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- ❖ **Dalits in India**
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INSIDE

| | |
|---|----|
| Editorial | |
| Redeeming Democracy | 5 |
| <i>B.K.</i> | |
| Dalits in India: An Overview | 7 |
| <i>Smt. M Sarala & Dr M.S. Sankar</i> | |
| Appraising Reservation Policy in the Post-Mandal Era | 14 |
| <i>Dr. K. Madeswaran</i> | |
| Relevance of Gandhism under Digitopoly | 20 |
| <i>Dr. N. Mukundan</i> | |
| Need of SHGs for Women Empowerment | 22 |
| <i>Dr. Anjuly Sharma</i> | |
| Toxic effects of Endosulfan pesticide on children | 26 |
| <i>G. K. Venugopal & Shaukath Azim</i> | |
| The Polity of the Anals of Manipur | 32 |
| <i>Dr. BD Thumdal Anal</i> | |
| Health and Nutrition Status of the Rural Girl Child | 38 |
| <i>Dr. (Mrs.) V. Jacqueline Raja Bai</i> | |
| Women's Question in Constituent Assembly Debates | 42 |
| <i>Dr. Satarupa Pal</i> | |
| Managing Environment via Rural Local Governance | 46 |
| <i>Dr. Dipen Saikia</i> | |
| Work-Life-Balance: A Human Resource Approach | 50 |
| <i>Mukund M. Mundargi</i> | |
| Role of Dairy Co-Operatives in Empowering Rural Women | 53 |
| <i>Dr. R. Arputharaj, Dr. A.Kumar & Dr. S. Pandeewari</i> | |

Redeeming Democracy

The ensuing general elections scheduled for the summer of 2019 are not going to be ordinary electoral contest between the contesting parties because what is at stake is the future of our democracy in which we pride in as the world's largest democracy. The forthcoming political battle envisages a pivotal moment in country's political life wherein political rivals will be embarking on a strategic course that is going to be exceedingly pushy and combative than in 2014, entailing the potential of altering fundamental postulates of India's democratic framework. Viewed in a broad perspective, India's, edifice of governance and Constitution envisage India both a democracy and a republic. Current potent and well-defined constitutional link between democracy and republic has firmly secured all citizens as equal stakeholders in this nation state. Nevertheless, this democratic and republican legacy is increasingly being eclipsed by the partisan, arbitrary and whimsical disposition of the dispensation at the helm that rarely cares for the traditional moorings of governance.

Votaries and zealots of the dispensation at the helm are often seen becoming vocal in public sphere in contesting the cardinal principles of democratic polity and constitutional institutions, vociferously clamouring for reviving mechanisms conducive for a particular ideology, thereby challenging India's heritage of diversity, plurality and composite nationhood. Interestingly, the proclivity of the ruling dispensation discernible from its policy responses and actions also manifests a design that suits a particular ideology irrespective of such a tendency being detrimental to the governing consensus on nationhood and citizenship. Top brass of the dispensation currently at the helm is indulging in articulating policy statements that indicates its preparedness for a more combative political strategy by raking up controversial issues thereby questioning the prevailing governing consensus on primary issues. Decisive measures being adhered to by the current dispensation at the helm in accordance with its ideological commitments are seemingly designed to evolve a new political culture that could be compulsorily entrenched in public space.

The Opposition, which is almost in a disarray, has failed to gauge the magnitude of gravity of the situation unfolding in the political arena, which is termed by some experts as "a fundamental contest between the original pluralist vision of Indian democracy and the monocultural and exclusivist view of the Hindu nationalists." Failure on the part of the Opposition parties to foresee the underlying designs beneath the interconnected trends emerging in the wake of the policy moves initiated by the ruling dispensation entails the potential of unleashing serious repercussions for the democratic polity. Tepid response of the Opposition to mobilize public opinion against the controversial issues like the status of J&K and the Citizenship Act has reportedly bolstered the ruling dispensation to eagerly wade into these issues and to place them at the top of its national political agenda thereby declaring its readiness for the summer 2019 electoral battle. Continued repression of critical voices and dissent in tandem with injecting acerbic narrative into the national political discourse is a clear sign of curtailing democratic freedoms and such measures have brought country's democratic governing framework under severe strain. Parliament, which is regarded as the heart of the Indian Republic, has seemingly diminished in stature under the brute majoritarianism. The dispensation currently at the helm has facilitated the intrusion of religion into politics as the new norm.

Subversion of the media autonomy, the erosion of civil liberties, the dominant role of money power in influencing election results, a rising tide of populism, the spreading cancer of divisive politics, the growing appeal of militant nationalism and misuse of religion in political campaigns have proved instrumental in contributing to the gradual fading of democracy. Concurrently, it is equally true that such attempts to derail democracy have also been made in the past without any tangible success because of the vigil exercised by the Indian voters. In the age of social media, the electorate seems more concerned about sifting chaff off the grain and is unlikely to be hoodwinked by fake news and populist rhetoric. Undoubtedly, the social media is the storehouse of fake news and rhetoric to misguide the gullible masses; nevertheless, simultaneously these masses are equally competent enough in keeping India's democratic imagination vibrant and expansive. They also have the potential of redeeming democracy and the ensuing general elections will perhaps prove us right.

— BK

Dalits in India: An Overview

Smt. M Sarala* & Dr M.S. Sankar**

[Dalit is a self-designation for a group of people traditionally regarded as untouchable. Dalits are a mixed population of numerous caste groups all over South Asia, and speak various languages. While the caste system has been abolished under the Indian Constitution, there is still discrimination and prejudice against Dalits in South Asia. Since Indian independence, significant steps have been taken to provide opportunities in jobs and education. Many social organizations have encouraged proactive provisions to better the conditions of Dalits through improved education, health and employment.]

Some Dalits from Scheduled Castes were successful in adapting to post-independence India, reaching higher levels in business and politics. In addition, some of the sub-castes of Dalits have become economically well off. Despite anti-discrimination laws, many Dalits still suffer from social stigma and political oppression; Dalits are often denied the basic rights of education, housing, property rights, freedom of religion, choice of employment (many Dalits accept payment of less than \$1 USD per day), and equal treatment before the law (89% of all court cases involving crimes against Dalits result in acquittals). In 2006, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh acknowledged parallels between “untouchability” and apartheid.

Etymology

The word “Dalit” comes from the Marathi language, and means “ground”, “suppressed”, “crushed”, or “broken to pieces”. It was first used by Jyotirao Phule in the nineteenth century, in the context of the oppression faced by the erstwhile “untouchable” castes of the twice-born Hindus

According to Victor Premasagar, the term expresses their “weakness, poverty and humiliation at the hands of the upper castes in the Indian society.”

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Gandhi coined the word Harijan, translated roughly as “Children of God”, to identify the former Untouchables. The terms “Scheduled castes and scheduled tribes” (SC/ST) are the official terms used in Indian government documents to identify former “untouchables” and tribes. However, in 2008 the National Commission for Scheduled Castes, noticing that “Dalit” was used interchangeably with the official term “scheduled castes”, called the term “unconstitutional” and asked state governments to end its use. After the order, the Chhattisgarh government ended the official use of the word “Dalit”.

“Adi Dravida”, “Adi Karnataka” and “Adi Andhra” are words used in the states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, respectively, to identify people of former “untouchable” castes in official documents. These words, particularly the prefix of “Adi”, denote the aboriginal inhabitants of the land

Social status of Dalits

In the context of traditional Hindu society, Dalit status has often been historically associated with occupations regarded as ritually impure, such as any involving butchering, removal of rubbish, removal of waste and leatherwork. Dalits work as manual labourers, cleaning latrines and sewers, and clearing away rubbish. Engaging in these activities was considered to be polluting the individual, and this pollution was considered contagious. As a result, Dalits were commonly

segregated, and banned from full participation in Hindu social life. For example, they could not enter a temple or a school, and were required to stay outside the village. Elaborate precautions were sometimes observed to prevent incidental contact between Dalits and other castes. Discrimination against Dalits still exists in rural areas in the private sphere, in everyday matters such as access to eating places, schools, temples and water sources. It has largely disappeared in urban areas and in the public sphere.

Some Dalits have successfully integrated into urban Indian society, where caste origins are less obvious and less important in public life. In rural India, however, caste origins are more readily apparent and Dalits often remain excluded from local religious life, though some qualitative evidence suggests that its severity is fast diminishing.

In India's most populous state, Uttar Pradesh, Dalits have revolutionized politics and have elected a Dalit chief minister.

Dalits and similar groups are also found in Nepal and Bangladesh. In addition, the Burakumin of Japan, Baekjeong of Korea and Midgan of Somalia are similar in status to Dalits.

Genetics

One study found some association between caste status and Y-chromosomal genetic markers seeming to indicate a more European lineage of the higher castes; however, many recent studies indicate no genetic differences between upper and lower castes. Caste differentiation between Indians is regarded by many as a social construct between Indian people, and is claimed not to have a genetic basis. Genetic testing further indicates that, as a whole, Indian genetic groups do not show a great affinity to any non-South Asian groups

Dalits and religion

Sachar Committee report of 2006 revealed that scheduled castes and tribes of India are not limited to the religion of Hinduism. The 61st Round Survey of the NSSO found that almost

nine-tenths of the Buddhists, one-third of the Sikhs, and one-third of the Christians in India belonged to the notified scheduled castes or tribes of the Constitution.

| Religion | Scheduled Caste | Scheduled Tribe |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Buddhism | 89.50% | 7.40% |
| Christianity | 9.00% | 32.80% |
| Sikhism | 30.70% | 0.90% |
| Hindusim | 22.20% | 9.10% |
| Zoroastrianism | - | 15.90% |
| Jainism | - | 2.60% |
| Islam | 0.80% | 0.50% |

Hinduism

The large majority of the Dalits in India are Hindus, although some in Maharashtra and other states have converted to Buddhism, often called Neo-Buddhism. Dalits in Sri Lanka can be Buddhist.

Historical attitudes

The term, Chandala can be seen used in the Manu Smriti (codes of caste segregation) to the Mahabharata the religious epic. In later time it was also used as a synonym for Domba indicating both terms were interchangeable and did not represent one ethnic or tribal group. Instead, it was a general opprobrious term. In the early Vedic literature several of the names of castes that are spoken of in the Smritis as Antyajas occur. We have *Carmanna* (a tanner of hides) in the Rig Veda (VIII.8,38) the Chandala and Paulkasa occur in Vajasaneyi Samhita. *Vepa* or *Vapta* (barber) in the Rig Veda. Vidalakara or Bidalakar occurs in the Vajasaneyi Samhita. *Vasahpalpuli* (washer woman) corresponding to the Rajakas of the Smritis in Vajasaneyi Samhita.

Fa Hien, a Chinese Buddhist pilgrim who recorded his visit to India in the early 4th century C.E., noted that Chandalas were segregated from the mainstream society as untouchables.

Traditionally, Dalits were considered to be beyond the pale of Varna or caste system. They were originally considered as *Panchama* or the fifth group beyond the fourfold division of Indian people. They were not allowed to let their shadows fall upon a non-Dalit caste member and they were required to sweep the ground where they walked to remove the 'contamination' of their footfalls. Dalits were forbidden to worship in temples or draw water from the same wells as caste Hindus, and they usually lived in segregated neighborhoods outside the main village. In the Indian countryside, the Dalit villages are usually a separate enclave a kilometre or so outside the main village where the other Hindu castes reside.

Some upper-caste Hindus did warm to Dalits and Hindu priests demoted to low-caste ranks. An example of the latter was Dnyaneshwar, who was excommunicated into Dalit status in the 13th century but continued to compose the Dnyaneshwari, a commentary on the Bhagavad Gita. Eknath, another excommunicated Brahmin, fought for the rights of untouchables during the Bhakti period. Historical examples of Dalit priests include Chokhamela in the 14th century, who was India's first recorded Dalit poet and Raidas, born into a family of cobblers. The 15th century saint Sri Ramananda Raya also accepted all castes, including untouchables, into his fold.

Most of these saints subscribed to the Bhakti movements in Hinduism during the medieval period that rejected casteism. Nandanar, a low-caste Hindu cleric, also rejected casteism and accepted Dalits. Due to isolation from the rest of the Hindu society, many Dalits continue to debate whether they are 'Hindu' or 'non-Hindu'. Traditionally, Hindu Dalits have been barred from many activities that were seen as central to Vedic religion and Hindu practices of orthodox sects. Among Hindus each community has followed its own variation of Hinduism, and the wide variety of practices and beliefs observed in Hinduism makes any clear assessment difficult.

The declaration by princely states of Kerala between 1936 and 1947 that temples were open

to all Hindus went a long way towards ending the system of untouchability in Kerala. According to Kerala tradition the Dalits were forced to maintain a distance of 96 feet from Namboothiris, 64 feet from Nairs and 48 feet from other upper castes (like Maarans and Arya Vysyas) as they were thought to pollute them. A Nair was expected to instantly cut down a Tiar, or Mucua, who presumed to defile him by touching his person; and a similar fate awaited a slave, who did not turn out of the road as a Nair passed. Ezhava in Kerala are Dalit, because of education because they were Budhists. Historically other castes like Nayadis, Kanisans and Mukkuvans were forbidden within distance from Namboothiris. Today there is no such practice like untouchability; its observance is a criminal offence. However, educational opportunities to Dalits in Kerala remain limited.

Reform Movements

The earliest known historical people to have rejected the caste system were Gautama Buddha and Mahavira. Their teachings eventually became independent religions called Buddhism and Jainism. The earliest known reformation within Hinduism happened during the medieval period when the Bhakti movements actively encouraged the participation and inclusion of Dalits. In the 19th Century, the Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj and the Ramakrishna Mission actively participated in the emancipation of Dalits. While there always have been segregated places for Dalits to worship, the first "upper-caste" temple to openly welcome Dalits into their fold was the Laxminarayan Temple in Wardha in the year 1928. It was followed by the Temple Entry Proclamation issued by the last King of Travancore in the Indian state of Kerala in 1936.

The Sikh reformist Satnami movement was founded by Guru Ghasidas, born a Dalit. Other notable Sikh Gurus such as Guru Ravidas were also Dalits. Other reformers, such as Jyotirao Phule, Ayyankali of Kerala and Iyothee Thass of Tamil Nadu worked for emancipation of Dalits. The 1930s saw key struggle between Mahatma Gandhi and B. R. Ambedkar over whether Dalits

would have separate or joint electorates. Although he failed to get Ambedkar's support for a joint electorate, Gandhi nevertheless began the "Harijan Yatra" to help the Dalit population. Palwankar Baloo, a Dalit politician and a cricketer, joined the Hindu Mahasabha in the fight for independence.

Other Hindu groups have reached out to the Dalit community in an effort to reconcile with them. On August 2006, Dalit activist Namdeo Dhasal engaged in dialogue with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh in an attempt to "bury the hatchet". Hindu temples are increasingly receptive to Dalit priests, a function formerly reserved for Brahmins. Suryavanshi Das, for example, is the Dalit priest of a notable temple in Bihar.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that discrimination against Hindu Dalits is on a slow but steady decline. For instance, an informal study by Dalit writer Chandrabhan Prasad and reported in the New York Times states: "In rural Azamgarh District [in the state of Uttar Pradesh], for instance, nearly all Dalit households said their bridegrooms now rode in cars to their weddings, compared with 27 percent in 1990. In the past, Dalits would not have been allowed to ride even horses to meet their brides; that was considered an upper-caste privilege."

Many Hindu Dalits have achieved affluence in society, although vast millions still remain poor. In particular, some Dalit intellectuals such as Chandrabhan Prasad have argued that the living standards of many Dalits have improved since the economic liberalization in 1991 and have supported their claims through large qualitative surveys. Recent episodes of Caste-related violence in India have adversely affected the Dalit community. In urban India, discrimination against Dalits in the public sphere is greatly reduced, but rural Dalits are struggling to elevate themselves.

Government organizations and NGOs work to emancipate them from discrimination, and many

Hindu organizations have spoken in their favor. Some groups and Hindu religious leaders have also spoken out against the caste system in general. However, the fight for temple entry rights for Dalits is far from finished and continues to cause controversy. Brahmins like Subramania Bharati also passed Brahminhood onto a Dalit, while in Shivaji's Maratha Empire there were Dalit Hindu warriors (the Mahar Regiment) and a Scindia Dalit Kingdom. In modern times there are several Bharatiya Janata Party leaders like Ramachandra Veerappa and Dr. Suraj Bhan.

More recently, Dalits in Nepal are now being accepted into priesthood (traditionally reserved for Brahmins). The Dalit priestly order is called "Pandaram"

Islam

Muslim society in India can also be separated into several caste-like groups. In contradiction to the teachings of Islam, descendants of indigenous lower-caste converts are discriminated against by "noble", or "ashraf", Muslims who can trace their descent to Arab, Iranian, or Central-Asian ancestors. There are several groups in India working to emancipate them from upper-caste Muslim discrimination.

