

PSOCIAL LEGISLATIONS AND CHANGING STATUS OF WOMEN

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Abstract: The process of modernization was corresponded by "the end of the debate of ideologies", which engendered a drastic transformation in the traditional social institutions like family and marriage. As the debate over extreme ideological predilections, petered out, strict adherence to conservative traditions also ended. The direct offshoot of this development has been the bridging of gender gap. The liberation of sociopolitical and cultural setup led to the strengthening of women's movement, bringing to the fore, crucial questions of women empowerment.

We are witnessing the simultaneous growth of two forces one of Globalization, the other localization, one driven by global corporations and the other driven by local communities and grass roots movements. One moving power upwards, the other moving it downwards. Coupled with this democratisation has emerged as a driving force of human development. The decade beginning in sixties (60's) heralded the twin process of democratization and globalization which ushered in liberation of the closed and opaque socio-economic, political and cultural structure, this process also resulted in the transformation of fractious, feudal, socio-cultural set-up into liberal and transparent structures.

Keywords: Status, Women, Modern India

Introduction

Women can be considered as a vital link between the family the society and the state since women are involved in looking after men, in various stages of their life as a mother, as a wife, and as a daughter their role in the overall development of the nation is crucial "Globalisation has rendered totally fluid the relationship between the community, the state and corporation" (Vandana Shiva, 1995) In this regard the contribution of women in strengthening the links between the state, the market and the civil society is significant. As women have

emerged as top business executives, bureaucrats, academicians, social workers and political leaders they are in a position to accept the challenger of a dynamic world "women's role in the various walks of life has contributed to the evolution of values which have counted for what may be described as all round progress, her status is the measuring rod in assessing the standard of culture of any age (Sengapta, 1969). However many scholars underscored the importance of women's role in the overall development of a country, but women have never attained any equal status with men in any period of history or any kind of society, they have always received a secondary status.

The Human Development Report of UNDP (1995-29) rightly pointed out that, in no society today do women enjoy the same opportunities as men; women still constitute 70 per cent of world's poor and two thirds of the world illiterates, they occupy only 14 per cent of managerial and administrative jobs, 10 percent of parliamentary seats and 6 per cent of cabinet positions. In many legal system; they are still unequal, they often work longer hours and unappreciated and threaten of violence stalks their lives from cradle to grave.

Objectives

1. It aims at understanding changing status of women in modern India.
2. It tries to explore the role of social legislations in women empowerment.

Methodology

The present article is being prepared on the basis of reliable secondary data. The researcher used various books, journals, documentaries and other available written materials.

However, as a paradox "Even in the light of heightened international awareness of gender issues, it is a disturbing reality that no country has yet managed to eliminate gender gap (Report of world Economic Forum, 2005) despite, frenetic pace of techno-economic growth and rapid time space compression and narrowing of cultural spaces, unshared by globalization gender issues still remain at the forefront of human development until women who constitute nearly half of human population attain equal status with their male counter parts, a developed world will be a fantasy. A nation's progress primarily hinges upon the development of its social capital. In the process of a nation's development the contributions of women is pivotal. In view of this (Das 1997; 378) stated that real development cannot take root, if it by passes women, who not only

represents nearly half of the country's total population, but also represent the cardinal around which societal reorientation takes place.

Hence, socio-economic development of the country primarily relies upon emancipation of women. The future of humanity can be glorified only if women are allowed to attain a status, which is parallel to men. A women is important element of the family who keeps the culture alive by transferring it from generation to generation through her children, women are fully aware of the fact that they can bring grace and dignity to the place where they live. They can build a new nation, their role and effectiveness in a family. Society and nations has been fully realised and accepted now" (Anuradhamathu, 2001).

