
Research Papers



HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN : ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The women have fundamental right to privacy, to health, to primary education, to free legal aid etc. The right to development is one of them. As per the U.N. Declaration, the right to development is an undeniable human right. The right to development indicate that every person and all people are entitled to participate in and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights an fundamental freedoms can be fully realized. Women cannot get human rights without social justice. In order to attain such rights certain programmes and policies are required. Women should be enabled to participate in economic, social and political decision making. The government should integrate the gender perspective in the social and economic policy designing. The present paper is an attempt to highlight on human rights of women in respect of development.

INTRODUCTION

The Indian constitution confers special rights upon women. Taking into account the subordinate position of women in the society, the constitution makers made some efforts for upliftment of women. The state is also empowered to make special provisions for the betterment of women in the society. The women have fundamental right to privacy, to health, to primary education, to free legal aid etc. The right to development is one of them. As per the U.N. Declaration, the right to development is an undeniable human right. The right to development indicate that every person and all people are entitled to participate in and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights an fundamental freedoms can be fully realized. The Declaration further explains that “the human person is the central subject of development and should be the active participant and beneficiary of the right to

development”. The exercise of right to full sovereignty over all their natural wealth and resources are considered in the right to development. The present paper intends to discuss the human rights of women in respect of poverty eradication and development.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Social justice is an integral part of human rights of women. It is an essential concomitant of sustainable development of a country. The human rights are considered to be meaningless if they are separated from social justice. According to Aristotle justice consists in treating equals equally and unequals unequally but in proportion to their relevant differences. It is comprises of impartiality. Human rights and social justice are necessary to society. These are binding by custom and convention but are justified by their inseparable quality to human dignity. To understand the humanness of a woman is imperative in helping her to attain development

besides assisting her to protect and promote her human rights. Various aspects of woman's life ranging from her childhood, to schooling, marriage and employment, roles and cultural practices offer secondary status to women in society. It is a perilous path through which women passes, such as, prebirth tests, abortion of female foetus, negligence towards girl child, early marriages, teenage motherhood etc. Moreover, women are exposed to domestic violence. Though various laws have been enacted including the Family Court Act, 1984, yet women are to be at receiving end.

Human rights to women envisages the liberalization of woman from the traditional bonds an discrimination. It also consists of improvement in her concept of self. It is related to a provision of social justice in respect of resources, organizations and structural opportunities of women. A change in the perception is desired in the concept of human right. But women are often denied social justice and human rights. The women constitute for about 47 per cent of total population, but they undertake two-third of activities and earn one-third of remuneration. Women in rural areas play crucial role in farming activities. They participate in most agricultural operations. But still they are not allowed to have a real control of land. They are not provided with any opportunity of being land manager. The rural development schemes have enhanced the actual income of some of the rural households. But the rural women are still unaffected of this change. Their standard of living or social status of women has not been enhanced.

WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT

The concept of development is multi-faceted. The development is a process of efforts to attain specific standard of life for women and vulnerable sections of society. It also envisages the individual and collective responsibility to meet the basic needs of the underprivileged. Such process also incorporates social and economic interventions for the promotion of progress of society. The provision for the prohibition of environmental degradation is also included in the process of development. An emphasis should be given on sustainable development. The sustainable development aims at accelerating the pace of economic development. It also intends to conserve and enhance the stock of environmental, human and physical capital without making compromise with the economic growth of future generations. The sustainable development refers

to "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Without having human equality and freedom sustainable development is impossible.

The development of women is imperative for the development of a society. Such development emphasizes various aspects like, political, social, cultural and environment. In a country like India, there are some obstacles in ensuring the participation of women in economic activities. Women are culturally and economically divided into small groups. Problem of finance is one of the major problems before them. One more threatening problem is of motivation and mobilization of women. Economic freedom must be ensured for the development of women. The holistic perspective of a community is depend upon development policies and programmes for women. The equality and social justice based programmes should be implemented. Aspirations of poor women should be recognized. An atmosphere of protection and special treatment facilitates the development of women. Therefore, social development of women should be undertaken as corrective measures. Social justice provide strong base for such developmental perspective. Moreover, women should be empowered so as to avail them the fruits of their labor.

