



Patriarchy: A Catalyst to Breed and Legitimize Sexual Violations Against Women in India

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ABSTRACT-

Criminalization is a social phenomenon that is shaped by society and continues to take shape through it. The rapid rise of crime in the society is the result of the narrow mindedness of the people spread over the ages in every corner of our country.

Female feticide is a matter of deep shame and great concern. The evil of female feticide has ingrained deep into our society and is perennially prevalent almost everywhere. It is heartbreaking and soul-wrenching to witness the paradoxical nature of the frail-minded society. A family does not spend a penny of thought before killing a girl child, though they indulge themselves in religiously worshipping Goddess Lakshmi, Kali, and Durga. Even though the prenatal sex determination is unlawful, citizens somehow find alternative ways to ascertain the sex of the child, leading to a bizarre situation not only for the fetus and the mother but the entire society. Despite the enactment of several laws passed by the government, female feticide is still rooted in our country and the plight of mothers stuck in this terrible trap of discriminatory society is deteriorating day by day.

In India, girls are crushed and devalued not only for economic reasons, but also for socio-cultural factors, such as the son extending the lineage, providing security and safety to the family and the need for liberation. At the same time, the increase in the number of cases of sex-selective abortion has become a significant social phenomenon in many parts of our society. Girls are targeted before they are born and are projected for hate crimes. Today, modern medical science, such as amniocentesis and ultrasonography, which was originally created to detect fetal abnormalities, is being misused to determine the sex of the unborn child.

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Decade of the Female Child (1991-2000) National Plan of Action aimed to secure the girl child's equality by putting in place adequate policies to protect the unborn. However, due to lack of legislation and proper implementation, the purpose of the law was defeated. The magnitude of this problem is difficult to determine as most deliveries take place at home and there is no record of the exact number of births and deaths.

Key Words: Domestic violence, female feticide, equality.

INTRODUCTION-

We celebrated Women's Day on 8th March and this day was important for two reasons: Firstly, it marked the 26th anniversary of Beijing Declaration adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China in 1995. Secondly, the year 2021 proved itself to be a signal to world leaders regarding the status of women.

As the world is still fighting the brutal COVID-19 lockdown, women are facing a lot of stress, anxiety and depression. It was well documented that women's bodies burn worse in distress than in pandemic or natural disasters

Domestic violence against women is already widespread and unreported in many parts of the country and brutality against women is breaking all records of humanity. During the phase of COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations recognized domestic violence against women as a "shadow epidemic". We often say that "home is the safest place" but not for a plethora of women in the world. Ironically, home is the most unsafe place for domestic violence victims, as they are forced to live with their abusers.

During the first four phases of the COVID-19, Indian women reported more domestic violence complaints than were registered in the same period of 10 years. As per the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) 2020 report, the majority (30.9%) of all 4.05 lakh cases underlined Section 498A of the Indian Penal Court. In India not only Domestic Violence but also pssproblems encountering female feticide and infanticide is reaching milestones since the last few decades.

It is a deliberate and intentional killing of a female child within a year of her birth either directly using toxic organic and inorganic chemicals or indirectly by willful neglect of one of the parents to feed the infant or by other family member or neighbour or babysitter.

Kollur (1990) defines infanticide as the murder of a child under "one year of age" who is killed by the mother, father or other people in whose care the child is entrusted and on whom it is wholly dependent.

It is unfortunate that even parents see the girl as a liability. This tendency lies in a complex set of social, cultural and economic factors. Dowry practices, lack of economic independence and inequalities against women have put them in a secondary position. The degree may be different but the girl child is neglected since the ages and discrimination against her goes hand in hand.

Female feticide has been reported in a number of places in India since 1789, including the Rajput caste in the western coastal districts of Rajasthan, in Surat and Kutch of Gujarat and in eastern Uttar Pradesh.

Desai (1988) has boldly documented that Female feticide was so widespread in the Jadeja (Rajput) families of Kutch that it was a task of every now and then.

Thus, the twin process of 'elimination of unborn daughters' and 'slow killing' through neglect and discrimination of those born is a matter of concern and it must be eradicated from the grassroot level.

Women Empowerment: A revolution

Women empowerment is a contentious issue. Because of contradicting assertions in various holy books, the role of women in ancient India was extremely complicated. Some have described their position as 'on par with men', while others have held it not only in disrespect but also in positive hatred. Some historians claim that women used to have the same position and power as men during the stone age period while others assert that during the post-Vedic periods, they began to face challenges. They were treated as slaves and chattels on numerous occasions and were debarred from moving outside. The status of women has progressively enhanced from the early twentieth century (national movement), and credit for this goes to the British people. It was only after India's independence, under the competent leadership of Dr. Ambedkar, that constitutional architects and national leaders began insisting on and reinforcing women's equality in society. Today, it is unbelievable and astonishing to realise that a large percentage of Indian women are employed and have the right to profess, practice and propagate any profession of their choice.

Women make up roughly half of the Indian population. Despite this, India has a lopsided male to female ratio. This is because, in certain sections of the country, women are still viewed distinctly than males. This issue may be traced back to ancient India, when women were revered as goddesses while yet being kept as slaves. Draupadi, the Pandavas' wife, had to deal with all kinds of inequality, injustice and inequity in the Mahabharata. This demonstrates that women were treated differently than men since ages. The ideal mindset of the culture was to force girls to marry at an early age. This situation was strange and unusual since, on the one hand, the daughters had the right to choose their husbands and, on the other hand, they were compelled to marry at a young age.

