

Challenges & Issues of Schedule Castes Women Entrepreneurship

Dr. Anamika (Ph. D)

Guest Faculty, Sociology,
Magadh Mahila College, Patna

Abstract

Schedule Castes are playing dynamic role towards transformational social, economic, environmental development and social change required for overall developmental stages and sustainable economic development. But schedule castes women have limited accessibilities to credit, education, health, role in economic participatory, role in economic decision making, government beneficial schemes among the many challenges they face. Economic and social development is essential for the well-being of individuals, families, and group of Schedule Castes women. The study is based purely on secondary sources. The study reveals that women of India are relatively disempowered and they enjoy somewhat lower status than that of men in spite of many efforts undertaken by Government. It is found that acceptance of unequal gender norms by women are still prevailing in the society. The study concludes by an observation that access to education, employment and change in social structure are only the enabling factors to women empowerment.

Keywords: *Schedule Castes, transformational, government, Sustainable, Rural.*

Introduction

Women are considered in the society only to perform duties like bring up children, caring family members, and other household activities. All over the world the women belonged to a class, which is by and large exploited. If we go through the history of mankind we find those different and desperate cultures, through distant in time and space, have one thing common and that is contempt for women.

Women constitute about half the population of India. But, no efforts were made to elevate the status of women till independence. It was only after we achieved freedom that efforts were made to remove their social and economic disabilities by providing those opportunities to develop and legal protection.

“Scheduled Castes” means such Castes, races or tribes or parts of or groups within such castes, races or tribes as are deemed under article 341 to be Scheduled Castes for the purpose of this Constitution. The Constitution under Article 366(24) specifically defined the term Scheduled Castes. Constitution of India provides securing for all the citizens, social, economic and political Justice and equality of status and opportunity. The Directive principles as contained in Article 46 of the constitution provide that “the state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular, of the Scheduled

Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation”

Women are continuously facing many problems even after having self-confidence, individuality, self-respect, personality, capacity, talent, and efficiency more than men. They are facing problems in their daily life even after they are given equal rights and opportunities like men by the Constitution of India.

Objective

- To analyze the issues, challenges and status of schedule castes women entrepreneurship.
- To assess the government measures programme for SCs women development.

Challenges & Issues of Schedule Castes Women

Social Problem

These problems pertained to the concept of purity and pollution. The untouchables were given a very low position in the society. The high-caste Hindus maintained a social distance from them. They were denied many basic amenities of life which were accorded to the high-caste Hindus. They were dependent on the tradition of Hindus for items of food and drink.

Religious Problems

These pertained to the denial of the right of entering temples which were exclusively served by the high-caste Brahmins. The untouchables were neither allowed to enter the temples nor served by the Brahmins. They had no right to worship the Gods and Goddesses in the temple.

Economics Problem

They suffered from many economic problems. They had to face many economic hardships and they were not given proper reward for their service. Traditionally, untouchables were deprived of landed property of their own. They were not allowed to carry on any business. They were not permitted to engage themselves in the professions which were being carried out by the people of other castes. The untouchables were not free to choose any occupation according to their own ability they had to clean the streets, remove dead cattle and to undertake heavy agricultural work. Mostly they were landless labourers. They worked in the fields of high-caste Hindus as labourers. Economic development women continued to be marginalized both in policy formulation and programme implementation, Low level of skills lead to lower wages and low earning. In terms of employment, she enjoys the same status as men, and has to be given equal pay for equal work.

Public Disabilities

Schedule Caste Women had to face many public indignities because they were denied the right to use the services of public utilities like wells, public transport as well as educational institutions.

Educational Problems

Traditionally the untouchables were deprived of getting education. They were not allowed to use public educational institutions. Even today most of the illiterates are untouchables. Describing the conditions of Harijans, K.M. Pannikar has remarked, their position, when the system functioned in its pristine glory, was in many ways worse than that of slavery. The slave at least was a chattel

of the master and therefore, he stood in an individual relation to his owner. Considerations of economic self-interest and even human feeling modified the barbarism of personal slavery. But these mitigating factors did not apply to the system of untouchability, which was mostly perceived as a system of communal slave holding. Instead of an individual owning slave, each village held the untouchable families attached to it in a kind of slavery. No individual of the higher castes was supposed to have any personal relations with an untouchable.