Sikhism

Irwin Baiya is the most prominent Dalit of the 20th century. Dalits form a class among the Sikhs who stratify their society according to traditional casteism. Kanshi Ram himself was of Sikh background although converted because he found that Sikh society did not respect Dalits and so became a neo-Buddhist. The most recent controversy was at the Talhan village Gurudwara near Jalandhar where there was a dispute between Jat Sikhs and Ravidasia Sikhs. The Different Sikh Dalits are Ravidasia Sikh and Mazhabi Sikh.

Although Sikhism does not recognize the caste system, many families, especially the ones with immediate cultural ties to India, generally do not marry among different castes. Recently, there were news that in some village in Punjab, some

Dalit Sikhs were not allowed to enter the village Gurudwara. A first look at any Sikh matrimonial website clearly shows the casteism in Sikhism. In fact, it is now-a-days said that there is more of casteism in Sikhism than in Hinduism. Recent clashes in Vienna is an example of severe caste division among Sikhs worldwide.

There are sects such as the Adi-Dharmis who have now abandoned Sikh Temples and the 5 Ks. They are like the Ravidasis and regard Ravidas as their guru. They are also clean shaven as opposed to the mainstream Sikhs. Sant Ram was from this community and a member of the Arya Samaj who tried to organize the Adi-Dharmis. Other Sikh groups include Jhiwars, Bazigars, Rai Sikh (many of whom are Ravidasias.) Just as with Hindu Dalits, there has been violence against Sikh Dalits.

Christianity

Across India, many Christian communities still follow the caste system. Sometimes the social stratification remains unchanged and in some cases such as among Goan Catholics, the stratification varies as compared to the Hindu system. Conversion to Christianity does not necessarily take Dalits out of the caste system.

A 1992 study of Catholics in Tamil Nadu found some Dalit Christians faced segregated churches, cemeteries, services and even processions. Despite Christian teachings these Dalit also faced economic and social hardships due to discrimination by upper-caste priests and nuns. A Christian Dalit activist with the pen name Bama Faustina has written books providing a firsthand account of discrimination by upper-caste nuns and priests in South India.

Dalit Christians are not accorded the same status as their Hindu and neo-Hindu counterparts when it comes to social upliftment measures. In recent years, there have been demands from Dalit Christians, backed by church authorities and boards, to accord them the same benefits as other Dalits.

Buddhism

In Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and a few other regions, Dalits have come under the influence of the neo-Buddhist movement initiated by Ambedkar. In the 1950s, Ambedkar turned his attention to Buddhism and travelled to Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) to attend a convention of Buddhist scholars and monks. While dedicating a new Buddhist vihara near Pune, Ambedkar announced that he was writing a book on Buddhism, and that as soon as it was finished, he planned to make a formal conversion to Buddhism. Ambedkar twice visited Myanmar (then Burma) in 1954; the second time in order to attend the third conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists in Rangoon. In 1955, he founded the Bharatiya Bauddha Mahasabha, or the Buddhist Society of India. He completed his final work, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, in 1956. It was published posthumously.

After meetings with the Sri Lankan Buddhist monk Hammalawa Saddhatissa, Ambedkar organised a formal public ceremony for himself and his supporters in Nagpur on October 14, 1956. Accepting the Three Refuges and Five Precepts from a Buddhist monk in the traditional manner, Ambedkar completed his own conversion. He then proceeded to convert an estimated 500,000 of his supporters who were gathered around him. [10] Taking the 22 Vows, Ambedkar and his supporters explicitly condemned and rejected Hinduism and Hindu philosophy. He then traveled to Kathmandu in Nepal to attend the Fourth World Buddhist Conference. He completed his final manuscript, *The Buddha or Karl Marx* on December 2, 1956.

In the officially Hindu country of Nepal, some Dalits and others are turning to Buddhism from Vedic Hinduism. Reasons cited are to embrace non-violence and as a response to the caste system, which has led to a substantial increase

in Buddhists in the population (0.1% to 0.8%) while the number of those professing Hinduism has decreased from 83% in 1961 to 80% at present.

The Prevention of Atrocities Act

The Prevention of Atrocities Act (POA) is a tacit acknowledgement by the Indian government that caste relations are defined by violence, both incidental and systemic. In 1989, the Government of India passed the Prevention of Atrocities Act (POA), which clarified specific crimes against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (the Dalits) as “atrocities,” and created strategies and punishments to counter these acts. The purpose of The Act was to curb and punish violence against Dalits. Firstly, it clarified what the atrocities were: both particular incidents of harm and humiliation, such as the forced consumption of noxious substances, and systemic violence still faced by many Dalits, especially in rural areas.

Such systemic violence includes forced labor, denial of access to water and other public amenities, and sexual abuse of Dalit women. Secondly, the Act created Special Courts to try cases registered under the POA. Thirdly, the Act called on states with high levels of caste violence (said to be “atrocities-prone”) to appoint qualified officers to monitor and maintain law and order. The POA gave legal redress to Dalits, but only two states have created separate Special Courts in accordance with the law. In practice the Act has suffered from a near-complete failure in implementation. Policemen have displayed a consistent unwillingness to register offenses under the act. This reluctance stems partially from ignorance and also from peer protection. According to a 1999 study, nearly a quarter of those government officials charged with enforcing the Act are unaware of its existence.

Dalits and contemporary Indian politics



Newspapers in Calcutta announce the surprise majority for Mayawati’s party in the 2007 elections in Uttar Pradesh

While the Indian Constitution has duly made special provisions for the social and economic uplift of the Dalits, comprising the so-called scheduled castes and tribes in order to enable them to achieve upward social mobility, these concessions are limited to only those Dalits who remain Hindu. There is a demand among the Dalits who have converted to other religions that the statutory benefits should be extended to them as well, to “overcome” and bring closure to historical injustices.

Another major politically charged issue with the rise of Hindutva’s (Hindu nationalism) role in Indian politics is that of religious conversion. This political movement alleges that conversions of Dalits are due not to any social or theological motivation but to allurements like education and jobs. Critics argue that the inverse is true due to laws banning conversion, and the limiting of social relief for these backward sections of Indian society being revoked for those who convert. Bangaru Laxman, a Dalit politician, was a prominent member of the Hindutva movement.

Another political issue is over the affirmative-action measures taken by the government towards the upliftment of Dalits through quotas in government jobs and university admissions. About 8% of the seats in the National and State Parliaments are reserved for Scheduled Caste

and Tribe candidates, a measure sought by B. R. Ambedkar and other Dalit activists in order to ensure that Dalits would obtain a proportionate political voice.

Anti-Dalit prejudices exist in fringe groups, such as the extremist militia Ranvir Sena, largely run by upper-caste landlords in areas of the Indian state of Bihar. They oppose equal treatment of Dalits and have resorted to violent means to suppress the Dalits. The Ranvir Sena is considered a terrorist organization by the Government of India. In 1997, K. R. Narayanan became the first Dalit President.

In 2008, Mayawati, a Dalit from the Bahujan Samaj Party, was elected as the Chief Minister of India's biggest state Uttar Pradesh. Her victory was the outcome of her efforts to expand her political base beyond Dalits, embracing in particular the Brahmins of Uttar Pradesh [47][48]. Mayawati, together with her political mentor Kanshi Ram, saw that the interests of the average Dalit (most of whom are landless agricultural laborers) were more in conflict with the middle castes such as the Yadav caste, who owned most of the agricultural land in Uttar Pradesh, than with the predominantly city-dwelling upper castes. Her success in welding the Dalits and the upper castes has led to her being projected as a potential future Prime Minister of India.

Dalit literature

Dalit literature forms an important and distinct part of Indian literature. One of the first Dalit writers was Madara Chennaiah, an 11th-century cobbler-saint who lived in the reign of Western Chalukyas and who is also regarded by some scholars as the "father of Vachana poetry". Another poet who finds mention is Dohara Kakkaiah, a Dalit by birth, six of whose confessional poems survive.

Modern Dalit literature

In the modern era, Dalit literature received its first impetus with the advent of leaders like Mahatma Phule and Ambedkar in Maharashtra, who brought forth the issues of Dalits through their works and writings; this started a new trend in Dalit writing and inspired many Dalits to come forth with writings in Marathi, Hindi, Tamil and Punjabi.

By the 1960s, Dalit literature saw a fresh crop of new writers like Baburao Bagul, Bandhu Madhav and Shankarao Kharat, though its formal form came into being with the Little magazine movement. In Sri Lanka, Dalit writers like Dominic Jeeva gained mainstream popularity in the late 1960.

References

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Appraising Reservation Policy in the Post-Mandal Era

Dr. K. Madeswaran*

[The Indian social system had for centuries perpetrated social and economic injustices by the so-called higher castes on the lower castes that had been systematically denied equal chance in the opportunities and facilities of the higher society. The scheduled castes were set apart outside and below the three main divisions of Hindu society. i.e., Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas. The ultimate weakness and failing of the caste system and the Indian social structure were that they degraded a mass of human beings and gave them no opportunities to get out of that condition-educationally, socially and economically].

The idea of framing the Constitution through sovereign Constituent Assembly took its origin in the philosophy of popular sovereignty during the 18th century. The demand of Constituent Assembly for India to determine the political destiny may be traced back to the assertion of Mahatma Gandhi. Dr. Ambedkar, a constitutional expert, philosopher and statesman emerged as a great crusader for the oppressed and depressed classes. He believed that Hindu religion was responsible for the slavery and oppression of the untouchables, caused widespread resentment in the Hindu society and also, he believed that India wants to be an egalitarian society in which there would be neither an oppressed class nor suppressed class with all burdens to carry nor any class with all the privileges.

The only way to achieve the goal of national integration was to provide all the amenities to the depressed classes and its due share in the value processes namely power, resources, education, skill series and alike². Another important aspect of Dr. Ambedkar's vision of the Indian society was secularism. He maintained that the State should be religion neutral which is a matter of individual conscience³.

Legislation regarding 'reservation' could be traced back to the colonial period. By the middle of the 19th century, certain reforms emerged in various parts of India. For instance, Non-

Brahmin movement in Madras Province. The Justice Party agitated reserved seats for non-brahmins in the legislative council, and the objective of the party was getting communal representation in the Government offices. In accordance with the provision of the Government of India Act 1919, the British Government appointed Simon Commission.

Dr. Ambedkar appeared before the commission to demand reserved seats for the untouchables in legislature bodies, special educational concessions and recruitment in government jobs. The Commission submitted its report in 1930, the backward people were categorised: a) Depressed classes, b) Aborigines and Hill Tribes, c) Other Backward Classes⁴. Hence, in 1932, the British Government passed the Communal Award, which provided separate electorates for depressed classes and minorities.

According to the historic agreement (Poona Pact 1932) the depressed classes would get 147 seats in the Provincial Council instead of 71 promised in the Ramsay MacDonald's Communal Award. The Depressed classes could get 18% for the seats in the Central Assembly also. These developments reflected in the next Constitutional document namely Government of India Act 1935, which replaced the term 'depressed classes' with 'scheduled caste'⁵.

The pledges of pre-independence era were uppermost in the minds of the framers of the Constitution. They were conscious of the sensitivity of the depressed people about their

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plight in the society. Their first achievement in the Constituent Assembly was the adoption of the historic objectives Resolution on 22 January 1947, moved by Jawaharlal Nehru. They declared in the resolution, to frame a Constitution wherein the people of India would be guaranteed and secured, *inter alia*, social, economic and political justice; and equality of status, of opportunity and before the law, and wherein, *inter alia*, the depressed and backward classes would be provided with adequate safeguards⁶.

The framers of the Indian Constitution were fully aware of caste-ridden societal imbalance and special problems of backward communities in India. They addressed themselves to declare the guiding principles to be kept in their mind in the process of Constitution making. In keeping with these, the Constitution of India proclaimed that, the right to reservation is also to be considered as a part of the fundamental rights guaranteed to the socially, educationally suppressed, deprived and historically disadvantaged people of India.

Even before India's independence, there were many controversies involved in the reservation policy. Verdicts of many High Courts and the Supreme Court over the years further complicated this issue. Some scholars say that it aimed at achieving the social justice and to establish an egalitarian society and viewed this policy as positive or compensatory or protective discrimination. On the contrary, others feel that it is a legalized discrimination and reverse discrimination and will lead to revitalize and polarize the caste system.

In this context, this paper makes an attempt to analyse the emerging issues in the backdrop of distrust between the pro-reservationist and anti-reservationist that will certainly have serious repercussions on our social set-up, which is already beset with many other serious problems. Therefore, it has become necessary to examine the dimensions or impact of reservation policy on the people of backward classes and see whether these classes have really reaped the benefits of the reservation policy on par with the notion of creating an egalitarian society. In this article conglomeration of ideas has been put

forward to bring into limelight the existing system of reservation policy in the post-Mandal era.

When the Constitution of India came into effect in 1950, it contained many special provisions for the protection of interests of the Scheduled castes/tribes and backward classes. According to the provisions, under article 330 and 332 of the Constitution, seats are reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the House of People and the Legislative Assemblies of the States in proportion to their population.

Hence, Article 15(4), on special provision for the advancement of any "socially and educationally backward class of citizens", and Article 16(4), on reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any "backward class of citizens" which, in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented in its services, that the other Backward Classes (OBCs) figure as a category apart from the SCs and STs⁷.

In pursuance of the Constitution, the Government of India appointed first Backward Classes Commission under the chairmanship of Kaka Kalelkar in 1953. It was the first national commission to determine criteria for identifying Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBCs) and their numbers State-wise. The Commission made several recommendations; 25% jobs in class I, 33.3% jobs in class II, 40% jobs in class III & IV. The Commission in its final report recommended that "Caste as the criteria" to determine backwardness.

In the view of the above, the Government considered it necessary that, some positive and workable criteria should be devised for the specification of the socially and educationally backward classes. The Government of India had specifically noticed the absence of any objective test for identifying socially and educationally backward classes. Hence, several Supreme Court judgments have also emphasized the need for evolving such criteria on the basis of field investigation and other independent evidence⁸.

In the year 1979, the second Backward Classes Commission was appointed by Prime Minister Morarji Desai, with B.P. Mandal, former Chief

Minister of Bihar, as Chairman and other 5 members with a mandate to “identity the socially and educationally backward classes”. The Commission, submitted its report on December 31, 1980, has evolved eleven indicators or criteria for determining the backwardness. The Mandal Commission report mobilized a segment of the Indian population known as “Other Backward Classes” (OBCs) and initiated a fierce debate on the policy of ‘reservations’ for underrepresented and less privileged groups in the Indian polity.

The Commission has listed 3,743 castes as OBCs for the benefit of reservation. Based on the recommendations of the Mandal Commission, reservation for SCs and STs is in proportion to their population, i.e., 22.5%. But there is a legal obligation to keep reservation, under article 15(4) and 16(4) of the Constitution below 50%, and accordingly, the Commission recommends a reservation of 27% for the OBCs. This reservation should apply to all government services as well as technical and professional institutions, both in the Centre and the States.

Even though, the Commission’s report did not contain any substantive data on the socio-economic, educational and occupational conditions of the different castes/communities, but it measured in terms of educational attainments, admissions to professional courses, employment in State and Central services and educational, economic and occupational background of parents. On the other side, the Commission had failed to collect basic data on the population of different castes. The Commission has admitted that its’ survey has no pretensions of being of academic research⁹.

The report of the Mandal Commission has been criticized on several grounds: The Commission has not explained why it chose to assign differential weightage to social, educational and economic backwardness and particularly why it devalued economical backwardness while determining the classes who are socially and educationally backward¹⁰. The Commission violates the Constitutional provisions prohibiting any discrimination based on caste or religion in

recruitment to services and goes against the special provisions for SCs and STs.

The 70% of the population is clubbed as “backward” and keeping floodgates open for more and more castes competing for “backwardness”. The Commission’s recommendations opened the floodgates of special representation to Muslims, Jains, Buddhist, Christians and so on, leading to disintegration rather than harmony in the society. Hence, the Commission report was challenged in the Supreme Court of India on various grounds. But the Supreme Court while emphasizing caste could be relevant factor for determining backwardness also pointed out that poverty, occupation and place of habitation could also contribute to backwardness and such factors could not be ignored.

Dimensions of Reservation Policy

It is found that the policy of reservation in India was quite firmly established during the times of the British rule itself but such a policy was aimed at minimizing communal inequalities in the representation in public services rather than a social engineering device to eradicate the deep-rooted social-economic inequalities of the disadvantaged section of the society owing to past social discrimination. When the Indian Union became a Republic, the Constitution went further and empowered the State to make laws for giving such preferential treatment not only to the SCs and STs, but also to OBCs that are socially and educationally backward.

