



Women's Empowerment: Issues And Challenges In Jammu And Kashmir

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Abstract

Domestic abuse, social norms, armed conflict, and state militancy are all contributing factors to the plight of women. In addition to experiencing intense humiliation and abuse, they have also had startling encounters with ongoing sadness that have left them psychologically sick. Women's rights have been violated and their hardships have been exacerbated by the violence in Jammu and Kashmir. Nobody was aware of the number of women who became widowed and had to raise their children. Using secondary sources of information, the researcher concluded that issues and challenges pertaining to education, health, domestic violence, politics, declining sex ratio, state violence, dowry harassment, eve teasing, unequal wages, child labor, female feticide and infanticide, and other issues continue to affect women in many parts of Jammu and Kashmir. The central government, state governments, and non-governmental organizations should collaborate to empower women in Jammu and Kashmir in order to overcome these obstacles. This essay highlights the efforts made by the government and outlines the policies in place to empower women in the area.

Keywords: challenges, violence, and women's empowerment.

Introduction:

India's northernmost state is Jammu & Kashmir. It became a contested area between India and Pakistan after the partition, which has led to a significant loss of life, according to the government. and public property, which has disrupted everyday life and made the state the center of attention worldwide. Women, who are the most disadvantaged and vulnerable segment of society, are disproportionately affected by the many issues and rights violations that the people of Jammu and Kashmir face. Over the past 20 years, gender discrimination has increased due to the state's current social, economic, and political circumstances (Gul & Khan, 2013). Women's little involvement in the political and social processes has been observed. Their rights to free expression, education, and employment have been taken away by such discrimination, which has a negative impact on their well-being and human development. Women's lives in the state have undergone such extreme transformation that they are forced to watch the rapidly shifting socioeconomic landscape in silence. Such shifts have given rise to indications of exclusivity, which has led to identity conflicts, particularly in the context of militancy and armed conflict. In addition to experiencing pervasive humiliation and harassment, women in the state also endure catastrophic events and protracted sadness,

which results in mental and emotional illness. Women in Jammu & Kashmir are constrained by traditions and norms, just like those in many other Indian states. the duties of managing household matters and raising their children (Gul, 2015). Armed conflict, militancy, domestic and social violence, and other factors have made women in the state victims of violence for the past 20 years. Women's development is hampered by domestic violence. Violence against women has increased as a result of armed conflict and militancy. "There is no denying that over the past 20 years, Kashmiri women have been at the forefront of the fight against all forms of injustice and crimes against humanity perpetrated by the government and certain questionable Dabla, "non-state actors" (2009). According to the Jammu & Kashmir police report, violence against women also occurs when male members control females and treat them as inferior; even economically independent and educated women are affected (Sharma, 2010). In contrast, a study by Banday& Ganesan (2016) found that women in the state face significant restrictions on their ability to travel alone and to stop their education because of traditional customs. According to Goswami (1993), men's lifestyle choices are the primary cause of domestic violence against women in India. Among the factors that encourage men to conduct domestic violence against women include alcoholism, drug use, smoking, extramarital affairs, poor company, and poverty. Similar results were found in studies by Bhatti (1998) and McKenry et al. (1995), which found that the primary causes of domestic violence against women are poverty, alcoholism, drug usage, smoking, extramarital affairs, and lousy company. Furthermore, Liz (2012) found that the number of family members, the husband's educational background, and the style of marriage all had an impact on domestic violence. Similarly, Gerstein (2000) came to the conclusion that the primary causes of domestic violence are poverty and educational attainment. Women are more susceptible to domestic violence when they marry younger.

