

# GENDER MAINSTREAMING : PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

## मुख्यधारा में जेंडर : समस्याएं एवं संभावनाएं



**Editors**

Prof. R.B.S Verma

Dr. Veena Dwivedi

Ms. Sita Gurjar

## 18. Women Empowerment in Present Times

*Dinesh Chahal*

*Desh Raj Sirswal*

India is one of the developing nations of the modern world. It has become an independent country, a republic, more than a half century ago. During this period the country has been engaged in efforts to attain development and growth in various areas such as building infrastructure, production of food grains, science and technology and spread of education. The life expectancy has increased and many diseases have been controlled. However, there are many areas in which Indian society is experiencing a variety of problems. Some of these problems have their roots in our colonial past while others are related to demographic changes, socio-political conditions and cultural processes. In the process of this development the women empowerment is a very important concern these days.

Till at last in the second half of the 20th century women awoke and realised that men had been coolly fooling them and they were taking it all lying down and happily. In the mid- 20th century women started stepping out of the four walls of their homes and started going to schools, colleges, clubs and then offices gradually. It looks like the tiger cubs after their growing they kill all other animals surrounding them. They were not to be satiated only by studying now, in the third quarter of the 20th century; their desire to enter into nation building grew vigorously. Now they started entering into all educational institutions, offices, hotels, hospitals, etc. This entry of women in the main stream of nation building is undoubtedly very encouraging but, at the same times this achievement is not without, a fatal sacrifice of the home.

Women and men are equally important for the growth and development of individual and social lives. The women play the important role as mother and the same makes it unique. However, careful analysis of Indian society indicates that the situation is not good for women folk. The sex ratio of male and female in the India population has been changing and becoming unfavourable towards women. In the Indian society women are considered major contributors to family and society. We have gods and goddesses both and one of the incarnation of lord Shiva is Ardhanareeshwar, which is made of half male and half female in its constitution. Unfortunately this equality and prominence tells an incomplete fact. The women are also subjected to discrimination in learning, dowry deaths and exploitations of various kinds which are very common. In fact the women are becoming targets of atrocities of many types. The same is manifested in discrimination against them from very early period. The incident of infanticide, early marriage, emphasis on domestic activities and lessor emphasis on education and career has made women's lives full of problems. They are discriminated

against from early childhood. The Indian dependence on others (e.g. parents, husbands) becomes fate of the majority of the women folk. The pattern of discrimination against women varies across rural, urban and tribal areas. They are assigned diverse responsibilities and treated as relatively weaker and less competent. 1

As Simone de Beauvoir has shown that a girl is as strong as her brothers till the age of eleven or twelve but then she is taught that she is weak and different. She in a way internalizes these things and starts behaving in a weaker and secondary manner. Mill also says that since we have not seen any other system in which men are living without women or vice-versa, so we cannot say what their real nature is. We have seen them in this relationship only. So we cannot conclude that women have a secondary status. This inferior and unequal status of women is the main reason behind sexual violence against them.

Sexual violence encompasses a wide range of acts, including coerced sex in marriage and dating relationships, rape by family members and by strangers, systematic rape during armed conflicts, sexual harassment (including demands for sexual favours in return for jobs and school/college grades), sexual abuse of children, forced prostitution and sexual trafficking etc. 2

This image is still prevailing in various sections of the society. It is reflected in the discriminatory practices in the family such as distribution of work, food and social activities. The girl child is usually burdened with responsibilities that are beyond her capacity. Such exploitations function as obstacles in the process of development and growth of the girl child. When a girl child matures and becomes an adult she is often found to be physically weak and mentally constrained. They are neither able to realize their potentials nor able to contribute to the mainstream of society. Their contributions are often limited to family and that too are ignored. 3

## **Women Empowerment**

Our Constitution gives equal rights to both men and women in every field. Today, women enjoy voting rights, right to inheritance and property. In fact, the Constitution lay down that the government should promote with special care the interests of the weaker sections of the people. Several laws have been passed since independence to promote the interests of women. These laws relate to marriage, inheritance of property, divorce, dowry, etc. In 1976, the Equal Remuneration Act was passed to provide for equal remuneration to men and women for similar work.

Recently, the government has started a scheme for the protection of girl child. The scheme is called 'Ladli', in which an amount is set aside at the time of the birth of a girl child which she gets when she completes eighteen years of age. This amount is then used for the education or the marriage of the child. Similarly, there is another scheme called 'Jaccha Baccha scheme'. Under this scheme, the state governments take care of the birth of the child and all expenditure related to medical assistance for the upbringing of the child.