The founding fathers of the Indian Republic were quite clear that reservation was no boon or charity offered to the communities, but as one of the means of enlisting their loyalty and meaningful participation in the experiment of democracy¹¹. Some scholars apprehended that far from freezing, reservation would strengthen caste and social divisions, retard social cohesion, and culminate in disaster; some others feared that apart from injecting the caste virus into the body politic, reservation would help only the advanced sections among the backward.

Nevertheless, it is found that the objective of reservation policy is to achieve the fruitful

equality among the people. The success of the democracy too depends on realizing this desideratum. But it is an obvious fact that the equality cannot be fully achieved. There must be sufficient reasons for the failure. The Legislature and Executive wings of the Government have to bear the bulk of the blame for the failure, whereas the judiciary has tried to solve the complicated issues by making timely intervention and balancing of conflicting interests.

For instance, *India Swahney Vs Union* is a significant case¹², through this case, the Supreme Court pronounced certain important decisions. i). The identification of backward classes on the basis of caste was held Constitutional. 2) The total reservation should not cross the prescribed limit of 50%. 3) Reservations were only permissible in case of initial appointments and would not be permitted to promotions. 4) The court also put forward a new doctrine of “Creamy Layer”.

It is observed that in the post-Mandal period, the identification of backward classes by quantifying the three aspects of backwardness i.e. social, economic and educational, poses a significant problem. For this purpose, certain parameters are to be formulated, particularly the doctrine of ‘Creamy Layer’. In response to the above direction of the Supreme Court, the Union Government resolved to implement reservation only after identification and exclusions of the ‘Creamy layer’ of the OBCs.

With this socio-economic criterion for identification of cream layer keeping in view, the Government of India constituted an expert committee under the headship of Shri Ramanandhan Prasad on 22 February 1993. The committee arrived at conclusion that the exclusion of any member of the socially and educationally backward classes should be exception. Before exclusion it should be ascertained that the root of the ill-effect of backwardness has been eradicated and there is no sign of it, because each State in Indian Union exhibits different rate of educational level,

economic progress and social stratification. In this regard, the States have been given the authority to decide the backwardness of the classes with regard to Other Backward Classes. The exclusion of the creamy layer is the essence as it provides a way out of purely group-based categories of reservation. It is the most effective way of meeting the demands of social justice and inclusive education by giving benefits to the most deserving. To allow the undeserving to benefit from reservation is to deny protection to those who deserve to be protected. It is needed to evolve a scientific method for excluding the creamy layer to ensure effective implementation of the reservation policy.

It is observed that the reservation policy fails to achieve its purpose of giving equal opportunity to everyone, because of lack of infrastructure in the rural areas of the country, where the proportion of backward classes is significant. The members of lower classes still feel that they do not have sufficient representation and the members of upper classes feel that in spite of their merits, they do not have the same opportunities. The minorities, religious minorities, demanding reserved representation too, which would ultimately lead to a situation where the seats left for the majority would not be proportional with their population. Therefore, it becomes a cyclical issue rather than an equal opportunity issue.

The debate on OBC reservation now gets crowded with the demand for reservations in the private sector. The cobwebs surroundings reservation in the private sector will get cleared with the implementation of OBC reservations in all the central educational institutions. If the present ideology of merit in IIT, IIM and medical education is nailed, the private sector will have to fall in line. The notion of merit must be reset in relation to the levels of living of the masses and improved productivity in both the agrarian and industrial sectors, development of innovative technologies and evolution of non-discriminatory management systems in all spheres of life do not depend on marks-centred merit. They depend on social connectivity, socially relevant knowledge and good institutional training.

There is confusion about the Census enumeration of the population of OBCs. It should be noted that census, if entrusted with the task, might take up the enumeration of the population of OBCs, but the list of the OBCs would be supplied by the Central Government. The Act of 2006 clearly states that ‘Other Backward Classes means the class or classes of citizens who are socially and educationally backward, and are so determined by the Central Government’.

The serious question is, will the OBCs be a dynamic category allowing deletions or additions to it based on census data; will the census data on socio-economic conditions be applied in monitoring the future necessity of continuance of reservations to the OBCs? The answers to these questions are closely intertwined with the relevance of conducting caste-based census in the country.

The Government of India released data from the population enumeration (Census 2011) held in February 2011. Also called the Primary Census Abstract, it pegs the population of Scheduled Castes at 16.6 per cent and Scheduled Tribes at 8.6 per cent, together forming a quarter of the total population. In the period 2001-11, the SCs grew by 20.8 per cent and STs by 23.7 per cent. The data shows the total population has witnessed a decadal increase of 17.7 per cent to touch 1.21 billion. Besides the SC/ST figures, the Census data pegs the work participation rate at 39.8 per cent. More than 60 per cent of the population does not participate in any economic activity.

The figures may seem alarming but then students and homemakers have been categorized as ‘non-workers’, along with dependents, pensioners and beggars¹³. The extensions of reservation on a caste basis will result in Indian version of apartheid, an emotional balkanization, a form of reverse discrimination that will not result in the harmonious and cohesive functioning of society. When the country has already arrogated to itself a significant position as an industrial, scientific and progressive nation, it would be destructive to turn the clock back and return to caste, linguistic and religious differences.

Systematic caste-wise enumeration of population was introduced by the Register-General of India in 1881 and discontinued in 1931. In view of this, figures of caste-wise population beyond 1931 are not available. The successive Governments may think that the caste census might create caste divisions and give rise to disharmony to the country. Those who oppose the reservation put forward the following issues; The Hindu society may be a caste society but the Indian Constitution is not a caste Constitution. anti-national, anti-secular, anti-divisive, anti-progressive, Caste cannot be a class to define backwardness.

In this context, it is to explain here that caste-based reservation policy that is followed in the country is not an anti-poverty programme of the Government. Caste-based reservation policy is also not a charity that the government bestows on the wretched of this country who have been at the receiving end of humanity, human rights, equality and justice since millennia. In actual sense, the caste-based reservation stands for parity, representation, human rights and is a defence mechanism against any and every case of caste-based discrimination and exclusion.

Reservation policy is a means to have equal say in the policy making and governance as well. It is not against merit at all. Those who oppose it on such grounds that it affects merit and efficiency and that is why the caste-based reservation should not be allowed to continue any more fail to see the stranglehold of the iniquitous and anti-human rights aspects of the caste system. Treating a section of society which remains on the margin in every possible sense unworthy of being equal is nothing but the hidden prejudices of the so-called upper strata of Indian society who clamour to maintain their hegemony in every sphere as they and only they have a rightful claim to rule over others¹⁴.

In the general perception, it may or may not be true, but now the Supreme Court wants to get caste-wise census, the Government should take necessary steps to make this possible. After all, the Court’s decision has to be respected. It is the

only possible and feasible way to identify the backward classes and rectify all the impediments prevalent in our country and make strides towards establishing an egalitarian society.

Conclusion

The main crux of the whole discussion is that the downtrodden segments of the society have been suppressed and exploited for such a long time that, extra pains will have to be taken to bring them at par with the upper classes. The social environment undergoes a change in which it becomes impossible for practicing old ways of sustaining inequalities. Social inequalities have produced psychological complexes of 'superiority' and 'inferiority' among the traditional groups. Offering them proper education could have removed this socio-psychological syndrome.

Education should be structured in such a way that the depressed classes should get enough opportunity to develop their talents and personality. It would be better if the educational curriculums are structured in a way to develop professional skills and knowledge. We need a new perspective that can grapple with increased inequalities on the one hand, and entrenchment of social prejudices on the other, and how both are implicated in all range of new social inequalities and hostilities to bring changes on reservation policies.

On the whole, reservation policies have worked more to eliminating socio-economic inequalities and take essential effort to integrate disadvantaged sections of society by increasing their access to responsible positions. As a result of reservations, large numbers of SCs, STs, and OBCs have gained access to education and jobs despite escalating pressures on the job market. The fact that these disadvantaged groups are now less under-represented in both education and government jobs than in the past is a measure of the success of reservation schemes and this has doubtless strengthened their relevance.

In highlighting the positive fallout of affirmative action, we do not intend to obscure the continuing problems with existing reservation policies or

to ignore the persistence of social discrimination against lower castes despite decade's affirmative action and antidiscrimination laws. Indeed, the point is that without some positive discrimination in favour, these groups would have remained outside power structure.

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Relevance of Gandhism under Digitopoly

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[Gandhism is a collection of thoughts that portrays inspiration, vision and the life work of M. K. Gandhi. The two mainstays of Gandhism are truth and non-violence. The incomparable Nobel prize winning Scientist, Sir Albert Einstein in a tribute to Gandhi said, “Generations to come, will hardly believe that, such a person as this ever in fragile living creature and blood, strolled upon this world”.]

Gandhism becomes more and more relevant, not only for India but for the entire world. The reason behind, he rehearsed certain values first and then preached. When some person asked for his message to humanity, Gandhi rightly said “My life is my message”. In this perspective, Gandhism identified the seven sins viz., Politics without standard principle, Wealth without work, Pleasure without conscience, Knowledge without character, Commerce without morality, Science without humanity and Worship without forfeit. The event of 150th birth commemoration celebration has given us an opportunity to help the humankind to remember the efficacy of the message of Mahatma Gandhi.

Why Relevance of Gandhism under Digitopoly?

Globalization and digitopoly era (Competition in the digital age) have conveyed splendid future to modern India. High skilled person gets good opportunity. In the meantime, Provincial India left out from the mainstream of economy is confronted with the vacuum between the haves and have-nots having been extended. Likewise, unethical business, growth without human face and so on. Every one of these shades of malice can be settled just through Gandhism. Under the present circumstances, Gandhism is like a panacea.

How did Gandhi impact and impart his idea to the country? What was its need? To answer these questions, it is necessary to know Gandhism. The present descriptive logical research paper discusses just key Gandhian logic.

Gandhian Environmentalism

Schumacher has appropriately called attention to, “boundless material consumption in a finite world is an impossibility.” Gandhi deserted the extravagant life, which he could have effortlessly managed and distinguished himself with less polluting poor people. One of the fundamental and significant postulates of Gandhian environmentalism, is that – “the earth gives enough to satisfy everyone’s need; but not for anyone’s greed.”. This statement asks fundamental question from us as to what is enough for need-based comfortable way of life. In the event that we take more than our need, we are likewise taking from the future and pulverizing natural environment.

Gandhism ensures “Protecting and conserving environment alongside the development process,” for India, as well as for the entire world. At present, catastrophic events are occurring because of man’s irrational activity (we review the story of golden goose and avaricious man). In this point of view, Gandhism provides right remedy to explain the present environmental crisis. Along these lines, Gandhism isn’t just a prophetic statement of the past, yet in addition of things to come.

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Cleanliness and Sanitation

Cleanliness and sanitation are an integral part of the Gandhian way of living. Gandhi said “*Sanitation is more important than independence*”. His dream was total sanitation for all. Cleanliness is most imperative for physical well-being and a sound domain of environment. It has bearing on public and personal hygiene which is essential for everyone to learn about cleanliness, hygiene, sanitation and the various diseases that are caused because of poor sterile conditions.

Gandhi stated, “Nobody should spit or clean his nose on the streets. Now and again the sputum is harmful to the point that the germs infect others”. In few nations, spitting on the road is a criminal offense. The individuals who spit in the wake of chewing betel leaves and tobacco have no thought for the feelings of others. However, Indians gained freedom under the leadership of Gandhi, yet his fantasy of a clean India is as yet unfulfilled. This should be obligatorily upheld.

Equal Distribution

Gandhism called for a “Sarvodaya” order of the society, which means the “Welfare of All”. It makes the diffusion of power and move toward empowering everybody. It has suggested the practical way and means as to how to bring this theory of equal distribution into reality. One ought to reduce one’s need to a minimum, bearing the destitution of others at the top of the priority list. He was against the shades of malice for centralized economy and technology without a human face. A search for eco-friendly technology, takes one to charkha and village industries-Gramodyoga. (Charkha is symbol of eco-friendly technology). It also gives employment to millions and millions of people. It is not only needed to protect environment but also save our fellow citizens in the present phase of cut-throat rivalry. But this needs to be dealt with utmost care.

Conclusion

Presently, we need to accomplish this by 2019 as a befitting tribute to the Father of the Nation,

on his 150th birth commemoration. Presumably, this will be the main tribute to the Father of the Nation. Gandhism is relevant in every policy of the country such as Swachh Bharat, empowerment of women, concern for less-privileged groups, and sustainable rural development. Along these lines, Gandhism is the foundation of another new social order.

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Need of SHGs for Women Empowerment

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[A self-help group (SHG) is a voluntary association of women in similar economic conditions. The members of the group make small savings for a duration of time until they have enough capital in the group to start their own lending process. At the grassroots level, women's participation and development often take place through interventions in the form of development programmes or projects. The participation of women in such community development programmes enhances their personal development making it more sustainable].

The Government of India has introduced many community development programmes to uplift the socio-economic status of women and reduce their vulnerability to poverty. The SHGs encourage rural households to take part in self-employment activities to supplement their meagre income. The members of the group make small savings for a duration of time until they have enough capital in the group to start their own lending process. These funds can then be utilised for lending purposes (to members or other people). In India, many SHGs are linked to banking institutions for the delivery of micro-credit. Self-help groups are popular and famous in India and South-East Asian countries.

In Bangladesh, Muhammad Yunus developed this concept (along with those of micro-credit and micro-finance) for the poorest of the poor, who were ignored and shunned by banks when it came to lending tiny sums of money. In India, SHGs first emerged within the Mysore Resettlement and Development Agency (MYRADA) in 1985. Here is a quick timeline of the journey of SHGs in India:

1. 1987: The National Bank for Agriculture And Rural Development (NABARD) provided MYRADA with a grant of¹ 1 million to enable it to invest resources in identifying affinity groups, building their capacities and matching their savings after a period of 3-6 months.

2. 1990: RBI accepted the SHG strategy as an alternative credit model.
3. 1992: NABARD issued guidelines to provide the framework for a strategy that would allow banks to lend directly to SHGs.
4. 1992: SHG-Bank Linkage Programme was launched.
5. The Tamil Nadu Women's Empowerment Project, an IFAD-supported project implemented through the Tamil Nadu Women's Development Corporation, was the first project in the country, around 1990, to incorporate the SHG concept into a state-sponsored programme. Since then, SHGs have been associated with women.

Why Are They (SHGs) Needed?

Let's look at the poverty circle. Women have always been given a secondary status – be it at home or in society. Women still remain poorest of the poor and can never break free from this cycle. Above all, a poor woman is vulnerable, insecure and lacks knowledge.

Why Are Women Not Empowered?

They lack four basic things:

1. Knowledge
2. Finance
3. Power
4. Opportunity

Self-help groups fulfil the four criteria cited – thereby making them financially stable and also granting them a sense of empowerment. “Women experience hunger and poverty in much more

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intense ways than men. If one of the family members have to starve it is an unwritten law that has to be the mother. A poor woman in our society is totally insecure – insecure at her husband's house... She is insecure in her in-law's house for the same reason she was in her parents' house..."

She has nothing to call her own. She cannot read and write and it is possible that she has never been allowed out of her house to earn money, even when she wanted to. So, when she is given even the smallest opportunity, she struggles extra hard to get out of poverty to build up her financial security.

Women Empowerment

The word empowerment is defined as the process by which women take control and ownership of their choices. Empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, to greater decision-making power and control and transformative action. Empowerment of women signifies harnessing women power by concretising their tremendous potential and encouraging them to work towards attaining a dignified and satisfying way of life through confidence and competence as person with self-respect, rights and responsibilities. The core elements of empowerment have been defined as agency (the ability to define one's goals and act upon them), awareness of gendered power structures, self-esteem, and self-confidence.

Empowerment as a concept was introduced at the International Women's Conference at Nairobi in 1985. The conference defined empowerment as "A redistribution of social power and control of resources in favour of women. It is "the process of challenging existing power relations and of gaining greater control over the sources of power".

Empowerment is a multi-faceted process which encompasses many aspects i.e. enhancing awareness, increasing access to resources of economic, social and political etc. "In recent years women empowerment has become a subject of great concern for the nations all over the

world, especially in poor and developing countries. The impact of globalization is seen eventually on position of women in some form or other in most of the developing countries with the variation of degree. The United Nations has also strived hard in an incredible way to draw the due attention of the World Community on this issue in the past years.

Women empowerment refers to an increase in the strength of women such as spiritual, political, social or economic. The most common explanation of "Women's Empowerment" is the ability to exercise full control over one's actions. Thus, women empowerment occurs in real sense when women achieve increased control and participation in decision making that leads to their better access to resources it often involves the empowered developing confidence in their own capacities.

