

Mapping Social Exclusion and Gender Inequality: A Study of Mewat District

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ABSTRACT: The transformation of gender relations since the beginning of the 20th century is one of most profound social changes in the human history. The history of human civilization is characterized by the male domination in the gender relations. Gender inequality refers the unequal distribution of social positions, status; economic benefits etc on the basis of biological differences and are unfavorable for females due to embedded socio-cultural value throughout the world in general and in India in particular. This Gender discrimination takes many forms. Many social practices seen as normal from a religious or cultural point of view (which may have deep historical roots) leave women out of the economic mainstream. These practices may have profound socio-economic consequences because they do not allow society to take advantage of the talent inherent in women. The present study investigates that how despite the legal guarantee of the liberty and equality; especially in part III of the Indian constitution through Article 14, 15 and 16 of the very basic law of country the position of women is pathetic. The data has been collected through structured questionnaire from 120 female respondents from 3 villages of Mewat district namely Hassanpur, Sheikhpur and Kalwari. The study found that violence lies in the structure of the society and has a place in the cultural practices which is well exemplified in through low sex ratio, lack in access to schooling facilities, lack of personal and political freedom, no say in decision making, forced marriages, with the few economic opportunities, lack of securing income, pressure to cover head and body with no personal choices.

Keywords: Social Exclusion, Feminist Perspective, Gender inequality, Mewat

INTRODUCTION

From the grand theoretical perspective to micro-level analysis, the notion of Human security as a practical and desirable objective to be achieved by the state faces many challenges of the specificity of the society. Gender discrimination is one such dimension on which the notion of, One cannot talk about human security without talking about the security without talking about the security of women and gender security. The human security is not only a concern with weapons, as it is about survival with dignity, concerned for people and their welfare. As no society can ever prosper half liberated and half chained. Women security is a pre-condition for the human security.ⁱ

Women's security is highly at the stake at the time of War, violence and conflict, they are the worst victims and marginalized group, they suffer extremely high, they form the majority of civilian deaths, the majority of refugees, and are often the victims of cruel and degrading practices, such as rape, human trafficking, and sexual slavery, women's security is also threatened by unequal access to resources, services and opportunities. Feminists identify other forms of gender violence during times of peace. Security is not the absence of war or violent conflict, even though this is crucial to human security, but "human beings require much more to be secure".ⁱⁱ Harm against women include not only armed conflict but also domestic and intimate violence (some feminists call it 'ordinary private violence' that is ignored by liberal advocates of justice).ⁱⁱⁱ Domestic Violence is one of the forms of threat to women. For Charlesworth, and doubt for other feminists as well, other forms of threat to women are pervasive: "For most women, danger comes from the 'private' realm of the family or community as much as from state. Violence against women is at epidemic levels around the world, with two-thirds of women experiencing violence during their lives, mainly at the hands of men in their family".^{iv}

Despite the legal guarantee of equality in socio-economic and political for both the sexes, still almost half of the population is facing violence in both latent and manifest form and more importantly it is embedded in the structures of the society. The position of women in the society can be best defined in what Amartya Sen says as 'unfavourable inclusion',^v i.e. they are placed in the society on the secondary position. An observation at some of the basic indicators itself reflect the position of women in India. In gender inequality index India ranks 135 in world with the cumulative index of 0.563. The maternal mortality ratio (death per 100,000 live birth) is still 200, while for the developed nation like Norway and Australia it is as low as 7.^{vi} Similarly the adolescent birth rate (birth per 100 women aged 15-19) for India is 32.79 while it is as low 1.9 for Switzerland and 3.8 for Germany. Similarly the share of women in the legislature (decision making body in a democratic structure) is around 10.8

