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EMPOWERING WOMEN BY FIXING THE CHINK IN SOCIAL FABRIC

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ABSTARCT

Women can be powerful actors for peace, security, and prosperity. When they participate in peace processes and other formal decision-making processes, they can play an important role in initiating and inspiring progress on human rights, justice, national reconciliation and economic revitalization. They can also build coalitions across ethnic and sectarian lines and speak up for marginalized and minority groups. Investing in women's leadership is therefore smart security as well as smart development. Empowering women is the biggest development and we have already covered a long way for empowering women but still there are miles to go. As the world is still fighting with the ruthless COVID-19 lockdown, women are dealing lot of stress, anxiety, depression. It was well documented that during a war, a natural disaster or a pandemic, women's bodies bear the worse burnt of the crisis. Domestic violence against women is already widespread and un-reported in many parts of country and is breaking all records of cruelty, brutality against women. As compared to men, women are usually earning less, saving barely, mostly engaging in contractual temporary, unorganized and insecure jobs as per the availability of jobs in the market offered to them. In the post pandemic world, women are predicted to compromise major share of lay-offs by corporations. This in turn shall impact economic empowerment. Women also face biases and discrimination in hiring practices can exist in the absence of pay gaps. Gender inequality has been a social issue in India for centuries.

Keywords: Empowering, Women, Fixing, Chink, Social Fabric

INTRODUCTION

We have celebrated women's day quite a month ago on March 8, this day was more significant for two reasons. Firstly, because it marks 25th anniversary of Beijing declaration and platform for Action adopted in 1995 at the fourth world conference on women in Beijing, china. Secondly, the year 2021 itself serves an epiphany for the world leaders on the position of women. As the world is still fighting with the ruthless COVID-19 lockdown, women are dealing lot of stress, anxiety, depression. It was well documented that during a war, a natural disaster or a pandemic, women's bodies bear the worse burnt of the crisis. Domestic violence against women is already widespread and un-reported in many parts of country and is breaking all records of cruelty, brutality against women. Now, at the time of COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nation recognizes domestic violence against women as a "shadow pandemic". We often say "home is the safest place" but not for many women in this world. Ironically, for domestic violence victims, home is the most unsafe place to be quarantined as they are forced to live with their abusers.

During the first four phases of the COVID-19 related lockdown, Indian women filed more domestic violence complaints then recorded in a similar period of 10 years. In 2020 between March 25 and May 31, 1,477 complaints of domestic violence were made by women. In 68 day period recorded more complaints than those received March and may in previous 10 years. According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)

2019 reports that a majority (30.9%) of all 4.05 lakh cases under section 498A of the Indian Penal court (IPC). The section deals with ‘cruelty by husband or his relatives’.

DIFFERENCES, NOT YET ADDRESSED

Due to pandemic and lockdown, women have to bear the lopsided burden of unpaid care and unequal share in household responsibilities. Being the De-facto caregivers within the homes has put an outsized portion of the domestic workload on women. As compared to men, women are usually earning less, saving barely, mostly engaging in contractual temporary, unorganized and insecure jobs as per the availability of jobs in the market offered to them. In the post pandemic world, women are predicted to compromise major share of lay-offs by corporations. This in turn shall impact economic empowerment. Women also face biases and discrimination in hiring practices can exist in the absence of pay gaps- for example, if women know they will be treated unfairly and hence choose not to participate in labor market. Similarly, it is possible to observe large pay gaps in the absences of discrimination in hiring practices- for example, if women get fair treatment but apply for lower-paid job. According to the data of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) minutes spend on unpaid labour by per day for women is 300.9 more minutes compared to a man. More than 90% of Indian women participated in unpaid domestic work at home in 2019 compared to 27% men. On the other hand, only 22% of women participated in employment and related activities compared to 71% of men. If the women is working then she has to face a huge pay gap for same work which a man is performs. The report, released by the international rights group said that women and girls are the hardest hit by rising economic inequality across the world. Patriarchal norms have marked women as inferior to men. A women is considered to be a liability on men in some places even in today digital world. Discrimination continues in every aspect of life of women. Be it education, health, protection, or participation, the girl a women is always treated unequally.

Long before the word ‘empowerment’ became popular, women were speaking about gaining control over their lives, and participating in making the decisions that affect them in home and community, in government and international development policies. But problem is, very few have clear conception on empowerment. (Rahman 2013) women of India are relatively disempowered and they enjoy somewhat lower status than that of men in spite of many efforts undertaken by government. Gender gap exists regarding access to education and employment. Household decision making power and freedom of movement of women vary considerably with their age, education and employment status. It is found that acceptance of unequal gender norms by women are still prevailing in the society. More than half of the women believe wife beating to be justified for one reason or the other. Fewer women have final say on how to spend their earnings. Control over cash earnings increases with age, education and with place of residence. Women’s exposure to media is also less relative to men. Rural women are more prone to domestic violence than that of urban women. A large gender gap exists in political participation too. The study concludes by an observation that access to education and employment are only the enabling factors to empowerment, achievement towards the goal, however, depends largely on the attitude of the people towards gender equality.(Nayak and Mahanta 2009). Women empowerment is one way to get the underprivileged as well as the reasonably privileged women to come to realise their worth and potential in the face of a male dominated country/world.(“10 Reasons Why Women Empowerment Is Crucial Today!” n.d.). Women have so much unexplored potential which has never been tapped.(“Role of Education in Women Empowerment and Development: Issues and Impact by Sowjanya Shetty, V. Basil Hans :: SSRN” n.d.). The government of India has taken the safety and empowerment of women and children into serious consideration. The growing injustice towards women had to be minimized and schemes related to women empowerment are the solutions to the major problems related to women in India(“Women Empowerment - List of Women Empowerment Schemes in India” n.d.)

