



Societal Sensitization Regarding Women Rights in India

What More to be Done?

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Abstract— This paper presents a systematic and wide-ranging agenda with applicable tools, to study women's situation and measures to sensitize the society regarding their human rights. We have challenges to the rights-based approach as it is inherent in structure of international human rights law by way of, it addresses mainly relations between the individual and the State and its agents, rather than relations among individuals. A second challenge lies in the fact that realization of various equally valid rights inevitably creates situations of conflicts between them. Through the State's obligation to protect individuals against infringement of their rights by other individuals or non-State actors, the State is responsible for putting in place effective forms of prevention of violations and/or for holding non-State actors accountable for violations of other individuals' rights. But many violations of the rights of women occur in situations that remain outside the regulatory framework of the State. Examples include the family, or the existence of religious law, as well as traditional and customary law. Likewise, many economic activities performed predominantly by women are not regulated by the State. In this scenario the need to sensitize the society regarding women rights is an inevitable task. And in this contour this paper proposes some measures to sensitize women and other related agents, about their available rights, The need of the hour is the deep penetration, to the grass root level, with those various pertinent tools which can challenge the vulnerability of the women in that particular community or the society.

Keywords- Women, Socialization, Sensitization, Rights, Violation of rights, infringement of rights, Societal Sensitization, Women Rights.

I. INTRODUCTION

Gender is a social status. Equality and inequality is based on sex. Gender is a factor through which a human being is recognized whether it is a male, female or another gender. Women are often suppressed due to their gender identities and are in vulnerable positions often. Every individual has multiple identities, which intersect with each other and place individuals in position power and powerlessness at different points. There may not be a static condition in the spectrum of 'powerfulness' to 'powerlessness' at any given period of time. To work in the area of sensitizing the particular group we have to understand their social identities. Social identities are not homogenous and thus every identity has its unique role in determining status in

society. Social institutions like caste, class and sex refers to the social identity of female and male human beings. It defines the boundaries of what women and men can and should be and do. It shapes and determines the behavior, roles, expectations and entitlements of women and men in a particular society.

Socialization teaches women and men to conform to rigid norms of gender. Cultural codes and norms of behavior applied and reinforced with rewards and punishment. Training for adult roles imparted through play, rewards system and educational processes. (Bott, S., Guedes, A., Guezmes, A. and Claramunt, C., 2004). Gendered stereotypes reinforced by moral precepts Stereotypical expectations used as justification for limited life choices Notions of "Good" and "Bad" as yardsticks for social judgments The Gender Box is created by the patriarchal social system. Patriarchy privileges men and subordinates women. Patriarchal hierarchies are reflected in formal and informal social structures and institutions (family, clan, community, market, state). Patriarchal value systems sustain women's subordination by making it seem Natural, glorifying it through moral arguments and by creating institutions that replicate gender hierarchies. Gender difference is made the reason for assigning different rights and entitlements to men and women. It violates basic principles of equality and social justice. It puts women at risk of exploitation, oppression and deprivation. It prevents women from participating in and benefiting from development interventions. It prevents society from benefiting from the contributions of women.

While human rights are often understood as the rights that everyone has by virtue of their humanity, the assumption that all humans have the same experiences and needs is particularly problematic for women. The ways in which women experience human rights and human rights violations are unique. In India the present scenario denies the historical specificity of women of ancient time, as powerful or central. Yet, the Indian constitution provides safeguard for women's rights and movements for women empowerment gave birth to some legal provisions. (PoonamDhanda.2012). although with the perspective of globalization and cultural interactions some legal provisions need to be amended or implemented more carefully. We can have a look on the available safeguards of the human rights of the women.



II. AVAILABLE SAFEGAURD OF HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN IN INDIA

God exist there, where is regarded is the base of Indian society. Not only government, or Parliament but many reformatory organizations have worked actively to improve the position of women. BrahmoSamaj, AryaSamaj, PrathanaSamaj are institutions that took the initiative to improve the position of India when it was under British regime. After independence many laws has been enacted to improve the position of women. These laws are as follows:

1. Hindu Married Women's right to Separate Residence and Maintenance Act 1949.
2. Hindu Marriage Act, 1955.
3. The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956.
4. The Hindu Succession Act, 1956.
5. Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961.
6. The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976.
7. The Child Marriage Restraint (Amendments Act, 1978).
8. The Dowry prohibition (Amendment Act, 1984)
9. PWDVA (2005) etc.

(Dr. S.C. Tripathi and Vibha Arora, 2010).