Gender Disparity: According to Amartya Sen, gender inequality is not one homogenous phenomenon, but a collection of desperate and interlinked problems and the different kinds of gender inequality were displayed in mortality, natality, basic facility, special opportunity professions, ownership, and household matters. We shall look into the classification of gender disparity at birth, growth and survival.

Disparity at Birth: In being born as female children and in giving birth to children, women experience grave disparity, while the infant mortality reveals, that the right to be born is denied, the maternal mortality speaks of the lack of medical care and attention to women.

Disparity in education: The level of women education is less than men still in the modern age, female illiteracy is higher in the rural areas where over 63% or more women remain unlettered. Education can pave the way for an overall development of individuals and for the society. Female literacy is not only an end itself, but also serves as a catalyst for overall performance, in other segments too.

Selective abortion and female infanticide: It is the most common practice for years in India in which abortion of female fetus is performed in the womb of mother after the fetal sex determination and sex selective abortion by the medical professionals.

Sexual harassment: It is the form of sexual exploitation of a girl child at home, streets, public places, transports, offices, etc. by the family members, neighbors, friends or relatives

Dowry and Bride burning: It is another problem generally faced by women of low or middle class family during or after the marriage. Parents of boys demand a lot of money from the bride's family to be rich in one time. Groom's family perform bride burning in case of lack of fulfilled dowry demand. In 2005, around 6787 dowry death cases were registered in India according to the Indian National Crime Bureau reports.

Poverty: Poverty is considered the greatest threat to peace in the world, and eradication of poverty should be a national goal as important as the eradication of illiteracy. Due to this, women are exploited as domestic helps

Health and Safety: The health and safety concerns of women are paramount for the wellbeing of a country and an important factor in gauging the empowerment of women in a country. However there are alarming concerns where maternal healthcare is concerned

Domestic violence: it is like endemic and widespread disease affects almost 70% of Indian women according to the women and child development official. It is performed by the husband, relative or other family member

Child Marriages: Early marriage of the girls by their parents in order to be escaped from dowry. It is highly practiced in the rural India

Inadequate Nutrition: Inadequate nutrition in the childhood affects women in their later life especially women belonging to the lower middle class and poor families.

Low status in the family: It is the abuse or violence against women and Women are considered as inferior to men so they are not allowed to join military services.

Professional Inequality: This inequality is practiced in employment and promotions. Women face countless handicaps in male customized and dominated environs in Government Offices and Private enterprises

Morality and Inequality: Due to gender bias in health and nutrition there is unusually high mortality rate in women reducing their population further especially in Asia, Africa and China

Household Inequality: Household relations show gender bias in infinitesimally small but significant manners all across the globe, more so, in India e.g. sharing burden of housework, childcare and menial works by so called division of work

Status of widows: Widows are considered as worthless in the Indian society. They are treated poorly and forced to wear white clothes

Earlier women were facing problems like child marriage, sati pratha, pardapratha, restriction to widow remarriage, widows' exploitation, devadasi system, etc. However, almost all the old traditional problems have been disappeared gradually from the society but given rise to other new issues.

Some of the major problems modern women are still facing mentioned below:

- **Violence against women:** Women are getting affected the various violence almost every day which is disrupting the society. Women are being victims of violence at huge level day by day because of increasing crimes against women (According to the report of Crime Record Bureau of the Central Home Ministry). Woman is getting kidnapped at every 44 minutes, raped at every 47 minutes, 17 dowry deaths every day, etc. They may face violence within the family (dowry related harassment, death, marital rape, wife-battering, sexual abuse, deprivation of healthy food, female genital mutilation, etc) or outside the family (kidnapping, rape, murder, etc).
- **Gender discrimination:** Women are considered as weaker section of the society than men and given less importance. Girls' children are becoming real victims of the discrimination. There are also discrimination of power and work between men and women because of the patriarchal system families in India. Gender discrimination affects women in the areas like nutrition, education, health, care, decline of female population, job, public life, etc.
- **Problems of female education:** Women education percentage is low in India especially in the rural areas because they are discouraged for higher education like professional and technical education.
- **Problems related to unemployment:** Women are getting more problems in searching their suitable work. They become more prone to the exploitation and harassment in the work areas. They are given more work and hard tasks by their boss intentionally. They have to prove their devotion, seriousness and sincerity towards work time to time.

