



Gender Issues In Citizenship Debates

Mrs.ChandramaDevi

Asstt.Professor BorhollaCollege

ABSTRACT:

Gender inequality is the social phenomenon in which men and women are not treated equally. Citizenship is not just a certain status defined by a set of rights and responsibilities. Citizenship should be inclusive, incorporating the interests and needs of all citizens. A gender perspective on citizenship begins with an assertion of the rights of all women and men to equal treatment. Citizenship should also be an active concept, beyond mere status and formal rights. Much of the literature on gender and citizenship discusses the structural constraints that women face in exercising citizenship rights, in terms of law, policies and formal public divergences in many feminist theories. Many writers such as Marshall, Manu and Turner discuss the citizenship issues but unfortunately the absence of gender issue in citizenship debate is almost a key feature of their writings. The paper argues the citizenship cannot be understood without gender relation. Citizenship is an inclusive concept encompassing both men and women.

Keywords: *Inclusive*, Perspective, Assertion, Constrain, Integrated, Divergence.

Introduction:

Citizenship is a legal status and relation between an individual and a state irrespective of men and women that entails specific legal rights and duties. A citizen is a participatory member of a political community, as such is an inclusive concept. Citizenship is intrinsically concerned with rights and equality and thus connects to gender lens reveals the unequal access of men and women to various aspects of citizenship. A gender perspective on citizenship begins with an assertion of the rights of all women and men to equal treatment. Women and men may have distinct needs, and women of different ages, classes, or ethnicities may also have varying needs that requires specific attention. In terms of gender perspective, citizenship goes beyond a relationship between the citizen and the state. It extends to a range of other social institutions, traditional systems, civil society organization, economic and other institutions that affect women's and men's lives and opportunities. Although, being a citizen allows women to make claims as a citizen in their own rights, the identity ascribed to them is still in reality often in relation to a man, whether as a daughter, sister or wife. It is thus important to address not only state-level formal institutional arrangements but also informal institutions in order to improve and guarantee women's entitlements as citizen. So, it is expected to identify changes in policy formulation, implementation and evaluation which will enable governments and civil society organizations to better serve women's interest. It is hoped that the equal citizenship, whilst key to struggle for gender justice.

Review of Literature:

Many writers and scholars address about the understanding of gender and citizenship issues in their research works and try to highlight the gender issue in terms of citizenship debates. A few literatures regarding this sensitive issue are mentioned below.

Mukhopadhyay, M. (2007) in his work "Situating Gender and Citizenship in development Debates: Towards a Strategy" in Gender justice, citizenship and development tries to highlight how can an understanding of Gender and citizenship inform development policy and empower women. Mukhopadhyay discusses Gender and citizenship in the context of development debates and research. He opined that development is largely inattentive to the dynamics of state-society relations. Instead it leaves untouched the political relationships that animate society and perpetuate inequality.

Meer, S. and Sever, C (2004) in their research work on "Gender and Citizenship: Overview Report", try to focus the issue of improvement of women from the gender approach perspectives. They criticized the traditional conceptions of "Universal" Citizenship and argue that rights and participatory processes, which fail to acknowledge gender power imbalances, may preserve exclusionary practices. It examines case studies to identify changes in Policy formulation, implementation and evaluation which will enable governments and civil-society organizations to better serve women's interests.

Mahmad, S and Musembi, C.N. (2011) "Gender and Citizenship at the grassroots: Assessing the Effect of NGO initiatives in social Mobilization and Political Empowerment in Kenya and Bangladesh" explain the issues of women's participation in association and civil society initiatives can reduce gender inequality. The study assesses the extent to which social mobilization and political empowerment initiatives led by NGOs have influenced gender dynamics in Kenya and Bangladesh. It focuses on gender dynamics in everyday expression of citizenship at community level. It concludes that the NGO initiatives studied have played a role in placing women in both formal and informal spaces of leadership and visibility.

Most of the literature reviled relating to Gender issues have tried to explore the gender inequality in different social institutions. They are not emphasizing on gender issue in citizenship debates Therefore, this study has its relevance in the present context.

Methodology:

The study is based on Secondary Data collected from different literature, books, magazines, articles and internet accesses. Therefore, both historical and analytical methods are adopted to prepare this Seminar Paper.

Objectives:

In this study an attempt has been made to depict the problem of Gender issues in Citizenship debates with main focuses on the following objectives.

