

Original Research Article

Women Empowerment for Sustainable Social Development

Abstract:

Gender is not a social function that exists in a vacuum. Caste, class, ethnicity, and race influence gender and form a complex matrix. The women have more or less equal contribution to their family, same as their husband. But, they do not have the right to decide regarding the kids, family, and even their own lives. There is strong intersectionality prevalent in rural West Bengal. Where patriarchy permeated all layers of social life. Women do not have any possible agency or institution to care for their thoughts and opinions. Gender inequality makes a nation poor that creates marginal class people. Positive discrimination is also termed reverse discrimination to end all kinds of discrepancies and injustices against women. It requires reorientation in the existing setup of the so-called society. Therefore, a specific type of policy framework, policy execution, special grant and reservation in every financial sector is needed to guarantee the social exclusion of these marginalized rural women. A laser-like focus is required to empower the less powerful segments of our developing nation. To achieve our research objectives, we used qualitative approaches. As a result, all people would come out and think positively about women's ability to reduce the threat of gender gap.

Keywords: Empowerment; Social exclusion; Society and discrimination; Patriarchy and equality; Intersectionality; Sustainability society

Introduction:

Every woman plays a significant role in their household. They have enough contributions for earning, rearing, and caring. But, this important thing is not well accepted in rural, less educated, and unaware under-civilized society. They have substantial family responsibilities that include household work, rearing kids, caring for old persons, animal husbandry, supporting males in family farming, and informal sector job as a daily wage. Most of them are also engaged in self-help groups (SHGs). They earn a good amount of money from this work. In our study area, all the women make equally like their husbands. Despite all these contributions, women are still time-deprived from the household to the community. In this society, women cannot fulfill their basic demands. They do not have any independence in decision-making for themselves or their girl child's education and marriage. Because unequal access to essential commodities deprives them of fundamental rights or minimum opportunities for well-being. Therefore, only the end of poverty in developing nations can be acquired with sex-selective discrimination. So, this intra-household discrimination creates a silent disaster for the rural, disadvantaged society. Where people are not aware of their future, most of them are still unaware of the scope of specialized education and the skill-based job market.

Women prepare meals for all members of their households worldwide, yet they intake a low quality of meals. We have observed that women-headed households consume fewer nutritious meals because they earn less to cope with a crisis. Gender inequality intersects with minimum provisions related to essential services like health care, insufficient education, and limited income opportunities to extend deprivations. They comprised on an average 55 percent of the agricultural labor force in our study area. Yet their potential food security remains constrained. Social sustainability has a wide dimension to build sustainable, livable places that promote welfare by better-recognizing people's immediate demands about their lives and work. It supports well-being by understanding what people need from their lives and work.

Meanwhile, it combines all the parameters and necessary units to help the social and cultural sphere supply adequate social amenities and women's active participation systems (Salovaara 2015). Employment enhances productive capacity attains supply of goods and services to eliminate poverty from the grassroots layer. The empowerment of the poor section is limited to fulfilling the target of SDGs to achieve economic growth despite framing gender mainstreaming policies all over the world all UN institutions. Many campaigns address the massive burden of unpaid or least paid work that causes concern related to SDG 5.4, urging shifting every social norm. The Fundamental Right of every citizen is the 'right to equality before the law.' Women's political rights, their 30% reservation in India's three-tier decentralized governing system from gram panchayat, and free compulsory education for all, described in Article 21-A. A significant role has to play by local administrators' like-Community development Blocks (CDB) and Civil Society Organizations.

Hence, this discriminated society still faces the problem of poverty that brings high risks; some partiality leaves women less resilient to cope with risks. Poor women in our study area have no savings in their bank account. However, all have a bank account for MGNREGA 100 days of work. But, they spent all their savings on a family. Despite doing all these great jobs, they have no respect for family and society. There are many special programs undertaken by the administration for the promotion of education and to increase the literacy rate among rural marginal people. But, there is no significant upliftment in women's awareness of higher education among the tribal community people in our study area. A considerable portion of them did not complete their school education. However, there are many scholarships from the state government to promote women education of poor marginal class people of rural areas. In our study area, women are still demotivated due to rude patriarchy. Many of our respondents asked us what would happen to a graduate as there is no government job. So, finish class ten education and train boys in family farming, motor mechanics, or migrate to other states to become unorganized sector laborers. And they are getting married to the girls after eighteen years of age. Because marriage below the eighteen-year-old is a punishable offense in West Bengal now. And, there is a scope to receive Rs 25000 from Rupashree Prakalpa by the Government of West Bengal if a girl married after her eighteen years of age.

