

Empowerment of Women in Kashmir: A Critical Appraisal

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Abstract

Empowerment of women can be defined as a multidimensional process which encourages women to realize and achieve their goals in all the spheres of life. Every day in newspaper we read about the crimes against women. It is hard to imagine the pain that women go through. Our society is male dominated and women never considered at par with men. Ever since the human life began women have been victimized in almost every arena of life. Owing to patriarchal society and deteriorating values, the so called traditions gradually affected the position of women turning it to be inferior and ill honored prone to harassment assault and many other social evils. This paper intend to highlight the present status of women empowerment in Kashmir and to access the status of crime against women and to examine critically the process of women empowerment in Kashmir. The paper is purely based on secondary sources of data and other relevant sources wherever found necessary. The authors found the significant impact on these variables.

Key words: *Women empowerment, crime against women, critical appraisal, Kashmir*

Introduction

Kashmir is one of the most volatile region in entire south Asia. Women are effected by its short and long term effects. Economic deprivation, poverty or gender based violence the costs of conflict are borne disproportionately by women and their children. Violence against women is experienced by women of all ages and social classes, all races, religions and nationalities. Violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men. Gender disparity is high, crimes against women are increasing and violence against women is high and in most cases go unreported. Workplace harassment of women is another phenomenon which is rapidly increasing as more women join the work force. Early age marriages are still taking place and the number of girls going to school is abysmally low. Female feticide and infanticide is starring the nation as one of the biggest social crisis. With the heavy

militarization in the Kashmir valley women have often been the targets and survivors of violence suffering from trauma, injury and disease. Throughout the troubled decades, Kashmiri women have challenged the label of 'victims'. Women are also labeled 'half widows' when their husbands have been disappeared but not been declared dead. The absence of husband's renders women economically vulnerable. Women are also affected psychologically and have been reported as the worst affected by mental health problems in Kashmir. Women have problem of powerlessness and this powerlessness reinforce the subordinate role the women. History has ineffectively witnessed women's suffering in the form of discrimination, coercion, subjugation, exploitation, degradation, humiliation and aggression. Women are denied access to both privileged and utilitarian role open only to males. Women from different socio- economic strata face a great deal of disparity in their life scenarios. Women are most affected end up having fewest work options and are left to go for traditionally female 'pink- collars' jobs such as clerical or support services that are characterized by low salaries, few or no benefits and little space for advancement. Kashmiri society is patriarchal in nature which has confined women within four walls. Women had limited exposure and low level of education with limited freedom of interaction because of discrimination and violence. Gender discrimination is on rise due to prevailing economic, social and political turmoil's. Low participation of women in socio-economic activities which has badly affected the process of development resultantly it has eroded their freedom of speech and expression, freedom to get education and enhancement of employment opportunities. Women in Kashmir also face issues like domestic violence, inadequate and unorganized health care, lack of decision making, lack of awareness, illiteracy and ignorance and many cultural and customs practices hinder the empowerment of women.

Review of Literature

Murthy H.V. Sreenivasa (2006) the author highlighted that Arya samaj was the earliest to start socio- religious reform movement in this state as early as in the last decade of the 19th century. Its reformist activities extended to the removal of social evils such as dowry system, untouchability, infant marriage and the practice of widowhood. In Kashmir the movement for widow remarriage was spearheaded by Arya samaj which had gained a firm foothold here. Thus the desire for a change was perceptible from societies and forums formed by both Hindus and Muslims. These exhorted the people to shun superstitions and

pernicious customs, but the progress of total reform was found to be slow. **Raza, M., Ahmad. A, Mohammad. A (1978)** the author reveals that sheikh Abdullah propelled the 'Quit Kashmir' movement with a very enemy of government discourse at Srinagar on fifteenth May 1946. Muslims ladies not just took out parades in rebellion of prohibitory requests yet in addition took part in extensive numbers of people in general gatherings held at khanqahe- Maula and Hazratbal. The ladies of Kashmir from varying backgrounds approached with increased excitement and vitality in help of their leader. One zoni gujjri was put in a correctional facility upwards of nine times. A few times she was assaulted by the police. She was around then quite young and her better half was dead against her political exercises. Spouse of a poor working man governmental issues was no extravagance for her, house was to be cared for. Her attractive rhetoric drew substantial crowds of ladies fomenters. Gujjri lost her solitary child matured 12 years when a projectile struck the kid in an attack made by the military police. Another lady Fatima a peasant lady was shot dead at Anantnag by the dogra powers in May 1946, while driving parade. All of this shows the strength of Kashmiri women who without the fear of losing their dear ones, decided to march against the brutal rulers of dogra. **Hate C.A (1969)** study changing status of women in post-independence India, highlighted the different factors that are responsible for the changes in the position of women. The author shows that women working in higher position are found in socialist countries than in democratic nations like India, Japan and United Kingdom. The author further concludes that women enjoy equality only in theory. In practice they face many discrimination and their dual roles are hardly recognized for their benefits.

Objectives

1. To highlight the present status of women in Kashmir
2. To assess the status of crime against women in Kashmir
3. To examine critically the process of women empowerment in Kashmir

Methodology

The present study is based on secondary source of data. The data is gathered from different books, journals, newspapers and other sources wherever found necessary. Observation method is also used to assess the empowerment of women in Kashmir.

Findings of the study

The findings of the study are as under:

In present society women status is not equal to men. Kashmir society is dichotomous, patriarchal and patriaral local society. Oppression of women is common but type of oppression is changed. Today women should work in office as well as house, childcare with less support from male counterpart. Gender discrimination is common in Kashmir. Violence against women has an astonishing and grim variety to it- with child marriage, sexual harassment, domestic violence, rape, dowry etc.