Women Empowerment in India

The year 2001 had been declared by the Government of India as "Women's Empowerment Year" to focus on a vision where women are equal partners like men", because the Constitution of India grants equality to women in various fields of life. In the past, the position of women was miserable in the society and even women were not ready to undertake any assignment or job due to many reasons like fear, shyness, male-dominance in the society and purdah system but time has changed now. Women of today are not like the early days.

Now, they are always ready to come forward and want more economic independence, their own identity, achievements, equal status in the society and greater freedom. And Government of India has provided for Self Help Groups (SHGs) to them so that proper attention should be given to their economic independence through self-employment, entrepreneurial development and well-being that ultimately leads to its contribution. SHGs have emerged as a powerful instrument in order to alleviate poverty and for the empowerment of women in the rural economy.

SHGs through the network of commercial banks, co-operative banks, regional rural banks,

NABARD and NGOs have been largely supply-driven and a recent approach in the provision of financial services to the poor and further upgrading their status in the society. In this way, SHGs are important not only to reduce rural poverty, to promote rural savings but also to increase gainful employment. Keeping this in mind, the present study aims at exploring the growth of SHGs and to analyse the current position of women empowerment and study the economic improvement of women after their joining SHGs. The information for the study has been collected from secondary sources i.e. various books, journals, newspapers, published literature, websites, and annual reports.

Self-Help Groups and Women Empowerment

Women and SHGs in many parts of the country have achieved success in bringing the women to the mainstream of decision-making. The SHG in our country has become a source of inspiration for women's welfare. Formation of SHG is a viable alternative to achieve the objectives of rural development and to get community participation in all rural development programmes. SHG is also a viable organized set-up to disburse micro credit to the rural women and encouraging them together into entrepreneurial activities. To alleviate the poverty and to empower the women, the micro-finance, Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and credit management groups have also started in India.

Self Help Group (SHG) is a small voluntary association so, it is recommended to be informal to keep them (SHGs) away from bureaucracy, corruption, unnecessary administrative expenditure and profit motive. In fact, it is a home-grown model for poverty reduction which simultaneously works to empower and shape the lives of its members in a better way. Groups are expected to be homogenous so that the members do not have conflicting interest and all the members can participate freely without any fear. Self-help groups (SHGs) movement has triggered off a silent revolution in the rural credit delivery system in India. SHGs have proved as an effective medium for delivering credit to rural poor for their socioeconomic empowerment.

However, in a group like SHG, they are ensured through collective action of the members. This scheme mobilises the poor rural people especially women to form groups for mutual benefits. SHGs play a crucial role in improving the savings and credit and also in reducing poverty and social inequalities.

To inculcate the savings and banking habits among members.

1. To secure them from financial, technical and moral strengths.
2. To enable availing of loan for productive purposes.
3. To gain economic prosperity through loan/ credit.
4. To gain from collective wisdom in organising and managing their own finance and distributing the benefits among themselves.
5. To sensitize women of target area for the need of SHG and its relevance in their empowerment.
6. To create group feeling among women.
7. To enhance the confidence and capabilities of women.
8. To develop collective decision making among women.
9. To encourage habit of saving among women and facilitate the accumulation of their own capital resource base.
10. To motivate women taking up social responsibilities particularly related to women development.
11. It acts as the forum for members to provide space and support to each other.

SHGs are considered as one of the most significant tools to adopt participatory approach for the economic empowerment of women, SHG is a group of people that meets regularly to discuss issues of interest to them and to look at solutions of commonly experienced problems. The group may or may not be promoted by Government or non-Government institutions.

The SHG is group of rural poor who have volunteered to organise themselves into a group

for eradication of poverty of the members. They agree to save regularly and convert their savings into a common fund known as Group Corpus. The members of the group agree to use this common fund and such other funds that they may receive as a group through a common management.

Generally, all members of the group should belong to families below the poverty line (BPL). However, if necessary, a maximum of 20% and in exceptional cases, where essentially required, up to a maximum of 30% of the members in a group may be taken from families marginally above the poverty line (APL) living continuously with BPL families and if they are acceptable to the BPL members of the group.

This will help the families of occupation groups like agricultural labourers, marginal farmers, and artisans marginally above the poverty line, or who may have been excluded from the BPL list to become members of the SHG. However, the APL member will not be eligible for the subsidy under the scheme.

The group shall not consist of more than one member from the same family; a person should not be a member of more than one group. The BPL families must actively participate in the management and decision-making, which should not ordinarily be entirely in the hands of AIM, families. Further, APL members of the SHG shall not become office bearers (Group Leader, Assistance Group leader or Treasurer) of the group.

Conclusion

SHGs have been identified as a way to alleviate poverty and women empowerment. And women empowerment aims at realizing their identities, power and potentiality in all spheres of lives. But the real empowerment is possible only when a woman has increased access to economic resources, more confidence and self-motivation, more strength, more recognition and say in the family matters and more involvement through participation. Although it is a gradual and consistent process, but women should build their mindset for taking additional effort willingly for

their overall development. SHGs have the potential to have an impact on women empowerment.

Self Help Group concept has been mooted along the rural and semi-urban women to improve their living conditions. Even though SHG concept is applicable to men also in our country, it has been more successful only among women. To reduce poverty by enabling the poor household to access gainful self-employment and skilled wage employment opportunities, resulting in appreciable improvement in their livelihood on a sustainable basis, through building strong grass-root institutions of the poor (SHGs) is now the main motive of the most of the employment schemes. Thus, SHGs have been showing the way ahead to alleviate the poverty of India along with women empowerment.

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Toxic effects of Endosulfan pesticide on children

G. K. Venugopal* & Shaukath Azim**

[Of all human activities, agriculture is perhaps the closest to nature. From time immemorial, farmers through farming activities have been ensuring the food production through successive generations. But during the course of time the crop productivity has been extensively affected by the pest infestation and therefore it became necessary to implement effective pest eradication management (Saini, Abhishek, 2012). As a result, the use of pesticide has increased dramatically over the last few decades in agricultural field to improve the yield of food crops all over the world in order to feed the ever-increasing population.]

Saravi and Shokrzadeh (2011) estimated that world population is increasing by an estimated 97 million per year. The food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO, 1986) of the United Nations has in fact issued a sobering forecast that world food production needs to increase by 70% in order to keep pace with the demand of growing population. However, increase in food production is faced with the ever-growing challenges as the area available for cultivation purpose is very limited (Saravi and Shokrzadeh, 2011). Chemical technology has expanded tremendously during the past fifty years. For example, approximately 70,000 different chemicals are currently used and released into the environment in the United States alone (Newton and Dillingham 1994).

What are Pesticides?

The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO 1986) defined Pesticides as “Any substance or mixture of substances intended for preventing, destroying or controlling any pest, including vectors of human or animal diseases, unwanted species of plants or animals causing harm or otherwise interfering with the production, processing, storage, transport or

marketing of food, agricultural commodities, wood, wood products or animal feedstuffs or which may be administered to animals for the control of insects, mites/spider mites or other pests in or on their bodies” .

First Warning Bells about Pesticides’ Danger

In 1962, Rachel Carson, an American courageous woman and scientist, wrote down her nature observation and pointed out sudden dying of birds caused by indiscriminate spraying of pesticides (DDT). Her book, *Silent Spring*, became a landmark. It changed the existing view on pesticides and has stimulated public concern on pesticides and their impact on health and the environment.

Pesticides and Human Health

Human health is threatened particularly by the excessive application of fertilizers and unsanitary conditions (Okeke and Igboanua, 2003). Human poisonings and their related illnesses are clearly the highest price paid for pesticide use. About 67,000 pesticide poisonings resulting in an estimated twenty-seven accidental fatalities are reported each year in the US (Litovitz et al.1990).

Endosulfan Pesticide

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Endosulfan is currently classified as Class II-moderately hazardous to human health. However, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rates Endosulfan as Category IB-highly hazardous.

Discovery of Endosulfan

Endosulfan was discovered by Farbwerke Hoechst A.G. Frankfurt, a German in the year 1954 and was produced by the Niagara Chemical Division, FMC Corporation, United States. Another popular name for Endosulfan is Thiodan

Toxicity of Endosulfan

Endosulfan is acutely neuro toxic to both mammals and insects including humans. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) classifies it as Category I: “Highly Acutely Toxic” while the World Health Organization (WHO) classifies it as Class II “Moderately Hazardous” Symptoms of acute poisoning include hyperactivity, tremors, convulsions and lack of coordination, staggering, difficulty breathing, nausea and vomiting, diarrhoea and in severe cases, unconsciousness reported in the places where the Endosulfan pesticide was sprayed.

Hazardous effects of Endosulfan on Human Life

In Cuba, Endosulfan Poisoning was responsible for the death of 15 people in the Western province of Matanzas, in February 1999. A total of 63 people became ill after consuming food contaminated with Endosulfan (Mccauley et al., 2006). The National Institute of Occupational Health (India) has linked the higher prevalence of behavioural disorders, congenital malformations in female children and abnormalities related to male reproductive systems to the continuous exposure to Endosulfan spray.

Statement of the Problem

Spraying of Endosulfan pesticide is one of the tragic incidents that created irreparable damages on the lives of scores of the people of Honnavar Taluk of Uttar Kannada District, Karnataka. In the coastal districts of Karnataka ill-effects of Endosulfan were found since 1990, i.e., for a period of 20 and more years Endosulfan pesticide was sprayed relentlessly on cashew plantation. It is because cashew is grown only in the coastal districts of the state.

Dakshina Kannada and Uttar Kannada districts of Karnataka are the major producers of cashew nuts. Therefore, the mortal effects of Endosulfan found only in these two districts. The deadly bug called Tea mosquito bug, popularly called as TMB, used to suck the tender fruit of the cashew and make it useless. So, in order to reap huge amount of commercial crop at the shortest time, Karnataka Cashew Development Corporation, sprayed tonnes of Endosulfan pesticide on the cashew farms.

Objectives of the study:

Present study has been undertaken with following objectives:

1. To examine the socio-economic background of Endosulfan victims.
2. To investigate the level of ill-health among the Endosulfan victims
3. To describe the attitude and aspirations of parents towards their children who are affected by the Endosulfan.

Methodology of the Study

The field and Universe

The present study has been done in Honnavar, one of taluks of coastal Karnataka. It has been reported that most of the taluks of Dakshina and Uttar Kannada districts of Karnataka have been affected much due to the aerial spray of

Endosulfan for about 20 years. In the present study 10 villages of the Honnavar region like Mulakoda, Balkuru, Melina mannige, Kasarkoad, Kelagina Idagunji, Meligina Idagunji, Kelagina keru, Gandad Hittal have been taken into consideration. After visiting these respective villages, field work has been undertaken with utmost care. Most of the above said villages are 5 to 20 km. from the Honnavar taluk and no sociological studies have been undertaken in these villages.

Sample Selection

In the present study of Honnavar Taluk of Uttar Kannada district of Karnataka, the sample has been undertaken in the following method. Honnavar taluk consists of nearly 52 villages and have a total population of 18,45,376, in this Endosulfan-affected people are 550 - 700. In order to limit our studies, we have taken 10 remote villages with 50 Endosulfan child victims, by following Random Sampling method. In order to get desired results Cluster Sampling method is also followed.

Sources of the Data

The present study has been undertaken on the basis of primary and secondary sources. Primary data are collected directly from the parents of Endosulfan victims from the field work. Secondary sources for this study have been collected from the Government Hospitals, Panchayat offices, Human Rights activists and also from the State Health Ministry of Karnataka.

Hypothesis of the study

1. Poor farmers and plantation workers (children) are affected by the Endosulfan pesticide.
2. Children and women suffer due to Endosulfan.
3. Poor Dalits and Other Backward people have been much affected by the irrational use of Endosulfan.

Effects of Endosulfan pesticide on children in Honnavar Taluk

For the present paper, 50 Endosulfan pesticide affected child victims were taken for detailed study in Honnavar Taluk of coastal Karnataka. The child victims were in the age group of 5 to 16 years, majority of the affected were male children. When enquired about the present ill-effects of Endosulfan Pesticides, the parents of the child victims replied that, victims were affected by the Endosulfan pesticides, when the neighbouring farms have been sprayed with Endosulfan pesticides by the government-owned Cashew Development Corporation.

When the researchers enquired with the educational background of the parents, 60% per cent of them were illiterate, remaining 40% per cent of them were less educated having primary education. This shows that ignorance of the parents led to the exposure of Endosulfan on to their children. In many cases, victim parents sent their children for labour work in the nearby cashew farms as helpers. In order to protect Cashew from the Tee Mosquito Bug, Endosulfan pesticide was aeriually sprayed by the Karnataka Cashew Development Corporation, while spraying pesticide children might have been affected with pesticide exposure or through the residues of Endosulfan which is still present in the surrounding environment.

As far as the economic conditions of the Endosulfan child parents were concerned, 90% per cent of the victims' parents are working as daily wage labours, who used to work in the nearby farms or in the fields and 60% per cent of them used to live in thatched houses, only 20% per cent of them were residing in RCC roof houses. At the same time 70% per cent of the households were earning less than 10,000 rupees, it shows majority of the Endosulfan victim parents are poor, unable to provide good medical facilities to their wards.

The following Table shows the amount of Psychological Depression encountered by the children:

Psychological Depression of the victim child

TABLE NO. 1

| Sl. No. | Psychological Problem | No of child affected | Total % |
|---------|----------------------------|----------------------|---------|
| 1 | No conscious on their self | 16 | 32% |
| 2 | Psychological pressure | 0 | 0% |
| 3 | Depression | 24 | 48% |
| 4 | Mental Retard | 10 | 20% |
| | Total | 50 | 100% |

The data presented in the table 1 provides the information about the psychological depression faced by the Endosulfan victims. According to the data, 32% per cent of victims do not have conscious on themselves, they behave abnormally. Due to their uncontrol and unconscious on their body, it has been found that it is the parents who are suffering from psychological pressure. At the same time, it has been found out that 24 child victims are suffering terrible depression. When we tried to meet, they appeared as if they were carrying heavy load on their shoulders. Continuous analysis of this child victims reveals that nearly out of 50 children 10 children are suffering from mental retard, the state of mental retardants is psychologically killing the victims' parents.

When the researcher enquired about the physical defects of the Endosulfan-affected victims, their deformities has been analysed in the following Table:

Physical Deformities Of Endosulfan Child Victims

TABLE NO. 2

| Sl. No. | Physical Defects | No of children affected | % of the Physical Deformity |
|---------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. | Stunted physical growth | 12 | 24 |
| 2. | Paralysis of their legs | 18 | 36 |
| 3 | No control over their hands | 17 | 34 |
| 4 | Unable to stand | 03 | 6 |
| | Total | 50 | 100 |

The above data presented in the table 2, reveals about the information regarding the physical deformities caused by the pesticide effect. As the researchers enquired about the medical care and hospital facilities, it was found that majority of the parents were treating their child victims with allopathic treatment, that is, with the modern medicine, a few of them were being treated with Indian ayurvedic medicine. As the modern medicines were costly in nature, economically poor victim parents were struggling hard to provide best medical care to their siblings.

As there are no well-equipped private hospitals in the nearby area, parents are treating the victim in Government Hospitals. Victim's parents disclosed that in a year, they take their affected child to hospitals for 4 to 6 times. Due to the extreme coastal humidity, it has been found out that carrying the affected child is a herculean task. It is because most of the affected children are suffering from many diseases; carrying them without scratches or pain makes the parents to get exhausted.

When enquired with the parents regarding the medical expenditure, 12 child victims' parents are spending more than Rs 20,000 in a year; in fact, parents are spending nearly quarter of their income for the medical treatment. Parents

disclosed that due to huge expenditure on medicine, they were unable to save their money for their other children and for their future life. Many of the Endosulfan child victim's parents revealed that due to their children's physical deformities, it was actually hampering their earning capacity. Taking care of the victim, bathing, making them to eat, feeding, taking them to regular medical check-up, keeping their hygiene, changing their clothes etc, this daily chore of work was not only making them physically exhausting but it also reduced their earning capacities.

Nearly 16 parents in the 50-victims said they are daily-wage labourers, due to their inability and to be with victim child they have failed to get lucrative jobs in the neighbouring states like Goa and Maharashtra. Due to their deformity, 85% per cent Endosulfan-pesticide-exposed child victims failed to get admission in their respective area schools. Many able-bodied children's parents were pressurising the school teachers not to give admission to the Endosulfan child-victims. The parents of able-bodied children are assuming that victim's disease could spread and affect their wards.

There are few instances in which teachers of private schools are showing negligence towards the affected children. Due to the sorry state of educational affairs, many of the victims' parents are not sending their affected children to the school. Few Endosulfan-affected-children's parents, who hail from well-to-do families, have arranged home tuition for their wards but teachers are hesitant to visit regularly, fearing that they may get affected with the diseases. So, majority of the Endosulfan-affected victims failed to get even basic education.