% in India, while for countries Norway, Germany and New Zealand it is more than 30%.^{vii} Habermas consider knowledge as power. Education is considered as synonym of knowledge and in 21st century knowledge precedes the power. If we look at the population of women with at least secondary education in India (% aged 25 and above), it is around 26.6% while for the male it is 50.4%^{viii}. Although it is low for both the gender but it clearly reflects the dichotomy of gender basis. Similarly the participation of women in the Labour force is 28.8 % while for the male it is 80.9%. The Gender related development index female to male ratio of HDI is 0.828 %. The HDI for female is 0.519 while for male it is 0.627^{ix}.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study analyses the cause and consequences of Gender based discrimination dominant palliative of which social system is impregnate with. The field study support and supplement the dimensions ever in the discussion of human security, in which embedded violence get recognized or practiced in social customs. The study is based on the field study of the Mewat district of the Haryana. For the fulfillment of the purpose of study, data has been collected through close ended questionnaire from the selected villages namely Hassanpur, Sheikhpur and Kalwari of Mewat. The sample size is of 120 female respondents (40+40+40 from each village) on the status of women assessed in context to various demographic criteria, education, work, political participation and their socio-economic condition.

As per the 2011 census, Mewat has the population of 1089263 out of which female 571162 and male 518101. In terms of literacy the district stands at the last. "A Baseline Survey of Minority Concentration Districts of India" a research study sponsored by ICSSR found that Mewat district lagged behind the All-India level in six out of eight indicators and also in two health indicators. It is the least developed district of Haryana State.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Reflection from the field suggest that among the respondents most of the respondents were homemaker and economically dependent on their spouse or any other family member. The level of education among women is not good in the villages. Out of total 120 respondents 42% of women are illiterate, 18% are only educated up to the primary level, 20 % have got their education up to the upper primary level, only 14% get secondary education, and only 6% able to pursue the higher studies. Despite the so many schemes and programmes launched by Government for girls' education there is low female involvement in education system. There is low parental demand for education and less supply of educational services for the girls. The results of data collected have direct correlation with the facilities provided to the girls for the schooling. As we can see 66% of the female respondents are not able to get education up to the middle level.

The data suggests that women have little say in the decision of child bearing. According to the study only 2% of respondents said that they have their own decision to have another child, 34% responds that decision is taken by their husband, 42% responds that decision is of both(husband and wife), 22% responds that decision to have another child is taken by their in-laws. The female have no say on their own their body, it is their husbands and in-laws which makes the decision. Definitely the will of producing a male boy child who carry name of the family to the next generation has also been imposed on the women. The family and societal pressure on women for a boy child led them towards illegal measures like Pre-natal diagnostic test and sex selective abortion, which is rampant, especially in the Mewat region and is a major reason for the declining sex ratio. Besides, it has also a perilous impact on the health of women.

Amartya Sen article in his article 'many faces of Gender Inequality' says "something of a social and cultural divide across India, splitting the country into two nearly contiguous halves, in the extent of anti-female bias in natality and post-natality mortality."^x Seems to take practical turn when we analyze the data collected with the inequalities. We can see the 'natality inequality', through the sex ratio clearly, where the preference of boys over the girls. According to the NCW report on Haryana, the state have high rank in development and also attains high HDI ranking, so the poverty cannot be cited as the reason for declining sex ratio, on the other side with the lower female death rate, and higher life expectancy along with a declining sex ratio can only indicate the increasing incidence of female feticides as well as negligence of the girl child. The district as like the other part of the country, witness the inequality in the participation of women in the economic sphere. The work participation rate is also having the gap of double among the male and female in Mewat district.

Workers and Non-Workers		
	Male in %	Female in %
Total Workers(main & marginal) (35.17)	50.44	17.79
Main Workers(27.67)	43.43	9.74
Marginal Workers(7.5)	7.01	8.06
Non Workers (64.83)	49.56	82.21

According to the census 2011 there are only 9.74% of female main workers, while 43.43 male main workers. And the percentage of female non-workers is quite high about 82.21 %, which denotes the economic dependency of females on their male counterpart.

The economic empowerment of women still seems a mirage especially in the rural areas. According to the reflection from the field only 2% of the total sampled subjects admit that they have their own decision to take up the job, 40% responds that these issues are decided by their husband, 54% responds it is decided by both(husband and wife), 4% responds it is decided by in-laws. The main point is that where is the self will? There is no place for the self decision by the females. And when it comes to control over personal income only 4% of the respondents said they have their own control over the personal income they earned, 48% respondents agree with the statement that their husband have control over the money whatever they earned, 32% said that the money is managed by both husband and wife, 16% admits that their in-laws decide that how to spent their personal income. In the context of both, the male factor is still dominating in the decision making. It is exclusion and denial of equal opportunity in economic spheres.

