियों के प्रति विचारों ने आजादी के बाद भारतीय व्यवस्था पर काफी प्रभाव डाला है। गांधीजी के पहले के समाज सुधारकों ने जिस तरह के कदम उठाये थे और कोशिशें की थी उससे यह प्रतीत होता था कि स्त्री दीन-हीन है और उसके स्थिति में सुधार की जरूरत है। उसे अबला का रूप समझा जाता था। गांधीजीने पहली बार इस धारणा को चुनौती दी और कहा कि क्षमता के मामले में वे पुरुषों से कम नहीं हैं। उन्होंने सावित्री, सीता, दमयन्ती का उदाहरण दिया और कहा कि स्त्री कभी भी लाचार और दीनहीन नहीं हो सकती। उनका मानना था कि स्त्रियाँ पुरुषों की अपेक्षा ज्यादा नैतिक होती हैं तथा उनमें स्व-बलिदान की भावना पुरुषों से कहीं ज्यादा होती है। हिंसा जिसे गांधीजीने

कायों का हथियार माना था। आज समाज की विडम्बना यह है कि शारीरिक रूप में स्त्री से ज्यादा सक्षम पुरुष, इसी का सहारा लेते हैं। गांधीजी ने महिला स्वास्थ्य, शिक्षा, महिलाओं के नागरिक होने के अधिकार तथा सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र में महिलाओं का योगदान, तथा राष्ट्र निर्माण में उनके योगदान को माना। उन्होंने बाल विवाह तथा बाल विधवा जिनकी शादी अधिक उम्र के लोगों के साथ जाति के आधार पर कर दी जाती थी, उसे निरर्थक बताया। उन्होंने घर से बाहर औरतों पर होनेवाली हिंसा की निन्दा की तथा पुरुषों को अपने व्यवहार में बदलाव लानेको कहा। उन्होंने १९४९ में लिखा 'महिलाओं को पुरुषों की अर्धांगिनी' कहा जाता है। जब तक उन्हें पुरुषों के समान कानूनी अधिकार नहीं मिल जाते। जब तक बेटे के जन्म की खुशी, बेटे के समान नहीं मनाई जाएगी, तब तक हम यही समझेंगे कि हमारा देश पूर्वाग्रह से ग्रसित भेदभाव का सामना कर रहा है। गांधीजी ने दहेज प्रथा की निन्दा की तथा स्त्रियों के विकास के लिये शिक्षा, रोजगार की उपलब्धता तथा सामाजिक व्यवस्था में परिवर्तन पर बल दिया।

विवेकानंद ने प्रारम्भ में महिलाओं को बाधा माना, क्योंकि वे स्वयं एक साधू (Monk) थे। परन्तु जब उन्होंने महसूस हुआ तो उन्हें लगा कि स्त्री तथा पुरुष में कोई भेदभाव नहीं होता है, तभी स्वामी विवेकानन्द ने भारतीय समाज में महिलाओं की स्थिति को सुधारने का प्रयास किया।

विवेकानंद ने माना कि किसी राष्ट्र की प्रगति का अनुभव उस राष्ट्र की महिलाओं के साथ होनेवाले व्यवहार से लगाना चाहिए। विश्व का कल्याण बिना महिला की स्थिति में सुधार के नहीं हो सकता। महिलाओं ने वर्षोंसे अन्याय सहा है तथा उसे हिम्मत के साथ सहा है, परन्तु अब परिस्थिति को बदलना होगा। विवेकानंद ने माना कि ये समझना बहुत मुश्किल है कि भारत में महिला तथा पुरुष में भेदभाव क्यों है। सदैव औरतों की आलोचना की जाती है, परन्तु उनके उत्थान के लिए कुछ नहीं किया जाता। केवल कानूनों द्वारा औरतों को उत्पादन की वस्तु बना दिया गया है। विवेकानंद का मानना था कि जब गार्गी, मैत्रेयी तथा अन्य महिलाएं मिसाल बन सकती थी तो अब महिलाओं को वो सम्मान क्यों नहीं? जो एक बार हुआ वो दुबारा भी हो सकता है इतिहास स्वयं को दोहराता है। जिन देशों ने औरतों को विकास में बराबर हिस्सेदारी दी है तथा उनकी इज्जत की हैं, उनकी विकास ज्यादा बेहतर हुआ है बजाय उनके जिन्होंने स्त्रियों को दोगले दर्जे का बना रखा है। वे देश जो औरतों को सम्मान नहीं देते हैं, महान नहीं बन सकते। जो लोग स्त्री, पुरुष की तुलना करते हैं वह गलत है। सम्पूर्ण ब्रह्माण्ड में संतुलन है। अगर पुरुष शारीरिक रूप से सक्षम है तो स्त्री जितना

प्रेम तथा वात्सल्य रखती है वो पुरुष में नहीं होता है। विवेकानंदजी ने माना कि दोनों को एक समान मानना चाहिए तथा स्त्री को सम्मान देना चाहिए क्योंकि वो मां के रूप में भगवान की प्रतिनिधि है।

राजा राममोहन राय : सती प्रथा एक प्राचीन हिन्दू रिवाज था। जिसके अनुसार एक स्त्री को उसके पति की चिता के साथ जलना होता था। १८११ में राजा राम मोहन राय ने अपनी भाभी को जीवित जलते हुए देखा। इससे उन्हें बहुत आघात पहुँचा तथा उन्होंने सती प्रथा के विरुद्ध आवाज उठाई। वो पहले भारतीय थे, जिन्होंने इस प्रथा का विरोध किया। उनका विरोध अनेक रुढ़िवादी हिन्दुओं ने किया, परन्तु उन्होंने इस प्रथा का विरोध जारी रखा तभी १८२९ में उन्हें सफलता प्राप्त हुई। जब लार्ड विलियम बेन्टिक ने सती प्रथा विरोधी कानून पारित कर दिया। इस कानून के अनुसार सती प्रथा को गैरकानूनी बनाया गया तथा इसके लिए दण्ड का

प्रावधान किया गया। राजाराम मोहन राय ने बाल विवाह का विरोध किया तथा विधवा पुनर्विवाह का समर्थन किया।

इस तरह हम पाते हैं कि प्राचीन समय से ही भारतीय विचारकों ने महिला उत्थान के लिए अनेक कार्य किये तथा महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा को समाप्त करने के अनेक प्रयत्न किए। परन्तु आज की वर्तमान वास्तविकता बहुत अलग है। आज भी महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा एक ज्वलंत मुद्दा है।

महिलाओं से सम्बन्धित कानून सरकारद्वारा महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा को रोकने के लिए अनेकों कदम उठाए गए हैं। जिनमें महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा अधिनियम १९९१, दहेज प्रथा अधिनियम १९६१, लिंग जांच निर्धारण अधिनियम १९९४ तथा बाकी अन्य सम्बन्धित कानून निम्नवत सूची है -

धारा	अपराध	सजा	जमानत योग्य /जमानत योग्य नहीं
228-A-IPC	बलात्कार पीड़ित की पहचान उजागर करना।	२ साल की सजा और जुर्माना	संज्ञेय और जमानत योग्य
294 IPC	अवांछित हरकते और गाना गाना।	३ महीने की सजा, या सजा और जुर्माना दोनों	संज्ञेय और जमानत योग्य
304-B-IPC	विवाह के ७ साल के अन्दर अप्राकृतिक मौत	७ साल से कम सजा नहीं या आजीवन कैद में भी परिवर्तित हो सकता है।	संज्ञेय और जमानत योग्य नहीं
306 IPC	आत्महत्या के लिये उकसाना	१० साल की सजा और जुर्माना	संज्ञेय और जमानत योग्य नहीं
354 IPC	औरत पर अपराधिक हमला करना करना उसका शीलभंग करने हेतु	२ साल तक की सजा या सजा और जुर्माना दोनों	संज्ञेय और जमानत योग्य संज्ञेय और जमानत योग्य
366 IPC	किसी औरत का उपहरण कर उसे कलंकित या अपवित्रा करने का प्रयास	१० साल की सजा और जुर्माना	संज्ञेय और जमानत योग्य नहीं
366-A-IPC	अवयस्क लड़की पर अप्राकृतिक कृत्य हेतु दबाव डालना	१० साल की सजा और जुर्माना	संज्ञेय और जमानत योग्य नहीं
377 IPC	अप्राकृतिक अपराध	आजीवन कैद, १० साल की सजा और जुर्माना	संज्ञेय और जमानत योग्य नहीं
406 IPC	यकीन या विश्वास तोड़ना	३ साल तक की जेल और जुर्माना या दोनों	संज्ञेय और जमानत योग्य नहीं
498-A-IPC	दहेज के लिए विवाहित स्त्री को अधीन रख कर क्रूरता करना	३ साल तक की सजा और जुर्माना	संज्ञेय और जमानत योग्य नहीं

509 IPC	किसी स्त्री या शीलभंग करने हेतु इशारा, संकेत या चेष्टा करना	साधारण १ साल की सजा या जुर्माना या दोनों	संज्ञेय और जमानत योग्य
375&376 IPC	बलात्कार विरुद्ध उसकी इच्छा के विरुद्ध बिना उसकी सहमति के विरुद्ध १६ साल की उम्र से कम	१० साल तक की सजा और जुर्माना	संज्ञेय और जमानत योग्य नहीं

उपसंहार -

पिछले बहुत वर्षोंसे भारत में महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा एक ज्वलंत मुद्दा बना हुआ है। National Crime Records Bureau के अनुसार महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा में २०१२ में ६.४ प्रतिशत की वृद्धि हुई है, तथा प्रत्येक तीसरे मिनट में एक महिला के साथ वारदात होती है। शायद यह एक विडम्बना ही है कि जिस देश में प्राचीन समय से ही इतने महान सुधारकों द्वारा महिलाओं की स्थिति सुधारने के लिए अनेकों प्रयास किए गए हो, उनके प्रयास वर्तमान समय में धुमिल हो चुके हैं। भारत में महिलाओं के विरुद्ध बढ़ती हिंसा ने उन प्रयासों को निरर्थक बना दिया है। जहां एक तरफ महिला सशक्तिकरण नीति के पहत उनके आर्थिक, राजनीतिक, सामाजिक सशक्तिकरण पर बल दिया जाता है। वहीं उसी समाज में महिलाएं हीन स्थिति में आज भी हैं। भारत में महिलाओं के प्रति पुलिस राजनीति सभी कम संवेदनशील दिखाई देते हैं। क्योंकि उनको शिकायत के विरुद्ध उचित कार्यवाही नहीं की जाती। इस स्थिति में परिवर्तन न आने का एक कारण राजनीतिक शून्यता भी है। ज्यादातर नेता पुरुष हैं इसलिए उनकी संवेदनशीलता तथा जागरूकता स्त्री कानूनों के संबंध में उतनी नहीं है जितनी होनी चाहिये। इसलिए राजनीति में महिला प्रतिनिधियों को बढ़ाने के लिए महिला आरक्षण विधायक लागू करने पर बल दिया जा रहा है। आज भारत मंगल ग्रह तक पहुँच चुका है और उसी भारत में महिलाओं की स्थिति को सुधारने के लिए अभी भी कानूनों की आवश्यकता पड़ती है। महिलाओं की स्थिति को सुधारने के लिए सरकार द्वारा अनेकों कानून बनाए गए हैं, परन्तु वे प्रभावहीन हैं। सबसे महत्वपूर्ण मुद्दा ये है कि क्यों ये कानून प्रभावहीन हैं; क्यों महिलाएं हिंसा का शिकार होती हैं?