Women's violence in Jammu and Kashmir

According to data gathered by the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) and presented to the Lok Sabha, there has been a rise in crimes against women in Jammu and Kashmir in recent years. The analysis, which looks at crime statistics from 2020 to 2022, shows that incidences are on the rise, especially in cases of domestic violence, rape, and kidnapping. According to the data, there were 3,404 complaints of crimes against women in Jammu and Kashmir in 2020; 3,937 in 2021; and 3,716 in 2022. The number of convictions in these cases also rose, rising from 52 in 2021 and 19 in 2020 to 68 in 2022. But the number of people imprisoned for these offenses increased dramatically, from 4,548 in 2021 to 6,309 in 2022. The increase in rape cases, which is consistent with the national trend, is one of the most alarming trends. The NCRB data also shows a high number of cases of cruelty and domestic violence committed by husbands or family members, which reflects ingrained social problems that still exist in spite of laws designed to protect women. The government attributes the increase in reported incidents to better complaint procedures, quicker access to police stations, and improved awareness. Better reporting has been facilitated by policies like Zero FIR, gender-sensitization training for police officers, and tough sanctions against negligent officials. Nonetheless, the increasing number also emphasizes the necessity of further efforts in the areas of social awareness campaigns, legal actions, and law enforcement. One of the most pervasive and systemic abuses of human rights is violence against women. It is a key barrier to eradicating gender inequality and discrimination worldwide; it transcends age, socioeconomic, educational, and geographic borders; it is anchored in gendered social structures rather than individual and random acts; and it impacts all cultures. According to the United Nations General Assembly (2006), "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm" is considered violence against women. Violence against women is a severe type of male domination over women. It can take place in both public and private settings and includes threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty. Women are pushed into a submissive role by men's aggression. In Jammu and Kashmir, there is an increase in domestic violence against women. According to police data, anecdotal evidence suggests that even monetarily independent and educated women suffer. Sharma, 2010). Over the past 20 years, there has been a rise in violence against women, and the situation has become more tense due to militancy and the effects of armed conflict. In the state, women of various economic, educational,

cultural, social, age, and class backgrounds are victims of domestic violence, which can occur in both urban and rural areas. Roughly 15% of married women experience mental and physical abuse.

Women's Empowerment in J&K

In order to empower women in the state, the federal government and state governments have introduced a number of programs. These programs include the following:

Initiatives to Raise Awareness for Poor and Rural Women:

By educating women about critical issues such as female feticide, domestic violence, trafficking, drug addiction, and low-sex camps, the awareness-raising program seeks to empower women. Seventy-seven percent of the organizations involved are already working to improve the lives of women and children. Simplified or dropped out of school. The program's objectives are to give girls and women over 15 access to school and extra resources, such as vocational training and skill development. The scheme's principal goal is to guarantee that the course materials are need-based and tailored to local needs while concurrently addressing several educational stages of primary, middle, high school, and matric/secondary level courses. Through education, the initiative also seeks to empower adult women and make them capable citizens. A committee made up of the institution and the principal or representative of a local government school in the area where the course will be held must choose the candidates. The program is being carried out nationwide by educational institutions and voluntary organizations with the necessary resources and expertise in the areas of women's rights, social development, and education.

Center for Family Counseling:

The FCC program offers free counseling, referral, and rehabilitation services to women victims who are morally endangered in their families or society at large, including those who are impacted by conflict, marital problems, or maladjustment.

Yojana Janani Suraksha:

By encouraging institutional delivery among low-income pregnant women, the Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY), a safe motherhood campaign under the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), aims to lower maternal and neonatal mortality. All states and UTs are implementing the Yojana, which was introduced by the Hon. Prime Minister on April 12, 2005, with a particular emphasis on underperforming states. JSY is a fully centrally supported program that combines postpartum care and cash aid. According to the Yojana, ASHA, an accredited social health worker, serves as a useful conduit between the government and low-income pregnant women in the eight EAG states, Assam, J&K, and the other NE states. Wherever AWWs (Anganwadi workers) and TBAs or activists similar to ASHA have been involved in this endeavor in other eligible states and UTs, they might be linked to this Yojana in order to provide the services.

Plan for Hostels for Working Women:

The program's goal is to increase the number of safe, easily accessible housing options for working women, along with childcare services for their kids, in urban, semi-urban, or even rural regions where women can find job. The program will support initiatives to develop new hostel buildings, expand existing hostel buildings, and establish hostel buildings on rented property in order to accomplish this goal. Subject to the guidelines established by the program, all working women, regardless of caste, religion, marital status, or other factors, will have access to the working women's hostel projects that are funded by this program. Although the projects funded by this program are intended for working women, women undergoing job training may also be housed in these hostels, provided that, when combined, they do not account for more than 30% of the hostel's total capacity and are only allowed to stay there when there are insufficient working women present. Children of working women may live with their moms in such a hostel until they are 18 years old for girls and 5 years old for boys.

Swayamsidha Plan:

In 2001, the Swayamsidha initiative was introduced with the goal of empowering women. With a focus on convergence activities, the program is built on self-help groups. The goal is to guarantee that members of self-help groups take advantage of all programs and services in a comprehensive and integrated way.