A. Constitutional Provision for the Betterment of Women

While framing the constitution, special attention was given towards women emancipation. The provisions in the chapters of directive principles of State Policy and Fundamental Rights with regard to women welfare are the following:

i. Provisions in the chapter for Fundamental Rights:

1. Article 14 to 18 of the constitution provides Right to equality for every citizen. According to Article 14 every citizen has the right to equality and right to Protection. This means that no one can discriminate with the women.
2. Article 15 provides that there should be no discrimination of religion, caste, creed, color or sex. But this article has two exemptions. It gives the state the right to protect the interests of women and children. This means that state can discriminate the other classes for the welfare of women and children.
3. Article 16 provides for the opportunities, for the women of public services as equal to men.
4. According to article 19 women are also free to express their, to speech.

ii. Provisions in the chapters on Directive Principles of State policy:

1. State formed such policies, which provides equal rights of living and for both men and women (Article 39).
2. Equal wages for both men and women (article 39).

3. To provide health conditions so that both women and men cannot be exploited and can work in a better environment. They should not be compelled to work which is unfavorable as according to their age and stamina.

4. State, efforts for the favorable and judicious circumstances for work and should help women's by establishing Maternity hospital etc.

Article 243 D of constitution provides for the reservation of 1/3 of seats for women in Panchayats.

Article 243 T of constitution provides for the reservation of 33% of seats for women in Municipalities

B. National Commission for Women

In 1990, the parliament enacted a law to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. Under this law National Commission for Women was established and this commission came into existence on 31 January, 1992. It is concerned with all those issues that are related with women's rights and upliftment of their status. The commission emphasizes Parliament for the enactment of laws related to the betterment of women. The commission inquires into the complaints lodged by women in matters of cruelty, exploitation and torture. This commission works for the social, economic and political rights of the women.

C. Educational and Employment Programmes for Women

The National Policy of Education was a landmark in the field of policy on woman education. The Mahila Saniakhya Programme was launched in 1989 to improve women literacy rate in those 163 district where women literacy percentage is low. Government is trying to provide free education to girls. Many of the kendriya Vidyalays provide free education to girls upto senior secondary level.

To strengthen the economic status of women, the government has launched various employment programmes such as Swarnajayanti, Gram Savarozgar Yozana, IRDP, Development of women and children in Rural area (DWCRA). Rashtriya Mahela Kosh was set up in March 30, 1993 to provide credit to poor women. (Madhurima. 2010).

III. EFFORTS TAKEN AT GLOBAL LEVEL FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

United Nations Organization has taken various steps at global level to empower women. It has created various organizations those work for women's upliftment and development. These are as follows:

1. United Nations development for Women (UNIFEM) provides financial and technical help to women in developing countries.
2. International Research and Training Institute for Advancement of Women (INSRAW) works for the improvement of the condition of women.



3. Convention on the Elimination on all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). It works to end the discrimination against women.

4. The Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). It monitors the implementation of the conventions on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

5. Commission on the Status of Women – This 45 member commission was also appointed by ECOSOC in 1946. It is responsible for the promotion of human rights of women in different countries, particularly such matters as the empowerment of women, status of girl child, training cum employment of women and their welfare programmes. In the year 2010, the UN has decided to merge all bodies related to women in to single entity known as “UN Women”.

Despite the continued efforts to ensure compliance with human rights obligations and the positive efforts, the situation of women and girls remains critical with a persistent lack of accountability for continuous violations and impunity. Cases of rape, harassment at workplace and dowry deaths are rampant. Illiteracy and ignorance about their rights are still prevalent among a majority of the women. Globalization and the liberalization of markets are transforming women’s lives. Yet women’s perspectives and voices rarely inform the decision making processes that shape the global economy. (Jalbert. E. Susanne.,2000).

We have challenges to the rights-based approach as it is inherent in structure of international human rights law by way of, it addresses mainly relations between the individual and the State and its agents, rather than relations among individuals. A second challenge lies in the fact that realization of various equally valid rights inevitably creates situations of conflicts between them. Through the State's obligation to protect individuals against infringement of their rights by other individuals or non-State actors, the State is responsible for putting in place effective forms of prevention of violations and/or for holding non-State actors accountable for violations of other individuals' rights. But many violations of the rights of women occur in situations that remain outside the regulatory framework of the State. Examples include the family, or the existence of religious law, as well as traditional and customary law. Likewise, many economic activities performed predominantly by women are not regulated by the State. Rights-based approaches are premised on strategies for political consciousness and empowerment and ensure that people claim their citizen rights and not fall prey to being beneficiaries (International Rescue Committee and Family Health International, 2000).

Rights –based approaches enable women to assert their rights and become key drivers of their own development process. It enables a critical review of the dominant social and political system and enables women to challenge inherent hierarchal and patriarchal values. The goal is to enable women to access their meaningful power, capacities and enhance capabilities that are needed to change their own lives, improve their own communities and influence their own destinies.

Deepen conceptual understanding on Gender and Patriarchy and its interaction with systems of social domination In this scenario the need to sensitize the society regarding women rights is an inevitable task. Some major steps will be needed to sensitize the community and the target groups i.e. women.