The study also found an eye opening fact that the females are not free to take decision of their own life, according to the high volume of data collected through the study 96% of the respondents agree with the statement that they have no say in their marriage decisions, the decision of whom to marry is taken by the family members, they only get informed by the family members and bound to follow the decisions. Even in such issues opinion of elder female family members are not consulted the decisions are taken by solemnly by the male members.

The women's were completely bounded in patriarchal society, 84% of respondents follow the (Veil System) Ghonghat partha, they are not free to speak to the male members of the village or even the male family members, the females don't have their voice in family and household decisions. When we talk about the political freedom of casting their votes 94% of the females said they cast their vote by the guidance of their husband or the family members. They are not able to exercise their political rights, even this is clearly enshrined in the constitution of India that all the people are free to vote according to their will and without any discrimination.

One of the menaces of the Indian society -the dowry system- is still prevalent and has acceptability by the people in general. According to the 97% respondents their parents have given the dowry or the gifts in their marriages. Even after the Dowry prohibition Act in 1961, which declared it illegal, this practice still continues and institutionalized in the society. There is patriarchal oppression in the society in which gender base inequalities presumes in the society and consider the females as the second standard citizens of the society. The sole purpose of women is considered as to serve her father, brother and husband for the existence. The dowry culture also considered as the primary cause for female feticide and violence against the women.

The collected data reflects about household inequality. 54% of the respondents said the requirement of their clothing is met by their husband, most of the women around 56% talk to their husband to seek their permission before buying anything, 66% of the respondents said they only go outside the home after getting the permission, even in their neighbourhood, 42% women respondents said they are not free to go for shopping alone, permission and company of husband or any other male family member is necessary, 48% women respondents said that even they go to the temple with permission of in-laws or husband and 52% respondents said they are not free to participate in village activities. There is no decision making of the female alone, every point of time they have to seek permission from any of the male family member.

The dominant construct of the patriarchy overshadowing the welfarist intervention of the state and the gender division lessen the impact of these actions. The finding from the field suggests that despite a satisfactory progress on the different indices of the HDI, the position of women is still secondary and this happens because females are prone to structural violence in this patriarchal society. Through the findings of the study it can be concluded that violence lies in the structure of the society and has a place in the cultural practices which is well exemplified in through low sex ratio, lack in access to schooling facilities, lack of personal and political freedom, no say in decision making, forced marriages, with the few economic opportunities, lack of securing income, pressure to cover head and body with no personal choices. There is an urgent need to promote the gender equality and reducing gender discrimination at the societal level and in this regard the first and foremost thing is to provide equal opportunity in the education facilities and to reduce the disparities. Also equal participation of females in household as well as political decision making should be ensured through various inclusive measures. And in this regard there is urgent need in the change in the perception of the society. The equal opportunities and reduce discrimination can only ensure the political, economic, social, personal and cultural security to the women, which ultimately led to the more just and equal society.

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ⁱⁱ Hoogensen, Gunhild and Stuvoy, Kirsti (2006, June), "Gender, Resistance and Human Security", SAGE Publications, <http://sdi.sagepub.com> Vol. 37(2): 207–228, DOI: 10.1177/0967010606066436, p.219.

ⁱⁱⁱ Aolain, Fionnula Ni (2009), "Women Security and the Patriarchy of Internationalized Transnational Justice" 31 Hum. Rts. Q. 1055, available at http://scholarship.law.umn.edu/faculty_articles/88.

^{iv} Charlesworth, Hilary (2010). "Feminist Reflections on the Responsibility to Protect." *Global Responsibility to Protect* 2 Volumes 2, Issue 3: pp232–249.

^v Sen Amartya, *Social Exclusion: Concept Application and Scrutiny*, Critical Quest Publishing, New Delhi, 2004

^{vi} <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profile/IND>

^{vii} *ibid*

^{viii} *ibid*

^{ix} *ibid*

^x Sen, Amartya, (2001, October 27-November 9), India's National Magazine from the publishers of THE HINDU, Volume 18 - Issue 22, p35, Retrieved from <http://www.frontline.in/static/html/fl1822/18220040.htm>.

