

INCLUSIVITY OF FEMINISM FOR RURAL WOMEN IN THE VILLAGE OF CHHALERA (UTTAR PRADESH)

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ABSTRACT

The research aims to bring transparency to the inclusion of women in all domains of society. It analyses the spectrum ranging from policies, state institutions, marriage, education, etc. It will use the primary method of interviewing around 50 women and circulating questionnaires. It will also use secondary sources like published papers and Government websites. This research highlights the gaps in gender equality in various domains of rural areas. It also brings forth women's lack of access to resources, which can ultimately hamper their growth.

Keywords: Rural Women, gender equality, feminism, Social Institutions and Policies

INTRODUCTION

There are various policies in favor of women like section 498A to prevent dowry deaths and, the 73rd amendment that reserves seats for women in panchayats they are still constrained by a patriarchal setup with unequal access to resources. This paper explores the ideas of ownership of private property by women, do they have safe access to schools, whether can they choose their life partners, and how are they victims of wage disparity and child marriage. (12) The population of rural women who are literate in rural areas is 65%. 68.84% of the Indian population lives in villages and there are a total of 6,80,467 villages in India. It is ironic that women are worshipped as deities in India yet are more vulnerable to oppression. They suffer both from economic and information poverty. They work for very long hours and also contribute to household work which remains unpaid and unacknowledged. Most of the agriculture is sustained by women who are basically the invisible lifeline. There is a need to deepen democracy at the grassroots level. The indigenous knowledge of rural women can be used for biodiversity conservation as well as food security. In order to make most of the government schemes successful there is a need to increase their participation in gram sabhas empowering them to interact with banks, post offices, and government officials and to be visible in the public sphere.

BACKGROUND

Through an active role of mobilization and awareness, a newspaper produced entirely by women in rural Uttar Pradesh has been awarded the Literary Prize by UNESCO. According to the “2007 Revision of World Urbanization Prospects” by the United Nations, India will continue to have the largest rural population in the world until 2050. As presented by National Sample Survey Organization women's employment dipped in the year 2010-12 however Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme was a savior in such a case. Women are seen stepping out of their private spaces and contributing to rural infrastructure making their presence felt. It will also highlight the discrepancies that are preventing them from living a dignified life on an equal footing with men. This includes questions like why are private property held by male members. The role of khap panchayats and is reservation in gram sabhas enough. This will be done through different case studies, government data as well as questionnaires. This research paper will talk about the traditional and modern methods like media, state policies, and awareness programs that can be used to create a more inclusive environment for women in rural areas. (12)

Literary review

Today local women occupy as much as 43% of the seats at the village and district levels. According to the Global Gender Gap Index Report, India's performance has improved from 0.665 in 2018 to 0.668 in 2020 (2). Most women look at village women panchayat members as role models. Even for registering Self Help groups and registering population women are considered better (4). Women usually lack resources, education, employment, and social assistance which the male society takes advantage of. Lack of education in adult women forced them to work at home as unpaid servants (11). Women's rights violation in rape, domestic violence, dowry-related deaths, Honor killings, and sexual harassment remains serious problems.” Almost 45% of Indian women are married before they turn 18 (6). It's equally important to acknowledge the special health needs of women which can be greater than men including their pregnancy and lactation period.

Poverty can directly impact the health of women, their status in the family, and society. For example in India, there is an excess of rural over urban mortality due to differential distribution of socio-economic characteristics in urban and rural areas (5). Since a girl child usually goes to her husband after marriage parents don't want to waste a lot of resources in her upbringing. A large amount of dowry is another problem. Even though the female employment rate is higher in rural areas they are engaged mostly in unskilled jobs.

Even though there is a 33% reservation for women they don't have the family support to contest

it. (9) States like Uttar Pradesh are low on gender and social indicators. Reservation mostly brings well-to-do kinswomen of influential families or there is a namesake election of women in panchayats. Poor participation of women in political institutions has been defined as the key reason why women still lag behind men in power, wealth, and resources and there is a need to bring positive discrimination. Reservation shall be in addition to meaningful participation, bringing women's issues to the table. There is an institutional masculinity in the political party structure. Men seek out women whom they will be able to manage and can succumb to their hegemony. Empowerment of women in the political space begins with empowerment at home (6). Even though women in India enjoy a large number of legal rights they are not usually enjoyed by them at the implementation level. The Fundamental rights incorporated in the Indian Constitution include equality under the law for men and women, however, there are still many loopholes in the policies which can be misused.