Forms of violence faced by women during their life

Table: 1

Stage	Type of violence
Prenatal	Pre-birth elimination of females Physical battery during pregnancy
Infancy	Female infanticide Differential access to care, nutrition, education, healthcare
Child hood	Child marriage, child prostitution, child sexual abuse
Adolescence	Teasing, rape, sexual harassment at the workplace, trafficking, forced prostitution
Youth and Adulthood	Marital rape, domestic violence, dowry related abuse and murder, homicide
Old Age	Threat of sexual abuse, abuse of widows, abuse of the elderly (forms affecting women more than men)

Source: violence against women in India, A review of trends, patterns and responses. April 2004

Prepared by international center for research on women (ICRW) for UNFPA India.

The table 1 reveals that the distinct forms of violence against women and girls over the life cycle ranging from discrimination at one end and to over physical and sexual violence at

the other. The life cycle approach to violence against women attempts to examine the demonstration and forms of violence in the lives of girls and women are highlighted critical areas of their disempowerment.

Different types of violence committed against women in Kashmir

Table: 2

Nature of crime	Place	Number of case in 2017
Rape	Srinagar	14
	Handwara	14
	Anantnag	11
	Kupwara	12
	Budgam	10
	Central Kashmir and ganderbal	06
	Pulwama	05
	Bandipora	04
	Baramulla	04
	Sopore	04
	Awantipora	03
Molestation	Central Kashmir and Budgam	155
	Kulgam	99
	Sopore	74
	Ganderbal	72
	Baramulla	66
	Handwara	61
	Shopian	51
	Bandipora	47
	Awantipora	42
	Pulwama	32
	Kupwara	30
	Anantnag	100
Dowry Deaths	Kashmir Province	129

Source: Police report

The police statistics shows a wonton rise in crime against women. The above table 2 shows that there are numbers of crimes committed against women but some of the cases are reported to the police because people feel ashamed to report the crime. The districts of the Kashmir valley are not safe for the women. Central Kashmir and Budgam district tops the list when it comes to acts of molestation and sexual abuse. Dowry deaths also on peak. The report goes on to portray a picture of freedom enjoyed by men who go to perpetrate such vile acts of crime without having a worry in their minds that they could face punishment for the crimes. In Srinagar 14 women were raped, in Handwara 14, in Anantnag 11, Kupwara 12, Budgam 10, central Kashmir and ganderbal 06, Pulwama 5, Bandipora 4, Baramulla 4, sopore4, Awantipora 3. No cases of rape have been reported from Shopian and kargil for the year 2017. As for as case of molestation are concerned, 155 cases of molestation have been reported from central Kashmir and Budgam district, 99from Kulgam, 74 from Sopore, 72 from ganderbal, 66 from Baramulla, 61 from Handwara, 51 from Shopian,47 from Bandipora, 42 from Awantipora, 32 from Pulwama, 30 from Kupwara and 100 from Anantnag and none from kargil. The dowry deaths in Kashmir province during 2017 are 129. The analysis further shows that women are considered as inferior and not safe in the present contemporary era. The government brings many laws for the protection of women but these laws are not fruitful at the ground level. There are many Ngos and Jammu and Kashmir women commission who work for the women empowerment but in reality women is not empowered and still struggling for empowerment.

Table: 3

Nature of crime	Number of case in the year 2018
Rape	142
Kidnapping	667
Eve-teasing	35
Domestic Assault	143

Source: Rape on rise, Rising Kashmir.com 16 May 2019

As per official figures at least 1000 cases of crime were recorded in 2018 against women in Kashmir. The situation is not different. The incidents of crime against women consistently showing an increasing trend. The data in table 3 reveals that at least 142 cases of rape were registered in Kashmir, 667 cases of kidnapping, 35 cases of eve-teasing and 143 cases of domestic assault were registered in Kashmir during 2018.

Critical Appraisal

There are many challenges which the women of Kashmir are facing significant among them is violence, which is perpetuated at domestic level as well as at state level and illiteracy and ignorance of women constraint their empowerment process. The subordinate position of women in Kashmir has multidimensional manifestations such as scarce representation or participation in the political system, large burden of the economy's informal sector with meagre financial rewards, almost exclusive responsibility for family and children and the more narrow scopes and aspirations career and subsequently low self-esteem. In a deep rooted patriarchal society, the state often interprets women's needs and rights to suit its own preferences that is why the typical and enduring consideration that women have received from the state has been only in their capacity of mothers and wives. Women are discriminated and marginalized at every level of the society whether it is social participation, economic participation, political participation access to education and also reproductive healthcare. Women are found to be economically very poor. A few women are engaged in services and other activities. It has also noticed that women are very weak to work. Education of the women is a very effective tool for women's empowerment. It also raises women's economic productivity. Despite that positive outcomes and the progress made over the past fifty years female literacy remains low as compared to men. The communities and societies in Kashmir are bound up with patriarchal normative universe from which women could hardly get true justice. The religious communities, or the artificial communities like professional bodies are hardly epitome of equality between men and women. Quite often the religious communities have made the life of the women worse by forcing them to adopt conservative practices that are harmful to women. Women on ground level continue to suffer due to social evils like gender inequality, unethical beliefs etc. women still lack acceptance from the male dominated society. Every day several rape cases, harassment cases, dowry cases, sextortion cases and other gender based crimes are reported across Kashmir.

Conclusion

Thus the violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into subordinate position. Women are always being victim of oppression and panic. Whenever their circumstances are brought to the notice we see that their situation does not seem to improve, whether it is domestic assault, molestation, rape and any other crime committed against women. Female feticide and infanticide is biggest social issue. Education has an important role in all round development but the preference of male child education is still prevail in our society. The government has taken many positive steps for the women empowerment but on the ground level women are still facing discrimination.

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