



Women Towards Equality

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ABSTRACT

Women's rights and the social status of the women around the world are the important indicators to anticipate global well-being of any nation. Three decades ago, the world took a land mark to step towards securing equality for women. The Convention on the elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), a treaty that identifies the step countries to ensure equal opportunity for women. Yet, despite many successes in empowering women, numerous issues still rests behind, those discontent women in all the fields of life ranging from social, political, economic...like starting from the Gender discrimination to rights and status of women acquired in the society.. The present article lime lights on the some social issues faced by the women in contemporary Indian society and role of the protective legislations in addressing the issues.

KEYWORDS : Women rights, Discrimination, Convention on the elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Female foeticides, Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques (PNDT-2002), Atrocities

INTRODUCTION

Women's are the wealth of the nations like India and have contributed in almost every field and made country feel proud at every juncture. However, another reality of Indian society is that there is systematic discrimination and neglect of women's in India, which could be in terms of inadequate nutrition, denial or limited access to education, health and property rights, child labor and domestic violence etc. The fear of sexual violence has been a powerful factor in restricting women's behavior and sense of freedom. The struggle against violence is actually the struggle against the unequal distribution of power both physical and economic between the sexes.

There still exists a wide gap between the goals enunciated in the constitution, legislation, policies, plans, programs and related mechanisms on the one hand and the situational reality of the status of women in India, on the other hand.

Women may be have stardom in any stream but are getting harassment every day by their surroundings. They are victims of crime directed specifically at them, rape, kidnapping and abduction, dowry-related crimes, molestation, sexual harassment, eve-teasing, etc. Around 40 per cent of married women in India are victims of domestic violence. The increasing violence against women shown in television and films and their vulgar portrayal as objects of sex is also an important contributing factor in the escalating violence against women in India. The crimes against women in India are growing at a rampant speed. Women, irrespective of their class, caste and educational status, are not safe. The lack of serious effort to rectify the weaknesses in dealing with the crimes against women further compound the situation and result is that the conviction rate remains abysmally low.

Social issues are the problems that are created

- 1) By the society,
- 2) for the society and
- 3) within the society

According to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru- "You can tell the condition of the nation by looking at the status of its women."

NEED FOR THE STUDY

- To study the issues abysmally affecting the growth and survival of women
- Attempts to question and analyse the values and ethics of the subordinating social structure and socio-cultural marginalisation of women thereby.
- To suggest and to promote the social wellbeing of the women by creating awareness on the protective legislations.

CONDITION OF WOMEN IN INDIAN SOCIETY

Though our country is on high roads in empowering women, yet numerous issues still rests behind, those discontent women in all the fields of life. Not in everywhere but there are some areas where the

life of women is the battle for survival and dignity, right from birth to death. Some of the social challenges faced by the women are

- Female foeticides
- Trafficking and sale of girls
- Atrocities on women

FEMALE FOETICIDES

No place is safe for women, not even in their mother's wombs. They are put to death before they are born. Female foetuses are selectively aborted after prenatal sex-determination, thus avoiding the birth of girls. As a result of selective abortion, between 35 and 40 million girls and women are missing from the Indian population. In some parts of the country, the sex ratio of girls to boys has dropped to less than 800:1000. Female foeticide is an ever-growing menace in Indian societies, and there is ample evidence. Censuses and surveys bring seriously threatening statistics and figures. The decline in child sex ratio in India is evident by comparing the census figures. In 1991, it was 947 girls to 1000 boys. Ten years later it was fallen to 927 girls for 1000 boys. Despite of these horrific numbers, foetal sex determination and sex selective abortion by unethical medical professionals has grown today. Since 1991, 80% of districts in India have recorded a declining sex ratio with the state of Punjab being worst. States like Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana have recorded a more than 50 point decline in the child sex ratio in this period.

PROTECTIVE LEGISLATION

The Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994, was enacted and brought into operation from 1st January, 1996, in order to check female foeticide. Rules have also been framed under the Act. The Act prohibits determination and disclosure of the sex of foetus. It also prohibits any advertisements relating to pre-natal determination of sex and prescribes punishment for its contravention. The person who contravenes the provisions of this Act is punishable with imprisonment and fine.

Recently, PNDT Act and Rules have been amended keeping in view the emerging technologies for selection of sex before and after conception and problems faced in the working of implementation of the ACT and certain directions of Hon'ble Supreme Court after a PIL was filed in May, 2000 by CEHAT, an NGO on slow implementation of the Act. These amendments have come into operation with effect from 14th February, 2003

SILENT FEATURES

Offences under this act include conducting or helping in the conduct of prenatal diagnostic technique in the unregistered units, sex selection on a man or woman, conducting PND test for any purpose other than the one mentioned in the act, sale, distribution, supply, etc. of any ultra sound machine or any other equipment capable of detecting sex of the foetus.