- Women who are uneducated more prone to divorce and desertion by their husbands on any stage of life. They have to live whole life with fear of divorce. In some cases they have to finish their life because of unbearable conditions.
- Dowry system is another huge women problem in the society which is increasing day by day. Women are ill-treated, man-handled, disrespected, tortured and suffer other cruelties (violence, murder and suicide) because of the lack of dowry at the time of marriage. It causes degradation of women status to a great extent

SC Human Development Indices are as follows: (2015-16)

- Rs 21,306 crores were allocated under SCSP by Department of Social Justice and Empowerment in the 12th Five Year Plan and State Governments were to allocate funds to SCSP in proportion to their SC population.
- Gap between SC and others continues to remain wide despite the SCSP. For eg. Literacy rate of SCs (66.1%) is lower than all India (73.0%) Infant mortality rate of SCs (50.7) is higher than all India (41.5) (NFHS, 2005-06).
- SCs having access to toilet facility is 23.7 % whereas for all India it is 42.3 % · Electricity access for SCs is 66.4 % whereas for all India it is 75%. Out of households who do not have electricity (1.96 lakh), SC households are 37.24 % (73,293) Employment status 2009-2010 of the SCs, SCs self employed are 26.2% whereas all India are 34.7%, SCs casual laborers (52% % in rural areas & 21% in urban areas) as compared to other categories (21.6% in rural areas & 5.9% in urban areas),
- Poverty is higher in case of SCs (average 38.3% SC as compared to 16% of others), Land holding of SCs is 1.37 % as compared to the all India holdings, 12.6 % of SC population is deprived of drinking water facility, SC population - 58% have pucca houses, others (78 %) have pucca house, SC population with kuccha houses: 18.7% ,others with kuchha houses : 6.81%

Government Measures for Schedule Castes Women

Government is committed to ensure that full benefits of government schemes and programmes flow to the women and children of SCs, who generally are among the most vulnerable sections of the society. Despite various initiatives of the Government for holistic development of the SCs they continue to face challenges due to lack of educational and employment opportunities, ownership of resources and social ostracism. Government is effective implementation of various safeguards provided in the Constitution for the welfare of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and in various other protective legislations, the Constitution provided for appointment of a Special Officer under Article 338 of the Constitution

The year 2001 was celebrated as "Women's Empowerment Year". During the year, various activities and programmes were taken up on different themes pertaining to women's social, political and economic empowerment.

Swadhar' has been designed with a flexible and innovative approach to cater to the requirements of various categories of women in distress, in diverse situations under different conditions. The

scheme aims to provide basic needs of shelter, food, clothing and care to the marginalized women / girls living in difficult circumstances, who are without any social and economic support. It also attempts to provide emotional support and counseling to such women, and ensure their social and economic rehabilitation, through education, awareness, skill up-gradation and personality development through behavioural training etc.

SHG and Women Empowerment: The Ministry of Rural Development is striving to bring about rapid and sustainable development, through socio-economic transformation, in rural India. It adopts an integrated approach towards improving the quality of life of rural poor and ensuring equity and effective people's participation. In this approach, non-government organizations, self-help groups and Panchayat Raj institutions have been accorded important role, in rural development of these, SHG is a 'people's scheme' and its organization is a significant step, towards empowering women. Women SHGs play a vital role in enhancing the knowledge, skill and good attitude of their members.