Education: A weapon to tackle the misery of marginalization against women

Education is the most powerful weapon for women empowerment and catalyzing the overall development of the country. Education can change the lives of tons of people in a remarkable manner. "If you educate a man, you educate a man, however, if you educate a woman, you educate a family," said the first Prime Minister of India. Thus, educating a woman is a moral obligation lying on the shoulders of every nation. To educate the nation, one needs to educate the Women. Statistics precisely claim that "women empowerment equals to India's empowerment." A well-educated woman will encourage the education of other women in her life, guide them and become a better role model for her children.

Statistics also show that women gained confidence, respect, and the ability to give financial support and these changes arose because of the advocacy of education. Since, an educated woman is aware of health care, law, and her rights, it leads to the progress of the society as both men and women can keep tab on each other. Women can achieve more socially, economically, and professionally with adequate education.

Women's access to education is still denied in rural India, and as a result, crime rates have surpassed all previous highs and are on the rise. Over the years, the government has developed number of programmes to raise awareness for women's education, including Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Operation Blackboard, Beti Bachao, Beti padhao and others. Despite these implementations, women empowerment lacks in thousands of rural areas in India and to bring a change, we'll have to execute the schemes in the same manner as they were implemented.

To bring a change in the mind-set of the people, educating women is must as Education enables women to recognise their strengths and weaknesses, as well as to make positive changes in their lives.

Education assists women in being self-sufficient. In comparison to other countries, Indian women have the lowest literacy rate. Education is a fundamental right for all people, and no one should be prohibited in gaining education. Education enables people to meet their necessities and provides them with opportunities and the confidence to speak out in opposition to domestic violence and sexual harassment. Thus, it's well said by Michelle Obama; "Be a part of the change and use education to empower a woman."

Gender Equality: An aftermath of women empowerment

Everyone in this society dreams of equal rights and access to the resources available to them, but there is a lot of discrimination in the society as well. This discrimination can be due to cultural differences, geographical differences, colour, social status and even gender. The most prevalent discrimination

is gender inequality. It is not a local issue and is confined to certain walks of life but is prevalent across the whole world. Even in progressive societies and top organizations, we can see many examples of gender bias.

Gender inequality is the most frequent practice in India, and it is practised by people of all communities and religions. It's believed that at the end of the day, women have to manage household chores, while men are perceived to protect their families and provide financial support, thus, women are taught to mould themselves based on the preferences of others and men are trained to lead. This is a long-standing stereotype, and it is one of the reasons why women are denied basic human rights. Even in domestic concerns, a woman is denied the freedom to express herself; political and financial perspectives lag far behind. Women are natural leaders who, given a chance, can achieve in any subject. We live in a male dominated world where a

man has the freedom to do whatever he wants, but the thoughts of women are sacrosanct.

Literacy rate among girls is very low. Most of the girls are not provided even primary education. Moreover, they get married early and are made to raise children and do only household chores. They are not allowed to go out and are dominated by their husbands. Women are taken lightly by men as they are considered their property. Women are also discriminated against in the workplace. They are paid less than their male counterparts for the same work. Women confront gender disparity even at the professional level, where a male candidate is promoted much ahead of a female candidate. Only deserving applicants should be promoted, according to the new thinking.

Thus, Women's empowerment guarantees that every woman has the opportunity to be educated, pursue professional training, and raise awareness. Gender equality, on the other hand, ensures that both genders have equal access to resources and equitable engagement. Gender equality is a critical step toward long-term development and ensures that everyone has access to basic human rights.

Roadblocks to health facilities of women-

Health demands and services for various populations have emerged as states work to make their systems more efficient and contemplate integrating more individuals under federal health reform implementation, most notably women. Women, who are critical to keeping families healthy, use the health care system more than men for themselves and their children. Many women become pregnant and give birth, which is a major health event, and then become the vital caregiver of their child, a role that has a substantial impact on family health. Women are more affected by aging and health care difficulties than men because they live longer, have higher rates of disability and long-term health problems, and earn lower than average, which allows access to state and community resources such as Medicaid. A woman's health is important to her, to her family, and

to the state budget throughout her life. Legislators are grappling with the realities of implementing federal health care reform under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), along with restricted budgets and changing health care regulations.

The ACA targets teen pregnancy prevention through several state award programs, which aim to educate teens about pregnancy and how to avoid sexually transmitted diseases. The current teen pregnancy rate in India is at its lowest level in 30 years, according to the study, which links the decline to more responsible teen behaviour—fewer teens have sex, and who use contraception more successfully. Policy makers can also assist with teen pregnancy prevention through a variety of initiatives tailored to the needs of each state. Partnerships between health systems, school districts and community colleges provide viable prevention programs. Grants are available for states and community-based organizations to start teen pregnancy prevention programs through various federal funding sources.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, about half of pregnancies in India are unplanned. Family planning services help prevent unintended pregnancies and place children in families who are prepared to care for them. Medicaid programs are required to include family planning services, such as contraceptives and STD screening and treatment, with the federal government covering 90% of the cost. States have been allowed to provide services to certain individuals who would otherwise be ineligible for Medicaid because of the family planning extension exemption, such as men, women who lose postpartum coverage, and those who are under the age of 19. The Affordable Care Act allows states more flexibility in health management.

CONCLUSION-

Once all these threats are over, all will understand the value of a woman and our country will achieve gender equality in the true sense. Women are setting examples everywhere and we all should highlight them to change the scenario and give them equal rights. Lastly, India's performance in Olympics 2021 is the latest example where India has won seven medals. Six of those seven medals came in individual events, and of those six medals three have been won by female athletes. This shows that even after facing so many difficulties, their performance is at par with male athletes. With so much potential, it is only a matter of time before women will overtake men and display all their potential for the world to see!

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