POVERTY ERADICATION AND WOMEN

A human rights approach to poverty is about empowerment of the poor. One of the clearest and most persistent themes in the World Bank series Voices of the Poor is powerlessness. It examines the "ten interlocking dimensions of powerlessness and ill-being emerge from poor people's experiences." It concludes "The challenge for development professionals, and for policy and practice, is to find ways to weaken the web of powerlessness and to enhance the capabilities of poor women and men so that they can take more control of their lives." Empowerment occurs through introducing the concept of rights. When human rights are introduced in policy making, the rationale of poverty reduction no longer derives only from the fact that the poor have needs but is based on the rights of poor people, entitlements that give rise to obligations on the part of others that are enshrined in law.

It is very common observation that women are discriminated against in all strata of society. Such discrimination is always seen in employment opportunities. The participation rate of women in

labor force is very low. Some social and economic factors are responsible for this fact. Besides this the segmentation of labor market is not conducive for the women. The technological progress has unfavorable implications in respect of women. Women workers have no strong union. Moreover, the policy towards women's employability and productivity through training is lacking. Women lose their income in the period of unemployment. It is significant reason of women's poverty. The consequences of unemployment are not limited to reduction of income, but it leads to ill health and death of a woman. Due to unemployment and poverty it becomes very difficult for women to combat against discriminations. It also hinders in the way of achieving the goals of life. The discrimination based on sex affects badly on income of women and their families. Such discrimination creates poverty. It negates women's human right and chains their potentialities. The consequences become very suspicious when various mechanism perpetuate the purpose of denying human rights of women. Generally it is found that inequality results in poverty and poverty accentuates inequality especially that of women.

GOVERNMENT MEASURES

The government has taken various steps to strengthen the economic condition of women. The government passed Equal Remuneration Act. The government ensured equal remuneration to men and women for the same work. The discrimination against women regarding recruitment is prohibited. The government has also set up advisory committees for facilitating opportunities to women for employment. The National Commission on Women's Rights has also been involved in the preparation of legislation dealing with child sexual abuse and more recently with legislation on sexual harassment. In August 1994 the state government of Maharashtra announced a policy to reserve 30 per cent of government jobs and 25 per cent of police station commands for women, as well as abolishing court fees in cases of violence against women. The government of India has passed the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in 2005. According to this act government has kept reserved 30 per cent jobs for women in rural areas. Besides this various earlier schemes like Integrated Rural Development Programme, Jawahar Rojgar Yojana, Twenty Point Programme, National Rural Employment Programme, TRYSEM etc. are already in execution. The government has started a scheme to

promote self help groups of women in 1999, which is known as Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarajgar Yojana. Such scheme was also started for the poor people residing in urban areas.

In January 1992, the National Commission for Women was established to investigate cases of abuse and report to the government on measures to improve the situation of women in India. Public criticism of the establishing legislation before it was enacted indicated that critics believed the commission would be too cumbersome and would not be independent of the government. The states of Maharashtra, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka and Kerala followed suit and established State Women's Commissions which engendered similar criticism. According to Ratna Kapur, the National Commission for Women mandated a sub-group to draft legislation dealing with child abuse. The legislation has been prepared and includes changes to the way rape is defined and dealt with as well as addressing the issue of child sexual abuse.

According to Ratna Kapur, the creation of the National Human Rights Commission and National Commission for Women are positive steps for the human rights situation in India. She believes that, in conjunction with India's recent ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the commissions should provide an effective forum for women. She cautions, however, that these will not be arenas where remedies are obtained but rather where policy and issues concerning women can be brought forward and discussed.

CONCLUSIONS

It is stated that if a woman is economically productive it would completely reduce her dependence and enhance her social status. It is assumed that the increased income is quite enough for social justice and her empowerment. But here it must be taken into account that the biggest obstacle to women's access to human rights is gender inequality and absence of freedom. This dichotomy put constraints on women's activities and functions. Women cannot get human rights without social justice. In order to attain such rights certain programmes and policies are required. Women should be enabled to participate in economic, social and political decision making. The government should integrate the gender perspective in the social and economic policy designing. In order to offer social justice to women an equitable access to quality education, adequate

nutrition and health services should be promoted. Women should be given top priority in poverty eradication programmes. In nutshell, an atmosphere should be created which helps her to overcome the feeling of powerlessness. She should come out from the comforts of dependency and should be able to face the challenges of autonomy by enjoying basic human rights.

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