इस प्रश्नों का उत्तर पाना शायद इतना आसान नहीं है, क्या ये महिला से जुड़ा संबंधित प्रश्न है। मुझे ऐसा लगता है कि ये 'पुरुषों'

से संबंधित समस्या है क्योंकि वे महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा करते हैं। अगर हमें इन परिस्थितियों को बदलना है तो इसे केवल महिला जागरूकता अभियानों से नहीं बदला जा सकता बल्कि पुरुषों को इस प्रक्रिया में सहभागी बना के उनके विचारों में परिवर्तन लाकर इसे बदला जा सकता है। महिलाओं को देवी तुल्य नहीं बनाना है, उन्हें पुरुषों के समान वही इन्सान समझना है, जो पुरुष स्वयं को समझते हैं। जिस दिन पुरुषों ने स्त्रियों की अपनी सोच के समान समझना शुरू कर दिया उस दिन के बाद शायद इस 'मुद्दे' को कभी उठाने की जरूरत ही नहीं पड़ेगी।

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Spirituality: the Need of an Hour

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Abstract: Equality refers to the condition of having equal dignity, rank or privileges with others, the fact of being on an equal footing. It also refers to the condition of being equal in power, ability, achievement or excellence. When we refer to gender equality, it refers to the same rights and opportunities enjoyed by men and women across all sectors of society, including economic participation and decision-making, and when the different behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men are equally valued and favoured.

India, since time immemorial had honoured woman as *shakti* incarnate, the living embodiments of the Universal Supreme Mother. Women, in ancient India, during the Vedic period, enjoyed equal status with men in all aspects of life. The earliest religious texts of Hindus show freedom for women. It is clearly stated in the *Rig Veda* that a woman is free to choose her life partner.

*Bhadra vadhur bhavati yat supesa
Swayam sa mitram vanute jane cit.*

Also we find in the Vedic or Upanishadic Age Maitreyi, Gargi and other ladies of revered memory have taken places of *Rishis* through their skill in discussing about Brahman. In an assembly of a thousand Brahmans who were all erudite in the Vedas, Gargi boldly challenged Yagnavalkya in a discussion about Brahman.

Even *Manusmriti* says, “Where women are respected, there the gods are pleased; but where they are not honoured, no sacred rites yield rewards”.

During the medieval period with the introduction of certain practices like child marriage, sati and so on their position in society deteriorated. In spite of this, women were seen in various fields. For example: Razia Sultan was the only woman monarch, who ruled Delhi, whereas Female saint-poet Mirabai played a significant role in the Bhakti movement. Today women are seen in different fields like education, sports, politics, media, art and culture, service sectors, science and technology, etc. but at the same time one cannot ignore the fact that they continue to face atrocities such as rape, acid throwing, dowry deaths, and the forced prostitution.

Men and Women are the creations of The Supreme God. God has gifted men and women with certain specific qualities in such a way that they both function jointly. They make a complete whole. This unique relationship is described in Indian philosophy as *Shiva* and *Shakti*.

Swami Vivekananda said, “When people are discussing as to what man and woman can do, always the same mistake is made. They think they show man at his best because he can fight, for instance, and undergo tremendous physical exertion; and this is pitted against the physical weakness and non-combating quality of woman. This is unjust. Woman

is as courageous as man. Each is equally good in his or her way. What man can bring up a child with such patience, endurance, and love as the woman can? The one has developed the power of doing; the other, the power of suffering. If woman cannot act, neither can man suffer. The whole universe is one of perfect balance.”

He also said, “It is very difficult to understand why in this country so much difference is made between men and women, whereas the Vedanta declares that one and the same conscious Self is present in all beings. You always criticize the women, but say what have you done for their uplift? Writing down Smritis etc., and binding them by hard rules, the men have turned the women into manufacturing machines! If you do not raise the women, who are living embodiment of the Divine Mother, don’t think that you have any other way to rise.”

If this is the present scenario, how can it be changed? Perhaps what is needed is the introduction of spirituality, which would bring about a change in one’s thinking. Spirituality as understood, is, “devotion to metaphysical matters, as opposed to worldly things”. It also means activities which renew, lift up, comfort, heal and inspire both ourselves and those with whom we interact. Human being is very much a spiritual being. But today he is leaning more towards materialism. Thus, what are required are efforts on each individual’s part to recover his or her own spiritual essence in its purity, which will help him to withdraw from materialistic contaminations and distractions. So spirituality consist in recovering the basic and ontologically ultimate identity, obscured and missed in mundane consciousness, but regained through a process of inward self – discovery. It is one of the ways, which ultimately leads to the discovery of the self. In other words, it consist in elevating oneself by developing the inner strength and qualities of character such as steadfast devotion to duty, spirit of self sacrifice, fortitude; courage, capacity for hard work, presence of mind, perseverance, endurance, thirst for knowledge, wisdom to discriminate between right and wrong and strength to fight against injustice, truth, modesty and forgiveness.

The two most indispensable figures from the epic period Sita and Draupadi exhibit a fully developed spiritual personality. Sita is an integral part of the Indian women psyche. She is considered as one of the *Shreshtha Nari* and

is respected as the epitome of all womanly virtues. Sita, is indeed, the ideal example of a woman, and possesses all the good qualities that a traditional Indian woman is expected to possess. She had to undergo a lot of trials and tribulations in her marital life and it was her courage, chasity and adherence to Dharma (righteousness) that finally made her emerge as the ultimate winner.

Draupadi, the wife of the five Pandava Princes, is a heroine, who is unpredictable, unwavering and who could also possess the austerity of a traditional Hindu wife. Many see Draupadi as an early feminist because of her fearlessness in admonishing those who harmed her or her family. Draupadi was a devoted wife, chaste, religious-minded and adhering to duty. Her integrity and fidelity were admirable. Her opinions were well respected and supported by her family as she was educated and had vast knowledge of many subjects. She possessed the unique qualities of strength, audacity and confidence. She had a great understanding of the balance between being bold and forthright, and being submissive and dutiful. She acted with presence of mind and fearlessness during calamities. Unlike the mythological goddess or the ideal heroines of our ancient literature, Draupadi was quite human with human emotions and feelings like anger, love, hate, happiness and grief. Her life was full of ups and downs but she maintained her dignity in both the situations. Draupadi's fearlessness and uncompromising nature makes her of great importance in the history of mythological women and of women today.

The two formidable enemies of spiritual life are *Kâma* and *Krodha* (desire and anger). This is mentioned in the *Gîtâ* as follows, "When a man broods over the sense objects, attachment to them arises. From attachment, arises desire, and desire breeds anger. From anger comes delusion of mind, and from delusion, the loss of memory; from loss of memory, the destruction of discrimination; and from the destruction of discrimination, man perishes."

So *Kâma* and *Krodha* needs to be curbed by developing a state of mind of constant awareness and reflection through *Viveka* and *Vairâgya*. *Viveka* and *Vairâgya* are the two pillars of spiritual life. The former is the faculty of discrimination- of what is good or bad, beneficial or malefic, eternal or ephemeral, true or false, and so on. *Vairâgya* is the faculty of detachment, desirelessness, and the tendency to renounce worldly life.

Now, how does a common man develop the spiritual qualities?

One of the method of developing the spiritual potential is the ancient yoga system of Patanjali also known as *Râja Yoga*, which helps one to purify the mind and body. According to Patañjali, *Yoga* means spiritual effort to attain perfection through the control of the body, senses and mind, and through right discrimination between *Purusa* and *Prakriti*.

The aim of yoga is set out in the beginning of *Yogasûtra* in its most celebrated and most debated aphorism namely 'yogah cittavrtti nirodhah'. It is the cessation of mental functions or modifications because one has to prevent the self from identifying itself with mental modification. "The task before the *Yogin* is, then, the suppression of the activity of the mind, the 'fluctuations of the mind-stuff are to be restricted.'" A man cannot realize spiritual truth that the self is pure immortal spirit which is quite distinct from the body and the mind unless the mind is purged of all impurities and rendered perfectly calm and serene. For the purification of mind or *chitta*, Yoga advocates control over the body, the senses and the mind with the help of Eight-fold Path of Discipline (*Astanga Yoga*):

- 1) **Yama:** It means the practice of abstinences. It includes non-injury (*Ahimsa*), Truthfulness (*Satya*), non-stealing (*asteya*), Continnence / Celibacy (*brahmacharya*), and non-possession (*aparigraha*).
 - 2) **Niyama:** It is external and internal purification. It includes cleanliness (*shaucha*), contentment (*sontosa*), austerity (*tapas*), Scriptural study (*svadhyaya*) and surrender of one's work to God (*Ishvara – pranidhana*).
 - 3) **Asana:** It means steady and comfortable posture . There are various kinds of postures which are a physical help to meditation. This is the discipline of the body.
 - 4) **Pranayama:** It means control of breath and deals with regulation of inhalation, retention and exhalation of breath. It is beneficial to health and is highly conducive to the concentration of the mind. But it must be performed under expert guidance otherwise it may have negative after – effects.
 - 5) **Pratyahara:** It consists of withdrawing the senses from their respective sense-objects.
- These five are called external aids to yoga (*bahiranga sadhana*), while the remaining three which follows are called internal aids (*antaranga sadhana*).
- (6) **Dharana:** It is fixing the mind on the object of meditation like the tip of the nose or the mid-point of the eyebrows or the lotus of the heart or the image of the deity. The mind must be steadfast like the non-flickering flame of a lamp.
 - (7) **Dhyana:** It means meditation and consists in the undisturbed flow of thought round the object of meditation as the unbroken stream of oil. Here there is still a distinction between the object cognized and the self as the cogniser.
 - (8) **Samadhi:** It means contemplation. This is the final step in yoga. Here the mind is completely absorbed in the object of meditation. The distinction between the object

and the self vanishes. It is a mental state in which all actions of the sense organs and the mind are restrained. It is the ecstatic state in which the connection with the external world is broken and through which one has to pass before obtaining liberation. By following this path it is possible to attain equilibrium of *Satva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* thereby allowing one to do his best.

Thus, the yoga system helps in controlling the fluctuations of the mind and thereby removes evil tendencies. It makes one realize that the same soul resides in all human beings. Soul has no sex, it is neither male nor female. It is only in the body that sex exists. Women too are on equal footing with men. They too are entitled to equal status, rights and opportunities as men are. They should not be merely looked on as object of pleasure, insignificant and weak. Thus spirituality is the need of an hour. If there is to be any change, it is to be in one's thinking and consequently, in the society.

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Bandini to Queen: A Quest for Authenticity, Equality and Modernity

A Search for Thematic Narrative of Authenticity, Equality and Modernity in Hindi Middle Stream Cinema Discourse, with reference to Selected Specific Women Characters

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Abstract: In the past few years, the global intelligentsia has been progressively attracted towards Bollywood, and the popular culture, represented through Bollywood. Even a cursory glance at sheer number of books, written by researchers and scholars on 'Bollywood', in the recent past, can make a case for this claim.

The Dichotomy of Popular film and Art film OR Any New Paradigm?