1. To examine the legal provisions for granting citizenship in civil society or in a state.
2. To evaluate the gender issues in Citizenship debates.
3. To identify the obstacles in granting citizenship on the basis of Gender.
4. Suggestions in the form of Conclusion.

Discussion:

Citizenship is the status of a person recognized under the law as being a legal member of a sovereign state or belonging to a nation. In India Article 5-11 of the Constitution deals with the concept of Citizenship. The term citizenship entails the enjoyment of full membership of any state in which a citizen has civil and political rights. The conditions and procedure for acquisition of Indian citizenship is as per the provision of the citizenship Act. 1955, which has been amended by the citizenship (Amendment) Act 1986, 1992, 2003 and 2005. As per provision of the citizenship Act. and the Ministry of Home Affairs, there are four ways in which Indian citizenship can be acquired. These provisions are by birth, descent, registration and naturalization irrespective of men and women or gender. In this sense citizenship should be an inclusive concept, incorporating the interests and needs of all citizens.

Gender perspective on citizenship begins with an assertion of the rights of all women and men to equal treatment. In gender perspective citizenship goes beyond a relationship between the citizen and the state. It extends to a range of other social institutions, such as the family and household, traditional systems, civil society organization, economic and other institution that affects women's and men's lives and opportunities. Citizenship is intrinsically concerned with rights and equalities, and thus connects to gender. Citizenship implies equal rights for all, but gender lens reveals the unequal access of men and women to various aspects of lives. The root cause of gender inequality is the role and place which society assigns to women. It is not simply a question of social class, but of culture. Granting unequal pay, space for sexual harassment, less opportunity for promotion of women in comparison to men, struggling with asking for higher pay in a job, unfortunate treatment to women on the basis of race and ethnicity are some prominent culture in our society. It counts a distinction between men and women and eventually provides a space for gender issue in citizenship debate.

Citizenship is not just a certain status, defined by a set of rights and responsibilities, but also as an identity. It is thus an expression of one's membership in a political community. Some writers differentiate citizenship in to active and passive categories. The passive citizenship is a recipient of certain benefits from the state, which include the right to

protection, access to basic necessities and liberties. The active citizen on the other hand engages with the state and the ruling elite to negotiate for rights. Active citizens not only receive certain rights from the state, but actively participate in deciding how benefits and burdens, rights and obligations are to be distributed how collective benefits and burdens are to be shared. Hence, though in principle citizenship entitlements are available to everyone, they are unequally distributed. One's location within the social structures based on class, caste, gender, ethnicity, region, language limits the possibility of engaging actively in the public sphere and for accessing one's rights.

Women's oppression is exemplified in the way women experience citizenship rights. Some feminists even express two way opinion regarding gender issues in citizenship debates, on one hand, they opine that the state might grant citizenship rights to women, and on the other, they express that it is the nature of the society, that would ultimately determine the extent to which citizenship rights can, in fact be exercised. Hence, gendering of citizenship lies in the creation of public-private divide, wherein male domination and female sub domination are structured by the strict separation of hierarchical spheres with male belonging to the public and female to the private.

Regarding citizenship discourse we have seen two major traditions. The first tradition is the civic republicanism which emphasizes on ideas of common goods, public spirit, political participation and civic virtue. Republicanism constructs citizenship as a status and as a means of active involvement and participation in the determination, practice and promotion of the common good. Many liberal thinkers criticize the republicanism and observe that republicanism by itself cannot generate a convincing theory of citizenship. The second is the liberal tradition which emphasizes individual rights and private interests. In the liberal tradition individual citizens are presumed to have equal status, equal rights and duties, so that the Principles of inequality deriving from gender, ethnic, class or caste or other contexts are not supposed to be of relevance to the status of citizenship. This tradition believes that everyone is treated as a full and equal member of society and the way to ensure citizenship in the state.

From the above discussion it is understood that gender citizenship is a product of negotiation and construction with the state. Over the last hundred years women's movement has been struggling for gender citizenship rights. The question of women's movement in political activity led to the formation of women's political associations. The women's movement challenged and broke the binaries of public-private and material-cultural, and demanded for equal rights of women in citizenship.

