



A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT SOCIAL LEGISLATIONS AMONG RURAL WOMEN IN INDIA

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Abstract

Indian society consists of people belonging to almost all kinds of religious beliefs. In every religion women are given a special place and every religion teaches us to treat women with respect and dignity. But somehow the society has so developed that various types of ill practices, both physical and mental, against women have become a norm since ages. For instance, sati pratha, practice of dowry, parda pratha, female infanticide, wife burning, sexual violence, sexual harassment at work place, domestic violence and other varied kinds of discriminatory practices; all such acts consists of physical as well as mental element. India is a complex country. We have developed various types of customs, traditions and practices, through centuries. These customs and traditions, good as well as bad, have become a part of our society's collective consciousness. We worship female goddesses; we also give great importance to our mothers, daughters, sisters, wives and other female relatives or friends. But at the same time, Indians are also famous for treating their women badly both inside and outside their homes. Therefore, the concept of women empowerment not only focuses on giving women strength and skills to rise above from their miserable situation but at the same time it also stresses on the need to educate men regarding women issues and inculcating a sense of respect and duty towards women as equals. In the present write-up we will try to describe and understand the concept of Women Empowerment in India in all its dimensions. Women empowerment in simple words can be understood as giving power to women to decide for their own lives or inculcating such abilities in them so that they could be able to find their rightful place in the society.

Key-Words: Self-worth, Opportunities, Economic Order, Institutional Provisions, Social Legislation.



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DISCUSSION:

According to the **United Nations**, women's empowerment mainly has five components:

- Generating women's sense of self-worth;

- Women's right to have and to determine their choices;
- Women's right to have access to equal opportunities and all kinds of resources;
- Women's right to have the power to regulate and control their own lives, within and outside the home; and
- Women's ability to contribute in creating a more just social and economic order.

Thus, women empowerment is nothing but recognition of women's basic human rights and creating an environment where they are treated as equals to men.

The policy of women empowerment is well entrenched in the Fundamental Rights enshrined in our Constitution. For instance:

- Article 14 ensures to women the right to equality.
- Article 15(1) specifically prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex.
- Article 15(3) empowers the State to take affirmative actions in favour of women.
- Article 16 provides for equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office.

These rights being fundamental rights are justiciable in court and the Government is obliged to follow the same.

- Article 39 (a) provides that the State to direct its policy towards securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood.
- Article 39 (d) mandates equal pay for equal work for both men and women.
- Article 42 provides that the State to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief.

SPECIFIC LAWS FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA:

Here is the list of some specific laws which were enacted by the Parliament in order to fulfil Constitutional obligation of women empowerment:

- The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976.
- The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961.
- The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956.
- The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961.
- The Medical termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971.
- The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987.
- The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006.
- The Pre-Conception & Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994.

- The Sexual Harassment of Women at Work Place (Prevention, Protection and) Act, 2013.

Above mentioned and several other laws are there which not only provide specific legal rights to women but also gives them a sense of security and empowerment.

In conclusion, it can be said that women in India, through their own unrelenting efforts and with the help of Constitutional and other legal provisions and also with the aid of Government's various welfare schemes, are trying to find their own place under the sun. And it is a heartening sign that their participation in employment- government as well as private, in socio-political activities of the nation and also their presence at the highest decision making bodies is improving day by day. However, we are still far behind in achieving the equality and justice which the Preamble of our Constitution talks about. The real problem lies in the patriarchal and male-dominated system of our society which considers women as subordinate to men and creates different types of methods to subjugate them.

For this to happen apart from Government, the efforts are needed from various NGOs and from enlightened citizens of the country. And first of all efforts should begin from our homes where we must empower female members of our family by providing them equal opportunities of education, health, nutrition and decision making without any discrimination.

The Objectives of the Study:

- (1) To study the status and role of women for development and formation of society.
- (2) To study the changing attitudes of the respondents towards social trends.
- (3) To study the changing life style among rural women.
- (4) To study the impact of social legislations on the women respondents.

