

Women in Rural India: Prospects and Challenges

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Abstract

The women in Indian villages achieve multiple roles that include looking after the several needs of the family members, contributing in home assured income producing activities (e.g., animal husbandry, agricultural activities) and holding jobs outside the home. Women position in patriarchal India is reduced to good daughters, good wives and mothers. Wifehood and motherhood are commonly accepted as key roles for women in an Indian society and by those suggestions they should not follow any different profession. Especially this once required by higher education or specialized trainings, which make them, lose focus on main household duties.

Patriarchal system in an Indian society also means that the family unit is based on the joint household structure, where only one male is a head of house. Usually this role does belong to a father. He does make choice in terms of marriage alliance, both daughters and sons, decision about buying and selling properties, and maintaining family property day-to-day life. In terms of domestic arrangement, the elder woman in a family is in charge.

Introduction:

India is a country of villages as the majority of its population lives in villages and extensive remote areas. The motivating feature is that every section of the country though linked with the cities now; however, still possesses its own unusual traditional attitude. Also most of the rural communities are still lacking of modern facilities like



education, electricity, proper drinking water, health care, sufficient transportation, etc. But the lack of education in many of the rural straps of India is proving terminal and acting as the

background powdered for social problems, evils and flagging the way to anti-social/national activities.

Women execute multilateral role in the society i.e., as a mother, wife, daughter and service provider to the society. In spite of the fact that the women's contribution to the country's development is equal to that of man, still they experience a number of limits that detain them from understanding their potential for growth. It was against this background that the government's all over the world felt the need to prioritize the interests of women and their participation at every stage of the development process. UN stated that 'Gender Equality and Women Empowerment' as one of the Millennium Development Goals to be attained by the year 2015. The term Women's empowerment indicates the skill of the women take all the important decisions independently related to her throughout her life span that will confirm her success in all aspects of life. A woman is a person who accepts challenging role to meet her personal needs and become economically independent. In fact often women in India are deprived of their fundamental right to dignity also leave alone the question of gender equality. The present paper explores the questions central to women's development in India that is fundamentally patriarchal in nature. The article attempts to grapple with the few challenges faced by the women in India like the Sanitation issues, educational beliefs, community customs, etc. The objective of the paper is to evolve strategies to empower women who are as human beings as men are.

Challenges faced by Women in Rural India

Against this background, a research has been shown to know the various problems faced by a woman in rural India i.e., mainly the villages. The main objectives of the study are to know the various social, psychological, economic and health problems of the women. The major victims of the issues that are present in the rural India are the women. Rural Indian Women are facing a lot of problems.

1. No access to education

According to ASER report 2014, only 1 out of 100 girls from Rural India make it to colleges. This number is both shocking and depressing considering the fact that women form almost half of our population. They are in the real sense the backbone of our society but in rural



India, their role is considered to be that of caretakers and child rears and education would make not benefit to them in their roles according to the typical mentality of people living in the villages.

The country literacy rate for women is 39 percent versus 64 percent for man. For example, in Uttar Pradesh is even lower, around 25 percent for women. This low rate of girls in an education lies down to parent's view that the educated girl brings no returns to her future roles, mainly as a homemaker and perhaps agriculture labour. The point is that girls increasingly are replacing brothers on farm duties while carrying domestic responsibilities at the same time. This is significant reason for not sending daughters to schools. A large proportion of nonworking girls is kept at home only because they household responsibility. Also, next point for not sending girls to school is to protect their virginity. Especially when schools are communal for both: girls and boys. In addition, long distance to education institutions with travel expenses makes impossible to change paten of basic education for girls.

2. Gender Discrimination

Gender Discrimination is rampant is many villages of India especially in the states of Rajasthan, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. Gender discrimination implies giving a superior position to men due to the prevailing mindset of Patriarchal society in India. Due to Gender Discrimination, women are kept confined to their households and not allowed to participate in any activities like elections, discussions, participating in major festivals, etc.



3. Child Marriage

Though Child Marriage is a completely illegal practice in India according to law, the reality is far from good. According to the National Statistical Organization, around 47% of women in India are married before the age of 18. This problem is graver in villages due to the prevalent illiteracy and lack of awareness among the women. This also has continued as a never-ending tradition in India.



4. Lack of proper sanitation



Women in rural India today face a problem of getting even the basic sanitation facilities. They are the victims of open defecation and also the diseases which are caused by it. Women are sometimes even prohibited from using the public toilets which are constructed by the government.

5. Domestic violence

Women in rural India are sometimes so ill-treated that they become victims of domestic violence every day in their homes. Alcoholism of the spouses sometimes even worsens the situation. She is treated like a slave and her upbringing stops her from questioning her spouse or in-laws.



6. Dowry

Women are given inferior status because they are considered to be a burden for the parents. This is mainly due to the dowry practice that is rampant in the rural parts of India. There is not a denial of the fact that dowry as the practice even exists in Urban and semi-urban regions but the



women in urban areas are educated and alert enough to tackle the issue which is not the case for rural Indian women

Conclusion

Rural women are key agents for development. They play a catalytic role towards success of transformational economic, environmental and social changes required for sustainable development. But limited access to credit, health care and education are among the many challenges they face. These are further aggravated by the global food and economic crises and climate change. Empowering them is essential, not only for the well-being of



individuals, families and rural communities, but also for overall economic productivity, given women's large presence in the agricultural workforce worldwide.

Any developmental process is the expansion of assets and capabilities of rural women to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold the institution accountable that affect their lives. Skill development among rural women is the need of the hour so as to make them confident, self-reliant and to develop in them the ability to be a part of decision making at home and outside. Indeed, it may not be wrong to say that still rural women are the most disadvantaged and neglected section of the society for they are economically backward. Therefore, there is a need on the part of the government and civil society to enable improvement in the quality of life of such vulnerable sections of the Indian population.

More importantly the developmental process in India should give priority to welfare schemes and programmes meant for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes" including women. These are the people who are economically backward; therefore, there is a need for sincere efforts on the part of the government to help improve the quality their life. The Social Assessment for the training and skill development clearly reflected that rural landless (mostly SCs and STs) form an integral part of poverty-ridden and marginalized groups. By empowering rural woman through education can thus enable them to live with dignity and self-reliance cutting across the barriers of customary biases and prejudices, social barrier of caste, class, gender, occupation and institutional barriers that prevent them from taking actions to improve their state both at the individual and collective level. Therefore, free education and necessary and employable skill development programmes must be launched for rural students and women so as to make them self-reliant and economically independent. Furthermore, right to vote is meaningless unless rural women are made aware, educated and imparted skills to understand the order of the day and this can bring change in their lives, in the family and lastly transform the holistic tribal landscape of India, through education, legal awareness, and socio-economic independence. Thus, there is no doubt that the rural women can acquire any developmental milestones (skills) only through education and thus can change their own destiny.