Suggestion to improve the life's of Endosulfan Victims

1. Government must provide sophisticated medical facilities to Endosulfan victims without any criteria of physical deformity.
2. Regular health check-up camps must be organized.
3. Medical attendants must visit the victim child regularly at their home.
4. Adequate compensation must be given to the Endosulfan victims' family members, so that young victims must be taken care with due attention.
5. Government must enhance the monthly pension to the Endosulfan victim or at least on par with the Kerala Government compensation of one-time package. (5 lakh and 5000 monthly compensation).

Conclusion

Unscientific and reckless misuse of chemical-based pesticide called Endosulfan has caused havoc in the life of Coastal Karnataka. Rampant use and abuse of Endosulfan pesticide has caused an irreparable damage to the scores of ill-fated lives of the coastal district of Karnataka. In order to get huge profits Karnataka Cashew Development of Corporation aerial sprayed tones of Endosulfan chemical-based pesticides on the coastal district for a period of more than 20 years, so all this tragedy has taken place. Few environmentalists equated this tragedy as "Silent Bhopal Tragedy". Whereas in Bhopal Tragedy in 1984 an insecticide plant Union Carbide India Limited, released methyl Isocyanate and caused thousands of deaths.

Similar to this, Endosulfan has caused this deadly tragedy wherein thousands of victims are bedridden and are suffering from various diseases. As it is caused by the Karnataka State-owned company KCDC, the responsibility of rehabilitation lies with the government, which

must provide all the necessary facilities to these affected people and should bring a silver line in the lives of the people.

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The Polity of the Anals of Manipur

Dr. BD Thumdal Anal*

[The Anals are indigenous people and one of the oldest tribes of Manipur like the Dravidians of Ancient India. The tribe is mostly found in the South-Eastern parts of Manipur. They are one of the first settlers of 19 Naga tribes in Manipur. This group has been recognised since 1951 as a tribe of India. Racially, the Anals belong to the Tibeto-Burman family of the Mongolian race.]

The Anals are mostly concentrated in the Sub-Divisions of Chandel, Chakpikarong and Moreh of Chandel district which is located on the southeast part of the state of Manipur. One also finds three villages of Anal tribe in Burma. However, most of the Anal tribes are inhabiting Chandel and neighbouring areas. Chandel is situated in South-East of Manipur 64 kms from its capital, Imphal. In fact, the Anals are also a majority group among other tribal groups. They are found in an area which roughly covers about 700 sq. miles on the Chakpi River basin surrounded by the virgin forests and hills with cascading waterfalls.

The Anals shared, experienced, inherited, owned and sang about the same antiquity, origin, history, migration, customs, culture, traditions, land values, songs with all other Naga tribes from Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Myanmar; particularly with the seven-sister tribes, the Marings, the Moyons, the Monsangs, the Chothes, the Lamkangs and the Taraos of Chandel district.

As a matter of fact, the Anals have common political aspiration with the other Naga tribes. Of the Ancient Chronicles of Manipur, 'Chaitharon Kumpapa' is probably the first chronicle that referred to the Anal tribe. According to this history, the first century colonizer travelled Manipur hills, there were many tribes including Anal tribe who took refuge from the aggression of the invaders. The Anal is one of the major tribes which spreads over the length and breadth of Chandel district.

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Anals' Polity

The polity is a form of civil government dealing with people on the aspects of living together and cooperation in the matter of common interest. In this article, the polity of the Anal tribe may be discussed in details with reference to the Naga polity as, the Anal tribe is also one of the important ethnic groups of the Naga tribes under the following headings:

Village

Prior to establishment of a village life, Anals were semi-nomads. Soon they realized the demerit of frequent migration and they began to lead a sedentary life. As soon as they adopted settled life, they started setting up a village on the top of hills. In this way Anals began to live at a village. Since ancient days, Anals founded a village with animistic rites. Capt. Rajendra Singh (1981) stated that before establishing a new village the priest had to go and find out if the place was a good one for settlement.

During the ancient times also, the priest used to take a fresh egg of a chicken and go to the proposed site of the village and made a fire by burning the dried splits of a particular type of bamboo called 'Rapi'. Before the fire got extinguished, the fresh egg with a small hole on the tip was then put on the glowing embers and heated. On getting heated if reddish colour liquid came out first the site was supposed to be bad for settlement. If the whitest colour liquid came out first then it was supposed to be a very good location for establishing the village. This practice; however, is generally not followed

nowadays and the priest just goes and prays at the new location. Now, unlike the past, it is founded without much rites and rituals¹.

Village Administration

Anals had a clear-cut organised political and administrative units for the villagers. There are three very important functionaries in the system as discussed below.

Kholpu (Founder and Priest)

Kholpu occupied the highest position in the village. The term has two variants such as “Khuruwng” and “Kolapa”. Khuruwng is the Anal Village Chief and how he came to occupy the office in the village council is very important to understand. The Khuruwng has to offer a big feast for his fellow villagers in order to occupy the office, failing which he has to resign from his office according to the customary law². Khuruwng carried out his administrative functions with the help of his four subordinates known as Miruwng, Pamruwng, Donruwng and Tangsel. Each of them is in-charge of defence, agriculture, domestic animals and general administration respectively.

Just as the Khuruwng has offered feast to the villagers, the four subordinates office-bearers were also bound to do, even though in somewhat less pompous way. In spite of power and responsibilities given to them, they can be removed from their offices, if they abused power against the villagers or broke norms and rules of the community³.

The chief must be well-versed in customary laws. Even though he enjoyed immense powers, he could not exercise those powers without the approval of the subordinate officials and elders of the village. He has power to appoint one youth leader “Miruwl Lulok”, who was even recognized by the king of Manipur as “Miruwl-Khullakpa”. The Kholpu and his councilors had full powers to summon any person in connection with any case to be settled. The term of Kholpuship was not fixed. He could continue as long as he enjoyed the confidence of his villagers. The court of the

Kholpu was to judge and decide cases of land dispute, theft, quarrel, divorce and crimes including murders, adultery⁴, etc.

There were certain privileges entitled to Kholpu and his councillors. Whenever, feast or function was organized in his village, Zu-tuwng (a pot of rice beer) and Sa-tuwng (a plate full of meat) were to be served to the Kholpu and his subordinates. The priest (Kholpu) and his subordinates had the privilege to select suitable sites for their jhum field, fishing and hunting on priority basis. Whenever a four-footed domestic animal like mithun, buffalo, pig, etc., were killed during Insa (the construction of a new house), Hmarshar (a customary feast hosted by the groom in favour of parents-in-law), Pathakowl (naming ceremony of a child), etc., in the village, a Sadal (one hind leg) was to be offered to the Kholpu and his councillors⁵.

The house of the Kholpu served as the village court and he was to act as legislator, administrator, guardian, interpreter and executive head under the Anal customary law. The house of the Kholpu was like a Guest House of the village. It is said that in the past when there was no police force, if a criminal is chased by the villagers and if the criminal had no alternative, ran into the house of the Kholpu and embraced the main pillar “Ashabol” of the Kholpu’s house. When such criminal was successful in reaching the Ashabol no one could harm him.

Thus, until and unless the case was settled by the Kholpu’s court, the criminal was not legally free from physical attack by his opponents. The Kholpu summoned and presided over the village assembly and passed on his advice accordingly. The Kholpu also gave advice and directions to the village youth through the Miruwl-lulok (youth leader) in defence matters and social works of the village⁶.

Royal dining plate called Kholpu singkho was served to the chief for food in honour and respect held for his prestigious position during social feast and functions. The villagers had to submit annually Zu thang-bel, a pot of rice beer and a

cock to the Kholpu's house or court during annual meeting of the village. No women can become a Kholpu⁷.

The position, powers and functions of the Kholpu has been reduced to a mere traditional priesthood with the emergence of Christianity and introduction of modern hill village regulation acts. Most of the Anal villages have now abolished this traditional post. Although already abandoned, some villages in Anal area retained the post of Kholpu. However, nowadays the powers and functions of Kholpu are left to the Christian pastors, deacons and religious leaders.

The Chief (Kolapa) was an administrator of a village who was Kholpu prior to the origin of Khullakpa. Once, a dispute arose between two persons namely L. Ruwngvol and Chamtung Pashel of Anal Khullen for chiefship of the village. The dispute became so serious that the matter was referred to the king who had established his supremacy over this village. The king ordered them to compete in different games, activities and eating etiquette. None of them could defeat the other.

At last, the queen observed their etiquette at the time of eating. Ruwngvol did not know the Meitei eating etiquette and Chamtung Pashel was selected and made the Kolapa and Ruwngvol was made "Lulakpa" (in charge of women and children). This incident had affected the nature and structure of Anal traditional chiefship by introducing a tradition of delegations of powers to the subordinates of village council.

Dopu or Athim (Village Doctor)

Dopu or Athim is the second highest officer in the village polity. He acted as a physician (local herbal man or medicine man). In Anal language he was described to be He-ni, Do-he, Lerni Athim which means a village doctor or physician who was able to perform miracles; he was a clairvoyant as well. He was not elected or appointed by the villagers. But he became Dopu by virtue of his healing knowledge and supernatural power. He was a gifted person and performed all the priestly works in a village. One

of his duties was to pray for the welfare of the villagers before seed was sown in the field and before they did slash and burn the fields for the year.

It was also his duty to close the village gate if an epidemic was broken out in the village. He also performed ritual on any occasion. In Anal tradition women could become a Dopu if she possessed those qualities but she was not entitled to participate in decision-making process of the village council. So, she was unlike a male-counterpart.

Tholpu or Thorshu-cha (Blacksmith)

The office of Tholpu was in the third rank in the village council. He was a village blacksmith who rendered his service for the welfare of the people. A day labour or wage was paid to any blacksmith by every Anal household of the village. The main duty of the blacksmith was to make and repair all kinds of agricultural implements, carpentry tools, cottage industrial implements, utensils, ornaments, arms and ammunitions of the village. The blacksmiths were entitled to select jhuming, housing and fishing grounds on priority basis. It is still practised in Anal society even today. Even though women possessed such qualities, they cannot become blacksmiths in Anal society⁸.

Phetha (Physical Hero)

The office of Anal Phetha in village council is not highly and traditionally regular as the office of Athim, Kholpu, etc. Moreover, the presence of Anal young wing in each village headed by experienced and able young leader makes the office less regular one. It is also clear that no all villagers or even leading Anal village(s) did not produce Phetha in every generation. So, while the role of Anal Phetha was widely and importantly recognized, the availability of Phetha determined the necessary existence of the office of Anal Petha in their village councils. The presence of Phetha and socio-political situation which demanded strong hand to tackle it⁹.

Anal traditional polity was continuing for centuries without radical changes. Until the Meitei Kings invaded the Anal country village,

the administrative unit was an important one. The occupation of Anal villages starting from the 16th and the 17th centuries turned the course of history. These changes took place in people as well as within Anal country. The Meitei Kings assumed control over the Anal villages particularly Anal Khullen, Khubung Khullen and Lamphou Charu. The new system of officials with the title Khulakpa, Lulakpa, Mantri, etc., in the hierarchical order was introduced. For this the king established political exertion over his subjects and abolished the age-old village officials. However, the Maharajas did not introduce a new law but empowered the appointed officials to carry out the village administration related to their customary laws as before¹⁰. Therefore, Kholpu had to continue his office with a slight change from the system of the ancient times. He was very often bound to appear at the court of the Maharaja for paying tribute giving vegetable products of the village. His visit to Manipuri King was viewed as a mark of loyalty to the latter. Any dispute, if arose was unable to settle at the village level it was referred to the court of the Maharajas. In one way the king was exercising the absolute power. He can make decisions and remove the officials of the village level¹¹.

Anal Defence System

Anals had the tradition of erecting fencing for their protection from their enemies as they were under pressure from the enemies on account of inter-tribal feuds in the past. The post of the fencing was made by Buwngtoh plants which bore thorns and were very effective as it literally made the intruder impenetrable. Generally, two strong gates were made which were closed by big planks. The gates were strengthened by placing a huge tree trunk against them at night. The fencing was in a circular shape. At night the village Phetha used to make the gates properly secure. Usually his house was located closed to the village gates. Villages were usually located on hill tops as this was favourable for defence¹².

The Anals started administering their village with the knowledge of Meitei Kings. It was so

from 16th and 17th centuries A.D. It is said that there were categories of Anal villages which continued Anal traditional administrative structure as well as following the new administrative structure. The first category of villages entered treaty of subsidiary alliance with the Meitei Kings during the periods and they continued the office of Khuruwng and the latter categories of village followed the office of Khullakpa which was first introduced by Garibniwas in 1735 A.D.¹³

The Khullakpa was assisted by his four subordinates namely Luplakpa, Mantri, Senapati and Meitei Lambu. They were actually appointed by the Meitei King after the nomination made by the villagers. The village officials held their offices as long as they wish provided, they won the satisfaction of the villagers over their political and economic performances. He applied customary law to matter of crime and passed judgment. The chief represented the villagers to the King and he was the messenger of the Meitei King to the people¹⁴.

The subordinate officials of Anal village enjoyed separate power and functions. Luplakpa being the office next to Khullakpa functioned on behalf of the chief if the latter was absent. He assisted Khulakpa in performing important matters¹⁵. Mantri was a village scribe who recorded all cases tried by the village chief. He also collected house taxes from the villagers and made an onward submission to the chief. The Mantri also received all complaints from the villagers and accordingly he informed the same to his head. The function of the Senapati was protection of village territorial boundary with the help of his villagers. It was so done when the intruders attacked the village. He closely functioned with the chief.

Finally, the Meitei Lambu acted as village messenger in village administration. He informed all necessary information to the villagers. As messenger he also informed occasions which needed public knowledge. His function was also to receive guests coming to the village¹⁶.

In spite of certain changes introduced by the Meitei Kings, the Anals failed to completely change the structure of the traditional system of Anals polity. However, the Meitei King exercised hegemony over the Anal villages. Any case which could not be settled under Anal customary law was brought to the King for final judgment.

The Anal polity during the British rule in Manipur was little different from that of the Meitei system. The contributions of the British were: (i) they allowed continuing Anal old system of village polity but power and function of the officials were lessened by the colonial administration, (ii) introduction of intermediary system through the office of Lambu who tried disputes or cases with the help of village officials. The changes introduced by the British did not make Anal system of traditional polity disappear. It is said that during the period, the Meitei Kings did not lose their hegemony either over the Anal villages except in Anal village administration.

Powers and Functions of Anal Village Chief and Subordinates

Chief and his subordinate officers can summon any person with regard to any case either to settle or dismiss. The chief and his subordinates of the village council have full right to judge cases or disputes relating to land, theft, quarrel, divorce, criminal, murder cases, etc. The chief and his subordinate village officers received Zupar Zuhrin (fresh rice beer) plus a plateful of cooked meat at the time of a feast or a function in the village¹⁷.

Law of Inheritance

The property of the father is inherited by his sons by sharing it amongst themselves. The youngest son of the father should inherit the main house of the father which is unquestionable¹⁸. Inheritance of properties is also extended to the daughter with the knowledge of the brothers. But generally, as far as matter of inheritance is concerned, there is no hard and fast rule in this particular matter. In case a person is without sons, the daughter/daughters can inherit parental properties with the knowledge of the village authority. It is also done

with the full consent of the clan provided that the daughters take care of the parents till their death failing which the property is inherited by the nearest kinsman.

The widow can also inherit the properties of her dead parents. The property goes to widow after her husband is dead. In that case, the one who looks after the widow inherits the property of the widow after her death¹⁹.

Powers, Functions and Privileges of Anal Village Council

Tenure: Contrary to definite term under legislation or enactment of law, there are no particular terms and conditions about chieftainship and its subordinate members in Anal village council. The chief enjoys Khuruwngship (chieftainship coronation) so long he enjoys confidence of the villagers. Similar is the case with his subordinate members. The chief and the members enjoy without specific tenure. They can be in the position for life or as long as they satisfy the village community provided that the chief or the village council members want to continue in the office²⁰.

Impeachment

The chief and his members can be impeached under certain conditions. If they were found guilty of committing crimes, they were subjected to removal from their office when two thirds of villagers dislike the continuation of the members in office because of loss of confidence²¹. The following are some of crimes for which impeachment can be done.