Hindi cinema once recognized only two categories; namely Popular Cinema and Art Cinema. However, the history of Hundred years of Hindi Cinema is replete with such examples, of films, which are neither strictly Popular nor Art films. In this paper, by transcending the strict categories of Popular and Art films, we would be mainly focusing on 'Middle Stream Cinema'. Middle Stream Cinema (after 1970s) has successfully flourished with film makers like Basu Chatterji, Hrishikesh Mukherjee, Gulzar, Basu Bhattacharya etc. It is neither typically popular, since it does not make the use of proven popular spice (>8>), themes and techniques; nor it can be labeled as completely experimental since it does not depict bold themes using very innovative cinematographic techniques. Rather the discourse of middle stream cinema is 'real life' and familiar themes. The characters seem to be neighborhood characters, without any 'heroine material' or glamour.

The main objective of this paper is to accomplish thematic analysis of selected films with reference to central women characters, Social thinkers and critics have shown their concern over the ironic portrayal of 'woman' in Popular films. She is either depicted as a sex symbol, a typical Western Barbie doll or a pious (nearly Goddess) 'Bahu' image. However, since the earlier times a few middle stream films have consistently made a genuine attempt to depict woman as 'real life characters' and not only as 'real life characters'.

The selected films in this article, to make the case for feministic narratives are *Bandini* (1963), *Guide* (1965), *Mirch Masala* (1985), *English Vinglish* (2012) and *Queen* (2014)

An attempt is made to study how the narrative of 'woman of substance' is co-authored by the creator and viewer of these films and to study the discourse of this narrative, from feminist point of view, the broadest theme of pursuit of 'authenticity', 'equality' and 'modernity'.

The main focus of the article is not the cinematography but the narrative and the discourse of the films- How these films have succeeded in initiating public appeal? Since it is rightly said that the viewer is the 'consumer – co-author' of the media experience, can we say that the image of authentic woman, modern woman is slowly becoming the part of our popular culture? Is it giving way to the stereotypical image of a woman cherished by mainstream and Art film?

Keywords : Bollywood Research, Popular culture, Middle Stream film, Creator and Consumer, media experience, broad feminist themes, Quest for authenticity, equality and modernity, thematic analysis, discourse analysis.

India is regarded as 'Bollywood Nation' across the globe. As Indubala Singh very forcefully states,

*"It is not a co-incident that the film Industry in India is the largest in the world. Whether it is the 'formula' of a Bollywood film or the films produced in different languages in the states of India or the so called 'art films', all these provide a mirror [...], a way a projection of the whole tapestry of Indian culture."*¹

Today, Indian Cinema has greatly contributed towards making of every brick of Indian popular culture. Thus, we see today that the story of Bollywood is the story of continuous progress and development. 'Big B' Amitabh Bachchan, was awarded the World Economic Forum's Crystal Award for 'Outstanding Excellence in the Field of Culture', in the year 2009, is AN indicator of the point, which

I want to bring home at this juncture. Bachchan, while speculating about the honor on his blog, said,

*"...Crystal Award was bestowed on me, an Indian from the world of escapist commercial cinema which 50-60 years ago was not such a bright profession to be in [...] But look how this very escapist cinema had progressed through the years"*²

Thus we see, in the past few years, the global intelligentsia and Art critics have been progressively attracted towards Bollywood, and the popular culture represented through Bollywood. Reflection on the 'film' as a mass medium of Art actually began with the medium itself. Film 'Bollywood' criticism is also progressively enhancing simultaneously with the growth of Bollywood.

¹ Singh Indubala, "Gender Relations And Cultural Ideology In Indian Cinema", pp 1 & 2.

² Ganti Tejaswini, Bachchan Amitabh Qtd. In, "Producing Bollywood: Inside the Contemporary Hindi Film Industry", p 2

As a result of the genuine efforts of critics and researchers, 'film theory' is emerging in India, which is essentially an amalgamation of 'literary criticism', 'social commentary' and 'philosophical speculations', all criticism being rooted in culture.

Aims and Objectives of Research Paper:

On the background of the above discussion, I have made a sincere attempt in this paper to analyze five women characters, from five different films, falling in the broad stream of Middle cinema (spread over the period of 1962-2014). The vantage point for the analysis is gender perspective. The guiding questions which have helped me to decipher the women characters are:

1. How far these characters have been successful in breaking the stereotypes image of an Indian Woman?
2. Have these characters succeeded in creating new benchmarks of feminine behavior?
3. Have they successfully painted the image of authentic modern woman, working towards actualization of her rights?
4. How much impact they have made on the public? Can we say the image of a modern, authentic woman is accepted by the popular culture?

The paper tries to decipher the socio-cultural themes, represented in the films, while answering the above questions.

Literature Review

As mentioned above, a lot of literature is available on 'Bollywood Criticism'. The books which I have extensively used for the present study are as follows:

'Gender Relation' perspective necessarily transcends feminism, which tries to understand a woman and her equal dignity as her counterpart as a human being. How ideologies are imbibed in culture and when they are represented by cinema, how, sometimes this powerful medium bings about changes in ideologies, is beautifully explored by Indubala Singh in her book titled *Gender Relations and Cultural Ideology in Indian Cinema*.

Tejaswini Ganti in *Producing Bollywood Theories of Popular Hindi Cinema* has analyzed Bollywood, from anthropological standpoint, whereby she contends that the rise of 'Bollywood', is a symbol of India's rising as a powerhouse. This has become possible only due to India's acceptance of 'Neo-liberalism ideology', leading to post-modern Indian cultural strands.

Methodology

The main methodological tools used to construct this research article are—

1. Narrative Representation and Narrative Analysis

To understand and evaluate the five women characters from films, method of selected narration and analysis is employed.

2. Lens of Gender and Popular Culture

To make comments on 'gender typification' and 'cultural roles of women', the lens of gender theory and popular culture theory is used.

Popular films v/s. Art film – The Paradigm Transgressed by Middle Stream Cinema

Hindi cinema recognized only two categories: Popular Cinema and Art Cinema

Popular Cinema

Characteristics of Popular Cinema have been studied extensively sometimes contrasting them with Hollywood cinema. At this point, I would only like to highlight one important characteristics of popular cinema; i.e. their repetitive representation of cultural stereotypes, 'Hero', 'Heroine', 'Villian', 'Mother' etc. This is all the more true of women characters.

While commenting on such stereotypes M K. Raghavendra writes,

*"In these films, abstract notions have simple human representations. Good is characteristically a young man, necessarily handsome and exceptionally virile; Good's off shoot, vulnerable innocence, is naturally a young woman, necessarily beautiful, preferably lacking in intelligence and helpless; Evil is usually male also virile and necessarily ugly and sometimes female and, if at all glamorous then necessarily witch like; Evil's off shoot, confusion can be male or female and preferably ugly and also untrustworthy."*³

Film critics have also described Hindi popular cinema (may be rightly), as 'escapist', and 'melodramatic' and very superficial, but most of the times hit on the box office.

Art Films

Indian Cinema, which stood apart from 'popular cinema', in various ways, and which many a times took the form of social Realism, is often regarded as Art film. Satyajit Ray's *Pather Panchali*, may be regarded as a pioneering

³Raghavendra M K, "50 Indian Film Classics", XXII

work in this respect. One very relevant characteristic of Art film is its breaking of established cultural ideologies, and stereotypification of characters.

However, the history of hundred years of Indian/Hindi cinema is replete with examples of such films, which can neither strictly be labeled as ‘Popularistic’, nor as art films. M K. Raghavendra while speculating on the issue recognizes a third category of films which was initially recognized as ‘Minority films’ and later on assimilated by Bollywood by Middle Stream Cinema.

“Middle Cinema, followed successfully thereafter (in the early 1970s) with film makers like Basu Chatterji, Hrishikesh Mukherjee, Gulzar and Basu Bhattacharya breaking away from what was seen as the formula.”⁴

The middle stream cinema is neither typically popular मसाला film, since it does not make the use of proven formula of success, popular themes, stereotypes and repeatedly used techniques; nor it can be labeled as experimental or art film since it does not depict anti-stereotype characters, bold themes, or make use of innovative cinematographic techniques.

The five films and the women characters selected for appraisal fall under the umbrella of middle stream cinema.

Thematic Analysis of selected ‘Women Characters’ from Middle Stream Cinema

Through this paper, I am trying to accomplish thematic analysis of selected women characters mainly from middle stream cinema. Social thinkers and critics of ‘Cinema’, have occasionally shown their concern over the ironic portrayal of women in Hindi cinema. She is either represented as a sex-symbol type or Barbie doll of the West or as unbelievably pious (near Goddess) Bahu, Ma who is sacrifice epitomized. Both the extremes distort her image as a real human being. However, in the history of cinema, we find few middle stream films have made a genuine attempt to pose a woman as an authentic ‘Real Life character’. The selected characters for appraisal in this paper are –

Character	Film	Director	Year
Kalyani	<i>Bandini</i>	Bimal Roy	1963
Rosie	<i>Guide</i>	Vijay Anand	1965
Sonabai	<i>Mirch Masala</i>	Ketan Mehta	1987
Shashi Godbole	<i>English Vinglish</i>	Gauri Shinde	2012
Rani	<i>Queen</i>	Vikas Bahl	2014

⁴Raghavendra M K, “50 Indian Film Classics”, XXVII

⁵Raghavendra M K, “50 Indian Film Classics”, pp 92 & 93.

Kalyani from *Bandini* (1963)

Bimal Roy, may be regarded as one of the founders of middle stream cinema, which is in a way a direct descendent of pre-independence popular cinema. His films, including *Bandini*, stand apart on the then background of escapist tendency of films. The narrative of *Bandini*, takes place in pre-independence era. Quite opposite to the escapist tendency, the film appears to be realistic and Kalyani is out to embrace every responsibility very gracefully.

The stereotypes of heroine as a passive endures, of whatever comes her way is successfully broken by Kalyani’s character. Kalyani responds to each and every demanding situation in her life, very rationally and bravely. Her moral is up even in the face of adversities. Her inner strength and upright moral behavior has endowed spiritual dimension to her character. She appears to be struggling in the face of real challenges of her life. To quote M K. Raghavendra,

“Where *Bandini* really breaks with the conventions of Indian cinema is in the figure of its heroine. The heroine in Indian cinema is conventionally an appendage, who merely responds to an action already initiated. In contrast, it is Kalyani, who initiates the action in *Bandini* and even in the absence of its other virtues, this alone makes the film a landmark.”⁵

Rosie from *Guide* (1965)

Vijay Anand’s film *Guide* was highly acclaimed for various reasons. However, the film is mainly appreciated for its different story lines and Raju *Guide*’s character (Dev Anand), may be, for dances and songs as well. But somehow Rosie’s character (Waheeda Rehman) seems to be shadowed in the film. Rosie suffers emotionally in the whole process. She seems to have taken a stand fought for her right to pursue her breaking career and hollow wedlock. As far as such decisions are concerned Rosie seems to break the typical stereotype of passivity. She comes across as real authentic, responsible, passionate woman. Her tender human side also gets beautifully unwind during the course of narrative when she and Raju’s mother (who share a bad blood) are forced to be together in the face of odd circumstances. However, her relation with Raju is shown to remain at pseudo romantic level throughout the film. In this, it strengthens the critical opinion that ‘Indian Cinema’, is not much happy showing courtesans and widows entering the wedlock. To quote Raghavendra,

“It may be surmised that the Indian popular film prefers to keep widows and courtesans out of wedlock not (as is commonly surmised) on account of its social conservatism but because having conceived of them in

essence as widows and courtesans it is loathe to seeing them change."⁶

In this sense, we may say that the film has succeeded in partially transgressing the stereotypes about women. Though being a very sensitive director, though Vijay Anand has ably transgressed many cultural stereotypes in this film. It also became very popular acclaiming good public and critique appeal. However, Rosie's character could not transgress a particular cultural demand.