Hence it is pertinent to note that "women are vital human infrastructure and their empowerment-economic, educational, social and political - "would encourage the pace of social development investing in women" capabilities empowering them to achieve their 'choices' and 'opportunities' is the surest way to contribute to economic growth and over all development (Pattanaik 2000)

India which attained independence in 1947 after long struggle for freedom has to device new strategies for initiating the process of socio-economic reform western model of development was not sustainable to achieve the objectives of a new nation. Hence Indian constitution was designed in such a manner so, as to adjust to the complicated socio cultural and political set up of the country. Since the Indian society was characterized by patriarchy and hegemony of dominant caste, the goal of the constitution was not only to specify the relationship between rulers and the ruled, but it had to adjust the over reaching demands of nascent nations, gender disparities constituted one such critical problem. "After Independence, the Government of India has taken numerous measures and made endeavors to enhance the status of women and establish gender equality. The constitutional obligation as well as different plans, programmes and policies have laid emphasis on women empowerment in order to bring them to the main stream of development (Pattanaik, 2000)

The Indian constitution has made certain special provisions which guarantees certain rights and previllages for women Part- III of Indian constitution begning with Article 14 ensures equality as a natural rights this guarantees equality of all before law. Article 15 prohibits a differentiation to any citizen on the grounds on religion caste role, place of birth and sex.

Article 15(B) makes special provision enabling the state to make affirmative discrimination in favour of women, similarly article 16 states that the government will not discriminate on the grounds of sex in the matters of employment.

In the directive principles of state policy article 39(a) mentions that the state shall direct its policy towards securing for both men and women equally. * The right to means of livelihood article 39(c) ensures equal pay for equal work Art. 73rd and 74th amendment of the constitution made provision of 33 per cent reservation for women in Urban and Local self- government. Indian government has promulgated several laws from time to time in order to preserve and protect the dignity and integrate women and to prevent any exploitation to her. e.g.

Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 based on equality of men and women. Provisions are made to get divorced. The Hindu Succession Act, 1956, Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, Medical termination and Pregnancy Act, 1971, Equal Remuneration Act, 1976, Child Marriage Restrain Act, 1976, Immoral Trafficking (prevention) Act, 1986, Pre- natal diagnostic technique (regulation and prevention of measures), 1994, Domestic Violence Act, 2006, etc.

The National Commission for Women Act 1990 was passed to set-up the National Commission for Women (NCW)

"In spite of all these constitutional measures and legislations women still remain socially, economically, politically marginalised they have been looked upon as passive recipients of the benefits of development but not as active participants in the process of development, for diverse socio-economic and politico - cultural reasons, women have been a missing dimension in development planning and political governance. They continue to live in an unequal world" (Azim, 2002)

In order to plug this lacuna the Government of India has attempted to initiate concrete measures and sixth five-year plan I was landmark set up in this direction. It contained separate Chapter on Women's Development. The plan document reviewed the socio-economic and political status of women and came to the conclusion that inspite of the entire constitutional and legal measures status of women did not witness, a phenomenal transformation. It also gave the three-pronged approach for the development of women that included education, employment and health. In seventh plan (1985-90) the developmental programmes for women continued with the major objective of raising their economic and social status to bring them into the main stream of national development. A significant step in this direction was to promote the beneficiary' -

oriented programme for women in different development sectors, which extended direct benefits to women (Das. 1997: 379).

Conclusion

Thus an evaluation of various measures undertaken by the government points towards the sincerity of the motive that the government has exhibited with regards to empowerment of women, however historical evidence and the contemporary developments does not indicate to the practical realisation of these motives of the government. The policies and the programmes launched by the government have remained only on paper. So it is very critical to understand the reasons for non- implementation of these programmes. It is also pertinent to understand the existing gaps between policy makers and the target groups. In order to comprehend the prevailing bottlenecks that have jeopardised the process of women empowerment.

One of the most important ways in which answers can be found to these key questions is by understanding the major determinants of women empowerment. In addition to this as B urbanization emerged as one of the key events in human history it will be significant to understand the linkage between the process of women empowerment and urbanization as urbanization leads to the emergence of liberal society and a change in the value system it will definitely have a decisive impact on the status and role of women in the society.

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