Feminists have argued that laws related to family, succession, divorce, inheritance, and guardianship preserve the family as it is a system of male dominance and control of female sexuality and reproduction(1). In a reserved seat system, it may prevent the increase in the number of women above the quota requirements, preventing a further nomination or selection of women once the requirement is fulfilled (9) .“

It should not happen that you are working and your husband is making decisions for you. If a woman is the head of the village then she should understand her rights and duties both. She should have equal rights at home too. We should take family decisions and further we should not follow our male folks at home. They can also be wrong (3). Women's empowerment can be measured in terms of resources, agency, and achievements which all encompass the ability to make decisions and utilize the resources towards the respective goals (3). In community self-help groups women are respected visible and sought after at block and district meetings (10). Women especially poor and Dalits are not getting their share in welfare programs (11). Within feminism, there are some biases coinciding with castes and communities. At times within Indian feminism Dalit feminist movements are projected as having only experience and no intelligence, hence further marginalizing of Dalit women within Indian feminist movements. Upper caste notions of gender relations can be prescribed to ignoring lower caste perceptions of women. Sub-caste reservation of OBC women is further debated as it is believed that only they can bring to light their true problems (1). According to a lot of feminists, the ideological division between them like Liberal, Radical, and Social has not been used to create dialogue but rather divisions and exclusion. Considering that women's groups were diverse in their ideologies they also struggled with the notions of power where some believed that only the elitists were given a platform to speak (3). It is important to engage with the systems of oppression instead of the objects of oppression. Globalization has brought hardships for lower-caste and working-class women like

the decline in agricultural profit and exploitation of young, underpaid, and lower-caste women (3). There is also a gap in the area of achievement motivation measurement in poor rural women entrepreneurs. Women entrepreneurs face considerable repercussions within their families due to the transformation of their role from homemaker to business person. (10)

Fieldwork & Analysis

The research has been conducted in “Chhalera” village in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Women here primarily engage in economic activities such as domestic help where they cook, clean, and wash dishes in the neighboring urban areas. Factors that impact the inclusivity of women include women’s access to education, media, paid employment, age of marriage, ability to make decisions, and mobility. In India Agriculture employs 80% of rural women. Empowering them can bring a paradigm shift in the economic growth of the country as well as food security and sustainable development goals (1) . They are able to send their children to the nearby Government schools and have access to Government hospitals which are crowded and time-consuming, but mostly resolve their health issues. In the evening they usually put up their harvests from nearby farms in a small mandi where the residents of urban localities pay for it. This research paper focuses on women, their lifestyles, and day-to-day problems. Around 1/3rd of the women have completed their education till class 10, whereas a few from the older generation never had the opportunity to go to school. Most of them were married post-18 years of age and contributed financially to their households. . Women enter marriage much earlier than men and child marriages are prevalent in different parts of the country (1). These women along with working as domestic help in most of the cases also do the household chores which takes them 2-4 hours. However, those who are housewives spend nearly 8-10 hours working at home. Most of these women weren’t comfortable going to a Government office by themselves and engaging in document- related tasks. They either struggle to understand the official work or are not equipped to comprehend the steps. The most startling part of the research was that not even a single woman knew a powerful lady from the local urban municipality or one they could approach in times of crisis. . The majority of women are denied prestigious posts in the country (1). They claim that the administration does take into account their complaints and there are a few women working there who are easily accessible. None of these women associate themselves with a women-led organization or an NGO that can act as external support. The study in various states show that women are used as proxies:-

- 1) They display a lower level of political awareness
- 2) They show their primary loyalty to the family
- 3) Their role as elected representatives is simply an extension of their role as a housewife

- 4) They serve the paternal interests of the family
- 5) They enter the constituency to save the constituency for their male relatives (11)