Sonabai and village woman from *Mirch Masala* (1985)

Ketan Mehta's film *Mirch Masala* justifies Mehta's reputation as one of the talented Indian film makers. The film unfolds in a western Indian village during the colonial era. The film is often seen as an allegory about colonialism. However, at this juncture, we would prefer to look at it from gender point of view. The story takes place on the background of typical small village set-up, where the economy of the village is bound to the red chilly cultivation, and its conversion into powder.

Sonabai, Mukhia's wife, Kaki and a few more women characters come across as strong, down to earth, responsible and a struggling heralds. The story breaks the stereotype of 'poor village girl'. It very successfully creates a benchmark for solidarity and committed action of women. I suppose, it also underlines one very important truth about women's struggle, and that is with awareness what is most wanted in such situations is inner strength and 'committed action'. The film narrative unwinds how the 'inner strength' is converted into 'collective strength', through solidarity, empowering women to handle such a tricky situation. In fact the depth of this action stands apart more on the background of men's passivity, and fear stricken attitude. The narrative of the film quite successfully and dramatically comments on various gender issues, leaving viewer awe-struck.

Mrs. Shashi Godbole from *English Vinglish* (2012)

Gauri Shinde's film *English Vinglish* depicts a simple story of house wife. Mrs. Shashi Godbole (Sridevi) is a light hearted but emphatic narrative of a typical 'middle class' young urban family woman. Shashi an efficient semi commercial laddu maker suffers an inferiority complex due to her poor English. The typical family comprising of husband, two children and mother in law, somehow do keep her reminding about her lacuna. When Shashi goes to US for her knees' wedding, she thoughtfully decides to overcome this lacuna by studying conversational English. Her French friend showers unconditional affection on her. But being rooted in typical Indian ethos, she is able to hold this relation at a bay and yet understands its value.

In the end of the film, as a result of many climatic situations, the family realizes her committed efforts to learn English, and overcome her inferiority. She appraises herself in totally new situations. Though the narrative is linear and simple, Shashi's character comes across as committed, yet unassuming. Truly rooted in traditionalism, yet embracing modernity. The film helps to transgress the boundaries of the notion of modernity.

Rani from *Queen* (2014)

Rani's character from the film (Kangana Ranaut) has won appraisal from public and critics alike Rani is shown to be a very typical middle-class urban girl, rooted in her family, carrying very typical ethos. For her, 'marriage' means a lot. Her boyfriend means a lot. She mends decisions of her life as per his wish and whim. Vijay, her boyfriend, takes great pleasure in dominating Rani. He refuses to get married with Rani just a night before of their marriage, the reason being that she will not be able to cope up with his foreign returned status. Rani is devastated, but shows great resilience in the face of the situation. Her family is extremely supportive of her. On this background, she makes a little unusual decision of going abroad on her pre-planned honeymoon alone. This decision changes Rani's life totally. She meets people like Vijayalaxmi, whose personality is diagonally opposite to Rani's personality. Eventually, Rani realizes people with different values, different backgrounds, different personalities and different struggles in their lives can love each other. Their humanness is not shadowed by any other mundane details. She is also able to compare this open world with her constricted man centered world view. Her friends coming from totally different backgrounds very soon unassumingly win her heart and she discovers her comfort zone. She also tries and tests her skills as a chef with her friends. Unknowingly Rani is groomed and is transformed as a person. She becomes more self-oriented, open minded, confident. A kind of 'sure of myself', attitude takes place of timid submissions, which she has done many times before, for her boyfriend.

When Vijay realizing his mistake follows Rani at her tour and wants her desperately to come back, she promises to meet him in India when she is back. The climax scene, speaks volumes. Rani goes to meet Vijay, at his home without saying anything she returns his engagement ring, hugs him saying thank you. Now Vijay is flabbergasted but knows in his heart, he won't ever have her in his life.

Again this film, like earlier is transgressing many gender stereotypes and cultural concepts. Rani's going on honeymoon alone, sets the direction of the narrative. Her emerging as a confident person and refusing marriage is not out of any personal feelings of revenge, but as a result of

⁶Raghavendra M K, "50 Indian Film Classics", XXIV

free thinking and realization. Rani like Kalyani, initiates action and assumes responsibility of her decisions and actions, e.g. She bitterly fights with street thief to save her purse. At this juncture, passing reference can be made to the fact that in the earlier generation spice film, in many films, God-like heroes name use to be Vijay. This Vijay in a way demystifies the role of 'Vijay – super hero' of yester years.

In many films, girls are shown to consider fiancée's plea after they professing repentance. Girls are also seen to sacrifice for the sake of family or for the sake of fiancée. But Rani's decision shows how she does not succumb to so-called emotional burden and social pressures. She emerges as a strong human being in the whole process and indeed values that.

Rani, Rosie, Kalyani, Mrs. Godbole and Sonabai:

After deciphering characters from the lens of gender and culture we may say that, all the women characters Rani, Rosie, Kalyani, Mrs. Godbole and Sonabai come across as real characters. We may find them anywhere around us in our neighborhood, or nearby vicinity (with exception of, may be, Rosie). As such viewers find it easy to identify with them.

A few characteristics which can be taken out as themes of their narratives are –

- Assuming responsibility
- Committing oneself to action
- Struggling with the odds of life gracefully
- Fighting to actualize the right towards equality
- Inner strength and Resilience

Following her inner voice, Kalyani leaves home, accepts the burden of her crime, opens all her cards before doctor who is willing to marry her. In spite of facing so many odds never loses sweetness of her temper and goes out of the way to help others. At the end, learning that her fiancée (Bikas Ghosh) really loved her and married another woman out of compassion and compulsion, she denies the bed of roses and runs to nurse and serve her true beloved. Following her inner voice Rosie quits marriage, builds her career, keeps romantic relation with Raju, and takes a stand against Raju, even when she knows she will lose this only relation in her life.

In case of Sonabai the inner voice of village women gets converted into collective voice, and brave collective action.

Following her inner voice Shashi decides to overcome a lacuna in her personality. Understands the value and

limitations of the whole exercise.

Rani, through her decision realizes value of freedom sacrifices so called settled typical life, for the sake of worthy freedom.

None of these characters are dancing dolls, neither they are Sati Savitris. They are women, may be like you and me. The escapist tendency of Hindi films, seem to be totally absent in the narratives of the above characters. On the contrary they help us to be aware of subtle social reality and are shown to take stand, and live their decisions fully.

Conclusion

In 1960s and 1970s, feminist theories really impacted Indian culture, and the western world, reflecting itself in the Art world as well. To quote Indubala Singh in this respect,

*“In 1972, the first issue of the short lived American journal, ‘women and film’ was published. The need for transformation of women’s stereotypical image, oppressive ideology and a need for the creation of a feminine, critical aesthetic, was felt.”*⁷

On this background, a feminist or gender paradigm may be described as a critical analysis of the dynamic of gender relations, and sexuality. The above mentioned film narratives have succeeded to a very great extent in making such expression about womenfolk, about her duties and rights. The characters have not only succeeded in breaking the established stereotypes but also have succeeded in authentically reframing a woman's image as real, authentic and modern person.

History says, the five films, were highly appreciated by the larger audience. This brings us to the subtle reality of the role of cine-viewers as co-creators of cine-world or cine-reality. Viewers are in a way co-creators of narratives. Cine-goers experience in a way completes the circle of appreciation.

Indubala Singh theorizes in this respect that, often cinema is deeply rooted in the socio-cultural climate. However, sensitive creators, try to build a new ideology on the basis of this subtle or obvious cultural change. The ideologies get represented in the cinema, giving viewers an opportunity to see and feel (identify with this) this new reality. And it catches viewer's nerve. Slowly and gradually, the new ideology gets percolated in the popular culture.

The public appeal and popularity, claimed by characters like Kalyani to Rani, definitely shows a strong strand of realistic depiction of women, transgressing the stereotypical dichotomy of sex symbol and traditionality.

The character of Rani, in the film *Queen* very positively

⁷Singh Indubala, “*Gender Relations And Cultural Ideology In Indian Cinema*”, p 13.

represents how she is able to initiate and achieve self-transformation and transgress the typical, traditional gender, identity.

Though Shashi's story is little simple and linear, her attempt to overcome her lacuna forgive her loved ones and emerge as a better person becomes appealing, especially in the metropolis where, there are many woman-folk carrying the complex about English language.

Sonabai's character her inner strength opens our minds to the reality of empowerment. The inner strength of woman's personality is her way towards empowerment. Sonabai is illiterate, staying alone, without much support of villagers. But she is able to actualize her right over her own sexuality through this inner strength.

Rosie's character, as stated earlier, is much shadowed in the film. Again her not getting married with a Raju, is strengthening the cultural expectation about courtesans, yet her strength to quit hollow marital relation, vigor to build her passion into career, no succumbing before society or even before Raju, definitely takes Rosie to different heights.

Kalyani's narrative is actually from pre-independence period. One can feel the idealism and climate of freedom struggle at the backdrop of the main narrative. The grace and nobility in the face of all sorts of adversities of Kalyani in spite of her fallibility, somewhere make a statement about the spiritual dimension of her personality.

Moreover all the characters are strongly rooted in their families (Rosie is willing to get rooted but is proved to unlucky due to her circumstances). May be with the exception of Rosie, all other girls seem to be neighborhood girls. All the above films have succeeded in creating this sense of identification, obviously reconstructing 'gender role' and image of a woman.

I would like to conclude the article, by expressing a strong desire to see Kalyani and Rani more often in film narratives. We would be happy to hear voices of Sonabai, Shashi and Rosie in reel life discourses as well as in real life discourses.

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Judiciary Activism towards Protection of Human Dignity of Women

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Meaning and Implications of Judicial Activism

Jurisprudence extended the power of judiciary to go beyond the statutory limit to give better and complicit justice. Arthur Schlesinger Jr. introduced the term judicial activism in a January 1947 Fortune Magazine article titled 'The Supreme Court: 1947.' Judicial Activism may be defined as the proactive role played by the judiciary in ensuring that the rights and liberties of the people are protected. It may be understood as the role of the court in stepping out from its normal interpretative role. When the court moves beyond its normal role of mere adjudicator of disputes and becomes a player in the system of the country laying down principles and guidelines that the Executive must carry out, that role of the court may be said to be judicial activism. According to A.M.Ahmedi, judicial activism is a necessary adjunct of the function since the protection of public interest happens to be its main concern.

Black's Law Dictionary defined Judicial Activism as a *Philosophy of judicial decision –making whereby judges allow their personal views about public policy, among other factors, to guide their decisions.* The process of making law by judges is what Justice V.G. Palshikar calls Judicial Activism. It codifies what was hitherto an un-codified convention, namely, recognition of judge-made law. Judicial Activism as distinguished from Judicial Passivism is an active interpretation of existing legislation by a judge, made with a view to enhance the utility of that legislation for social betterment.

Judicial Activism earned a human face in India by liberalizing access to justice and giving relief to disadvantaged groups and have-nots under the leadership of activist judges. Though there are some sections in the Criminal Procedure Code of 1973 to protect the rights of the victims and for providing compensation, the Criminal Courts at the lower level in India have ignored those provisions for a long time and not utilized them during their sentencing processes. But it is heartening to observe that several judgments in both the High Courts and the Supreme Court in the last two decades or so have come to the rescue of the victims.