Women have become prominent that rights will be vital in achieving the SDG. They started to move against the normal flow of marginal society to kill the disease called poverty with the help of several policies and programs. It helps to arrange loans and practical skills-based work programs to support poor women financially. It helps them raise voices against injustices by strengthening women's agency to motivate them. It is pretty urgent to ensure access to essential services, control over land and other inherited properties, new technology services, and financial services supplied by government authorities. The focus of launching

SDG 5 is to empower the second sex worldwide to ensure gender equality. The purpose of SDGs is well structured to give a new shape to the lives of all human beings in the 21st century by addressing significant challenges like ending poverty, discrimination, and gender-based violence.

Empowerment Works as a pre-condition

Gender inequality is a concerning issue in developing nations. Because any society cannot be produced economically, politically, or socially by ignoring half of its working population. There is a considerable dissimilarity in access to paid employment and wages almost all over the Indian Territory. Positive discrimination (PD) has termed reverse discrimination. It is the reservation and quota system in India for the underprivileged section. This extra advantage refers to some adaptive policies to upraise the value of women in their existing societies irrespective of caste and class. Therefore, this drastic step supports their representation at the bottom to the top level of democracy. And it leads to the uninterrupted flow of gender-related development on a macro scale. It increases racial tension among the more privileged people with the minorities. Hence the term positive discrimination has positive and negative impacts on society. Empowerment is the only procedure for augmenting the space of both individuals and groups or communities for assuring their choices. And convert different choices into desired forms to draw suitable conclusions. The entrusted people have various options and the ability to act. We selected Garbeta-II Community Development Block of West Bengal as our study area

Women are still held back in terms of education, impaired workloads, inherited property rights, and limited participation in decision-making. That directly affects their capacity to improve their lives and contribute to their country's economic growth and sustainable development (FAO 2009, 2011). This study positively shows a direction for social exclusion from the existing social discrepancies. The existed social networks of patriarchy sought to deconstruct the norms actively. Therefore, education at all levels of rural society can finally lead to empowerment. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) focus on ending all kinds of discrepancies against the second sex to remove the subordination system. Women's empowerment in a nation is determined mainly by economic, social, and political identity. However, SDG 5 has severe limitations in its ability to ensure food security. The emphasis in Target 5. a is mainly on inheritance and implicitly access. But even this access is diluted. Thus eliding precisely what often needs, namely making national laws equal for all the citizens. Social norms and gender biases within families and communities create severe barriers to implementing women's legal rights (Agarwal 2018, 3, 7). The Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-07) prioritized all kinds of empowerment like- 1) social empowerment, 2) economic empowerment, and 3) providing gender justice. And to create women agencies for enabling favorable environment by removing all forms of odds disparities against them (Beniwal 2013).

Discrimination and Its Different Name

Positive discrimination is also termed as 'reverse discrimination. It is also named affirmative action in the US. The same calls as the reservation system in Bangladesh and quota in India. Positive discrimination in the UK and employment equity in Canada. The extra advantage refers to different factors, including race, religion, sex, or nationality. All these come under

consideration for the betterment of underrepresented groups in recruitment in various sectors of their social status. They have been historically excluded. The opponents of the quota system believe that positive discrimination neglects the equality of people. It may increase racial tensions among the more privileged to the minority groups. Opponents further claim that these actions have undesirable effects and often fail to attain their goals (Anju, 2011).

The contribution of Swami Vivekananda to women's empowerment is remarkable among all-times philosophers, social reformers, and revolutionaries. His observations and analyses towards women's empowerment are incredible. He gave great remedies to kill the disease of inequality and underdevelopment from Indian society. This philanthropist has a tremendous influence on Indian culture. Swamiji argued that;

“Atma- the soul has no sex, no caste, and no imperfection.”

(Vivekananda 1894, volume 4, Pg no.176).

It is indispensable to develop both equally and welfare to achieve maximum output. One of his famous statements regarding world development is;

“There is no chance of the world's welfare unless the condition of women improved.”

Care represents a critical condition for carrying out the existed social order. There could be no economy, no culture without care. Care must be considered an independent right for persons belonging to vulnerable groups of human society (Elson 2019).

“No society that systematically undermines social reproduction can endure for long. The result is a major crisis.” Nancy Fraser

Women are under-represented as employers in Rural India

The share of employers in total employment in 2018 was relatively low, at around 3 percent, both globally and in the middle- and high-income countries. In low-income countries, the employers' share was just 1.6 percent, partly explained by the prevalence of subsistence activities undertaken outside organized economic units. Globally and across all country income groups, the gender among employers is significant: the share of women with this employment status is just half that of men.

