



"A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS"

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ABSTRACT

The idea of Human Rights can be traced back to the Neanderthal man when human society came into existence. It can also be identified in the origin and development of Greek civilization and culture also. However the serious consideration of Human Rights appeared after the First World War and the Second World War when the military regimes started committing excesses against the innocent people and against the prisoners of War of the respective countries. It may also be described that the aftermath of the two world wars compelled the people and awakened the humanitarian outlook in them that in principle led to the formation and establishment of Human Rights in the world and so in India. But the most regretful matter is that in spite of the formation of Human Rights in our country the existential conditions of most of our women and poor children remain the same. The Government Resolutions and the constitutional amendments could hardly produce any positive change in their social and economic condition.

It should be curious to note that even after Fifty years of independence the sentiment of preferring male child to female one did not vanish in the rural and urban societies of our country. Even today it is reported that female infanticide is predominant which signifies the acute suffering and pitiful existence of women in our nation. Indeed, the discriminative attitude of society towards women who are undergoing steering both socially and emotionally.

India's population may well exceed one billion within the next decade. It is, often, the quantitative, rather than the qualitative aspect of the "population problem" that gets the major attention. A truly meaningful population policy must, however, address both these interdependent dimension. While we must do everything possible to regulate and retard population growth, we must also ensure the quality of our human resources. With a healthy and productive population, India could become one of the mightiest countries of the world in the next century.

KEYWORDS: *idea of Human Rights , human resources , Greek civilization.*

INTRODUCTION:

The idea of Human Rights can be traced back to the Neanderthal man when human society came into existence. It can also be identified in the origin and development of Greek civilization and culture also. However the serious consideration of Human Rights appeared after the First World War and the Second World War when the military regimes started committing excesses against the innocent people and against the prisoners of War of the respective countries. It may also be described that the aftermath of the two world wars compelled the people and awakened the humanitarian outlook in them that in principle led to the formation and establishment of Human Rights in the world and so in India. But the most regretful matter is that in spite of the formation of Human Rights in our country, the existential conditions of most of our women and poor children remain the same. The Government Resolutions and the constitutional amendments could hardly produce any positive change in their social and economic condition.

THE CONCEPT OF HUMAN RIGHTS:

Several theoretical approaches have been advanced to explain how and why human rights became part of social expectations. On the other hand human rights are seen as evolution of natural law stemming from different philosophical or religious grounds. Other theories hold that human rights codify moral behavior which is a human social product developed by a process of biological and social evolution (associated with Hume). Human rights are also described as a sociological pattern of rule setting (as in the sociological theory of law and the work of Weber). These approaches include the notion that individuals in a society accept rules from legitimate authority in exchange for security and economic advantage — a social contract. The two theories that dominate contemporary human rights discussion are the 'Interest theory' and 'will theory'. Interest theory argues that the principal function of human rights is to protect and promote certain essential human interests, while 'will theory' attempts to establish the validity of human rights based on the unique human capacity for freedom.

Later on the Human Rights have been classified into two major categories such as (1) civil and political rights and (2) economic, social and cultural rights. However the scope of the rights can be summed up in simple description of — right to work, to education, to health and housing and of course chiefly the right to security. Now, let us examine the validity and credibility of these rights in the present Indian context.

THE PRESENT SCENARIO OF OUR NATION

At the time of Independence our country faced two major nutritional problems. One was the threat of famine and the resultant acute starvation due to low agricultural production and the lack of an appropriate food distribution system. The other was chronic energy deficiency due to:

- low dietary intake because of poverty and low purchasing power;
- high prevalence of infection because of poor access to safe-drinking water, sanitation and health care; .
- poor utilization of available facilities due to low literacy and lack of awareness.

The major public health problems were chronic energy deficiency, marasmus and micronutrient deficiencies such as goiter, beriberi, and anaemia. Then the country adopted multi-sectoral, multi-pronged strategy to combat these problems and to improve the nutritional status of the population. In this context the article 47 of the Constitution of India states that 'the State shall regard raising the level of nutrition and standard of living of its people and improvement in public health among its primary duties'. Besides this, the so called Green Revolution ensured that the increase in food production will stay ahead of the increase in population. But all these declarations ultimately disillusioned the masses.

The ruling Government of country proudly declares that majority of our population are fed properly and the nation is progressing well in that direction_ But the private and foreign surveys reveal that Sixty percent of our population are still below the poverty line and do not have minimum staple food to feed their stomach Adding fuel to the fire the United Nations triter National council revealed that South East Asian countries (including India) cannot survive unless they create 10 Lakh jobs per month. The present average per capita income per day is Rs. 15/- in rural and Rs. 251- in urban population indeed reveal what a hazardous blow is given to our economy as well as to the health of our young and adolescent citizens. The irony is that though Government succeeds, let us suppose, in creating manual jobs in the country, our youth are not strong and healthy enough to perform the work which again should lead to acute poverty and morbid generation ft is against this back drop that one must consider the need to assess the nutritional requirement needed for adolescents and especially for the women of our country.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF THE WOMEN COMMUNITY:

It should be curious to note that even after Fifty years of Independence the sentiment of preferring male child to female one did not vanish in the rural and urban societies of our country. Even today it is reported that female infanticide is predominant which signifies the acute suffering and pitiful existence of

women in our nation. Indeed, the discriminative attitude of society towards women who are undergoing suffering both socially and emotionally.