Concept of Human Dignity

Human beings are born equal in dignity and rights. Human Rights and Fundamental Freedom are the birth rights of all the human beings. In India, there is no comprehensive legislation on privacy rights, contrary to the contention of

legislation in USA on privacy rights. Supreme Court of India recognize right of privacy under Art.21 of Constitution of India as fundamental right. Human dignity means freedom to live in peace, health and hope. These are moral claims which cannot be empirically ascertainable. Self-perceptions are at the very heart of dignity. 'Privacy' means the individual's right to control dissemination of information about him. It is his personal possession.

This paper seeks to examine the concept of dignity of women that has been interpreted by Indian Judiciary, briefly analyzing some of the landmark judgments shaping the moral fiber of human being. The Supreme Court of India has derived a catalogue of human rights from the notion of 'human dignity' implied by a right to life enshrined in Art.21 of the constitution. Human life and human dignity have been disregarded today in various ways and in different directions. In this context, Indian Judiciary plays the role of savior of human dignity, when such terms can't be codified.

Human rights for women came into sharp focus with the adoption of the *convention on elimination of all forms of discrimination against women* by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 18th December 1997. This is treated as the *Magna Carta of women's human rights*. State parties are required by convention to eliminate discrimination in the exercise and enjoyment of all cultural, civil, political, economic and social rights.

Human Rights and Women: An International Overview

- The Character of the United Nations Organisation (1945)
- *The Immortal Magna Carta (1215)*
- *Petition of Rights (1628)*
- *Bill of Rights (1689)*
- *Act of Settlement (1700) in Great Britain;*
- *The Declaration of Independence (1776),*
- *Bill of Rights (1789) in USA and*
- *Declaration of the Rights of Man (1791) in France*

In the modern context, the UN charter, sundry international and regional declaration, conventions, charters and conferences and national Constitution compose the rich sources of human rights.

The brooding omnipresence of a higher law – a common law to all mankind – was termed as *Just Natural* for the Romans, *Lax Naturalis* for medieval Christians, *Rita* and *Dharma* for ancient Hindus and is christened as *Natural law* by modern jurists. The recognition of such superior law led to the evolution of the *Natural Rights / Human rights*.

The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948*, professes the principle of non – discrimination and proclaims that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, without any distinctions including that of sex.

The *International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966*;

The *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966*;

A number of regional right characters, viz.,

- European Convention for Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms, 1950;
- *African Charter on Human and people's Rights 1981*; and
- *American convention inhuman Rights, 1969*. all include provisions for progressive protection and guarantees for women.

The UN General Assembly unanimously adopted a *Declaration of Eliminations of Discrimination Against Women in 1967*, resolving to abolish sex – discriminatory laws and practices, to grant women equal rights with men in matters of Civil law including absolute interest in property and free choice and consent in marriage.

The *Second World Conference on Human Rights* held at Vienna in 1993, called for full and equal participation of women in all aspects of public life.

The United Nations sponsored *First world Conference on Women* was held at Mexico from 19th June to 2nd July 1975;

The *Second World Conference of United Nations Decade for Women* was held at Copenhagen from 14 to 30 July 1980;

The *Third World Conference* was held at Nairobi, from 15th to 26th July 1985, to reviews and appraises the achievements in the U.N. Declarations for Women equality, development and peace.

The *Fourth Conference on Women Action for equality, development and peace* was held at Beijing, China, from Sep.4 to Sep.15, 1995 with a caption: *Look at the world through Women's eyes. Beijing Plus Five* – a special session was held by General Assembly in New York from 5th to 10th June 2000, to assess the progress made by the State parties in the implementation of their Commitment to gender equality.

The status of women is a benchmark of social process and is a very important part of the *human development index* in the human rights jurisprudence.

Human Rights of Women: Indian Scenario

i) Provisions of Constitution Relating to Women's Right

Article 16(4) of the Constitution provided for the Reservation of posts in favour of any Backward Class of any citizens which is in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented in the Services under the State.

Article 243-D of the Constitution contains that not less than 1/3rd of the total number of seats to be filled in direct election in every Panchayat shall be reserved for women. The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution, effected in 1992, provide for reservations of seats to women in elections in the Panchayats and Municipalities.

Same provisions have been made in Article 234-T for reservation of seats to women in the direct elections to every Municipality. Thus, there is a reservation of 33% seats for women in local bodies.

Article 23 provides against exploitation of women under the heading *prohibition of trafficking in Human beings and Forced labour*.

Directive Principles of State Policy regarding women are in Articles 39, Article 42 & Article 44 of the Constitution.

The Indian Constitution directs that the International Character should be interpreted in the same manner as an Act of Parliament (Art 367 (1)).

The Constitution has accepted the principles of gender equality. The Preamble speaks of equality of status and opportunity. Article 14, 15(1), 16 (1) (4) reiterate the principle by assuring equality. Article 21 has provided right to life with dignity.

ii) Women's Rights Under Criminal Laws In India

Various provisions have been made with regard to offences against women under *Indian Penal Code, 1860* (IPC) and *The Indian Evidence Act, 1872*.

The provisions of the IPC:

Sec. 354 of the IPC makes punishable an assault or Criminal force assaults or uses of Criminal force on any women intending to outrage, or knowing it to be likely to that he will thereby outrage, her modesty shall be punishable.

Sec. 312 provides for punishment for causing miscarriage, if such miscarriage is not caused in good faith for the purpose of saving the life of the women.

Sec. 376 provides punishment for rape which has been defined in Sec. 375.

Sec.228-A provides punishment for a person who discloses the names or identity of the rape victim.

Section 493 – 498 deal with offences against marriage.

Section 498 – A provides punishment for cruelty against a women by her husband or his relatives.

iii) Indian Evidence Act

Sec. 114-A of *Indian Evidence Act* incorporates a presumption that where sexual intercourse by the accused with the prosecutrix is provided and if she alleges that she has been raped, the Court shall presume that she did not consent.

Criminal law enactments are passed to preserve the dignity of women and to protect women against social discrimination, violence and atrocities.

Abuses and offences against women are covered under various sections of the *Indian Penal Code*:

- Miscarriages (Sec. 312 to 314)
- *Co-habitation caused by a man deceitfully* (Sec. 493)
- *Offences against bigamy* (Sec. 494)
- *Adultery* (Sec. 497)
- *Enticing or taking away a married women* (Sec. 498)
- *Buying or disposing away a person as slave* (Sec. 370 & 371)
- *Unlawful compulsory labour* (Sec. 373 & 374)
- *Sale of obscene books etc* (272 & 294)
- *Kidnapping or abducting or inducing women to compel her marriage etc.* (Sec. 366 & 366A & B)
- *Outraging the modesty of Women* (Sec. 354)
- Offences against rape (Sec. 375 & 376 A to D).

iv) Other provisions: Various Enactments

India has enacted various laws for the protection of women:

1. The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act 1956
2. *Maternity Benefit Relief Act 1961*
3. *The Dowry Prohibition Act 1961*
4. *The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act 1971*
5. *Equal Remuneration Act 1976*
6. *Factories Act 1948* (Sec : 19, 22(2), 27, 42(b))
7. *The National Commission for Women Act 1990*

8. *The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act 1987*

9. *The Family Court Act, 1984*

10. *The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibitions) Act 1986*

11. *The Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994.*

12. *The Child Marriage (Restraint) Act, 1929*

13. The Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993.

The Government of India constituted the National Human Rights Commission, State Human Rights Commission and Human Rights Court.

The Government declared the year 2001 as the *year of Women Empowerment* and the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women was evolved in 2001.

The development of the law relating to women shows the spectrum of the changing position of the women in the society. Though women enjoyed a dignified status in *Vedic* period, they lost their individuality and status during *Shastric* period and thereafter.

The Reformist Movement during the British regime led to various enactments, viz.,

- Hindu Widows Remarriage Act,
- *Hindu Women's Right to Property Act,*
- *The Female Infanticide Prevention Act,*
- *Removal of Cast Disabilities Act,*
- Child Marriage Restraint Act, etc.,

The law is one of the several key factors that have acted as a catalyst for the reformists to bring about the social changes in pre-Independent India.

v) Women's Rights under the Civil Laws of India

The right to marry and found a family has been protected under the personal and Special Marriage Laws of India. These are:

- The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955,
- *Special Marriage Act, 1954*
- *The Family Courts Act, 1954*
- *Hindu Adoptions & Maintenance Act, 1956*
- *The Dissolution of Muslim Marriage Act, 1939*
- *Muslim Women's (Protection of Rights upon divorce) Act,*
- *The Christian Marriage Act, 1872*

- The Christian Marriage and Matrimonial causes Bill, 1994

Provisions relating to maintenance of married women are provided in the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955. Hindu married or unmarried women can adopt a male or female child under the *Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956*. A Muslim divorced woman is entitled to Mother & other properties to be given at the time of divorce. According to the draft law called *The Christian Marriage and matrimonial causes Bill*, the Christian women will have equal rights of divorce and succession.

vi. Women's Right under the Labour laws of India

Human rights against exploitation, right for maternity benefits, facilities in factories for women workers, equal pay for equal work with men is provided in *The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976*. Maternity benefits to be given to women.

The judicial decisions rendered by the Indian Courts depict the active initiatives of the Judiciary to protect the human dignity of women from exploitation by the at all stages where the legislations are unenforceable due to lack of adequacy of enforcement machinery.

Case Laws

In "*Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan*, (1997) 6 SCC 241) the Supreme Court laid down number of guidelines to remedy the legislative vacuum. In this, Supreme Court referred to the convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and also the resultant violation of gender equality under Art.14, 15 and right to life Article 21 of the constitutions.

The Supreme Court in "*Apparel Export Promotion Council v. A.K.Chopra*" (1991) 1 SCC 759) held that punishment of removal of male employee from service after he has been found guilty of sexual harassment of a female colleague is proper and reasonable on the ground that sexual harassment of a female at the place of work is a form of "gender discrimination against women" and is incompatible with the dignity and honour of a female and needs to be eliminated.

In "*T.K.Gopal v. State of Karnataka*" (AIR 2000 SC 1669) the Supreme Court on the violation of human dignity of the victims of Sex Crime, observed that "rapist not only violates the victim's privacy and personal integrity, but inevitably causes serious psychological as well as physical harm in the process. Rape is not merely a physical assault – it is often destructive of the whole personality of the victim. A murderer destroys the physical body of his victim; a rapist degrades the very soul of the helpless female".

Invading Privacy:

'Privacy' has been defined as "the rightful claim of an individual to determine to which he wishes to share himself with others and control over the time, place and circumstances to communicate with others". It will be accepted that one person's right to know and be informed may violate another's right of privacy.

The Supreme Court in "*State of Maharashtra V.N.Mardikar* (1991 (1) SCC 57), held that "the unchastity of a women does not make her open to any person to violate her person as and when he wishes. She is entitled to protect her person if there is an attempt to violate her person against her wish. She is equally entitled to the protection of law. Therefore merely because she is of easy virtue, her evidence cannot be thrown overboard. In this case, the court observed that "even a woman of easy virtue is entitled to privacy and no one can invade her as and when he wishes.

"Right of privacy" can be said "to be let alone" what is in information to others according to a journalist, could be personal and sensitive information to an individual. "The Lakshman Rekha' or the 'line of control', should be that the publication of comments information should not invade into the privacy of an individual, unless, outweighed by 'bonafide' a genuine public interest" ("*G.Pravina v Shri Narendra Modi*", High Court of Madras, W.P.No.13742 of 2014, 2014 (2) CWC36).