Care Work should be a sector of Investment in all Countries

The care giving work is called Purple Economy in developed countries. And it is well accepted there. This approach is a norm in a rural society where women's lifestyle, daily duties, their great job has been accepted as societal norms. So, women learn to sacrifice their desires for their whole life. But, this system is entirely different in the so-called developed countries. Their perception is very different for women. Therefore, they value caring as a source of GDP. They well accepted the ethical criteria to a well-established nation in all its

ways. It is time to recognize women as an integral part of society. Both men and women possess the potential to contribute significantly to a nation's development. Therefore, it's crucial for all informed individuals, irrespective of gender, to recognize this reality and prioritize the holistic advancement of the country. By harnessing women as a vital asset in constructing a self-sustaining global community, no one will be excluded or disadvantaged. Consequently, this approach would transcend the conventional gender-based distinctions regarding who provides for the family.

Gender budgeting Makes Economic Policies work for equality

Gender budgeting reveals political agenda priorities. This budget is the most important tool for transforming societies within the context of economic policy. It discusses the factors that influence revenue generation as well as key areas of expenditure. It also includes a gender-specific examination of resource distribution, as well as a restructuring of revenue streams to promote equality. It is critical to step up efforts to address the complex obstacles that women face in the workplace, the home, and the resource-generating spheres. This approach has made it easier to reconfigure regional planning and implement decision-making processes. This integration assures that it may be used throughout the budget cycle, from assessment through evaluation. Nonetheless, the feminist viewpoint on the care economy is based on an ideology of total development, although at a slow and steady pace. This method, on the other hand, has the potential to increase women's engagement in the productive labour sector.

Human dignity against women and the costs of Gender Stereotypes

The ever existed gender inequality percolated in all layers of developing nations like India that reinforces male violence against women. So, the struggle should be against patriarchy for equal rights same proportion share in every aspect similar to men members within a family level to national level. There is no such cost measurement techniques or efforts in developing nations but, in Europe it is assumed that about 226 billion euro in a calendar year where matriarchy is intrinsically connected to women's dignity, their recognition. Women often sacrifice their requirements, even their daily needs. They have a habit of adjusting to avoid any kind of bargaining with males to get relief from regular physical and mental harassment. The rural society always threatened that they would go if their husbands left them. They cannot return to their parental home because of the economic consequences, and they will be treated as a burden. So, the girls also learn to follow the same thing since childhood. And, gradually, they forget their human values, rights, and better livelihood options in social lives. Therefore, it leads to the feminization of poverty at a broader level. Harassment at the domestic level significantly impacts overall health, mental setup, individual well-being, and the entire family. So, vital public services and moral support are badly required here to mainstream women in the particular study area to a large extent in all rural areas of India.

In this study, we tried to recognize women's position, acknowledge their needs in rural areas, and deconstruct the existing social networks of patriarchy. After self-exciting the inherent lacunas in every layer of society, we suggested the most suitable measures for mainstreaming the region. To fulfill our research goals, we followed through group discussions with ten specific women groups in our selected study area Garhbeta- II Community Development Block (CDB) of West Bengal. Therefore, the authors framed a qualitative framework to understand the current scenario better. We observed some problems minutely in their day-to-

day life. We interviewed a hundred (100) respondents of age group 25-55 years by a pre-prepared survey schedule with fifteen questions like educational qualification, the scope of higher studies, intra-family disparity among children, home tutor or coaching class accessibility for boy and girl child, nutritional food intake disparity among boy and girl child, etc. After that, we tried to show the interconnection between different forms of positive discrimination and the upliftment of the social status of women. Also, it focused on the level of education, individual livelihood options, and overall health condition. The average monthly income from different sources of the respondents is Rs. 5500. Where a woman earns Rs. 2700/ month and a man earns Rs. 2800/ month. Among the hundreds of women respondents, only 10% have completed their higher secondary (class XII) education. The same situation is with their husband too. The percentage of respondents who qualified for their first board exam (class X) is 45% and 30 % of the total respondents are class VIII passed. A total of 72% of women's husband is addicted to alcohol. Almost 85% of our women respondents face domestic violence in their daily life. Their husbands mentally torture 60% of women. And 48% of our women respondents are physically harassed by their husbands on an average every month. This is the ground reality of education in the study area.

