

Analysis of Atrocities Against Women in India

***Dr. Pram Prakash Yadav**

Introduction

Position of women in India has remained a topic of concern since ancient times. They can be the perfect example of home makers. With their incomparable quality of calmness of their mind, they can easily handle even toughest situation. Indian women are completely devoted to their families. They're preached in the names of Goddess Saraswati, Goddess Durga, Parvati & Goddess Kali. Their condition remains unchanged even during the modern times with only little changes. In India, women were never given any right of liberty & equality. Their condition becomes even worse when they gave birth to girls. Men treated them in a humiliated manner. They were not only permitted not to step outside their house but also abstained from being educated. They were also supposed to eat after their husbands or even sometimes to eat their husband's leftovers. It's said during the ancient India, women enjoyed equivalent status & rights like their males counterparts. In addition they were properly educated in the early Vedic period. These references are available from the works of Grammarians such as Katyayana and Patanjali. Women also had the freedom to select their husbands. This system was known as 'Swambar.' In fact during this time, women had superior position than the males.

Status of Women in Indian Society

The worth of a civilization can be judged by the place given to women in the society. One of several factors that justify the greatness of India's ancient culture is the honorable place granted to women. The Muslim influence on India caused considerable deterioration in the status of women. They were deprived of their rights of equality with men. Raja Ram Mohan Roy started a movement against this inequality and subjugation. The contact of Indian culture with that of the British also brought improvement in the status of women. The third factor in the revival of women's position was the influence of Mahatma Gandhi who induced women.

To participate in the Freedom Movement. As a result of this retrieval of freedom, women in Indian have distinguished themselves as teachers, nurses, air-hostesses, booking clerks, receptionists, and doctors. They are also participating in politics and administration. But in spite of this amelioration in the status of women, the evils of illiteracy, dowry, ignorance, and economic slavery would have to be fully removed in order to give them their rightful place in Indian society. The worth of a civilization can be judged from the position that it gives to women. Of the several factors that justify the

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greatness of India's ancient culture, one of the greatest is the honoured place ascribed to women. Manu, the great law-giver, said long ago, 'where women are honoured there reside the gods'. According to ancient Hindu scriptures no religious rite can be performed with perfection by a man without the participation of his wife. Wife's participation is essential to any religious rite. Married men along with their wives are allowed to perform sacred rites on the occasion of various important festivals. Wives are thus befittingly called 'Ardhangani' (betterhalf). They are given not only important but equal position with men.

Women Status in Modern India

During this time there was a little development in the women status. There were many women reformers in India who worked for the uplift & betterment of their female counterparts. The begun of Bhopal discarded the 'purdah' & fought in the revolt of 1857. Their education was elevated and English was introduced during this period. Various female writers emerged in the society. In the modern time, women in India were given freedom & right such as freedom of expression & equality as well as the right to be educated. Various prestigious positions at this period were held by women. They're enjoying the 'ladies first' facility in different fields. However, some problems such as dowry, domestic violence, sex selective abortion, female infanticide are still prevalent. Preventive measures needs to be taken to ensure that women are empowered in India.

Social Empowerment

Women are educated about the social benefits including awareness about the existing social problems in the society, good recognition & image in the family & community, role in making important decision in their family, plan & promote better education for their children, taking care of health of the aged and the children just to mention a few. Women are also allowed to participate in political and public life. Therefore, they are given a chance to serve the community including fighting for the basics amenities & welfare needs of the village community such as:

- Safe drinking water
- Public sanitation
- Street light
- Chance to help the weaker people like disable and the aged

Empowering Indian Women By Education

Most women are given a chance of finishing their education to the degree level. They are discouraged from getting married and raising a family when they are young. There are number of women education grants that offer help to women from poor background in order to give them a chance to be educated. There're various scholarships that benefits women in India to achieve their career by going back to school or various training institutions where they can further their education. Also, many NGO's in India offer support to women in order to benefit them in education. The government of India is also setting aside funds that are used to empower women & other initiatives that will

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empower them. Women who have the desire to improve their lives are allowed to take these grants from the government and NGO's to empower themselves with the help of their spouses or without for single mothers to get education to the degree level, post graduates, PHD just to mention a few. These grants for women get most supports from different companies after realizing that women can perform better than men if they are well educated and equipped.

Empowering Women In Business

The government of India set aside some reasonable amount of money which women who have business ideas can borrow in order to start businesses. Women are encouraged to start small business in order to have their own source of income thus they become independent. Various non-governmental organizations also offer financial support to women in India and encourage and teach them how they can be making their own money by starting various business activities. The status of the women in India has greatly improved and there are many women who are holding high position in the government offices. This has proved that women can be even better than men if they are given an opportunity. Women are given equal opportunity like their male counterparts by the government.