- a. Ajol-inii: Incestuous and illicit marriage, invalid marriage and adultery.
- b. Khamtungro pita: Crime related with non-performance of the installation feast for the members of village council.
- c. Kuhisin: Shedding of blood committed accidentally or intentionally.
- d. Pamjol: Disposal of public land for self-gains or interest.
- e. Sorcha: Misappropriation of public money. Nomination and Installation

The procedure of nomination of members of village council starts with proposal. Then the candidate offers a jar of rice beer with a hen or a cock. The function is known as “Zuparihli” or “Halkisam”. On the approval of the villagers, the nominated member is installed after offering one pig and two jars of rice beer to the villagers. This is a part confirmation of his membership. For the post of chieftainship, the candidate has to offer one mithun and seven jar of rice beer to the villagers during his installation feast (Shangkadon)²².

Fine of non-Premeditated Murder

If one killed another person accidentally the matter is settled by imposing fine amounting Rs. 100,000 (rupees One Lakh only) with one pig and one jar of rice beer²³. Apart from these non-statutory traditional institutions of Anal polity, the most important statutory body which comparatively functions independently at the village level is village authority. It came into force after Indian Independence. The Village Authority started operation after 1956. The powers and functions of the body are legally more absolute and binding upon the villages. All administrative and judicial powers are rolled into this single statutory body.

At present, the traditional institution of polity is also in operation in the Anal society; however, the Village Authority is the officially well recognized authority in most of the tribal societies including the Anal community. It is true that the Village Authority does incorporate various Changro elements, has statutorily clearly defined power and functions for the administration of tribal villages.

Constitution of Village Authority

The existing village authority came into existence in the tribal society of Manipur after the enactment of the Manipur Village Authorities in Hill Areas Act, 1956. The Act has three chapters and fifty-eight sections altogether.

The number of members to be elected in the Village Authority depends upon the number of tax-paying houses of any villages. So, the constitution of the authority varies from village

to village. A Village Authority is constituted in the following ratio/pattern with due declaration by the office of the Chief Commissioner.

- i. For every village where the number of the tax-paying houses is between 20 and 60, should have five members;
- ii. For tax-paying houses between 60 and 100 shall have seven members;
- iii. Where the tax-paying is houses between 100 and 150 shall have 10 members;
- iv. If the number of tax-paying houses is above 150, the number of members is ten.

The section 2 of the Manipur Village Authorities in Hill Areas Act, 1956, stated that: “The Chief Commissioner may, having regard to the general interests of the people of the village as also to the demand, if any from the people of that village for an elected village authority, declare by notification in the official gazette, that the village shall have an elected village authority, and thereupon the members of the village authority of the village shall be elected in accordance with the provisions of this act and the rules made hereunder”.

For any village which is fallen short of the requirement of notification to be made under this section 2, the chief commissioner shall nominate members to village authority. Each village authority is to be headed by the Khulakpa as its ex-officio Chairman. But in case of non-existence of this traditional office at the village, the members shall elect a Chairman from among themselves²⁴.

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Health and Nutrition Status of the Rural Girl Child

Dr. (Mrs.) V. Jacqueline Raja Bai*

[Health is 'human capital'. The nutritional status is an essential aspect of an individual's total health, which implies not only immunity from disease, but physical, mental and emotional fitness as well. Food itself is the most important factor in the concept of nourishment. There is general agreement that, if the diet in early adult life is nutritionally adequate, its general character needs not be altered in later years.]

The Census of India defines persons below the age of 14 as children. In general, girl child means, "a female child, from birth to the age of puberty". Social scientists include females in the age group of 15 to 19 years under the category of the girl child.

It is observed that the girl child in India is born and raised in cultures which associate negative value with her as an entity. In a male-dominating society which continues even today, the girl child is considered as a liability for the parents. In India, for a girl child the period from infancy to adolescence is a perilous path.

There is high risk of malnutrition and disease that the girl child faces at all the three critical

stages – infancy and childhood, adolescent and reproductive phase and hence focussed attention is required to meet the nutritional needs of the girl child at all stages of the life cycle

The nutritional status of girl children, especially of rural girls, is worse than for boys due to inadequate food intake. Biases in parental care, feeding patterns, intra-familial food distribution and treatment of illness are all in favour of males. As a result, the rate of incidents of girl child mortality, malnutrition, morbidity and maternal mortality is high.

This study probes into the causal factors which contribute to the problems of the rural girl child. It also highlights the current status of the needs of the rural adolescent girls and suggests the most effective ways of addressing them, promoting

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health and nutrition and hence providing care to them.

Introduction

Health is 'human capital' and the nutritional status is a significant aspect of an individual's total health, thereby implying not only riddance from disease, but physical, mental and emotional fitness as well. Food itself is the most significant factor in the concept of nourishment. The level of nourishment is referred to as nutritional status or nutriture. Therefore, the foods people eat and the ways they respond to different patterns of eating offer a logical point to start a study of nutrition. There is general agreement that, if the diet in early adult life is nutritionally adequate, its general character needs not be altered in later years.

It is observed that the majority of Indian diets have a basic similarity in pattern, namely, disproportionately large content of cereals and poor consumption of protective foods such as milk and leafy vegetables. This highlights the part played by nutrition in the economic betterment of the people. The intimate association between general malnutrition and specific diseases such as anaemia and night blindness have been brought to light.

Status of the Girl Child

In general, girl child means "a female child, from birth to the age of puberty". Owing to age-old norms and customs pertaining to patriarchy, religious beliefs, taboos and ethnic practices, the girl child in India is born and raised in cultures which associate negative value with her as an entity. It is found that the status of the girl child overall is deprivation, either expressed or hidden behind 'equal status syndrome'. In a male-dominating society which continues even today, the male child is taken as an asset to the family whereas the girl child is considered as a liability for the parents. The widespread discrimination of the girl child and the gender has affected her socio-economic status and demographic status. The girl child discrimination in India is evident from the unfavourable attitudes prevailing in

society. The hazards the girl child is exposed to seem to be endless.

Health Problems and Nutritional Requirements

The girl child, particularly in the rural area, should have access to comprehensive, affordable and quality healthcare. A holistic approach to the girl child's health which includes both nutrition and health services needs to be adopted and special attention has to be given to the needs of the girl child at all stages of the life cycle.

In India, no more than 25 per cent of adolescent mothers give birth in a hospital nor do they have health facilities.

It is observed that health of the mother and maternal and infant mortality is correlated. The percentage of girls and boys, who are married well before the legal ages of 18 and 21 respectively, is on the increase. The repercussions of early pregnancy and child birth have not even dawned on the pair when they wed. The first child arrives within the year when most adolescent girls are malnourished, anaemic and poorly educated. With no planned spacing between the births, another child is born before the young mother has rebuilt her strength or given sufficient nutrition and mother-care to the firstborn. These are among the main causes of high deaths of young women and infants.

There is high risk of malnutrition and disease that the girl child faces at all the three critical stages - infancy and childhood, adolescent and reproductive phase and hence focussed attention is required to meet the nutritional needs of the girl child at all stages of the life cycle. This is also important in view of the critical link between the health of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women with the health of infant and young children.

The nutritional status of girl children, especially of rural girls, is worse than for boys due to inadequate food intake. Although adolescent girls have special needs and face many difficult circumstances on the way to womanhood, their

specific situation and needs remain largely ignored and neglected. Biases in parental care, feeding patterns, intra familial food distribution and treatment of illness are all in favour of males. As a result, girl child mortality, malnutrition, morbidity and maternal mortality are high.

Although the situation varies greatly from region to region and even within countries, a common thread is the lower value ascribed to girls in relation to boys in virtually all countries. In addition, rapid urbanisation, growing economic disparities between rich and poor and especially between the resources' women and men control, gender-based violence and armed conflict add to the already distressing situation of adolescent girls.

Health problems which particularly affect adolescent girls include:

1. Malnutrition, anemia;
2. Sexual and reproductive health including FGM, too early and unwanted pregnancy, adolescent maternal morbidity and mortality, unsafe abortion, sexually-transmitted diseases (STD's), HIV / AIDS;
3. Violence including sexual abuse and incest;
4. Mental health;
5. Substance abuse including the use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs.

Needs of the Rural Girl Child

Health of adolescent girls including reproductive and sexual health and nutrition is not sufficiently recognised by planners and policymakers. The health of adolescents is intimately linked to their development. Changing global conditions are placing greater strains on young people modifying their behaviours and relationships and are causing increasing health problems. These health problems often fall on the young girls who are disadvantaged due to their age, gender and low economic status. Adolescent girls who are no longer children but not yet women, are denied rights and protections available to adult women.

Because of their gender, they often suffer culture-bound violations and are exploited, abused and denied opportunities more available to adolescent boys. When they live in impoverished settings, they lack access to the health services, nutrition, education and gainful employment, all issues that have an impact on their health and well-being.

Addressing the Health Problems

Interventions are needed in five major areas to improve the situation as indicated in the WHO / UNFPA / UNICEF document entitled: "Action for Adolescent Health: Towards a Common Agenda". These are:

1. The provision of information;
2. Strengthening skills;
3. Access to quality health services;
4. Provision of Counselling;
5. A safe and supportive environment.

The awareness programmes and imparting education to women will certainly improve health and general standards of women who by such attainments will remain as assets not only to the family but also to the nation.

Addressing the Nutritional Requirements

Schemes for nutrition, supplementary feeding, literacy, the right to education and healthcare remain hollow expressions without any meaning as long as women (and chiefly adolescents) have no control over pregnancy. Legal measures such as compulsory birth registration would make the enforcement of the Child Marriage Act easier.

One of the specific targets of The Draft Participatory Perspective Plan (1995-2010) formulated in 1995, which set the goal of integrating women in the mainstream of development, included ensuring adequate nutrition for all girl children.

Nutritional aspects of food consumption have also been addressed as a part of food security. The available and accessible food should also

be absorbed to convert food into energy, to achieve necessary nutrition status. This conversion of food into energy in turn depends on non-food factors such as access for safe drinking water, healthcare and sanitation.

Foods brought together in a meal should present a composite of good flavour, texture, colour contrast and nutrition. Foods make available practically limitless choices. Variety in choice, diversity in textures in foods in a meal, interesting colour contrasts in foods may all be observed in planning nutritionally adequate meals around a daily food pattern. Common foods are cheaper and provide all the nutrients needed under ordinary circumstances.

Decade of the Girl Child

In recognition of the discrimination faced by women throughout their life-cycle and beginning as girls, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), declared the 1990s as the Decade of the Girl Child in the Male (Maldives) Summit in 1990. Each country formulated 'Decade Plans' for the advancement of girl children.

Conclusion

In rural India, the low status of females is reflected in their unequal access to food and medical care which leads to malnutrition, deficient growth and development and increased sickness and death in childhood. The risk is compounded by early marriage which is the social norm in many developing countries. The child marriage practised till the early half of the twentieth century had greatly affected the

reproductive health of girls and it was only the Child Marriage Restraint Act and such other strict measures that saved them to a great extent.

Women's subordination is socially constructed (man-made) and not biologically given or predetermined. The widespread discrimination of the girl child and the gender has affected her socio-economic status and demographic status. The girl child discrimination, particularly in rural India, is evident from the unfavourable attitudes prevailing in society.

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Women's Question in Constituent Assembly Debates

Dr. Satarupa Pal*

[Women's identification is often determined by gender, race and class as well as by ongoing tensions between arguments based on women's equality in a highly hierarchical patriarchal society like India. Even after independence, various exclusionary practices continue to remain in vogue in Indian society which often subjugate women's status in all aspects of life. Women constitute a large part of excluded sectors in Indian society. The paper explores, with the help of theoretical framework, the treatment of women's question in this highly exclusionary Indian socio-political milieu.]

During the British period, women were dependent on men (Hagaragi 2012). They were deprived of all property rights except the right to *streedhan* which they had received at the time of their marriage. The condition of widows was extremely poor and inhuman at that time.

However, Indian women displayed courage and leadership in the political movements for independence from colonial rule. During the uprising of 1857, women of the ruling class came together along with men to fructify their dream for an independent India. In the 19th century, social reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar initiated various programmes like women's education and social reforms for women.

It is to be noted that the women's question was neglected in the Indian freedom movement generally. With the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi and his achievement of the supreme leadership position in the Indian National Congress since the early 1920s, the question of women's inclusion increasingly came to the fore along with the liberation of the country from colonialism.

During the freedom struggle, a large number of women participated at the call of Gandhi. He extolled the self-sacrificing image of Indian woman as a symbol of nationalist struggle. Women were active in various political campaigns. (Lingam 2002).

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Women hailing from peasant and working class as well as middle class played significant roles. Women's movement had also taken shape which focused on equality in law, education and work. The debate on Indian nationalism dealt with an ideological link between women and power as encapsulated in the image of *Shakti* and the aura of the mother goddess that are supposed to be based on the idea of supreme female power on the one hand. On the other, women's question was subverted by the nationalist project that was controlled by males.

Thus, Indian feminist experience shows that traditions do oppress women but also accord them high status primarily through their roles as mothers and wives by manifesting the uniqueness of Indian culture. At the outset, this paper explores the debate on women's question in the Constituent Assembly and its impact on the making of the Indian Constitution. It is widely believed that the Indian Constitution reflects democratic principles whereby women would get equal privileges from state mechanisms in accelerating the process of democracy at all levels in the country.

Focus on Women in the Constituent Assembly Debates

This section explores as to how the men and women members of the Constituent Assembly spoke equally of the status of women in independent India.

In the Constituent Assembly, Smt. Hansa Mehta pleaded for social, economic and political justice for women. She also asserted that microscopic segment of women has received highest status in the society. In this connection, she further said that ‘one swallow does not make a summer’. It would not present real picture of status of Indian women (<http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/cadebatefiles/C19121946.html> accessed on 5th January, 2014).

While asserting that Indian women had suffered from centuries’ old inequalities in terms of laws, customs practice etc., she further added: “It has violated the rights of thousands of women today who are denied ordinary human rights. They are put behind the *purdah*, secluded within the four walls of house.” She was profoundly proud of being a member of women’s organization that never asked for reserved seats, for quotas or for separate electorates. She believed that without mutual respect and understanding the real cooperation between man and woman would not be achieved (<http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/cadebatefiles/C19121946.html>; accessed on 5th January, 2014) .

Renuka Roy, representative from West Bengal, while supporting territorial representation without reservation of seats, said: “Since the start from women’s movement in this country, women have been fundamentally opposed to special privileges and reservations; though women have gradually lost all their rights both in law and society. Further, women in this country have striven for their rights, for equality of status, for justice and fair play most of all to be able to take their part in responsible work in the service of their country” (164.100.47.132/lssnew/constituent/vol4p5.pdf; (accessed on 12th January, 2014).

She raised strong voice for the prevention of trafficking of women and abolition of *devadasi* system. Further arguing that legislation must be needed to abolish this practice, she added: “. *Devadasi* system is the dedication of women to temples—must be abolished by a categorical provision in the constitution, it would violate women’s rights and dignity in the society.” She also

expressed her grievances regarding the existing act of the prevention of immoral traffic of women for its ineffectiveness in regard to its proper implementation. It would be really effective when men came forward and took part for abolition of this problem. (Consideration of Article, 17 of the Draft Constitution C. A. D. Vol. No. IV, 18th July, 1947. In 164.100.47.132/lssnew/constituent/vol4p5.pdf; accessed on 12th January, 2014).

Purnima Banerjee,¹ proposed amendment for eligibility criteria of membership of the upper house of Municipal Boards or the provincial assemblies. Further, she proposed nomination of members by governors, the words used are ‘social services.’ But despite the wish, women workers have not been presented opportunities for opening such camps regarding social service. Furthermore, she was of the view that Sikh or the Muslim community will be represented by persons of that community in the Constituent Assembly. In this regard, Purnima Banerji said that vacant seats for women must be filled up by the women members. (‘Selected Speech of Women Member of the Constituent Assembly’ in rajyasabha.nic.in/rsnew/.../Selected%20Women%20Speech_Final.pdf; accessed on 5th January, 2014).

Citing Rohini Kumar Choudhury, she stated that women are standing on new threshold of life. They are in transitional period where they are transformed from *Sahadharmini* (wife) to the representatives of the national spheres with due recognition. Thus, they are man’s equal partner and help-mate in the making of nation-building activities of future India (See, Selected Speech of Women Member of the Constituent Assembly’ in rajyasabha.nic.in/rsnew/.../Selected%20Women%20Speech_Final.pdf; accessed on 5th January, 2014).

Keeping in view the fundamental rights and minority rights, Begum Aizaz Rasul, the only Muslim woman representative of the Constituent Assembly, also pleaded for women’s equality of opportunity under the new constitution. She opposed reservation of seats for minority community. She expected that majority would deal justly and fairly with all minorities. But reservation of seats for minority in the service was very essential (Selected Speech of Women Member of the Constituent Assembly’ in

rajyasabha.nic.in/rsnew/.../Selected%20Women%20Speech_Final.pdf; accessed on 5th January, 2014).