To justify and for the fulfillment of the above objectives of the study problem, the following 'hypotheses' have been formulated regarding the study:

1. The positive changes are being practiced in social and family status of rural women due to the impact of urbanization, rural development programmes and social legislations.
2. The social and family position of un-employed rural women is found low in comparison to employed rural women.
3. The rural women are found desirous and aware to get employment.
4. Now-a-days; the rural women are aware towards their rights.
5. The behaviour patterns, life style, capacity to take decision and the feelings of family adjustment have changed among the rural women.
6. The feelings to become economic-independent have developed in rural women.

Methodology, Universe of the Study and Sampling:

For this study “Mathura” district of U.P. is selected as a universe of the study. According to district directory and block records; The researcher has opted ten villages from Lucknow by the lottery method of ‘Random Sampling’ and 30 women have selected from each village by purposive and irregular marking sample method from the voter lists of the concerning villages. Hence, the researcher has selected 300 rural women in all for the purpose as respondents. A combination of Exploratory and Explanatory research designs for the purpose. As we know that exploratory research design is used to find out the causes of social problem concerned and explanatory research design is used to explain the subject matter regarding the problem under the study. To conduct a study through these research designs, a researcher can use available literature, informal interview, and non participant observation to achieve the objectives of the problem.

Table No. 1: Distribution of respondents against different variables

1	Age-Group	<u>Upto 25 yrs.</u> 108(36.00)	<u>26-44 yrs.</u> 138(46.00)	<u>45 yrs. & above</u> 54(18.00)	--	Total 300(100.00)
2	Education	<u>Illiterate</u> 27(09.00)	<u>Upto Intermediate</u> 30(10.00)	<u>Graduate/PG</u> 210(70.00)	<u>Welleducated/ professional</u> (33(11.00)	Total 300(100.00)
3	Caste category	<u>General</u> 162(54.00)	<u>Backward</u> 39(13.00)	<u>Scheduled</u> 99(33.00)	--	Total 300(100.00)
4	Occupation	<u>Domestic</u> 48(16.00)	<u>Labour</u> 72(24.00)	<u>Service</u> 54(18.00)	<u>Others</u> 126(42.00)	Total 300(100.00)
5	Marital Status	<u>Un-married</u> 90(30.00)	<u>Married</u> 192(64.00)	<u>Others</u> 18(06.00)	--	Total 300(100.00)
6	Income (Rs. Monthly)	<u>Below 3000</u> 60(20.00)	<u>3000-6000</u> 81(27.00)	<u>6000-9000</u> 129(43.00)	<u>9000 & above</u> 30(10.00)	Total 300(100.00)

(The figures shown in brackets are percentage)

Table No. 2: The Awareness among the respondents towards the Social Legislations

		<u>Aware</u>	<u>Un-aware</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>No response</u>	<u>Total</u>
1	On the basis of Caste Categories	132(44.00)	105(35.00)	47(15.67)	16(05.33)	300(100.00)
2	On the basis of Age Groups	156(52.00)	60(20.00)	84(28.00)	--(00.00)	300(100.00)
3	On the basis of Education	138(46.00)	125(41.67)	32(10.67)	05(01.67)	300(100.00)
4	On the basis of Marital Status	127(42.67)	93(31.00)	75(25.00)	05(01.67)	300(100.00)
5	On the basis of Income Groups	130(43.33)	132(44.00)	33(11.00)	05(01.67)	300(100.00)
6	On the basis of Occupations	146(48.67)	110(36.67)	44(14.66)	--(00.00)	300(100.00)