Contemporary Major Issues Related Indian Women's Rights

Women in India face a lot of social inequalities ranging from gender specific abortions, mistreatment by their spouses, to eve teasing. Most women aren't aware of women rights in India and other times their legal rights are not protected as they should be. Women empowerment plays a significant role in letting **FEMALE FOETICIDE**

This is the act of aborting female foetuses. This problem is linked to the dowry system whereby women are expected to pay dowry to the men in spite of the fact that it was prohibited in the year 1961. Unlike in western cultures, Indians have a strong inclination for sons over daughters. Pregnancies are planned using differential contraception. Foetal foeticide has led to social discrimination against women and they are treated as second-rate citizens. 80% of the districts in India have recorded a high male sex ratio with the state of Punjab recording the highest ratio.³⁶ An estimated ten million female foetuses have been aborted illegitimately in India. The social impact of these abortions is an increase in human trafficking. Trafficking is rampant in areas where the numbers of women are low due to female foeticide. To curb this problem, the Indian government should take strict actions against those who practice it.³ them know their rights.

Eve Teasing

Eve teasing is a euphemism for sexual harassment of females by males in public areas. This aggression differs in severity from mild brushing and taunts to the more serious groping in public areas. Some human rights organizations have been at the forefront lobbying against the use of this term. They argue that the term makes a serious infringement on women rights to appear innocuous. The challenge that faces victims of eve teasing is how to prove that a total stranger has sexually harassed them. It is becoming increasingly difficult to prove such crimes because offenders have found clever ways of harassing women. There are many tourist guide books that warn foreign

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women to avoid attracting attention from perpetrators of these crimes by dressing conservatively. However, both tourists and Indian women are harassed regardless of what they are wearing. The number of women's organizations working for women rights in India has gone up. Victims of this crime can seek recourse in court. Perpetrators of these crimes are punished by imprisonment, fines or both.

The Burning Bride

This is a type of domestic violence whereby a bride is killed by her husband or husband's family because of dowry dissatisfaction issues. Kerosene is the fuel of choice for most perpetrators. This crime has been a problem since the year 1993. Perpetrators of this crime are punished accordingly by either giving them a death sentence or a life sentence. 2,500 deaths per year in India are attributed to bride burning.

Dowry

In India, the dowry prohibition act which was enacted in 1961 outlaws the giving or receiving of dowry. However, giving and receiving of dowry is still practiced to date. Women are faced with the pressure of giving dowry to the bridegroom's family. This is a violation of the women rights in India because it gives them financial burdens. The dowry is considered as a bribe to the man so that he can agree to keep the woman, especially if she is too old to be unmarried. Dowry can be anything from cash to gifts. The gifts include Jewellery > Furniture > Motor Vehicle > Home > Cash Dowry is not only given before the wedding but the husband's family expects to be given gifts and/or cash even after the wedding. This places a heavy financial strain on the bride's family. If the husband and his family are dissatisfied with the dowry, they can mistreat the wife. The dowry system in India is the root of many problems against women such as bride burning and female foeticide. If strict measures are put in place to combat the dowry system, a lot of problems that face women can be eliminated.

Rape

This is among the most common crimes against women in India. Marital rape was made illegal in 1983 but it is still rampant. Rape is a heinous crime against humanity and it seriously undermines women rights. Rape in India is a crime that occurs every 54 minutes and it violates a woman and her privacy. The rape cases in India are constantly making headlines because of the brutality with which they are executed. In December 2012, a 23 year-old girl was gang raped in a public bus. The rapists penetrated her with a metallic rod and this destroyed her intestines which had to be removed through surgery. There have been scores of other rape incidents in India. In most of these rape cases, the law fails the victim because of vague interpretations and this is absolute disrespect of women rights in India. Delays and humiliating cross examination of victims makes them afraid to come forward. As a result, many cases of rape go unreported. To curb rape cases, awareness campaigns need to be done. Men should also learn the importance of respecting women rights. Women need to be taught self defense mechanisms so that they can protect themselves.