Umeed

Rahul Gandhi, a scion of the Congress party, launched The Hope, a flagship project financed by the Government of India to empower women in conflict-ridden Kashmir, in June 2013. Only until a group of Kashmir University students traveled to Aameeti (UP) to examine the model and its effective application was the program made practicable. The goal of the Umeed program is to empower women across India, including in Jammu and Kashmir. In order for their SHGs to eventually become bankable at a lower interest rate, the project aims to encourage rural women to save small amounts of money.

National Minorities Development & Finance Corporation.

Women from minority communities, i.e. Under this arrangement, Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs, Christians, and Zoroastrians can get loans at a nominal interest rate of 6% per annum, which can be paid off in five years. A single beneficiary may only get a loan of up to Rs. 1 lakh.

National Backward Classes Finance & Development Corporation.

Under this plan, women who belong to backward and other classes as defined by State SRO 126 are financed at a very low interest rate of 4% per annum up to Rs 50,000 and 6% per annum up to Rs 1 lakh, with a five-year payback period. The National Handicapped Development and Finance Corporation (NHFDC) 40% of women with disabilities are disabled. are being funded via this program at extremely low interest rates of 3% up to Rs. 50,000 and 4% annually up to Rs. 1 lakh, which must be paid off within seven years.

Loan for Education:

Under each of the aforementioned programs, education loans are also given to women who are beneficiaries for professional or technical training. Microcredit loan Self Help Groups (SHGs) can also receive microcredit facilities at a 5% interest rate with a three-year repayment period.

Sher-I-Kashmir Employment and Welfare Program:

Along with the centrally financed programs listed above, the social welfare department also implements the "Empowering Skilled Young Women, 2009" program, which it leads. The government's Sher-I-Kashmir Employment and Welfare Programme (SKEWP) aims to give educated unemployed youngsters opportunities for self-employment. The young ladies without jobs are taking advantage of the nominal interest rate of 6% on the financing offered to aspiring business owners, and the company is actually receiving positive feedback around the state.

Obstacles to Women's Empowerment in J&K

By assisting women in assisting themselves and their families, the federal and state governments are taking positive steps toward empowering women. However, a sizable portion of the state's female population is still unemployed, illiterate, widowed, half-widowed, and falling behind in all areas of life. Some obstacles that stand in the way of women's empowerment include:

- * In J&K, violence against women is on the rise.
- * People's ignorance or illiteracy also hinders women's empowerment.
- * In many J&K districts, a large number of girls continue to marry young, which has a stronger negative impact on their general development.
- * Absence of decision-making power
- * The empowerment of women is impeded by numerous cultural traditions and customs. For instance, when their daughters reach puberty, many parents do not send them to school. *Insufficient involvement of women in political matters
- * Women's low status and poverty
- * Women have a high rate of illiteracy, Ignorance
- * The health care delivery system is inadequate and disorganized.

All of these obstacles stand in the way of numerous developmental initiatives aimed at empowering women. We must conquer these obstacles as soon as possible in order to reach our goal. Even though the state administration has recently made some positive strides, the state urgently needs to make significant progress! In keeping with our great Jawaharlal Nehru's statement that "You can tell the condition of a

nation by looking at the status of its women," every effort must be made to empower and develop women holistically as we move toward a developed nation.

Conclusion

A supportive policy framework, well-targeted resources, and a strong and ongoing commitment from governments and other stakeholders are necessary for the empowerment of women in J&K. Long-term advancements in awareness-raising and educational possibilities will benefit women's general growth. Significant advancements can be made in the near future by raising and extending public knowledge of crucial gender equality, enhancing laws, and creating an environment that is supportive of women. The Without a doubt, since the beginning of the Five Year Plans, the development of women in Kashmir has been a component of the planning process. Notwithstanding these efforts, women in Kashmir continue to face numerous obstacles and problems in the areas of health, the economy, education, politics, domestic violence, the declining sex ratio, female feticide and infanticide, late marriage, state violence, dowry harassment, eve teasing, unequal pay, child labor, child sexual abuse, and workplace sexual harassment. Society as a whole must take action against social ills including drug addiction, dowries, and child marriage in order to lower the prevalence of domestic violence. Regarding domestic violence, counseling should be provided in a variety of settings, such as peer groups, mosques, and meetings of mohalla committees. Both governmental and non-governmental organizations should take proactive measures to reduce domestic violence. The government should bolster its law enforcement forces, while non-governmental organizations can establish counseling centers, plan community events, and create social groups to reduce violence through collaborative efforts. **References;**

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