According to the 2011 Census, literacy is if any person aged seven years and above can read and write. The overall mean literacy rate of the nation India is 74.04%. The state average is 76.26%, male literacy is 81.69%, and female 70.54%. Therefore, to ensure inclusive, equitable, and standard quality of education to all ordinary people, the increase of scope to access lifelong learning in the open, distance, and regular mode of a system at free of cost to promote this the rural disadvantaged society has become mandatory now. Because education is a right for all citizens of India. Article 21-A of the Constitution of India ensures free, compulsory school education up to 14 years of age-old for every child. After this age, there is no free and compulsory education in India. Therefore, we suggest to the higher authorities to provide free education at least up to the graduate level in the backward region of India. Because education is the only weapon to make human beings aware self-dependent, the most important thing is to make her citizens civilized and build a developed nation. Because it has the power to upraise the well-being of citizens that add extra gains in different socio-economic factors. A statistic of economic growth by improved quality education accounts for around 50 % of the entire country's financial well-being in the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) nations within the past fifty years. Just because of the maximum numbers of women accessing higher education in different disciplines and greater equality in all financial activities sectors. Therefore, education must be available throughout life irrespective of gender stereotypes

Implementing positive discrimination

The government has included positive discrimination in the law and policy, and the implementation procedure is not strong enough. In reality, the government is not committed to the meaningful implementation of quotas. Only in those affairs where quota or reservation is included in government circulars, women's participation according to allocation is visible. Otherwise, nothing is noticeable.

Women Economic Self dependency

Women's economic empowerment is the central theme for their rights and gender equality in society.

- i. It included their ability to be involved in existing job markets and equal access to control over family resources and their lives and create women agency.
- ii. Empowering women means minimizing the gender gap to fulfill the targets of the 2030 Agenda for SD and achieving the goals.
- iii. The increasing level of educational attainment contributes to empowerment which expands inclusive economic growth.

The end marginality can be possible with the end of sex-selective intersectionality. Because gender inequality makes women dependent, despoil them of their human dignities and scopes for well-being. They make strenuous efforts for income as daily wagers, creating jobs for successful entrepreneurs and caring for their families. She is doubtful about owning her land. Only 20 percent of landowners are women globally. If she wants to inherit her family property someday, it is their legal right according to the Constitution of India. But, to get their equal share, many hurdles need to be overcome in-laws or parental homes. Because the social law deprived them of equal share or pro men, social conventions favor male relatives of every woman (SDGs).

Suggestions

Every mature household person must be equally responsible for carrying out their duties smoothly, even in earning purposes. In this way, all the members of society can lead a happy life. Meanwhile, the roles of every member should be redefined for adopting a gender unbiased family and gradually a healthy culture for holistic development of the nation. In this way, all marginal communities will be independent in all the means and get their human rights. Therefore, a strict, focused decentralized approach needs to adapt to end gender-based discrimination. We think it is time to readjust all the existed social norms (Chandra 2010).

After considering all the above statements, we observed specific facts in our study area. Where spread of awareness irrespective of gender is essential to get optimum output. Therefore, we must focus on achieving at least school-level education and restricting the dropout rate. A particular emphasis must be focused on free Lifelong learning for all. Job-related training camps should be arranged free of cost for smooth job accessibility. Another vital thing is the availability of funds and investment by different entrepreneurs for rural setup to increase job opportunities. Rigid guidelines are required for proper policy execution and profoundly penetrating the bottom level's benefits. The other important things to consider here are-

- i. Equal opportunity of work, equal pay and fixed working hours for all;
- ii. Evade all kinds of intersectionality and discrimination at the household level;

Further, all kinds of discriminatory societal practices and community need to be eliminated by the active involvement of people in mainstreaming women. Elimination of all types of sex-selective discrimination, domestic violence is essential for rural India. It is time to strengthen the weaker section of society by acknowledging them as integral for sustainable

social development (Tiwari 2014). Now it is urgent to collaborate with civil society by following the path of developed nations (Kelkar 2009).

Conclusion

Now we can claim that the Right to positive discrimination is every woman's right. Although feminists do not recognize this as a right, women are still positively classified by quota or reservation in many countries. India has introduced various provisions to upgrade the status of women. The Constitution includes different conditions of positive discrimination acknowledging that women are deprived. To ensure women's active participation in every kind of productive work is needed by the government. Women are positively discriminated against in various spheres to achieve equality with men. Although the government entirely determines women, and in many cases, they compete with men to get a job, the social limitations hold them back. Positive discrimination must end when both women and men reach the same status. It looks like that it may take more time before such a decision can be taken as the advancement of women in society is moving abysmally.

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