



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS AND SOCIETY IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION & THE PLIGHT OF WORKING WOMEN

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Abstract: The current review to evaluate the ways how women's political participation, which is a fundamental prerequisite for gender equality and genuine democracy. It would facilitate women's direct engagement in public decision-making and ensure better accountability to women. The overarching academic tower used in the writings consists of structure. Institutions and feminists' conjecture to recognize the predicament of women's under-representation in politics.

INTRODUCTION

In the 1990s the neo liberal economic reforms followed by governments in the developing countries had an adverse impact on their people, especially on their marginalized sections. India is no exception to this. Amongst these marginalized sections women have been the worst affected ones. Be it a natural calamity like drought, cyclone, flood or famine or man-made tragedies such as poverty, inequality, unemployment, hunger or displacement due to the wrong policies of governments; women have always been at the receiving ends. While analyzing the problem along the rural- urban divides, it is seen that women in the rural areas have been utterly helpless with untold miseries in comparison to their urban counterparts. Seriously handicapped by age old superstitious traditions and customs, cultural prejudices and lack of exposure to opportunities and modern means of communications they have become very vulnerable targets in the event of any untoward happening. Lack of health and hygiene, wide spread illiteracy and gender- biased malnutrition in the rural areas have only added to their agonies. Under the pressure of the diktat from the global financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF, which are working at the behest of the developed countries, India has been forced to go for policies of structural adjustment and drastically cutting down of state expenditures in the social sectors. Consequently, the capacity level of the Indian state to undertake social welfare measures has touched an all-time low aggravating the situation further.

Population and Sample

The proposed project is based mainly on the basement and grass-root levels in two districts of Odisha - Cuttack and Keonjhar, a coastal but relatively community. The latter is a forest-based underdeveloped economy inhabited mainly by poor tribes.

Data and Sources of Data

Secondary sources used in this research included reports, documents, journals, textbooks, newspapers, periodicals, and web resources.

Theoretical framework

The contemporary time is turbulent time. Conventional ideas have largely failed to solve human problems. Even the idea of nation state encompassing all human activity is being challenged. There is a new social upsurge across the globe. The running theme of all the upsurges is the demand for fulfilling multiple human aspirations. Therefore, there is an urgent need to revisit the space, status, dignity and honour of women in our traditionally vertical and patriarchal society.

Women have to change their approach to political participation if they aspire for substantial representation in the legislative bodies, join political parties of their choices, get themselves involved at local levels, and get politically empowered.

Women in independent India, today, are much more exposed to wider opportunities and thus are in a better situation now in certain ways as compared to their earlier position. Some of the problems which happened to be byproducts of illiteracy, abominable poverty and starvation that had been haunting the community of women for centuries are under the process of reshaping during the present phase of new economic policies and liberalization. However, in this new scenario they still continue to be the most marginalized community (UN Report 1995-96- 2.8 billion women are marginalized). Problems such as child marriage, practice of 'sati', prohibition on widow remarriage, exploitation of widows, devadasi system, purdah system, and illiteracy among women- particularly in the rural areas- still continue unabated. The socio- religious and economic integration of women is yet to be democratically achieved. How far development in the field of science and technology, universalization of education, socio-political movements, modernization and similar developments have impacted the attitude of people towards women would be an interesting and challenging exercise to undertake. It would be very interesting to probe to what extent globalization related multifaceted developments have been successful in boosting the morale and self-confidence of contemporary Indian women. Many of those women who could grab the opportunities extended to them have proved that they are capable of discharging the responsibilities assigned to them on par with their male counterparts. The nation which neglected almost half of its population for several centuries seems to have somehow realized now the necessity of giving equal rights and opportunities to its womenfolk.