In commending the work of Drafting Committee, Begum, Aizaz Rasul stated that 'being a Democratic Republic, the constitution provides for all citizens, individually and collectively, the best fruits of democracy and ensures to them those basic conditions and freedoms which alone made life secure, significant and productive' (Selected Speech of Women Member of the Constituent Assembly' in rajyasabha.nic.in/rsnew/.../Selected%20Women%20Speech_Final.pdf; accessed on 5th January, 2014).

While expressing the hope that women of India would be happy to step into their rightful heritage of complete equality with their male counterparts in all sphere of their lives, she did not address any specific issue on Muslim women in the deliberations of the Constituent Assembly.

Apart from the fact that a male member also spoke of discrimination against women under the feudalistic rule in India (C.A. D Vol. 7)2, Rev. Jerome D' Souza also drew her attention to the upbringing of her children and to the maintenance of the family. Male members of Constituent Assembly stated that the state shall not discriminate any citizens on grounds only or religion, race, cast, sex etc. In other words, democracy must be provided equality to all its citizens (CAD Vol. 7, 22nd November, 1948 in <http://indiankanoon.org/doc/241801/>; accessed on 16th January, 2014).

To protect fundamental rights, Ammu Swaminathan also praised for granting equal right to women by the constitution, which has given right to women on par with every other citizen of the country. In other words, it is a unique achievement of the women to come forward and to participate in the progress and prosperity of the nation (CAD, Vol. XI, 24th November, 1949 in <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/constituent/vol11p10.html>; accessed on 5th January, 2014).

While commending the efforts of Smt. Muthulakshmi Reddy in prohibiting the *Devadasi* system, G. Durgabai was of the view that Madras had already prohibited this practice under a law

passed few years ago. But this evil practice had been deteriorating women's status in the name of religion (CAD Vol. VII, 3rd December, 1948. in <http://www.indiankanoon.org/doc/607985>; accessed on 5th January, 2014).

All the women members of the Constituent Assembly took part and raised various issues relating to the problems confronting women viz, equality of rights, constitutional provisions of life in favour of women and children. But all opposed strongly reservation of seats for women in democratic bodies. They thought that it would deteriorate their status in independent India. However, many women representatives spoke of the issues like the evil social practices of women's trafficking and *devadasi* system, but untouchability of women was less discussed in the assembly. Though, all women members expected that equality of opportunity must be given under the constitution of free India.

The Constituent Assembly debates on women, even by women members, were rather depressing from the women's genuine interests in the context of Indian society. There was some voice raised against the practice of *Devadasi* in the temple (a kind of female prostitute) and for equal rights to men and women in Indian democracy.

Conclusion

Despite various empowering schemes for women guaranteed by Central and state governments, elected women representatives of public decision-making Institutions continue to be faced with several exclusionary practices in their activities of office work. The main problem lies in policy implementation and patriarchal, stereotypical attitude of our societal setting.

Reservation is the political mechanism by which women are entering the political parties and politics at higher levels in numbers never seen before. The very presence of women in the political arena is itself a near-revolutionary change. Though, elected women divided by caste, class and community, reservations help to identify and mobilize a constituency of 'women'. It is true that without an extension of reservation, other political bodies remain women-unfriendly. Women have negligible

presence in the majority of organizations, such as trade unions, political parties, parliament and state legislatures, which do not pay enough attention to gender issues.

Nevertheless, there are prominent women in positions of leadership in public life. It is noteworthy that all women leaders have not achieved their status by virtue of birth or marriage. But the hegemonic power of grammar determines male-dominated politics which excludes women from political decision-making institutions. After 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts, a large number of women are involved to take part in rural and urban local bodies. But they are guided by male members and patriarchal attitudes.

Undoubtedly, some of the states have ensured 50 percent women's reservation in local bodies; nevertheless, picture of representation has remained the same. Though women members of the Constituent Assembly were always not in favour of women's reservation in democratic decision-making. In current scenario, it can be said that only equality and justice are the cardinal principles of democracy along with educational qualification that could ensure women's effective representation in democratic bodies.

End Notes

1. Purnima Banerji represented from United Province of undivided India, said that social service should include voluntary social service. She emphasized voluntary social service because lately provincial and other governments had opened branches of studies in the subjects were giving diplomas for attending the social service camps which were organized. For further details see 'Selected Speech of Women Member of the Constituent Assembly' in rajyasabha.nic.in/rsnew/.../Selected%20Women%20Speech_Final.pdf; accessed on 5th January, 2014).
2. Shri Basanta Kumar Das (West Bengal: General) said: "The imposition of a duty known as 'Lalbag' on marriage or other occasions as also the way in which they impose certain humiliating social restrictions as, for example, in some cases their feudal lords do not allow their ryots and

kisans to ride horses in the presence. If there is a marriage party, the bride-groom cannot ride a horse. The womenfolk of their ryots are not allowed to wear even silver trinkets ornaments and in some cases refusal of the right to hold an umbrella." See CAD Vol. 7, 22nd November, 1948. In <http://indiankanoon.org/doc/241801/> (accessed on 6th January, 2014).

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6. CAD Vol. 7, 22nd November, 1948. in <http://indiankanoon.org/doc/241801/> (accessed on 6th January, 2014).
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Managing Environment via Rural Local Governance

Dr. Dipen Saikia*

[People are facing an enormous challenge in environmental problems in day-to-day life. We had ignored these severe issues at earlier stage. Now we are realizing the severity of the problem. In order to realize that many countries are focusing on the environmental issues to avoid such issues like global warming, ozone depletion, forest degradation, natural resource depletion, deforestation etc. Global warming and climate change are the great challenges and it has become an undisputed fact about our current livelihoods are adversely affected by this. Because of this, our planet has become warmed up and every year witnesses rise in temperature almost all over the world.]

While analysing these issues, the member countries of the United Nations (UN) have come together on this particular issue and hold their summit every year to deal with environmental problems. However, people should also need to focus on protecting natural resources and be concerned about.

India is also facing a series of environmental problems and government intends to improve the natural resources through various enactments, policies and programmes. India is having enormous natural resources, number of species, plants, animals and micro-organism such as deserts, rainforests and coral reefs etc. India is facing multiple problems pertaining to environment and in recent years its biodiversity richness has been declining.

In this background, rural local governance plays an important role to resolve environmental issues at local level and it has competence to manage the common resources as a unit of self-government. Local government can mobilize the people to protect nature through collective action. As a result, 73rd Amendment to the Constitution of India has given devolving power to the local government through decentralization of power.

Decentralization involves the administrative, fiscal and democratic devolution of power and resources by governments from top to bottom and

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influence democratic voices through communities and pressure over the issues that affect their daily life¹. The Constitutions of India envisages a local government as a self-reliant unit through its Directive Principles of State Policy under Article 40. Decentralization of power helps in creating a condition favourable for local government to exert control over the natural resources with the help of communities on grounds of both efficiency and equity². Hence, this paper focuses on environmental issues at the ground level and how rural local bodies act to deal with these challenges and managing the natural resources at grassroots.

Major Issues and Challenges

The World Bank has identified the major issues in South Asian countries in environmental development through their studies at various levels. The following issues are identified by the World Bank: water availability and water quality has been declining in arid and semi-arid region, risks of flood, droughts and water-borne diseases also increased, reduction of hydropower and bio-mass production, death caused by extreme weather, declining agriculture productivity, fisheries³. These are all the causes that lead the people to poverty and it will create social and environmental problems.

While focusing on this problem, government should have strategy to overcome the obstacles and constraints to protect the natural resources. Since there is an ambiguity in making policy to

protect the environment and safeguard the people's livelihood, both centre and state governments have to take prior action in this regard and it has to safeguard the poor's livelihood through equal distribution of resources among the people. In this background, local government plays an important role in protecting natural resources at grassroots level through its functioning and proactive roles.

Rural local government has certain roles and responsibilities to protect the natural as well as common resources. The rural local governance can bring good quality of water, covering forest areas with greenery, control over the use of excess resources to optimizing use of resources and protect the species through maintaining the bio-diversity register. These are all the roles to be played by the rural local governance in India. For example, in Western Ghats some of the panchayats come under the eco-sensitive zone and it has power to control exploitation of natural resources and mining power is vested with the Centre. The Panchayats can verify the new species and it can be registered through bio-diversity register. If anyone wants to start work in forest, he has to get prior permission from the Gram Sabha.

Impact of Population Growth

Population growth is a major issue and plays a vital role in environmental degradation. It leads to excessive consumption of natural resources by the population. The UN study revealed that population is growing by about 78 million per year, down from about 90 million estimated early in the 1990s. Still at the current rate world population increased substantially and was projected to rise to over 8 billion by 2015. In 2015 the world population was more than 7.3 billion people and consuming resources is a problematic one in the world. As a result, the equal distribution of natural resources and to ensuring sustainable environmental protection has become problematic.

Drinking Water and Sanitation

During the year 2012, 87.8% Indian households had access to improved source of drinking water

at the same time as 86.9% households in rural area and 90.1% households in urban area had access to improved source of drinking water. The target of making access to safe drinking water sources to all households in rural areas was to be achieved by 2015. The NSSO data (2012) revealed that the 43.4% of households at all India level had no latrine facilities. It had also shown that 59.4% and 8.8% households in rural area and urban area respectively had no access to sanitation. Towards achieving basic sanitation facility in households in urban areas, the 2015 target was likely to be met as the percentage of households without sanitation facility was likely to be 10.74% in 2015.

Against the target of 14.18% and the progress was quite back in rural areas as likely achievement in 2015 is 60.96% of households without sanitation facility in respect of the target of 46.77%. At all India level, 2015 target was unlikely to be met as the percentage of households without sanitation facility was likely to be 47.31% in respect of the target of 38.09% (Millennium Development Goal, India Country Report, 2015)³.

A recent study conducted by IIT- Madras revealed that low-income families spend 15% of their income on water⁴. Once a time, a rich people having that habit to buy a water to drink in our society, but nowadays poor families also spend their money to drink water. It shows that we have no enough water resources and maintenance of water bodies. Government should have proper planning to execute and renovate the water bodies in rural and urban area and Panchayati Raj institutions have a role to secure the water bodies in the particular boundaries of the rural and urban areas.

Pollution

Pollution is one of the main issues in all over the world. Mainly it's affecting the developing countries which are more affected by pollution due to the rapid industrialization and economic growth activities. As a result, millions of people are afflicted with ill-health, disabilities and

poverty. But in the developed countries, they have well-equipped technologies to combat pollution whereas the developing countries have no technologies and mechanism to control pollution. The prime objective of the developing countries is to attain economic growth very rapidly and not steadily.

There are diverse types of pollution like air pollution, noise pollution and water pollution etc. As per the WHO report, 86% of the people living in urban areas have polluted the air and it has exceeded the air quality level. According to air quality report, 96% of the cities in developing and under-developed countries are not following the guidelines of the air quality.

In India, a greater number of cities is polluted by air and noise due to the industrialization and transportation. The Global Urban Ambient Air Pollution Database shows that India's upcoming towns and cities were wrestling with toxic air, because of limited government intervention and increasing vehicular overcrowding. The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has suggested that 11 cities of Indian states should ban 2000 CC plus diesel vehicles to control the air pollution. On this basis, New Delhi and Kerala have been taken steps to ban diesel vehicle over 2000 CC plus⁵. In order to realize that, many state governments are taking effective action to control the air pollution.

Forest Coverage

According to Ministry of Environment and Forest (2015), 1,899,358 hectares of forest land is under encroachment in 36 states and union territories, while India is striving to achieve the target of having 33% land under forest cover. As per the forest survey report (2015), it is revealed that India's total green cover has reached 24.16%. Of the 1, 899, 358 hectares of encroached forest area, nearly 29% of the land is encroached by Madhya Pradesh around with 5,52,570 hectares, followed by Assam with 3,17,215 hectares, Telangana with 1,83,465 hectares, Maharashtra with 1,83,171 hectares and Chhattisgarh with 1,18,494 hectares⁶.

| S.No | States | Encroachment (Hectares) |
|------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. | Madhya Pradesh | 3,70,484 |
| 2. | Assam | 3,17,215 |
| 3 | Maharashtra | 1,83,171 |
| 4 | Chhattisgarh | 1,18,494 |
| 5. | Karnataka | 81,776 |
| 6. | Odisha | 78,505 |
| 7. | Arunachal Pradesh | 58,626 |
| 8 | Andhra Pradesh | 44,420 |
| 9 | Gujarat | 34,791 |

Source: Forest Survey of India 2015

In the year 2014, there were 692 protected areas (103 National Parks, 525 Wildlife Sanctuaries, 4 Community Reserves and 60 Conservation reserves) covering 158645.05 km or 5.07% geographical area of the country. Per-capita Energy Consumption (PEC) (the ratio of the estimate of total energy consumption during the year to the estimated mid-year population of that year) increased from 6205.25 KWh in 2011-12 to 6748.61 KWh in 2012-13 and hence, the percentage annual increase of 8.76%. In 2013, the estimated CO₂ emission (Million Tonnes) for India was 1954.02. The Carbon dioxide emission showed a percentage increase of 235.57% in 2014 over 1990 for India.

In 2010, consumption of CFC was estimated at 290.733 ODP tonnes (ODP –Ozone Depletion Potential), down from 5614 ODP tones in 2000. From the year 2000, the CFC consumption decreased gradually till 2008, but showed minor increase in 2010. As per Census 2011, 67.3% households are using solid fuels (fire wood, crop residue, cow dung cake) for cooking against 74.3% in 2001. Census 2011 also reveals that in rural areas 86.5% households and in urban areas 26.1% households were using solid fuels for cooking⁷.

Role of Local Rural Governance in Managing Environment

The rural local bodies play a major role by ensuring safe environment. To cope with global warming and climate change, rural local bodies are the only source at grassroots level to tackle environmental emergencies. In that respect, Government of India constituted District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 for rural local body to prevent and arrange relief measures and respond to disaster at local level. According to IDMC, 2.14 Million people were displaced in India due to the natural disaster in the year 2013.

From 2008 – 2013 about 26.13 million people were displaced by disaster due to the climate change in India⁸. As per the Yokohoma (ICDM, 1994) Strategy, plan and action should involve central, state, district and local governments, which should prepare plans for disaster management. The 73rd Amendment to the Constitution of India has given legal power to the rural local body at village, block and district levels and it has specified 29 functions. Through these 29 functions, rural local bodies could be strengthening the common and natural resources available locally.

On the other hand, PESA act ensures that Panchayats and Gram Sabha could be benefited by ownership of resources and rights in the scheduled areas as self-reliance in the village which is not covered by 73rd Amendment act. The act provides solution to many issues such as tribal land alienation, deprivation of rights on minor forest produce, lack of control of the residents over natural resources, lack of control over local plans and so forth⁹. The rural local governance not only makes the people as self-reliant, it also enables the rural local body to observe the natural resources.

Conclusion

To tackle and resolve these environmental issues at the grassroots level, we need ground level policy and ensure planning from below. Local Governance can identify the hurdles at the local level and they can make the policy for their own purpose as well as nation's environment development. Because, more particularly poor

and marginalized are affected by the environment problems. If local bodies are to be enabled to resolve these environmental issues, they need financial support as well as technical support. Rural local bodies' functions and roles must be to protect the natural resources within their boundaries. Rural local governance can transform the societies and communities through their activities. Not only transform the societies, rural local governance can also enrich and protects the natural resources in a transformative way.

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Work-Life-Balance: A Human Resource Approach

Mukund M. Mundargi*

[The highly competitive global economy has led to the organizations expecting the employees to operate on a twenty-four hours a day schedule. The technological advances have made it possible for employees to be connected to all times, which ushered the work-life balance issue into the forefront of the employees and employers alike. The term work-life balance was first coined in 1986 in USA in relation to the unhealthy choices that many Americans were making in favour of the work place as they opted to neglect family, friends and leisure activities in the pursuit of corporate/work goals.]

Work is normally identified with paid employment in this context. Life included activities outside work-life and also includes free time. Work is classified into physical and mental work. Mental work has increased substantially compared to physical work, which is felt due to Informational Technology and due to intense competitive work environment, long-term loyalty and a sense of corporate community has eroded by performance, culture and expects more and more from employees. Balance is maintained when equal weight is given to both work and home activities. Clark (2000) perceives balance as satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with minimum of role conflict.

Work-Life-Balance – Conceptual Approach

Work-life balance is a state of equilibrium in which the demands of both person's job and personal life are equal. It is perceived that the quality of an employee's personal life and family life impact work quality and that it makes business sense to promote work and family integration (Lockwood, 2003). Work-life balance is defined as work-family balance as the extent to which an individual is equally self-engaged and equally satisfied with his/her work role and family role (Greenhouse et al., 2003).