The women are accorded the status of second class citizens in our country. Then it should not be surprising that developmental programmes which do not take in to account the aspirations of women are not effective in achieving their objectives. The growing attitude of society that, rural women who comprise Fifty percent of population or inarticulate, illiterate and ignorant of objects of welfare is diminishing the chance of survival of women. Today the conditions of material state in which poor women live is characterized by low wages, poor nutrition, lack of access to health care, education and training emphasis on improving the daily conditions of women's existence curtailed women's awareness of, and readiness to act against the less visible but powerful underlying structures of subordination and inequality. While receiving material benefits, women should not be deprived of their urge to achieve a better role, their will power to reach a higher quality of life and their commitment to an enhanced status in the family, community and society.

Today the nation cannot afford to ignore or reject the importance and participation of women in the progress of our society according to the surveys women make up 30% of the official labour force, perform 60% of all working hours, receive 10% of the world income but still own less than 1% of the world property. This is the lawful economic profile of women in the world. This is also true of Indian women and very much true of rural women.

Rural women in our country suffer economically and socially both of which are invisible. Economic invisibility steins from the perception that women are not relevant to the wage and market economy. Social invisibility is a result of general status of second class citizen, usually accorded to women The growing realization that rural women are not inarticulate, illiterate and ignorant objects of welfare, but are in fact, productive, hard working adults, who have coped with battle for survival from a very young age, makes their participation in the development process increasingly necessary and imperative. But what is appalling to everyone is the failure of the society to recognize the importance and the immense significance of women participation in the progress of the mother land. It is known fact that majority of women live in rural areas, urban slums and majority of women workers are engaged in subsistence agriculture and informal sector with little or no regulation, legislative protection, and trade union support. The down scaling of public sector, budgetary restraints and privatization affected women adversely, particularly through the reduction of subsidized welfare services. Rapid technological advances are likely to affect poor women by devaluing their traditional skills thus jeopardizing their survival strategies and pushing them into extreme poverty.

There is also increasing evidence of women entering home based sub-contract work, which almost denies them protection under labour laws and isolates them from fellow workers thereby reducing opportunities to organize themselves. At times, women have suffered a disproportionate reduction in labour, market opportunities under economic reforms especially in economics under transition. The vast majority of women work in self- employment outside the agriculture in low paying trade and service activities. The major difficulty encountered by women in self- employment activities relates to access to credit market and technical skills. Customary laws and conventions in our country preclude women from claiming family assets. The drudgery, destitution and helplessness of the fairsex is indeed indescribable. The women inconsolably cry to enter into a world which is totally callous and apathetic to their miseries. A considerable amount of abuse and harassment of women also takes place within the family. The phenomenon of violence in the home is common and is not only confined to poor and illiterate families as it is often presumed In some communities female children have been known to be systematically condemned to pervasive neglect.

The incidence of unwanted pregnancies is still very high suggesting among other factors, inadequate access of women to education about reproductive choices, family planning services or lack of control over their reproductive roles in an unequal sexual partnership. Excessive worked, malnutrition, repeated pregnancies, poor education and health facilities mars the lives of majority of women particularly those who are poor and live in abject poverty. In the present society poverty is known to have driven countless women

to low status, low paying occupations in domestic services or organized prostitution frequently as migrant way from their homes at times across international borders exposing them to considerable risk of economic exploitation and sexual abuse. In material terms also women and girl children in ultra-poor families are the worst sufferers, as the distribution of family resources under patriarchal systems tends to be skewed against them.

CONCLUSION:

India has been generously endowed with abundant land and water resources and rich biodiversity. A whole range of foods which can provide balanced nutritious diets are available within the country. Our agricultural scientists have to be alive to the need for augmenting and diversifying food production in our country. Prudence demands that we use our plentiful food resources wisely for the promotion of the health of our people, specially the women community.

India's population may well exceed one billion within the next decade. It is, often, the quantitative, rather than the qualitative aspect of the "population problem" that gets the major attention. A truly meaningful population policy must, however, address both these interdependent dimensions. While we must do everything possible to regulate and retard population growth, we must also ensure the quality of our human resources. With a healthy and productive population, India could become one of the mightiest countries of the world in the next century.

The regular surveys of National Institute of Nutrition, India must regularly forward their findings to the Ministry of IIRD (Human Resources Development, New Delhi) and the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, New Delhi, so that they are enabled to prepare Budgets for meeting the nutritional demands. Subsequently the government and N-G- must take care for reaching of the commodities to the needy women community of our country.

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