Findings:

Over the years the civil society has gotten closer to achieving gender equality. As a result of the last long movements for gender equality and gender issues in citizenship debate, it is found that the women have got the opportunity for better representation in politics by achieving citizenship rights. Yet then, in reality gender equality is remaining as a theoretical dogma in many countries of the world. We have identified some factors which affects the gender equality in citizenship debate. The main factors are –

1. Women still have less access to education than man. Uneven access to education has a huge effect on opportunities of the women which they should have got as a bonafied citizen of a country.
2. In most societies, there is an inherent belief that men are simply better equipped to handle certain job especially in state administrations so, from the ancient time some scholars refused to grant citizenship to women, instead they advocated to engage the

women in lower income jobs or unpaid labor. This discrimination resulted gender issues in citizenship debate.

3. Lack of legal protection also has a significant impact on women's ability to thrive and live in freedom. As a result women frequently have to make decisions for compromise which led to limit their goals. Despite having some progress in the field of political sphere over the years. Women are still grossly underrepresented in government and the political process.
4. Gender inequality and racism have been closely linked for a long time for performing the political activities by women. Some students on the citizenship debate on the bases of gender reveals that while the white women are allowed to acquire citizenship the African women are not allowed to have the same opportunity. The distinction among women on the basis of color continues the legacy of discrimination and contributes to gender inequality and gender issues in citizenship debate.
5. The overall mindset of a society has a significant impact on gender inequality which led to gender issue in citizenship debate. This study shows that, how society determines the differences and value of men vs. women plays a starring role in every arena, whatever it is political participation or citizenship.
6. A study done by the United Nations Millennium goals reveals that two thirds of the developing world have achieved a level of parity, but the problem still persists in the Middle East and North American countries which is a debilitating issues that contribute to gender discrimination.
7. It is found that an urgent necessity for formation of appropriate international networks for the development of national and global citizenship education in relation to gender equality.

Suggestions in the form of Conclusion:

The exclusion of women from public democratic discourses does not necessarily imply the failure of women to engage actively with politics by enjoying citizenship in a state. Gender equality is a basic right for all people irrespective of men and women. A focus on gender equality is essential to close inequality gaps and ensure the citizenship to women. It is essential to build a more equal and inclusive concept, free from gender discrimination involving gender issue in citizenship debate. The civil society should take the responsibility to eliminate the gender prejudice begins from childhood which is mostly responsible for gender discrimination in our social culture. In our traditional culture, girls and boys face unequal gender norms regarding expectations and access to resources and opportunities, with lifelong consequences – in their home, schools and communities, which nursing the gender inequality. So, gender issue in citizenship debate is not emerging from superstructure itself, rather, it has a close relationship with the base. In other words, the social culture and tradition itself furnishing the debate involving the question of equal citizenship to women and men. In many countries, though, the women are allowed to enjoy equal citizenship rights with men, yet, in many countries the women are not empowered to enjoy equal citizenship rights till now.

References:

1. Booth. D. Zoll; Introduction: Working with the grain. The African power and political Program IDS Bulletin vol-42 No.2 March pp-1-10 (Google scholar)
2. Cecchini.M.2003, 'Active Citizenship: Adult Learning and Active Citizenship: EAEA conference, Cyprus, 15 Nov 2003 (Google Scholar)
3. Cornwall. A and Gaventa.J. 2001, Bridging the gap: Citizenship Participation and Accountability; PLA Notes 40, University of Sussex Brighton: Institute of Development studies (Google Scholar)
4. Kabeer, N 2004, Inclusive Citizenship: Meaning and Expression: London: Zed Books (Google Scholar)
5. Meer, S. and Sever, C 2004, Gender and citizenship, overview Report, Brighton: Bridge development gender, Institute of Development studies, University of Sussex. (Google Scholar)
6. Mukhopadhyay, M 2007, Introduction: Situating Gender and Citizenship in Development Debates. International Development Research Centre Ottawa (Google Scholar)
7. Bouta, T., Frerks, G and Bannon, I (2005) – Gender, conflict and Development, Washington, DC: World Bank.
8. Canning, K., and Rose, S.O; (2001): Introduction: Gender, Citizenship and Subjectivity: Some Historical and Theoretical Considerations. Gender and History.
9. Dhruvaranjan, V. and Vickers, J. (eds) (2002) Gender, Race and Nation: A Global Perspective. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
10. Giles, W., and Hyndman, J. (eds) (2004) Sites of Violence: Gender and Conflict zones. Berkeley: University of California Press.