1. The Act provides for the prohibition of sex selection, before or after conception.
2. It regulates the use of pre-natal diagnostic techniques, like ultrasound and amniocentesis by allowing them their use only to detect:
 1. genetic abnormalities
 2. metabolic disorders
 3. chromosomal abnormalities
 4. certain congenital malformations
 5. haemoglobinopathies
 6. Sex linked disorders.
3. No laboratory or Centre or clinic will conduct any test including ultrasonography for the purpose of determining the sex of the foetus.
4. No person, including the one who is conducting the procedure as per the law, will communicate the sex of the foetus to the pregnant woman or her relatives by words, signs or any other method.
5. Any person who puts an advertisement for pre-natal and pre-conception sex determination facilities in the form of a notice, circular, label, wrapper or any document, or advertises through interior or other media in electronic or print form or engages in any visible representation made by means of hoarding, wall painting, signal, light, sound, smoke or gas, can be imprisoned for up to three years and fined Rs. 10,000.

EARLY MARRIAGE AND TRAFFICKING AND SALE OF GIRLS

Early marriage of children, particularly the girl child, is not an uncommon practice in over 40 countries, mainly in Sub-Sahara Africa and South and South-East Asia, including India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. A significant number of these countries are signatories to various international conventions and have guaranteed various rights of children, including the prescription of the legal minimum marriage at 18. In fact, Cameroon has gone a step ahead and prescribed 21 years as minimum age for the marriage of girls. In spite of this, a staggering 62 per cent of women are already married by the age of 18. According to a recent UNICEF report (2005) the percentage of girls aged between 15 and 19 years who are married in different countries Child marriage also results in the trafficking of children for various purposes, including prostitution, labour and exploitation. Young girls are lured/forced into marriage for the purpose of selling them to other states. Rajib-Haldar, Secretary, Prayas, says: "Trafficking of „married girls“ is rampant in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and even Kerala." (*Infochange, Feb. 2007*). Also, a survey of victims of trafficking revealed that 71.8 per cent of the respondents were married when they were children (i.e., when they were less than 18 years of age). This suggests that child marriage is among the key factors that make women and children vulnerable to trafficking (Report, Trafficking, 2002-2003, Final Report of Action Research on Trafficking in Women and Children, Volume I).

Laws and policies dealing with Child Marriage

There are three main laws dealing with the issue of child marriages in India:

Central Laws related to Child Marriage in India

1. The Child Marriage (Restraint) Act, 1929
2. The Prevention of Child Marriage Act, 2004
3. Compulsory Registration of Marriages Act, 2006
4. Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006

State Initiatives against Child Marriage

1. The Himachal Pradesh Marriage Registration Act, 1996
2. Marriages (Registration and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1976-Karnataka
3. Rajasthan Compulsory Registration of Marriages Bill, 2002
4. Maharashtra Regulation of Marriage Bureaus and Registration of Marriages Act, 1998
5. Tripura Recording of Marriage Bill, 2003

Other Initiatives

BalVivahVirodhAbhiyan- National Commission for Women (NCW), April 2005

ATROCITIES ON WOMEN

Atrocities towards (and against) women are forms of oppression hindering the development of women and thereby resulting in gender injustice, this being ideologically supported by a value system, which is androcentric and gender insensitive. Deepening inequalities and struggles by the oppressed section to assert their rights (granted under democracy) have unleashed retaliations by the more privileged and, women situated as they are in the social matrix as non-free, dependent subjectivities, become specially affected ones. This problem was greatly existed in Dalit and tribal women. For tribal women who have suffered the multiple oppressions of caste, class and gender since birth, after facing the violence and its adverse effects on her and her family, it would really be a challenge and struggle for justice. Various factors acts as obstacle to their access to justice. They would be influenced, pressurized, blocked, intimidated, stigmatized, and revitalized for justice. Recently a 17year girl was assaulted by a man, convinced her by saying that was a doctor in the city like Kolkata where our leaders wants to turn it to London..

If we are not able to assure the protection for the women in the cities where do we able to give protection to the women who are illiterate and residing in the areas far from the police station.....???

CONCLUSION

Any meaningful and effective solution to the problem of atrocities and cruelty against the females by the male members has to consider various aspects including the causes for this immoral behaviour. With the media and advertisement profession heavily dependent on the human weakness of temptation, especially using pictures of exposed female body for their effectiveness, and the use of intoxicating drink becoming a fashion for the highly cultured, it appears difficult to implement any integrated and complete solution to the problem. Stringent laws can certainly work as a deterrent. But creating proper awareness also can bring about some improvement. Thus the causes and some answers have been presented here for awareness among the concerned. As for solution, some words of wisdom are the only solace.

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