Today, at the dawn of 21st century the women across the world are placed at advanced position. They are paying need to their inner voice. We have many programmes to develop the women's status in India. These are as follows:

**Swalambam (Self Employment):** It provided training to women to develop a job deserving personality in them in traditional and nontraditional trades. Many woman benefited under the programme in 2002, 2004-05.

**Gender Development Index (2001-02):** It is based on Gender inequality which was incorporated in the Annual Economic Survey.

**Support training for Employment Programme (STEP) (2003, 2004-05):** It provides training, extension, infrastructure, market linkages, etc. Also, the updated skills and new knowledge will be provided.

**The National Perspective Plan for Woman (NPP), 1988:** It provides a democratic and co-operative social structure for woman and for rural development it provides services related to health, legislation, political participation, education, employment, communication and voluntary action.

**Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) 1999:** As depicted from the name it provides the APL (Above Poverty Line) families, income through a mix of bank credit and Government Subsidy.

**The National Plan of Action for the Girl Child (1991-2000):** Under this plan, the evils in the society of female feticide and female infanticide were legally stopped by banning sex determination test.

**Health Initiative (1992):** Maternal and Child Health Programmes (MCH) have become a part of various 5 year plans. (Eight 1992-1997 and Ninth Five Year Plan 1997-2002). Under this, the Child Survival and Safe Motherhood Programme (CSSM), initiated in August, 1992 to improve the fields of morality, prevention, and treatment of Anaemia, treatment of maternal complications, etc.

**The Socio-economic Programme (SEP):-** This was for employment and training of poor and needy woman. The one of twelve targets of the tenth five year plan (2002-07) was reduction in poverty ratio. But this programme was failed due to dropping it in the eleventh plan. The eleventh plan has set 6 categories such as income and poverty, education, health, women and children, infrastructure and environment and sustainability. Due to which, the independent SEP declined.

**Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK), 1993:** It concentrates on the women and their economic empowernemnt. RMK is supported by voluntary organizations, women's Development Corporations, Women's Co-Operative Societies, and Block Samitis under the Swayam Sidha Programme.

**Awarness Generation and Gender Sensitization, 1991:** The programme changes the social attitudes towards women and girl child. The media and presses have contributed a lot in this programme by presenting the positive image of woman towards citizen.

There are some other programmes also which promote women's status in India such as Swayamsidha; Swa-Shakti; Mahila Samridhi Yojana MSY), 1993; The Rural women's Development and Empowerment Project, (RWDEP) 16th October, 1998; The Mahila Saakhy a Scheme, 1989; Women's Vocational Training Programme, 1974; Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY) (reserves 30% of employment opportunities for woman); The Indra Awas Yojana(IAY); National Maternity Benefit Scheme (2001-02); and National Old Age Pension Scheme.4

Some Indian women have been able to overcome the barriers in their path and became successful in many walks of life. In this connection one can mention the names of Pandita Rama Bai, Sarojini Naidu, Indira Gandhi who emerged as leaders at national level. The provision for education, legal provisions about the age of marriage and reservation for women in various walks of life has contributed to change in their situation. Today the presence of women in various occupations and public offices is much more prominent than

what it used to be during earlier periods. However, the Indian society has still to go a long way as for as gender equality is concerned.

The Modern era has shown India the advent of liberalism and as the literacy of its population increases the closed and suppressed practices derived from conservatism will fade away. The Nation is witnessing a glorious era of feminist prosperity giving in to the future of equality and liberal accessions. The future holds bright for women in India as we see politicians like Sonia Gandhi ruling the House; making India proud in Sports i.e., Saina Nehwal (Badminton), Mary Kom (Boxing), Deepika Kumari (Archery), within large corporations viz., Indra Nooyi CEO of Pepsi Co., Chanda Kochar CEO of ICICI Bank, award winning authors and film makers like Jhumpa Lahiri(two times Man-Booker Prize Winner), Naina Lal Kidwai, Zoya Akhtar Khan (director of 'Luck By Chance'), Barkha Dutt (NDTV Correspondent). The true meaning of Indian Democracy will be seen only when the Nation forgets the conservative attitude that its age old culture has brought along from the dreary past, and ascend the steps to complete development through up gradation of the women through liberal approach, humane behaviour and tug onto the wings of global liberalism that is engulfing the world at large.5

In the 21st century women should not pay heed to the oppressions and injustices met out to her. It's time to put all that behind her and look ahead towards her empowered role. They need to listen to their intuition and are expected to take the right action at the right time. Their intentions and actions will determine their empowerment sooner than later.