INDIA’S STORY

India’s progress in diplomacy, technology, economy, or in any other field has been robust. But, India still has many challenges related to caste, creed, religion, sex, etc. Gender inequality has been a social issue in India for centuries. That in many parts of India, the birth of a girl child is not welcomed is a known fact. It is known fact too, that discrimination starts from even before the girl child is born and sometimes she is killed as a fetus, and If she manages to see the light of the day, she is killed as an infant, which makes up the highly skewed child sex ratio where for every 1000 boys in India, there are only 908 girls. In such a scenario, it is but obvious that for myriad reasons, many girls across the country are forced to drop out of school. Hence, they do not get proper nutrition, upbringing, education, etc. which make women the most vulnerable at the times of crisis like this Coronavirus situation when the reports of girls dropping out of school came that thousands of girls drop out of their schools and colleges to work in fields with their parents or to do household

choruses to earn living for themselves and their families. Data released by ministry of women and child development (WCD) the average dropout rate of girls was 17.3% at the secondary education level and 4.74% at the elementary level in 2018-19.

Child marriage in India is another humongous to challenge to its society and the people who are in power. An estimation by International center for research on women-UNICEF was made on India's child marriage rate to be 47% from a sample surveys of 1998, while United Nations reports it to be 30% in 2005. The census of India of has counted and reported married women by age, with proportion of females in each 10 year census period since 1981. Jharkhand is the state with highest child marriages rates in India (14.1%), while Kerala is the only state where child marriage rates have increased in recent years. Jammu and Kashmir was reported to be the only state with lowest child marriage case at 0.4% in 2009. Although Indian constitution prohibits such activities against women as per article 23 everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and protection against unemployment. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work, for women too!! According to Article 16 the Indian constitution guarantees equal opportunity to all citizens in matters related to employment in public sector. Our constitution ensures that there shall be equal opportunity for the citizens in the matter of employment or appointment to any office under state. There are also various provision related domestic violence for instance, The protection for women from Domestic Violence Act,2005 and section 498A critically defines domestic violence and for this imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years and shall also be liable to fine can be imposed but being a criminal offence no monetary relief or compensation is provided. Also there is a prohibition of child marriage act, 2006 this law seeks to prevent the solemnization of child marriages. It also includes the prohibition of marriage between children below the age of 18 for a girl and the age of 21 for a boy.

DECODING GOVERNMENT'S INITIATIVE

When we talk about government's initiative for women empowerment, the very first scheme which comes to mind is 'Beti Bachao Beti padhao'. The scheme 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' revolves around the notion of female feticides. It is campaign which aims at eradication of female feticides and to make girls socially and financially self-reliant through education. Another one we have is 'Mahila-E-Haat' is a bilingual online marketing platform which helps aspiring women entrepreneurs, self-help group, and NGOs to showcase their products to the world. The platform is open to all women above the age of 18. Another important initiative by the government is the 'Mahila Shakti kendra'. The scheme came into force in 2017 and it aims to empower rural women with opportunities for skill development, employment, digital literacy, health and nutrition. Then another one we have is STEP or support to training and Employment programme for women. STEP aims at providing skills and competencies to women which will lead to employability. Under the scheme, a particular project is provided for a duration of 5 years, depending upon the nature of it, kinds of activities involved and the number of beneficiaries to be undertaken. It provides help in sectors including agriculture, horticulture, handicraft, computer handlooms, tailoring, etc. With this, it also provide help and support in skills like spoken English, it and computer, travel and tourism, hospitality, etc.

GIVING WOMEN THEIR CHANCE

Women can be powerful actors for peace, security, and prosperity. When they participate in peace processes and other formal decision- making processes, they can play an important role in initiating and inspiring progress on human rights, justice, national reconciliation and economic revitalization. They can also build coalitions across ethnic and sectarian lines and speak up for marginalized and minority groups. Investing in women's leadership is therefore smart security as well as smart development. We have many set examples of women proved themselves in every aspect of life. For instance, we have Ms. Nirmala Sitharaman as the most powerful woman in the politics, we have Mithali Raj captain of Indian cricket team and has many records and rewards after her name, then we have Roshni Nadar, the first women to head a listed Indian IT firm and there are many more women who have always scored better than men in their respective fields not only in India but across the world. We have seen many women Prime ministers of different nations have handled the COVID situation in much sustainable way in comparison with their male counterparts. The world has many idol women from our history till date for example the iron lady of India Ms. Indira Gandhi and the nightingale of India Ms. Sarojini Naidu the first women president of Indian national congress and many more women in the past have proved themselves as a leader of people and now the world is witnessing terrific leaders like Prime minister of Finland Sanna Marin, she is the youngest state leader, and finland's youngest prime minister. In New Zealand they have Jacinda Ardern, the lady prime minister who fought from the virus with her prowess and vigour and there are many women who proved their mettle to the world. Empowering

women is the biggest development and we have already covered a long way for empowering women but still there are miles to go.

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