Women and Child Development Sector, the Nodal Department of Women and Child Development also implement a few innovative schemes, besides formulating policies and programmes; enacts / amends legislations affecting women and co-ordinates the efforts of both Government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to raise the overall status of women, on par with that of men.

The programmes of the Department include:

- i. Empowering Strategies
- ii. Employment and Income Generation
- iii. Welfare and Support Services
- iv. Awareness generation and gender sensitization and
- v. Other enabling measures.

These programmes play the role of being both supplementary and complementary to the other general development programmes, in the sectors of health, education, labour and employment, rural and urban development etc.,

Government Schemes

The Government programmes for women development began as early as 1954 in India but the actual participation began only in 1974. At present, the Government of India has over 34 schemes for women operated by different department and ministries. Some of these are as follows.

1. RastriaMahilaKosh (RMK) 1992-1993
2. MahilaSamridhiYojana (MSY) October,1993
3. IndiraMahilaYojana (IMY) 1995
4. Women Entrepreneur Development programme given top priority in 1997-98.
5. MahilaSamakhya being implemented in about 9000 villages.
6. Swayasjdha
7. SwaShakti Group
8. Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women(STEP).

9. Swalamban
10. Crèches/ Day care centre for the children of working and ailing mother.
11. Hostels for working women.
12. Swadhar.
13. National Mission for Empowerment of Women.
14. Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) (1975),
15. Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescence Girls (RGSEAG) (2010).
16. The Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers.
17. Integrated Child Protection scheme (ICPS) (2009-2010).
18. Dhanalakahmi (2008).
19. Short Stay Homes.
20. Ujjawala (2007).
21. Scheme for Gender Budgeting (XI Plan).
22. Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP).
23. Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSEM).
24. Prime Minister's RojgarYojana (PMRY).
25. Women's Development Corporation Scheme (WDCS).
26. Working Women's Forum.
27. IndiraMahila Kendra.
28. MahilaSamitiYojana.
29. Khadi and Village Industries Commission.
30. IndiraPriyadarahiniYojana.
31. SBI's SreeShaki Scheme.
32. SIDBI's MahilaUdyamNidhiMahilaVikasNidhi.
33. NGO's Credit Schemes.
34. National Banks for Agriculture and Rural Development's Schemes

The efforts of government and its different agencies are ably supplemented by nongovernmental organizations that are playing an equally important role in facilitating women empowerment. Despite concerted efforts of governments and NGOs there are certain gaps. Of course we have come a long way in empowering women yet the future journey is difficult and demanding.

Findings of the Study

- Globalization, Liberalization and other Socio-economic forces have given some respite to a large proportion of the population. However, there are still quite a few areas where women empowerment in India is largely lacking.
- There needs to be a sea – change in the mind set of the people in the country. Not just the women themselves, but the men have to wake up to a world that is moving towards equality and equity. It is better that this is embraced earlier than later for our own good.
- There are several Government programmes and NGOs in the Country, there is still a wide gap that exists between those under protection and those not.

- Poverty and illiteracy add to these complications, The Empowerment of Women begins with a guarantee of their health and safety.
- Empowerment of Women could only be achieved if their economic and social status is improved. This could be possible only by adopting definite social and economic policies with a view of total development of women and to make them realize that they have the potential to be strong human beings.
- In order to create a sustainable world, we must begin to Empower Women

Suggestions

- The first and foremost priority should be given to the education of women, which is the grassroots problem. Hence, education for women has to be paid special attention.
- Awareness programmes need to be organized for creating awareness among women especially belonging to weaker sections about their rights.
- Women should be allowed to work and should be provided enough safety and support to work. They should be provided with proper wages and work at par with men so that their status can be elevated in the society.
- Strict implementation of programmes and acts should be there to curb the mal-practices prevalent in the society.

Conclusion

The Empowerment of schedule caste women has become one of the most important concerns of 21st century not only at national level but also at the international level. Government initiatives alone would not be sufficient to achieve this goal. Society must take initiative to create a climate in which there is no caste, and gender discrimination have full opportunities of self decision making and participating in social, political and economic life of the country with a sense of equality

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