Privacy, liberty and dignity are pillars of gender justice. In several decisions, the Supreme Court of India and several High Courts, it has been reaffirmed. The Supreme Court in a watershed judgment in "*Olga Tellis V. Bombay Municipal Corporation*" (1985 (3) SCC 545), in case declared that a man has not only a right to live with human dignity, consequently all attributes for living with the dignity of a human soul namely education, shelter etc., are to be guaranteed and welfare activities of the State must be directed to ensure socio-economic condition where no one in the country is deprived of the basic requirements to lead a dignified life.

Sexual Exploitation: Women and Children

In *Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan*, (1997) 6 SCC 241), the Supreme Court laid down number of guidelines to remedy the legislative vacuum. In this case, Supreme Court referred to the convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and also the resultant violation of gender equality under Art.14, 15 and right to life Article.21 of the Constitution.

The Supreme Court in *Apparel Export Promotion Council v. A.K.Chopra* ((1999) 1 SCC 759) held that punishment of removal of male employee from service after he has been found guilty of sexual harassment of a female colleague is proper and reasonable on the ground that sexual harassment of a female at the place of work is a form of

“gender discrimination against women” and is incompatible with the dignity and honour of a female and needs to be eliminated.

The role of Public Interest Litigation in respect of education is very commendable: *Gaurav Jain v. Union of India* (AIR 1990 SC 292), the Supreme Court rejected the demand for providing separate schools and hostels for children of prostitutes, as it was not in the interest of such children.

In *Unni Krishnan, J.P. v. State of A.P.* (AIR 1993 SC 2178), Article 21 has been interpreted by the Supreme Court to include the right to live with human dignity and all that goes along with it. “The ‘right to education’ flows directly from right to life”. In other words, ‘right to education’ is concomitant to the fundamental rights enshrined in part III of the Constitution. The State is under a constitutional mandate to provide educational institutions at all levels for the benefit of citizens.” The benefit of education cannot be confined to richer classes.

The question whether the right to education was a fundamental right and enforceable as such was answered by the Supreme Court in the affirmative in *Mohini Jain v. State of Karnataka* ((1992) 3 SCC 666).

The correctness of this court’s decision was examined by a larger bench of judges in *Unnikrishnan J.P. v. State of Andhra Pradesh*. The occasion was the challenge, by the management of private medical and engineering colleges, to State legislation regulating the charging of “capitation” fees from students seeking admission. The court expressly denied this claim and proceeded to examine the nature of the right to education. In *Unnikrishnan J.P. v. State of Andhra Pradesh*, Justice Mohan observed “in educational institutions which are seed – beds of culture, where children in whose hands quiver the destinies of the future, are trained. From their ranks will come out when they grow up statesmen and soldiers, patriots and philosophers, who will determine the progress of the land.

Firing a missile of judicial activism on January 12, 1993, for the rights of the prostitutes’ children the Supreme Court disposed of a petition filed by a Delhi based organization, the Patit Uddar Sabha. According to this revolutionary judgment, it shall now be sufficient to write the name of the mother only in place of child’s father’s name. Now the children of the prostitutes and unknown father would be equally eligible for the admission in the educational institutions, who could not be admitted so far. Such children would now have more self confidence and start finding them on equal footing to the other children of the society.

Right to Inheritance of Illegitimate Children:

In *Santa v. Durga* (AIR 1992 BOM 192), the Supreme Court stated that children of a void marriage (whether

declared void or not) and children of annulled voidable marriages will inherit the property of their parents only and of none else and they have no right to claim partition of the joint family property. The same view has been expressed by the Madras High Court in “*Perumal Gounder v. Panchayapan*” (AIR 1990 Mad 110) and the Bombay High Court in “*Shanaram v. Dugubai* (AIR 1987 Bom 182). In *Smt.P.E.K.Kalliani Amma V.K.Devi*” (AIR 1996 SC 1963), the apex court held that the succession or inheritance by illegitimate children for all practical purposes, is limited to the properties of the parents only.

Another important case in this regard is *Jinia Keotin v. Kumar Sitaram Manjhi* (AIR 2000 SC 735), where the Supreme Court held a similar view. Same view has been approved and followed by the Supreme Court in *Bharatha Matha v. R.Vijaya Renganathan* (AIR 2010 SC 2685), where it was held that a child born of void or voidable marriage is not entitled to claim inheritance in ancestral coparcener property but is entitled only to claim share in self-acquired properties of his/her parents, if any. Illegitimate children are as innocent as any other children and therefore, it is said that the children must not be the sufferers for the fault of their parents. They cannot be discriminated against and they will be on a par with other legitimate children and will be entitled to all the rights in the property of their parents, both self-acquired and ancestral. Here it is relevant to say that the sins of parents ought not to be visited on their offspring.

In this respect, recently in *Revanasiddappa v. Mallikarjun* (2011) 5 MLJ 392 (SC) 1, the Supreme Court of India (decided on 31 March 2011) rules that children born of void marriages or out of wed-lock are entitled to a share of the parent’s property, both ancestral and personal. In this case, the Bench ruled that children from second wife had rights to their father’s ancestral property and said that “a child born in such relationship is innocent and is entitled to all rights, which are given to other children born in valid marriage”.

In this historically ruling, the Supreme Court has dissented from the earlier position held in *Jinia Keotin*, *Bharatha Matha* cases, etc. Right to property is no longer fundamental right but it is a Constitutional right and Article 300 A contains a guarantee against deprivation of property right given by authority of law.

The judgment is significant that seeks to give property rights to illegitimate children, that give live – in partner’s legal safeguards and also that allows maintenance and property rights to second wives. In reality, because of this judgment, now all women are being protected. The judgment is a step in the right direction, since illegitimate children are more vulnerable, guaranteeing their rights can go a long way in making Indian Society a progressive one.

The Supreme Court has brought justice and bestowed a decent level of honour to the child born out of amorous relationships from devoted lovers. It is a correct move to ensure that the “innocent beings” do have a right to property of their parents, whether self attained or ancestral.

In *Rameshwari Devi v. State of Bihar* (AIR 2000 SC 735), the court dealt with a case wherein after the death of a Government employee, children born illegitimately by the women, who had been living with the said employee, claimed the share in pension/gratuity and other death – cum – retiral benefits along with children. The court held that the child of the deceased employee born out of void marriage was entitled to share in the family pension, death-cum-retiral benefits and gratuity.

Trafficking in women and children is the gravest form of abuse and exploitation of human beings. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sex exploitation, forced labour services, slavery, servitude or removal of organs by means of threat or use of force. Trafficked persons survive in brothels, parlours, bars, factories, farms, guesthouses and even in the homes as well. The income generated by human trafficking is comparable to the money generated through trafficking in arms and drugs. Human trafficking is linked to other organized crimes like human smuggling, drug trafficking and money laundering. The Oxford English Dictionary defines traffic as “trade, especially illegal (as in drugs). The word trafficked or trafficking is described as “dealing in something, especially illegally (as in the case of trafficking narcotics)” Though there is not concrete definition of trafficking, it could be said that *trafficking necessarily involves movement/transportation, of a person by means of coercion or deceit, and consequent exploitation leading to commercialization*. The abusers including the traffickers, the recruiters, the transporters the sellers, the buyers, the end-users etc., exploit the vulnerability of the trafficked person.

In India, trafficking in children is on rise and majority of victims of trafficking are below 18 years of age (NCRB, 2005). *Tamil Nadu ranks first in immoral trafficking*, followed by Karnataka among major States, while the national capital New Delhi tops in the chart of union Territories according to Home Ministry data for 2007. Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra expose equally a gloomy picture. Therefore, it would be imperative to take all steps to prohibit prostitution. Right of the child to development hinges upon elimination of prostitution. Success lies upon effective measures to eradicate root and branch of prostitution.

In *Bachpan Bachao Andolan v. Union of India* writ petition was filed by HRLN in 2011 on the issue of abuse and exploitation of children in circus industry and to examine several recommendations aimed at reforming the existing legal and procedural mechanism on child protection. In this

case, the court has ordered Central Government to bring a notification prohibiting employment of children in circus, to conduct raids to rescue children already working in circuses and frame proper scheme for their restoration. This order given by the Supreme Court has made clear its intention to deal with the problem of exploitation of children in a long term systematically.

Conclusion

The brief survey of the above cases shows the activism of the Indian Supreme Court to protect women from various types of exploitation. In this regard, the performance of the Indian Judiciary stands out as a significant contribution to the implementation of human dignity of Women. Although the Supreme Court made laudable directions and suggestions in many instances to protect and promote the human dignity of women, unfortunately these directions and suggestions are not followed and implemented by the Government machinery effectively.

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मराठी वृत्तपत्रांना 'स्त्री' संपादक वर्ज्य

प्रा. विमुक्ता राजे

पत्रकारिता व संज्ञापन विभाग, जोशी-बेडेकर महाविद्यालय, ठाणे

प्रास्ताविक : मुद्रित माध्यमांत दैनिकाचे अपरंपार महत्त्व आहे. किंबहुना संपूर्ण प्रसारमाध्यमांमध्ये दैनिकांचे अर्थात वृत्तपत्रांचे अग्रस्थान अजूनही टिकून आहे. इलेक्ट्रॉनिक माध्यमांचा विस्तार प्रचंड होऊन देखील जगभरातील वृत्तपत्रांचे स्थान ढळलेले नाही. स्वस्त किंमत, सहज उपलब्धता, टिकाऊपणा, संग्राह्यता, विश्वसार्हता, कोठेही व कसेही बसून वाचण्याची शक्यता, विश्लेषणाची सोय आणि आपल्या विचारांची पडताळणी करून घेण्याचे सोपे साधन अशी काही कारणे या माध्यमाचे महत्त्व कायम ठेवून आहेत. वृत्तपत्रांना इतके महत्त्व असल्यामुळे दैनिकांचे संपादकसुद्धा महत्त्वाचे ठरते. मात्र अन्य व्यवसायांसारखाच पत्रकारिता हा व्यवसायदेखील पुरुष वर्चस्ववादीच राहिला. गेल्या २५ वर्षांत स्त्रिया या हळूहळू मराठी पत्रकारितेत आल्या आणि स्थिरावलेल्या दिसतात. त्यास वृत्तपत्रविषयक शिक्षण देणाऱ्या संस्था आणि बदललेले वातावरण बऱ्याच प्रमाणात कारणीभूत आहे. परिणामी मराठी वृत्तपत्रसृष्टीत स्त्रिया मोठ्या संख्येने काम करू लागलेल्या दिसतात. तरीसुद्धा संपादकापर्यंत स्त्री पोहोचण्याची अवस्था अजूनही मराठी वृत्तपत्रांमध्ये आली नाही.

आज एकविसाव्या शतकात स्त्री प्रत्येक क्षेत्रात पुढे आहे. कोणतेही काम तिला अशक्य राहिलेले नाही. स्त्री अतराळात जाऊन पोहचली. राजकारण, समाजकारण, उद्योग, शिक्षण, साहित्य, कला, शास्त्र अशी सर्व क्षेत्रे तिने यशस्वीरित्या पार केली. स्त्री सुविद्य आहे ती जागरूक आहे, तिला आत्मभान आहे. स्त्रीला जबाबादारीची जाणीव आहे. मानवी जीवनातील कोणतेही क्षेत्र तिला आता अशक्य राहिलेले नाही. पुरुषांच्या बरोबरीने ती प्रत्येक क्षेत्रात अगदी रणांगणावरही आपली कर्तबगारी गाजवत आहे.