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Work-Life Conflict – Need for Work-Life-Balance

Work-life-balance becomes necessary when work-to-life conflict occurs due to work becoming hectic and strenuous consequent to the new corporate environment characterized by willful from ambiguous persuasion to increasing productivity. The boundaries between work and home tend to get blurred. The more this boundary is blurred, the higher the work-life-conflict.

Work-life-conflict is perceived in two directions i.e. work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict.

1. Work to family conflict occurs when experiences at work interfere with family life viz.

- Prolonging abnormal or fixed work hours
- Work overload and other forms of job stress
- Interpersonal conflict at work
- Extensive travel
- Career transitions
- Unsupportive supervisor or organization, etc.

2. Family to work conflict occurs when experiences in the family interfere with work viz.

- Presence of young children

- Primary responsibility for children
- Elders' care responsibilities
- Interpersonal conflict within the family unit and
- Unsupportive family members

Work-family conflict relates to employee's experience that his or her work pressures to optimize. Job requirements interfere with the ability to meet family demands. It is necessary to manage and balance the expectations of family and work, which does affect individuals. Work life conflict can have unfavourable results on families and work places causing anxiety and depression, poor job performance and absenteeism (Anderson et al., 2002 & Frone, 2003).

Work-life-balance becomes important to individual, the organization and the society at large. Work-life balance has policy implications for human resource management. Work-life-balance has important consequences for employee's attitudes towards their organizations as well as the lives of employees.

Work-Life-Balance – Business Policies and Performance

Business performance is impacted by policies related to work-life-balance. Employers attract better recruits by offering work-life-balance policies alongside competitive remuneration packages. Work life balance policies can improve staff retention rates and can enhance productivity. Work life balance policies can minimize stress and contribute to safer and healthier work place by combating fatigue and thereby reduce the chance of accidents occurring in the work places.

The implementation of Work-Life-Balance policies can ensure the following benefits to the business organizations.

- Reduced staff turnover rates.

- Less loss of knowledge workers to competitors.
- Lower recruitment and training costs associated with reduced turnover.
- Benefit of becoming a good employer.
- Broader recruitment tool.
- Improved quality of aspirants for employment.
- Improved return on investment in training as employees stay longer.
- Reduced absenteeism.
- Improved morale of employees.
- Greater staff loyalty and commitment.
- Improved corporate image which can lead to greater sales.

Properly planned flexible employment practices that enable employees to achieve better work life balance can lead to significant business improvement. Organizations should provide various stress-free working hours. Employees should be provided with facilities for meditation techniques, yoga, extra-curricular events and proper self-appraisal of jobs. The work life balance policies of the organizations must introduce flexible working hours, cash facilities, strong security in case of need, adequate training for improvement of employee performance. Organizations should focus on developing, formulating, implementing and reviewing work-life-balance and work-life-conflict relating to their employees and the organizations themselves.

Work-Life-Balance – Strategies of Employers

The benefits of work-life-balance policies of employers are achieved through certain strategies by employers.

1. Flexibility: Employers can follow this strategy which involves options on work arrangements for empowering employees, which best suits

their life style. This strategy may include working from home, flex time, job sharing or leave options.

2. Training Empowering employees through practical training to ensure that they know how to manage work load and job stress.
- 3 Resilience: Employees should be made to realize that resilience is a priority for them and hold them accountable for maintaining and building their own personal resilience levels. Resilience resources are related to better health and wellbeing and also organizational productivity.
4. Life style programs: These involve providing employees with health and wellness that contributes to the cost of engaging in physical activity and is a great way to ensure this important life style factor a priority.

Strategies of Employees for Work-Life-Balance

Employees would be happy with their work and family life with the following broad guidelines.

1. Track your Time: Keep a time log of everything you do for a week.
2. Determine the Priorities: Prepare a list of priorities at work and at home and analyse your time for each of the activity and act accordingly.
3. Set Specific Goals: Take your list of priorities and turn them into concrete and measured goals.
4. Schedule Scrupulously: Set aside a few minutes at the beginning of each day to plan your tasks and activities for day and evening ahead.
5. Establish Boundaries: Set practical limits about your work at home and at work and communicate these boundaries to your supervisors, co-workers, partners and family.

6. Take Care of your Health: Keep physically and mentally healthy.

7. Nurture your Family/Relationship.

8. Take Time for You.

9. Work Smarter.

Conclusion

Work-life-balance programmes and policies have the potential to significantly improve employee morale, reduce absenteeism and retain organizational knowledge. There is need to optimize happiness in life by a fine balance between life, employment and work. There is need for avoiding excess of one beyond a point. Hence, balancing employees' choices is the dire need in the circumstances. Employees have to decide how they want to live and spend their time. Organizations need to adopt human resource strategies and policies to overcome the issues of the work life balance of employees in the current business environment.

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Role of Dairy Co-Operatives in Empowering Rural Women

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[Women are the eyes of the nation. The role of women in the development of nation is very important. So, women should enjoy respect both in the house and in the society. The strategy for strengthening women's economic status is to address the twin objectives of increasing income and solidarity of women. To enhance the status of women, they must be empowered socially, economically and politically. The present paper tries to focus on the measurement of decisional empowerment of women through dairy co-operatives. For this study we largely drew data from the primary survey conducted among women (pouring) society members of Madurai Aavin Union, Tamil Nadu. A sample of women members surveyed for this study to understand women empowerment through dairy co-operative in areas of decision-making empowerment. The study aims at identifying the decisional aspects in which women have been empowered.]

Dairy co-operatives in India being the replication of the 'Anand' type dairy co-operatives have played a major role in production and marketing of milk. These co-operatives were established and spread throughout the country under the programme 'Operation Flood' which started during the seventies. In Madurai district of Tamil Nadu, the Anand-type dairy co-operatives were first established during 1967. The Madurai District Cooperative Milk Producers' Union Ltd, is popularly known as Madurai Aavin. This is one of the largest dairies in the southern part of Tamil Nadu. Woman empowerment tries to ensure participation of women in the key areas of development like economy, society, politics and culture and involvement in decision-making process, which will enable them to control their lives.

Decision-making within the Household

The empowerment process can be expected to have a definite impact on the process of decision-making within the household. Economic independence enhances woman's status within

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the household. It is a well-accepted fact that even in those families where seclusion is the order, 'economic contribution to the household income provides a certain degree of autonomy in decision-making. As a member of the family system, a woman's input into the family decision-making process is largely dependent on the level of resources owned and controlled by her, as well as her family's decision-making style- whether autocrat or democrat.

Statement of the Problem

The main thrust of the milk co-operatives is providing employment and generating more income for the betterment of the socio-economic conditions of the members. Socio-economic empowerment signifies progress or advancement in respect of social and economic aspects of the people. So, the researchers aim to probe the role of dairy co-operatives in the empowerment of rural women and the social and economic development in their lives.

Hence, the researchers aim at analysing whether Madurai Aavin Union helps the rural women by rendering services and implementing the Government schemes through the society. This study focuses on how the women members of the society are empowered in decision-making in their family after they have been enrolled as a member in the society.

Objective of the Study

1) To identify the decisional areas in which women empowerment has increased after joining the dairy co-operatives. 2) To offer suggestions based on the major findings of the study.

Source of Data

The present study was based on both primary and secondary data. While the primary data have been collected through personal interview using a well-structured interview schedule from sample women members of selected co-operative societies. The secondary data was collected from unpublished reports of the office of the Deputy Registrar, Dairying, Madurai and Theni, the unpublished records of Madurai union, books, journals, magazines and from related Web sites.

Sampling Design

There are seven zones in the Madurai District Co-operative Milk producers' Union Ltd., In these zones out of 1085 societies, only 710 societies are functional. The multi-stage random sampling technique was adopted in the study. The study of the Union covers Madurai and Theni districts and it has seven zones namely Melur, Vadipatty, Chellampatti, Usilampatti, Peraiyur, Theni, Andipatty. At the first stage, functional societies (710) are identified from all the seven zones. In the second stage, 10 percent of the functional societies were chosen for the study on a random basis as sample societies. In the next stage the 500 women sample respondents were selected from these 71-sample dairy co-operative societies (both general and women societies).

For this purpose, those who supplied milk to the societies at the time of study alone were considered. In other words, those members who were not functional were ignored. From these 500 women respondents' seven members were randomly selected from each society to conduct the study.

Research Methodology

The statistical tools were selected on the basis of the fulfillment of objectives and the scale of data. Regression model was built to know the predictors that are significant in estimating the

level of the decisional empowerment of the members after joining the society.

Result and Discussion

Opinion about Empowerment in Decision Making

In olden days, the decisions regarding the construction of house, education of children and any decision regarding the family were purely taken to be the men in the family. The women did not have any power in taking decision or involving in it. But now days, after joining the dairy co-operatives, she is able to participate in the decision or involving in it. The opinion of the members regarding decision-making in the family after joining the society has been listed in table 1.1.

Regression estimation of Decisional Empowerment

The opinion of the members regarding decision-making in the family after joining the society has been analysed. To know the predictors that are significant in estimating the level of the decisional empowerment, a regression model was built by taking the following predictors.

a. Predictors: (Constant), 'My children's future is not in my hands', 'I am not allowed to take family planning decisions on my own', 'I vote on my own', 'I am free to decide whether to work or not', 'I am not allowed to work', 'My suggestions are not accepted when decision regarding savings raises', 'I am not aware about the medical care of my family', 'My involvement in family decision making is allowed', 'I do not involve myself in my children's marriage decision', 'I am not allowed to take decisions regarding children', 'I am allowed to decide my children's education', 'I am not allowed to take decisions', 'While decision regarding savings arises my suggestions are accepted', 'I do not vote on my own discretion', 'I am not allowed to pursue higher studies', 'I am allowed to involve with regard to children's marriage decisions', 'I am aware to take medical care of family', 'I decide my children's future', 'I am allowed to improve my own educational qualification', 'I decide the birth control aspects'.

Table 1.1
Decisional Empowerment

| Decision-making Empowerment | SA | | A | | NA/NDA | | DA | | SDA | | Total |
|--|-----|----|-----|----|--------|----|-----|----|-----|----|-------|
| | C | % | C | % | C | % | C | % | C | % | |
| My suggestions are not accepted when decision regarding savings raises | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 25 | 5 | 415 | 83 | 60 | 12 | 965 |
| My involvement in family decision making is allowed | 235 | 47 | 255 | 51 | 10 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2225 |
| I am not allowed to work | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 50 | 10 | 310 | 62 | 140 | 28 | 910 |
| I am not allowed to pursue higher studies | 0 | 0 | 25 | 5 | 70 | 14 | 295 | 59 | 110 | 22 | 110 |
| I am not allowed to decide my children's education. | 55 | 11 | 440 | 88 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2050 |
| I am not aware about the medical care of my family | 0 | 0 | 465 | 93 | 35 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1965 |
| I am allowed to involve with regard to children's marriage decisions. | 180 | 36 | 295 | 59 | 25 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2155 |
| I do not vote on my own discretion | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 180 | 36 | 135 | 27 | 185 | 37 | 995 |
| While decision regarding savings arises, my suggestions are accepted | 130 | 26 | 345 | 69 | 25 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2105 |
| I am not allowed to take family planning decisions on my own | 0 | 0 | 180 | 36 | 320 | 64 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1680 |
| I decide my children's future | 115 | 23 | 385 | 77 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2115 |
| I am aware to take medical care of family | 0 | 0 | 430 | 86 | 70 | 14 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1930 |
| I do not involve myself in my children's marriage decision | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 320 | 64 | 180 | 36 | 820 |
| I am allowed to improve my own educational qualification | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 60 | 12 | 125 | 25 | 315 | 63 | 745 |
| I decide the birth control aspects. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 295 | 59 | 205 | 41 | 0 | 0 | 1295 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----|----|-----|----|----|---|-----|----|-----|----|------|
| I am not allowed to take decisions regarding children education | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 310 | 62 | 190 | 38 | 810 |
| I vote on my own to work or not | 45 | 9 | 425 | 85 | 30 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2015 |
| I am free to decide whether | 150 | 30 | 350 | 70 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2150 |
| I am not allowed to take to take decisions | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 265 | 53 | 235 | 47 | 765 |
| My children's future is not in my hands | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 445 | 89 | 55 | 11 | 945 |

Computed data

Table 1.1 has shown that the opinion of members towards decision-making in the family after joining the dairy co-operative society that assertion of women members was allowed to

take family decisions gets the maximum score followed by the statement that they can be allowed to involve in their children's marriage decision, they are free to work, occupies the second and third places respectively.

Table 1.2

Regression Coefficients for estimation of Decisional empowerment

| R | R Square | Source of Variation | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------|----------|---------------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|-------|
| 0.858 | 0.74 | Regression | 85.733 | 20 | 4.287 | 66.628 | 0.000 |
| | | Residual | 30.817 | 479 | 0.064 | | |
| | | Total | 116.55 | 499 | | | |

Computed data

b). Dependent Variable:

Decision making empowerment
 $\text{Decisional empowerment} = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + \dots +$

It is seen from table 1.2 the power of the regression model is represented by the R² is a healthy 0.736, and the 'F' test of the model is high as the significance of F is 0.000 which is less than 0.05.

Table 1.3

Regression Coefficients for estimation of Decisional empowerment Level

| Predictors | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | sig. |
|--|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|--------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| (Constant) | -6.283 | 0.658 | 0.207 | -9.549 | 0.000* |
| My suggestions are not accepted when decision regarding savings raises | 0.246 | 0.034 | 0.145 | 1.157 | 0.410 |

| | | | | | |
|--|--------|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| My involvement in family decision making is allowed | 0.131 | 0.028 | 0.223 | 4.701 | 0.000* |
| I am not allowed to work | 0.182 | 0.021 | 0.447 | 8.603 | 0.000* |
| I am not allowed to pursue studies | 0.289 | 0.024 | 0.313 | 11.858 | 0.000* |
| I am allowed to decide my children's | 0.456 | 0.046 | | 9.863 | 0.000* |
| I am not aware about the medical care of my family | -0.035 | 0.056 | -0.019 | -0.631 | 0.528 |
| I am allowed to involve with regard to children's marriage decisions | 0.068 | 0.028 | 0.079 | 2.419 | 0.016* |
| I do not vote on my own discretion | 0.258 | 0.019 | 0.457 | 13.433 | 0.000* |
| While decision regarding savings arises, my suggestions are accepted | 0.167 | 0.031 | 0.178 | 5.45 | 0.000* |
| I am not allowed to take family planning decisions on my own | 0.187 | 0.063 | 0.185 | 2.976 | 0.003* |
| I decide my children's future | 0.254 | 0.044 | 0.222 | 5.818 | 0.000* |
| I am aware to take medical care of family | 0.206 | 0.048 | 0.148 | 4.333 | 0.000* |
| I do not involve myself in my children's marriage decision | 0.033 | 0.033 | 0.033 | 1.021 | 0.308 |
| I am allowed to improve my own educational qualification | -0.015 | 0.028 | -0.022 | -0.542 | 0.588 |
| I decide the birth control aspects | 0.241 | 0.058 | 0.245 | 4.176 | 0.000* |
| I am not allowed to take decisions regarding children education | 0.083 | 0.027 | 0.083 | 3.025 | 0.003* |
| I vote on my own | 0.212 | 0.035 | 0.169 | 6.069 | 0.000* |
| I am free to decide whether to work or not. | 0.176 | 0.033 | 0.167 | 5.290 | 0.000* |

| | | | | | |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| I am not allowed to take decisions | 0.174 | 0.031 | 0.076 | 2.367 | 0.018* |
| My children's future is not in my hands | 0.227 | 0.063 | 0.147 | 3.626 | 0.000* |

Computed data

* = significant at 5%

The table 1.3 indicates that the t test result showed those predictors that are statistically significant at 95 % confidence as their significance levels are less than 0.05. This clearly indicates that members have decisional empowerment after joining the dairy co-operative society.

Findings

It can be clearly seen that there is an increase in decisional empowerment of women after joining the society for the following decisional statements 'my involvement in family decision-making is allowed', 'I am not allowed to work', 'I am not allowed to pursue higher studies', 'I am allowed to decide my children's education', 'I am allowed to involve with regard to children's marriage decisions', 'I do not vote on my own discretion', 'While decision regarding savings arises my suggestions are accepted', 'I am not allowed to take family planning decisions on my own', 'I decide my children's future', 'I am aware to take medical care of family, 'I decide the birth control aspects', 'I am not allowed to take decisions regarding children', 'I vote on my own', 'I am free to decide whether to work or not', 'I am not allowed to take decisions', and 'my children's future is not in my hands'.Conclusion

Even after active participation as a member in dairy cooperatives, women do not have decisional empowerment to take medical care of their family, decisions regarding savings, to take children's marriage decision, to improve their educational qualifications.

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