Such is the power of 21st century. We can't win without a fight. Every great social movement raises the question of women. Women's emancipation movement took inspiration from freedom from slavery. Women's liberalisation movement took its inspiration from movement against colonialism. It was a fight to change the world against exploitation. We should congratulate the womenfolk around the world for

making the world a better place. We must congratulate every woman we see whether it is on the shores of Accra or on the Arabian desert of the streets of Times Square. They have reshaped the world and promoted balance. In this new era the major stress should be on equal pay for equal work and elimination of discrimination in cases of employment. One of the major policy objectives, adopted by every government, should be universal education of woman, the lack of which tends to perpetuate the unequal status quo. The popular UNESCO slogan should come in handy6:

“Educate a man and you educate an individual; educate a woman and you educate a family.”

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## सम्पादक परिचय



**प्रो. आर.वी.एस.वर्मा**, समाजकार्य के क्षेत्र में 43 वर्षों से अधिक समय से शिक्षण एवं शोध कार्य से जुड़े हुए हैं तथा आप कई कमेटीयों के अध्यक्ष एवं प्रशासनिक पदों पर अपनी सेवाएं दे चुके हैं। राष्ट्रीय स्तर के पुरस्कार से भी आपको अनेकों बार नवाजा जा चुका है। राष्ट्रीय एवं अंतरराष्ट्रीय सेमिनार एवं संगोष्ठियों में इन्होंने मुख्यवक्ता, विषय विशेषज्ञ के रूप में अनेकों उद्बोधन दिए हैं। समाज कार्य के क्षेत्र में 16 अंग्रेजी तथा 07 हिन्दी भाषा की पुस्तकें आप द्वारा लिखी जा चुकी हैं तथा 60 से अधिक आपके लेख एवं पुस्तक मूल्यांकन राष्ट्रीय एवं अंतरराष्ट्रीय पत्र-पत्रिकाओं में प्रकाशित हो चुके हैं। राष्ट्रीय स्तर के सेमिनार में 54 तथा अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर के सेमिनार में 15 से अधिक पत्रवाचन किया है। एक डी.लिट तथा 54 पी.एच.डी. के शोध कार्य आपके मार्गदर्शन में संपन्न हो चुके हैं। दो अंतरराष्ट्रीय तथा नौ राष्ट्रीय सेमिनार आप द्वारा आयोजित कराए गए तथा 28 अनुसंधान परियोजना आप द्वारा संपन्न की जा चुकी हैं। वर्तमान में श्री वर्मा प्राचार्य, उदयपुर स्कूल ऑफ सोशल वर्क, जनार्दनराय नागर राजस्थान विद्यापीठ ( डीम्ड ) विश्वविद्यालय के पद पर कार्यरत हैं।

### **डॉ. वीणा द्विवेदी**

पिछले ग्यारह वर्षों से जैन विश्व भारती, लाडनू तथा उदयपुर स्कूल ऑफ सोशल वर्क विभाग में अध्यापन कार्य के अलावा एन.एस.एस. कार्यक्रम अधिकारी तथा समन्वयक शोध के रूप में जुड़ी हैं। पिछले 25 सालों से महिला सशक्तिकरण तथा विकास के मुद्दों पर अनेक स्वयंसेवी संस्थाओं तथा सरकार के साथ मिलकर मास्टर ट्रेनर के रूप में अनेक प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रमों का आयोजन भी किया है। स्थानीय स्तर पर आपको 3 बार पुरस्कार से नवाजा जा चुका है। आप महिला वकालत के मुद्दों को लेकर दो बार मनीला, फिलीपींस तथा ढाका की यात्रा भी कर चुकी हैं। राष्ट्रीय तथा अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर 40 से अधिक शोध पत्रों का वाचन कर चुकी हैं। आपने 04 पुस्तकों में मुख्य संपादक तथा सह-संपादक के रूप में 05 पुस्तकों में महिलाओं तथा अन्य सामाजिक मुद्दों पर अपने लेख लिखे हैं। दो जर्नल्स में आप को-एडिटर तथा सदस्य भी हैं।



**सीता गुर्जर**, सहायक आचार्य, उदयपुर स्कूल ऑफ सोशल वर्क, जनार्दनराय नागर राजस्थान विद्यापीठ ( मान्य ) विश्वविद्यालय, उदयपुर ने महिलाओं की स्थिति में सुधार लाने तथा उनके सशक्तिरण से संबंधित राष्ट्रीय एवं अंतरराष्ट्रीय पत्र एवं पत्रिकाओं में लेख लिखे हैं। इसके साथ-साथ इन्होंने महिलाओं के मुद्दों से संबंधित संगोष्ठियों में पत्रवाचन भी किए हैं। यह स्वयंसेवी संस्थाओं तथा क्षेत्रीय कार्य से भी संबंध रखती हैं। इस प्रकार से सीता गुर्जर ने अपने आप को एक कुशल शिक्षक, अनुसंधानकर्ता तथा क्षेत्रीय कार्यकर्ता के रूप में स्थापित किया है।



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