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Human rights are those minimum rights which are compulsorily obtainable by every individual as he/she is a member of human family. The constitution of India also guarantees the equality of rights of men and women. However, in the sphere of women's human rights in India, there exists a wide gulf between theory and practice. Indian society is a male dominated society where men are always assumed to be superior to women. The women in India very often have to face discrimination, injustice and dishonour. Though women in India have been given more rights as compared to men, even then the condition of women in India is miserable. The paper will throw light on the human rights of women in India and that how all the fundamental rights given to the women are being violated in India, by focussing on the various crimes done against them. The constitution of India has granted equal rights to the men and women.⁴⁰

Women Human Rights In India

• Right to equality • Right to education • Right to live with dignity • Right to liberty • Right to politics • Right to property • Right to equal opportunity for employment • Right to free choice of profession • Right to livelihood • Right to work in equitable condition • Right to get equal wages for equal work • Right to protection from gender discrimination • Right to social protection in the eventuality of retirement, old age and sickness • Right to protection from inhuman treatment • Right to protection of health • Right to privacy in terms of personal life, family, residence, correspondence etc. And • Right to protection from society, state and family system

Violation of Right To Property

In most of the Indian families, women do not own property in their own names and do not get share of parental property. Due to weak enforcement of laws protecting them, women continue to have little access to land and property. In fact, some of the laws discriminate against women, when it comes to land and property rights. Though, women have been given rights to inheritance, but the sons' had an independent share in the ancestral property, while the daughter's shares were based on the share received by the father. Hence, father could anytime disinherit daughter by renouncing his share but the son will continue to have a share in his own right. The married daughters facing harassment have no rights in ancestral home.

Violation of Right To Protection Of Health

According to the World Bank report, malnutrition is the major cause of female infertility. The presence of excessive malnutrition among female children as compared to male children is basically due to differences in the intra – family allocation of food between the male and female children. Normally, the male members are fed before the female members of the family. According to Human Development Report, in rural Punjab, 21% of girls in low income families suffer from severe malnutrition as compared with 3 % of boys in the same family. Even the low income boys are far better than upper income girls.

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Women In Politics In India

Historical Context During the independence movement, women were visible and active as nationalists, and as symbols of “Mother India”. Gandhi, in particular, was instrumental in creating space for women through his non-violence (and some would argue feminized) mode of protest.³⁵ Gandhi’s legendary salt march initially excluded women, but due to demands from women nationalists he later realized the power of women organizers at the local level. His inclusion of women, however, was not located within a gender equality framework, but was a means to achieving a stronger and unified Indian state. The inclusion of women in the nationalist movement was also to debunk the British colonial assertion of “needing to save the poor, vulnerable women” of pre independence India.⁶⁷ As in many nationalist movements, women in India took part in the struggle, in turn propelling a women’s rights movement. And, as seen historically in many post-colonial countries, the nationalist women’s movement in India was confronted by the rebuilding of a patriarchal nationalist state. Women revolutionaries gave way to their male counterparts who (as a result of Partition politics) created a strong, male, and Hindu “New India”. The first post-independence Lok Sabha (the People’s Council or the Parliament) had 4.4% women. The period between the early 1940’s and late 1970’s saw an emergence of the Indian women’s movement, but it was not until the 1980s that the women’s movement gained real momentum. Reservation at the Panchayat Level In 1976 the Committee on the Status of Women in India was established and published a report recommending an increase in elected women at the grassroots level, which led to the introduction of the 33.3% reservation at the Panchayat level in 1988. It was only in 1993 that an amendment in the constitution made the proposed reservation at the Panchayat (village level governing councils) a reality. The salt march was a form of protest head by Gandhi through Rout India to initiate the boycotting English made salt and to symbolize the move towards nationalizing India’s commodities and hence Independence! from the colonial rule. Panchayats are local level councils, directly elected by the people. The council governs the village’s social, political and economic issues. ¹³ In the last two decades since the reservation for women in elected Panchayats was passed, many studies have been conducted to look at the impact of this policy. A survey conducted in 2008 yielded that women made up close to 50% of all the village councils across the India.

Conclusion:

Female labor force participation in India is lower than many other emerging market economies, and has been declining since the mid-2000s. Moreover, there is a large gap in the labor force participation rates of men and women in India. This gender gap should be narrowed to fully harness India’s demographic dividend.¹⁴³ In addition, a related literature also finds that greater economic participation of women leads to higher economic growth. ²⁰ A number of policy initiatives could be used to address this gender gap in Indian labor force participation.¹⁴⁴ These include increased labor market flexibility (which could lead to the creation of more formal sector jobs) allowing more women, many of whom are working in the informal sector, to be employed in the formal sector.¹⁴⁵ In addition, supply-side reforms to improve infrastructure and address other constraints to job

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creation could also enable more women to enter the labor force. Finally, higher social spending, including investment in education, can also lead to higher female labor force participation by boosting female stocks of human capital.

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