Exploring how a gendered analysis can be integrated into the work and strengthen women’s access to rights with dignity. The research methodology used was predominantly qualitative, using focus group discussions, participatory rural appraisal and interactive workshops. As one of the specific tool is “Participatory Rural Appraisal”(PRA), a shortcut method of the data collection. It is a method of action research and utilizes a range of techniques. It involves local people and outsiders from different sectors and disciplines. Outsiders facilitate local people in analyzing information, practicing critical self-awareness taking responsibility and sharing their knowledge of life and plan to act in suitable way. Building the capacity of the women group is the cornerstone of any facility’s ability to address violence against women and girls in an ethical and effective way. (Shashi, Krishan. July 1, 2008)Methods for collecting information on provider’s knowledge, attitudes, and practices include surveys and gathering qualitative data through group discussions or other participatory methods with providers. Qualitative data can provide an in-depth understanding of provider’s perspectives (United Nations Children’s Fund, 2010). Quantitative data makes it easier to measure change over time.

For this purpose there should be a facilitator and the support staff who can go to the fields, the actual grass root level. In general, facilitator should consider the following key activities to build staff capacity: Facilitator from facility administrators to service providers to support staff should first be sensitized about issues related to violence against women and gender discrimination. Evidence suggests that facilitators are as likely as any other members of society to hold views that may be detrimental to the welfare of survivors, such as blaming the victim.

Facilitators also need to have a basic understanding of the nature and scope of violence against women and girls, the dynamics of abuse, risk factors and consequences (Bryce, P./PAHO, 2001).They should forget their personal perceptions, attitudes and beliefs related to violence against women and girls and must be sensitize themselves regarding these sensitive issues. They should be havingknowledge of gender issues and human rights and must be incorporate with good understanding of the legal framework, national policies and protocols. Their technical skills related to addressing violence against women and girls ought to be appropriate.

Holding intensive training workshops for staff, with the help of outside experts or institutions; may enhance the capacity of facilitator and the support staff(United Nations Department of public Information, DPI/1772/HR– February1996).Sending selected staff to course or workshops in other organization or universities and hiring new staff with specific expertise in the area of violence against women and girls; and arranging for ongoing training and support from



individuals or organizations with specific expertise in areas such as psychology or law can be the key players. Distributing written educational information to providers on a regular basis and incorporating the issue of violence against women and girls into other training workshops for health staff will definitely pave the way for the desired outcomes.

The Other specific works can be done through PRA approach as follows:

- Counseling
- Psycho-social Support for Survivors
- A gendered analysis of violence against women
- Crisis intervention techniques
- Support group methods
- Trauma, coping and survival
- Current understandings of well-being and social inclusion
- Communication skills and intervention techniques
- The availability of state and community resources
- Non-discrimination and diversity

As another major tool, Self Help Groups (SHG) may augment the sensitization of women. They focus not only on savings but also provide a space for women to access and learn about her rights. So the term can be backed with the other term and that is SMG (Self Motivated Groups). However a deeper analysis is needed to see how the loans taken by women are used for the purpose of enhancing their position, dignity and that benefits accrue to her Vocational training skills promote economic security among the community women but most of them seem to be in the traditional domain and efforts are needed to challenge such gender stereotyping and explore non-traditional skills. Need to work with men in the community so they could play positive role in ending and preventing violence against women and girls.

The emphasis of the Self Motivating Groups should be on ensuring that not only should the material condition of women improves but also her position in the family and the community; involving greater decision making powers, right to a life free of violence and control over her bodily integrity and life, etc. There is need to carefully examine what the SMG is focusing on: improving her condition of health, education and other basic requirements.

The other tool is “Case conferences” that are an opportunity for a service provider to present to colleagues in a structured format any specific challenges that the service provider may have experienced working with a particular survivor. The goal of a case conference is to seek the professional insights and opinions of colleagues, especially those colleagues with extensive experience or special expertise. The famed and named institutions should come forward in this direction to set an example in this regard. Especially the educational institutions can arrange conferences and seminars to sensitize

the minded fellows so they can further create the awareness to their peer groups and students.

Street plays can play very effective role in sensitizing the common mass. It is an act played by the trained actors to send particular message to the community. It includes minimum eight to ten people to perform the act in the language of that particular community, where the message has to be sent. The message is conveyed in attractive form as singing, acting and dance can be involved. Street plays can be organized by the educational institutes

The critical and analytic perspectives of the present scenario signifies that when governments commit to the realization of human rights principles, through legal reform as well as practical implementation, discriminatory practices can be curtailed. However, several challenges still exist in terms of the realization of women’s human rights and sensitization. The implementation of legislation poses difficulties in the face of resource constraints and lack of gender-analysis in distribution and prioritization. Securing women’s human rights begins with ensuring the sensitization of the community and the above mentioned tools can make this target more achieving. This appropriate accountability mechanisms or tools will ensure empowerment of women and improve their access to justice as more awareness of the mass definitely sensitizes people regarding women situation in society

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