PLIGHT OF WORKING WOMEN

Working women in urban areas give precedence to their career and professional ambitions over plans to start a family. Working women in urban India put career ahead of motherhood. Over half of the married women in the aforesaid city have shelved plans to start a family as career advancement and higher education is their priority and cannot sacrifice the same to raise kids. Ambitious working women in India are not willing to give up their career for the sake of family as they are apprehensive about dealing with stress. Nearly 50 % of the total working women interviewed said they are deliberately avoiding to begin a family. Rest 50 % of the total working women interviewed said that they regret not being able to work in higher-waged job places as they are less educated, lack skills and training of these about 22 said that they regret motherhood as they have lost their social identity. It's an encouraging note that working women are becoming more focused on the work front. India's extremely lop-sided gender ratio is because women are seen as economic burdens. If a greater focus on work makes women more secure financially, some of this prejudice will be mitigated. This is the only answer to address the status of Indian working women, who are doing ever worse than Bangladesh and Sri Lanka on several gender indices but obviously they are facing a lot of prejudice and disapproval. Do we want our women to be forever dependent – socially and economically? More women are now spending far more time in the labour force than before but still have to invariably take the responsibility of home and family care, consequently sacrificing their leisure and personal care time. Still rarely does a man take the initiative in sharing the responsibilities of house hold maintenance and caring children. In urban areas, women's employment in modern white-collar jobs has been growing. The growth of financial and entertainment services in the private sectors also brings more educated women into the area of employment. Areas such as fashion designing and beauty care have started to attract creative women and entrepreneurs. But the decline of expenditure in public sector and the tendency of the private sector to reduce costs have hit women's regular jobs adversely, especially those in unskilled or semi-skilled categories. Trends of globalization and liberalization are still altering the pattern of work. These newer trends are wiping out small, casual and non-mechanized jobs but need for hard, meticulous and handpicked jobs is still intact which could encapsulate lots of women. Modern trends demand qualified, skilled computer – literature worker's for new areas of techno and scientific organization. A lot has been written about the Indian growth story, relatively little, however, about the ongoing radical transformation in the Indian economy. This transformation has much to do with education rather than growth, with women rather than men, with inclusion today and growth tomorrow. Among all the "revolutions" taking place in India today, this is, and will be, the most far reaching. It is not an exaggeration to state that the entire dynamic of man-woman and family relations is changing in India. This has obvious implications for fertility, labor force participation, jobs, and family income in India. It is shown that the labour force participation for females in urban India has stayed constant in India since the early 1980's. It is shown that the labour force participation rate for females in urban India has stayed constant at a low level of around 25 % for the last 25 years. The section documents trends for an "adjusted" labour force participation rate" the adjusted ratio is with respect to women working. It is shown that this ratio has shown a marked tendency to increase with increasing years (46 % of women in urban India were working). The unpaid nature of the jobs is shown to be an artifact of the census data which does not collect information on incomes received from self-employment. It has been found that a greater proportion of women are in unpaid jobs. Close examination of the national sample survey data for 25 years reveals that there is little difference in the unpaid /paid nature of jobs between men and women. One of the assumed determinants of low female labour participation rate is the belief that women get far lower wages than men for comparable jobs and ability. The mystery behind the low labour participation (female) rate has declined rapidly and is declining further incomes have increased with the fast pace of growth in the last, decades. And jobs are no longer scarce indeed, for educated labour, there is apparent scarcity. And wage discrimination in the work place is small and therefore not likely to be a deterrent. So why aren't there more women entering the labour force? But they are. About 10 % points of the average labour force participation is in terms of women not working and not working at home. This suggests that the future should witness a rapid increase in the labour force participation rate. As income increases, the women feel less pressure to work and therefore withdraw from the work place. In India, this is associated with women's labour force withdrawal for family status purpose. Women tend to re-enter the labour force when the new labour they find is commensurate with their family status. Service jobs (teaching, nursing, government service) clerical jobs in urban areas are preferred once manual labour has been abjured. Eventually, after the income levels reach a certain high level, women re-enter the work-force. It is examination of trends in urban India that can yield insights about labour participation. India was one of the lowest labour participation rates for women in the world more accurately, one of the lowest rates for urban women.