Women are less educated than men with only 50 percent of the female population being educated. There is also restricted access to mainstream political power, lack of control over arable land, poverty, and other forms of social deprivations, and caste, community, and class also impact women's social access to rights (1). Most of them are supported by their family to carry on with their professions as money is a scarce resource at home and there are hardly any savings. Much of the finances are spent on the day to day consumption and inflation is a big concern. In most of the cases, they claim to send their daughters to school the same as their sons. Even though there are a few exceptions to it. Most of the households need the contribution of both husband and wife to run it. In 34% of the cases, it's only the male member earning the money. The majority of the women are co-dependent on the male members of the family like their father, brother etc. In a few cases, the entire family is run solely by the woman. A lot of these women aren't comfortable making important decisions at home or sharing their problems assertively. These are women who have lost their partners or have rebellious children. In some situations, they also complain of their son not listening to them. There are various policies introduced by the Indian Government. For women The Indian Constitution in Article 14 guarantees the right to equal protection under the law, Article 15 forbids discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth Article 25 guarantees freedom of religion, and Article 29 guarantees to minorities the right to conserve their culture (1). There are several schemes in India for rural women like Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, Beti Padhao Beti Bachao, Prime Minister Employment Generation Program, and many more that have brought positive change in their lives. Even then a lot of women still suffer from socioeconomic issues one in five women has experienced some form of domestic violence according to national data. Dowry demands are prevalent in the country due to which sons are favored over daughters (2). Some solutions that can help overcome these problems would be the conservation of biodiversity and food security can be entrenched in the rural community if rural women's indigenous knowledge can be learned. The rise in the confidence level has helped them to go ahead in many fields. A newspaper produced entirely by women in rural India is among the four winners of this year's Literacy Prizes awarded by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Khabar Lahariya, the fortnightly newspaper distributed to more than 20,000 readers in Uttar Pradesh, is entirely created and marketed by newly literate "low caste" women who are training as journalists in Chitrakoot and the rural women can play an active role in this. This is possible only through an effective means of awareness and mobilization process. The level of awareness is very low among some wage seekers, particularly regarding unemployment allowance, wages to be paid if work is provided beyond five kilometers, social audit, and

grievance redressal mechanisms, etc. Appropriate media and agencies for awareness generation should be identified and utilized. Traditional and modern media should be utilized for awareness-building among the workers. The awareness-building methods should be carved so that it is well understood by the wage workers. Most of them are illiterate or have studied up to primary school only. So, the awareness messages should be in the form of short films, animation slides, posters, etc (8). Traditional media such as folk songs, puppet shows, etc. should be properly utilized to get the message across to the community. To make the scheme successful in empowering rural women, it is very necessary that they participate in large numbers in the Gram Sabha (open rural assembly) and voice their preferences and concerns regarding the implementation of government schemes, including, MGNREGS (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme). Rural Indian women are stepping out of their private space and making a contribution to building infrastructure in the village, other than empowering themselves. The Government of India has provided an opportunity for rural women to live with dignity and honor and equal footing with the rural man. Earlier, the contribution of the rural women was invisible to the people with patriarchal mindsets. MGNREGS is trying to empower the invisible lifeline of rural communities. To make their lives successful and meaningful, Indian rural women have also to put in 100 percent initiative (12). Some feminists have argued for a legal reform of law based on feminist understanding of law, contributing to the creation of new laws and amendment of old laws (1). Women are engaged in all levels of the agriculture value chain. Women-oriented reforms like skill development and equal access to resources can improve agriculture manifold, especially in developing countries like India. Gender-specific training and awareness camps have seen improved participation by women (2).

CONCLUSION

In semi-rural households, it is common to see women working in unskilled jobs while also managing household responsibilities. This is due to the high inflation rates and low overall income. While their position at home is elevated and their opinions are taken into account, they are stuck in a cycle of double roles, managing both outside and inside their homes while being highly underpaid. These women are a part of the informal sector and often lack basic amenities, as their priority is their children's upbringing and family.

Despite superficial independence, they deal with a lack of choices and often do not know any woman in a position of power who can help them. Older women, who are widowed and uneducated, are particularly vulnerable and often succumb to their family's demands. The community among these women is strong, and they support and unite with each other. While they lack consciousness of a better life, living in semi-rural areas has given them access to better government schools, hospitals, and markets to sell their goods. Work is easily accessible, although the hours can vary. The main barrier to their progress is backward traditions like dowry,

which leaves the female's family in a weaker position, providing for the groom and his family in cash and kind. Government policies and programs have loopholes that are taken advantage of by higher castes and male-dominated families. Politically also women have only symbolic power, with real power lying in their male partners. The way forward is to encourage indigenous knowledge, promote self-help groups, run awareness programs, and strengthen the ground-level implementation of policies.

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