असे असले तरी एखाद्या मराठी वृत्तपत्राच्या संपादकपदी स्त्रियांना स्थान मिळालेले दिसत नाही. मासिके, साप्ताहिके, नियतकालिके यांचे संपादन स्त्रियांनी केले आणि करतही आहेत. परंतु वृत्तपत्रांचे संपादन करणाऱ्या स्त्रियांची नावे शोधू लागता शिरीष पै आणि वसुंधरा पेंडसे-नाईक हिच आठवतात. तर अलिकडच्या काळातील जयश्री खाडीलकर-पांडे.

श्रीमती पै या 'मराठा' वृत्तपत्राच्या संपादिका होत्या. आचार्य अत्रे यांच्यानंतर त्या 'मराठा' चे संपादन करू लागल्या. श्री. नीळकंठ खाडिलकर यांच्यानंतर जयश्री खाडिलकर 'नवाकाळ' चे संपादन करू लागल्या. दोघीनाही हे पद मिळाले ते वारसा हक्कानेच. दोघीही बुद्धिमान, गुणवान होत्या. आहेत पण अत्रे आणि खाडिलकर ही आडनावे नसती तर त्यांना संपादकपद मिळाले असते काय असा प्रश्न निर्माण होतो. श्रीमती वसुंधरा पेंडसे-नाईक या 'नवशक्ती' च्या संपादक होत्या. त्यांचे वाङ्मयीन कर्तृत्व मोठे होते. संस्कृतचा व्यासंग दांडगा होता. 'मराठा', 'नवशक्ती', 'नवाकाळ' ही तीनही दैनिके मराठी वृत्तपत्रसृष्टीत नाव मिळवून होती व आहेत. तरीही या तिघींची कारकिर्द संपादक म्हणून लक्षात राहिली नाही. प्रत्येक नियमास अपवाद असतो त्याप्रमाणे

सध्याच्या काळात 'पुण्यनगरी' या वृत्तपत्राच्या संपादिका राही भिडे या एकमेव संपादिका दिसतात. हा अपवाद वगळता मराठी वृत्तपत्राच्या संपादकपदी स्त्रिया का आढळत नाही याचा विचार येथे करावयाचा आहे.

गेल्या काही वर्षांत पत्रकारितेत महिला चांगल्या संख्येने येत आहेत. दूरदर्शन, आकाशवाणी, वृत्तपत्रे अशा तिन्ही प्रमुख माध्यमांमध्ये त्यांची उपस्थिती लक्षणीय आहे. पण सूक्ष्मपणे पाहता ही संख्या मोठ्या शहरांतच दिसते. या सगळ्या महिला उच्चशिक्षित आणि जागरूक आहेत.

गेल्या काही वर्षांत बातमीदार, छायाचित्रकार, उपसंपादक, रविवार पुरवणीचे संपादक इत्यादी हुद्दे महिला पत्रकारांना लाभले. त्यांनी ते व्यवस्थित समर्थपणे हाताळले देखील. पण त्यांच्यावर असलेल्या संपादकपदी मात्र त्या पोहचू शकल्या नाहीत किंवा त्यांना ते मिळत नाही. माध्यमे ही समाजापुढे धरलेल्या आरशासारखी असतात. समाजातील स्त्री-पुरुष असमानतेचे प्रतीक माध्यमांतही प्रतिबिंबित होताना दिसते. म्हणून वृत्तपत्रातील सर्वोच्च स्थानी म्हणजे संपादकपदी पुरुषच दिसतो.

मराठी वृत्तपत्रातील संपादकांची ३ नोव्हेंबर २०१४ पर्यंतची यादी

वृत्तपत्राचे नाव	संपादक
महाराष्ट्र टाईम्स	अशोक पानवलकर
लोकसत्ता	गिरीश कुबेर
सामना	संजय राऊत
लोकमत	विनायक पात्रुडकर
सकाळ	पद्मभूषण देशपांडे

या मुख्य वृत्तपत्रांप्रमाणेच महाराष्ट्रातील इतर काही वृत्तपत्रे व त्यांचे संपादक पुढीलप्रमाणे:-

१. 'पुढारी' - विवेक गिरधारी, २. 'प्रहार' - महेश म्हात्रे, ३. 'नवशक्ती' - प्रकाश कुलकर्णी, ४. 'तरुण भारत' - किरण ठाकूर, ५. 'नवाकाळ' - जयश्री खाडिलकर, ६. 'पुण्यनगरी' - राही भिडे तसेच स्थानिक वृत्तपत्रे व त्यांचे संपादक पुढीलप्रमाणे :-

१. 'ठाणे वैभव' - मिलिंद बल्लाळ, २. 'सन्मित्र' - विजय जोशी, ३. 'जनादेश' - कैलाश म्हापदी, ४. 'जनमुद्रा' - दीपक साळवी, ५. 'दिनमान' - अनिल ठाणेकर

संपादकपदी पुरुष असण्याची काही कारणे -

१. संपादक होण्याकरता कोणते गुण लागतात त्याचा आढावा घेतला तर वृत्तपत्रसृष्टीत चौफेर काम करण्याचा अनुभव, उत्तम लेखणी, भरपूर व्यासंग, संघटना कौशल्य, कल्पकता, नेतृत्व करण्याची क्षमता, राजकीय जाण, सामाजिक प्रश्नांबाबत ठाम भूमिका, आर्थिक व्यवहारांची जाण, वृत्तपत्राचा खप वाढविण्यासाठी निरनिराळे उपक्रम व योजना शोधण्याची किमया... असे काही गुण संपादकाच्या ठायी असावे असा रिवाज आहे. ते प्रत्येकाच्या अंगी असतातच असे नाही. पण तरीही केवळ पुरुष आहेत म्हणून या व्यवसायात ते संपादकपदापर्यंत पोचू शकतात.

मराठी पत्रकारितेत स्त्रियांचा शिरकाव उशिरा झाला. तरीही लेखन, वाचन, नेतृत्वक्षमता, संघटनाकौशल्य एवढ्या निकषांवर आज अनेक स्त्रियांनी स्वतःला सिद्ध केले आहे.

२. अनेक क्षेत्रात स्त्रियांनी कर्तृत्व गाजवले, त्यातील एक राजकारण, देशातल्या राजकारणात तर स्त्रिया ग्रामपंचायतीपासून ते विधीमंडळ, लोकसभा अध्यक्ष ते पंतप्रधानपदापर्यंत. वृत्तपत्रात राजकारण हे क्षेत्र सर्वात महत्त्वाचे मानले जाते. पण मुळात स्त्रियांना राजकारणातील काय कळते? हाच समज वृत्तपत्रसृष्टीत रुजलेला असल्याने नव्वद टक्के स्त्रिया तिथेच बाद होतात. वृत्तपत्रांतून राजकीय विषय प्रामुख्याने हाताळले जातात व जाणार यात वाद नाही. त्यामुळे स्त्रिया तिथे कमीच पडणार हे गृहीत धरले जाते.

३. वृत्तपत्रात राजकारणाबरोबरीने येणारे दुसरे क्षेत्र म्हणजे गुन्हेगारी विश्व. या क्षेत्रातही स्त्रियांचा वावर कमी. कारण तिथे जोखीम अधिक. प्रचंड असुरक्षितता. अशा कारणांमुळे स्त्रीला या पदावर बसता येणार नाही असे मानले जाते.

४. खरे तर पुरुषांचे असे असलेले खास व्यवसाय व कौशल्ये स्त्रियांनी आत्मसात केली आहेत. मग संपादनाचा व्यवसाय असा

काय वेगळा ठरावा, की ज्यात अजूनही स्त्रीला शिरकाव नाही. पत्रकारितेत स्त्री आहे पण पत्रकारितेच्या अग्रभागात नाही. असे का व्हावे?

याचे कारण समाजाच्या मानसिकतेत आहे. आज २१ व्या शतकातही स्त्रीला 'Boss' म्हणून स्वीकारणे कठीण जाते. पुरुषप्रधान समाजाची मानसिकता यास कारणीभूत आहे आणि ती परंपरागत आहे. आधुनिक विचार, आधुनिक सुधारणांची मोठी परंपरा सांगणाऱ्या मराठी पत्रकारितेत असा प्रत्यय यावा याचा खेद वाटतो.

५. महाराष्ट्रातून प्रसिद्ध होणाऱ्या इंग्रजी दैनिकांमध्ये स्त्री पत्रकार भरपूर व ठळक जागी दिसतात. पण महाराष्ट्रातील मराठी भाषेत निघणाऱ्या वृत्तपत्रांमध्ये मराठी स्त्रियांना तुटपुंजे स्थान लाभले आहे. मग संपादकपद तर दूरच राहिले.

मराठी पत्रकारितेत आढळून येणारा मराठी समाज हा विशेषतः मध्यमवर्गीय मराठी संस्कृतीतून येणारा. सुसंस्कृत बौद्धिक पण तरीही विशिष्ट चाकोरीबद्ध विचारसरणीतून येणारा आहे. मराठी वृत्तपत्रातील बहुतेक संपादकांची पार्श्वभूमी हीच दिसते. अशा कुटुंबांमध्ये स्त्रियांवर आजही काही अप्रत्यक्ष बंधने दिसतात. ती नोकरी करणारी असावी, पण तिची नोकरी चाकोरीबद्ध असावी, सुरक्षित असावी, विशिष्ट वेळेतील असावी अशीच अपेक्षा असते.

स्त्री संपादक झाल्या तर दीर्घकाळ ऑफिसमध्ये राहू शकत नाही. घर, कुटुंब, मुलं, सणवार, आजारपण हे सर्व 'स्त्री'लाच सांभाळावे लागते.

याउलट इंग्रजी पत्रकारितेत स्त्रिया अशा विशिष्ट चौकटीतून आलेल्या दिसत नाहीत. अनेकदा त्या उच्चभू वर्तुळातून आलेल्या असतात. त्यामुळे त्यांना मध्यमवर्गीय चौकटी आड येत नाहीत.

६. म्हणूनच मग स्त्रिया आपले कर्तृत्व सिद्ध करण्यासाठी मग नियतकालिकांकडे वळलेल्या दिसतात. नियतकालिकांच्या म्हणजेच साप्ताहिके, पाक्षिके, मासिके यांच्या संपादकपदी स्त्रिया दिसतात.

वृत्तपत्राचे जग खूप धावपळीचे असते. रोज अनेक बातम्यांचा रतीब असतो. घडलेल्या घटनेवर भाष्य करावयास फारसा वेळ नसतो. जागाही फारशी उपलब्ध नसते. यामुळेच वृत्तपत्रातील संपादक पद आणि नियतकालिकातील संपादक पद यातील फरक शोधून जाता नियतकालिकांमध्ये हाताशी वेळ उपलब्ध असतो. घडलेल्या घटनेवर सांगोपांग विचार करून विश्लेषण करून संपूर्ण माहिती देणे, त्यास लेखाचे स्वरूप देणे

शक्य होते. यामुळेही स्त्रिया कदाचित नियतकालिकांच्या संपादनाद्वारे आपली ठाम मते मांडत असाव्यात. विशेषतः स्त्रियांसंबंधी, मुलींसंबंधी घडलेल्या घटनांवर या संपादिकाचा विचार करण्याचा दृष्टीकोण हा स्त्रियांच्या मानसिकतेचा विचार करून केलेला असतो.