The Constitution of India provides equal rights and opportunities to women. It does not make any discrimination on the ground of sex. Indian women are also responding positively to this changed socio-political situation. This is not to argue that bad days are only a matter of history. On the contrary, the changing scenario, in turn, has also brought a host of new problems and challenges which are even more menacing and devastating in nature. They are now beset with new stresses and strains. In this globalizing era gender-based crimes against women, especially against young women, are constantly on the rise so much so that they are feeling very insecure almost everywhere- in educational institutions, work-places as well as at homes (in the 'circle of trust'). Women being

violated in the very circle of their trust as would be evident in innumerable cases such as 'marital rape'; talks of dress code, moral policing and a long list of 'Dos' and 'Donts' for women and girls are only the tip of the ice-berg. The news of people in high and respectable positions in fields such as judiciary, police, civil service, journalism etc. being allegedly involved in heinous crimes against women are becoming all too common these days. It is all the more alarming to see the kinds of bizarre reactions that some people in high public positions make in response to such incidents reflecting their sickening mindsets as they attempt to turn the blame on the women themselves who have been subjected to such sufferings by criticizing their dresses, the timing of their being out of home and even raising flimsy questions about their character. It is very easily forgotten that the law-and-order situation in the country everywhere is increasingly worsening at a time when women have been circumscribed to work overtime at odd hours with inconvenient terms and conditions in a changing environment. The new scenario demands of them to take up larger family responsibilities and career prospects. The fact that their most fundamental rights as citizens and human beings are being violated by criminals, who go scot free, is brushed under the carpet. Besides, the transnationalisation of production process in the contemporary phase of globalization has opened up vast employment opportunities for the middle classes even in the developing countries. It is evident from the fact that the IT sector in India has benefited from this process. At the same time with this new prosperity the members of this class have also brought with them their obscurantist ideas and exploitative trends which need to be probed as to analyse to what extent these developments have also led to gender-discrimination and crimes against women. So the central question that emerges here is what could be the primary reason which is at the root of the ever increasing gender-crimes against women? There are also other related questions as to why have the policies and programmes of the government to empower women, particularly after the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Indian constitution, not helped the situation in a substantial manner? Can there be a way out of this impasse? These are some of the pertinent questions that the proposed study would like to probe. It is in this backdrop that the present study is attempting to probe into the question of women participation in politics and society in two districts varying largely in terms of their rural-urban divides, ethnic and caste compositions. It is important to probe, if at times, socio-cultural aspects like caste, class and gender differentiations along with lack of access to education also become a major impediment in the more inclusive functioning of women involvement in society. In another way prevalent dominant economic and social structure could also work as obstacles in the way of successful participation of women in society. The proposed study would attempt to measure the impact of the factors of caste, religion, wealth, sex, education, occupation; family background, political party affiliation etc. in their intersectionality in the two proposed districts so as to see their assisting/hampering the process of emergence of leadership.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study will be based on the collected data's historical descriptive and analytical review. To assure the quality of my sources, documents are evaluated through some criteria in keeping with accepted historical research. The Chief source collection of data is Secondary sources. Secondary literature reviews refer to studies conducted by other researchers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the above research study, it is observed that women occupy a global status that plays a significant role in world politics. The adoption of a convention on eliminating all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) give a platform for all women's positions, and its participation stood up to 20.3 %. Policies need to be redefined and refined for the inclusion of women as significant policies undertaken. I'm the past have been proved a failure. Remedial measures still have to be taken for adequate gender sensitization to ensure gender justice in today's age of globalization.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I, Sampurna Nanda, feel highly grateful to the Almighty and the great souls of my demised parents, Mr. Dasarathi Nanda and Mrs. Golap Nanda, for having inspired me with their forever blessings. I want to express my special gratitude to my esteemed Principal madam, Mrs. Namita Mohanty of DAV Public school CDA Cuttack, Odisha. She gave me the golden opportunity to do this wonderful project: "Women's participation in politics and society in the age of globalization." I owe my gratitude to Prof Dr. Mitalli Chinara, my guide, who has been directing and creating pathways for the progression of my research work.

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