Table No. 3: The knowledge among the respondents regarding the Pre-Independence

Social legislations affiliated to the women

S. No.	Pre-independence Social legislations affiliated to the women	Knowledge among respondents (frequencies & %)				Total (%)
		Yes	No	Neutral	No response	
1	Sati Pratha Prohibition Act, 1829	30 (10.00)	195 (65.00)	60 (20.00)	15 (05.00)	300 (100.00)
2	Hindu Widow Re-marriage Act, 1856	51 (17.00)	192 (64.00)	39 (13.00)	18 (06.00)	300 (100.00)
3	Special marriage Act, 1872	-- (00.00)	150 (50.00)	150 (50.00)	-- (00.00)	300 (100.00)
4	Hindu Marriage Special Act, 1923	-- (00.00)	93 (31.00)	195 (65.00)	12 (04.00)	300 (100.00)
5	Hindu Women Property Rights Act, 1937	60 (20.00)	153 (51.00)	87 (29.00)	-- (00.00)	300 (100.00)
6	Child Marriage Restraint (Removal) Act, 1929	93 (31.00)	102 (34.00)	100 (33.33)	05 (01.67)	300 (100.00)
7	Hindu Marriage Dis-abilities Removal or Hindu Women's Right to Separate residence & maintenance : 1946	12 (04.00)	129 (43.00)	156 (52.00)	03 (01.00)	300 (100.00)

(Note : The figures shown in parentheses are percentage)

Table No. 4: The family status of married respondents

<i>S. No.</i>	<i>Status of respondents</i>	<i>frequency</i>	<i>percentage</i>	<i>Special Remark regarding family and education</i>		
1	(a) Very Strong	39	13.00%	Working/well-educated		
	(b) Strong	165	55.00%	Educated family		
	(c) Weak	63	21.00%	Farmers/Uneducated		
	(d) Very Weak	27	09.00%	Laborers/illiterates		
	(e) Neglected	06	02.00%	Widows/ divorced		
Total		300	100%			
2	Opinion is considered for important family affairs as- Family budget, Marriage, Religious works, Rituals/Sanskar,Liking/option/desires etc.	(a) Yes	204	68.00%	Working/well-educated	
		(b) No	51	17.00%	Uneducated /housewife	
		(c) Neutral	45	15.00%	illiterate/Widows/divorced	
		Total		300	100%	

Discussion, conclusions and results:

The above tables depicts that the respondents have no knowledge or lack of knowledge regarding the pre-independence social legislations made for uplift of the women. . The level of knowledge is found less regarding the un-touch ability (offences) Act, 1955 i.e. in 40% respondents; The dowry prohibition Act 1961 (Article:10) in 51% & Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Act, 1986 in (61%); The protection of civil right Act, 1976 in (59%); The immoral Traffic Prevention (Amendment) Act, 1986 in 44%; The 73th Constitutional Amendment Act 1993 providing reservation for the women in Panchayat Raj in 42% and the Family violence Act, 2006 in only 36% rural women respondents. It is evident that there is lack of knowledge regarding the social legislations, amendments; Acts, and constitutional provisions made for the uplift of rural women especially. Among 300 respondents 175(58.33%) respondents have represented their attitudes in the favour of the social legislations, 120(40%) respondents in disfavor; while only 5 respondents did not reply in this concern. **As a result, it is clear that the women of all the caste categories are in the favour of the implementation of the social legislations made for the uplift of the women.**

The figures and percentage of the above table reveal that, out of 300 respondents, 243(81%) respondents have accepted that the knowledge of social legislations; is essential to improve the position of women of rural communities; while a few i.e. 57(19%) respondents have replied in negative. **This fact shows that the knowledge of the social legislations is essential to improve/reform the position of the women of rural communities.** The following table focuses on the reasons responsible for the lack of knowledge towards social

legislations among the rural women. All the hypotheses formulated regarding the study problem; are found empirically and statistically true and significant; therefore in the light of the facts and findings it may be concluded that:

- (1) The positive changes are being observed in social and family status of rural women due to the impact of urbanization, rural development programs and social legislations.
- (2) The social and family position of un-employed rural women is found low in comparison to employed rural women.
- (3) The rural women are found desirous and aware to get employment.
- (4) The awareness regarding to get education is found among the rural women.
- (5) The attitudes of rural women are changing regarding the utility of education.
- (6) The joint families are disorganizing due to the impact of urbanization and social legislations in rural society.
- (7) The behavior patterns, life style, capacity to take decision and the feelings of family-adjustment have changed among the rural women.

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