राजकारण, गुन्हेगारी या क्षेत्रांनी वृत्तपत्राचा बराचसा भाग व्यापलेला असतो. त्या तुलनेत नियतकालिकांमध्ये समाजकारण, साहित्य संस्कृती या विषयांना वाव असतो. म्हणूनही स्त्रिया नियतकालिकांचे संपादकपद स्वीकारत असाव्यात.

प्रतिक्रिया -

या शोध निबंधाचे लेखन करताना अभ्यासाचा भाग म्हणून प्रत्यक्ष वृत्तपत्रसृष्टीत कार्यरत असलेल्या काही जाणत्या मंडळींच्या प्रतिक्रिया या संदर्भात गोळा केल्या.

१. 'लोकसत्ता' वृत्तपत्राचे मुख्य उपसंपादक श्री. असीफ बागवान यांना या विषयासंबंधी सांगितल्यावर त्यांच्या मते वृत्तपत्राचे क्षेत्र अत्यंत धावपळीचे आहे. वेळ किंवा हेडलाईन इथे खूप महत्त्वाची असते. या क्षेत्रात रात्री उशिरापर्यंतही काम करावे लागते. आपल्या समाजाची मानसिकता विशिष्ट प्रकारची आहे. एका विशिष्ट रँकिंगपर्यंत स्त्रिया पोचतात. पुढे मात्र संपादकपदाऐवजी पुरवण्या, साप्ताहिके, मासिके अशा ठिकाणी वळतात. रोजच्या वर्तमानपत्राचे म्हणजे मुख्य अंकाचे वाचक हे संख्येने पुरुष जास्त असतात. बस, ट्रेनमध्ये येता-जाता पाहिले तर पुरुषांच्या हातातच वृत्तपत्रे दिसतात. पुरवण्यांमध्ये सॉफ्ट टारगेटेड विषय असतात. फॅशन, पाककला, मुलांचे विषय, ज्येष्ठ नागरिक, आरोग्य या पुरवण्यांच्या संपादक स्त्रिया दिसतात. कारण पुरवण्याचा वाचकवर्ग मोठ्या प्रमाणात स्त्रिया असतात.

२. 'सामना' वृत्तपत्राचे मुख्य उपसंपादक श्री. राजेश पोवळे यांचे मत असे की, सध्याच्या काळात असा फारसा भेद होऊ शकत नाही. पूर्वी स्त्रिया फार वेळ देऊ शकत नव्हत्या. पण आता परिस्थिती सकारात्मकपणे बदलली आहे. स्त्री पुरवणी संपादक असण्याचे फायदे असे की स्त्रियांकडे उपजतच सौंदर्यदृष्टी असते. त्यामुळे पुरवण्यांची मांडणी, हाताळणी अधिक चांगली होऊ शकते.

या क्षेत्रात सतत लोकांशी संपर्क व संबंध ठेवावा लागतो. स्त्रिया मेहनतीत मागे पडत नाहीत. बुद्धिमत्तेतही त्यांनी स्वतःला सिद्ध केले आहे. पण घराची, कुटुंबाची जबाबदारी सांभाळून वेळ द्यावा लागतो त्यामुळे काही मर्यादा येतात. पुढील काळात एखाद्या

वृत्तपत्राचे संपादकपद स्त्री सांभाळताना पाहणे नक्की आवडेल.

३. 'लोकमत' चे उपमुख्य उपसंपादक श्री. पवन देशपांडे यांच्या मते वृत्तपत्राच्या जगात समाजात थेट घुसावे लागते. वेळ हा महत्त्वाचा घटक या नोकरीत असतो. वेळेच्या मर्यादामुळे असेल कदाचित सर्वोच्च स्थानापर्यंत पोचता येत नसेल. मालक, संपादक नियुक्त करताना आपली सगळी कामे करू शकेल का हे पाहतो. संपादक होण्यासाठी घर, संसार, वेळेची बंधने यामुळे स्त्री काहीशी खचून जाते. मग तिची महत्त्वाकांक्षा उरत नाही.

नोकरीच्या ठिकाणी कराव्या लागणाऱ्या तडजोडीपेक्षा आधी घरातूनच या नोकरीबाबत कधी कधी त्रासाची सुरुवात होते. त्यामुळे अॅडजस्टमेंट करत काहीसे बॅकफूटवर राहणेच त्या स्वतःहून पसंत करतात.

४. 'माझा' वृत्तवाहिनीचे वृत्तनिवेदक श्री. मिलिंद भागवत - सुरुवातीच्या काळात या क्षेत्रात महिलाच नव्हत्या. आता मात्र मोठ्या संख्येने त्या आहेत. वृत्तवाहिनीच्या संदर्भात रोज स्वतःला सिद्ध करावे लागते. नुसते सिद्ध नाही इतर इतरांच्या तुलनेत वरचढ सिद्ध करावे लागते. संपादकपदी रूजू होण्यासाठी राजकारण, सामाजिक, साहित्यिक, क्रीडा, गुन्हेगारी सर्व क्षेत्रांची माहिती असावी लागते.

एखादी स्त्री संपादक झाल्यास स्त्री प्रश्नांकडे अधिक चांगले लक्ष देऊ शकेल. पत्रकारितेच्या क्षेत्रात 'वेळ' हा घटक खूप महत्त्वाचा असतो. तो कदाचित स्त्रियांकडे कमी पडत असावा.

५. ज्येष्ठ पत्रकार इंद्रायणी सावकार - पत्रकारितेचे जग आजही 'मेन्स वर्ल्ड' आहे. अनेक स्त्रिया इतर क्षेत्रांसारख्या या क्षेत्रात निवृत्तीपर्यंत रहात नाहीत. आपली सामाजिक घडणूक यासाठी काहीशी जबाबदार आहे. म्हणून कदाचित स्त्रिया संपादकपदापर्यंत पोचू शकत नाही. 'लेडी बॉस' ही संकल्पना सरकारी माध्यमात म्हणजे दूरदर्शन, आकाशवाणी याठिकाणी काहीशी स्विकारलेली दिसते. परंतु पत्रकारितेच्या खासगी क्षेत्रात मात्र लेडी बॉस सहजासहजी स्वीकारत नाहीत. सामाजिक स्तर असलेला स्त्री-पुरुष भेद या क्षेत्रातही दिसतोच. असे असले तरी पुढील काळात स्त्री संपादक पाहणे आवडेल.

६. 'महाराष्ट्र टाइम्स'च्या खास प्रतिनिधी शर्मिला कलगुटकर - या क्षेत्रामध्ये बाईपणामुळे काही मर्यादा आहेत. कारण २४ तास डिमांडिंग असे करिअर आहे. वृत्तपत्रांच्या धोरणावर त्या वृत्तपत्राचा, त्यातील कर्मचाऱ्यांचा दृष्टिकोण माईड सेट ठरत असतो. वरच्या पदावर जाताना किंवा गेल्यावर तुम्ही

किती वेळ देऊ शकता हे महत्त्वाचे असते. कारण सध्याच्या काळात निखळ पत्रकारिता राहिली नसून तो एक व्यवसाय आहे.

एक गोष्ट अनुभवली स्त्री समान मेहनतीने, कष्टाने काम करते. बौद्धिकदृष्ट्या ती कुठेच कमी पडत नाही. असे असले तरी अंतिम निर्णय प्रक्रियेत मात्र तिला समाविष्ट केले जात नाही याची खंत वाटते. संपादक पदावर स्त्री दिसत नाही, यात समाजाची मानसिकता कारणीभूत आहे. तसेच काम करताना एखादी माहिती काढणे पुरुषास जितके सहज असते तेवढे स्त्रीस सोपे जात नाही.

परंतु जर स्त्री संपादक झाली तर तिचा सर्व स्टाफ हा माणूस म्हणून अधिक अनरिच होईल. कारण स्त्रीकडे उपजतच संवेदनशीलता अधिक असते. त्याचा फायदा ती आपल्या वृत्तपत्रास नक्कीच करून देईल.

भविष्यातील चित्र

मराठी समाजात संपादकास एक वैचारिक व सामाजिक नेत्याची प्रभा लाभते. त्या तोडीचा मान मिळतो. लोक त्यांची भाषणे ऐकायला गर्दी करतात. असंख्य कार्यक्रमांमध्ये मराठी संपादकांना बोलावून मानाचे स्थान दिले आहे.

कधी कधी समाजातील एखाद्या कर्तृत्ववान पुरुषास आवर्जून बोलावून संपादकपद देण्याचे धोरण मराठीत दिसते. काही माजी संपादक मुळचे पत्रकार नव्हते, त्यांचे व्यवसाय वेगळे होते. त्यांच्याप्रमाणे वेगळ्या व्यवसायातून पत्रकारितेत येऊन संपादकपदी विराजमान होण्याची संधी स्त्रियांना आजवर मिळालेली नाही व पुढेही मिळण्याची चिन्हे नाहीत.

वास्तविक तेवढ्या कुवतीच्या मराठी स्त्रिया कितीतरी आहे. डॉ. स्नेहलता देशमुख, डॉ. विजया वाड, नीला मांडके-सत्यनारायण इत्यादी स्त्रियांनी नियतकालिकांचे संपादकपद भूषविलेही आहे. परंतु वृत्तपत्रांचे संपादकत्व मात्र त्यांच्यापासूनच दूरच राहिले.

भविष्यकाळात एखाद्या वृत्तपत्राच्या संपादकपदी स्त्री असणे हा बदल नक्कीच सुखावह असेल. असे म्हटले जाते की एक स्त्री शिकली की संपूर्ण कुटुंब साक्षर होते. ती आपल्या कुटुंबास वळण लावते. तसेच वृत्तपत्राच्या संपादकपदी स्त्री विराजमान झाली तर समाजाला वेगळे वळण लागू शकेल. समाज मनाची घडण करू शकेल. असे नक्कीच वाटते.

लोकशाही, मत स्वातंत्र्य यांचे आविष्करण वृत्तपत्रातून जास्तीत जास्त होते असा आजवरचा अनुभव आहे. असे असताना राजकीय विचार व्यवहारांनी परिलुप्त असलेल्या माध्यमाने स्त्रियांना दूर ठेवावे किंवा त्यांना अव्हेरावे, यामुळे संबंध समाजाचे नुकसान होईल. त्यामुळे स्त्रियांनी पत्रकारितेसह त्यातील सर्वोच्च पद असलेले संपादकत्वही काबीज केले तर ती खऱ्या अर्थाने समानता ठरेल. कारण स्त्रियांकडे बुद्धी आहे फक्त संधी हवी आहे ती मराठी वृत्तपत्रांनी द्यायला हवी.

संदर्भ ग्रंथ

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शब्दसंख्या - १,९०६

Vidya Prasarak Mandal, Thane Group of Institutions

- Dr. Bedekar Vidya Mandir (Marathi Medium School)
- Sou. A. K. Joshi English Medium School
- B. N. Bandodkar College of Science
- K. G. Joshi College of Arts
- N. G. Bedekar College of Commerce
- VPM's TMC Law College
- Dr. V. N. Bedekar Institute of Management Studies
- VPM's Polytechnic
- VPM's Advanced Study Centre
- VPM's Polytechnic IT Centre
- VPM's Centre for Foreign Language Studies
- VPM's Department of Defence and Strategic Studies
- VPM's London Academy for Education and Research
- VPM's Academy of International Education and Research
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