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Shazia Manzoor
Research Scholar, Department of
Law, University of Kashmir,
Jammu and Kashmir, India

Gender inequality in Jammu and Kashmir in context of tribal women; with special reference to educational developmental schemes

Shazia Manzoor

Abstract

The target of feminism aims at gender justice. It does not seek superiority of women rather demands equality. At the heart of feminism lies the belief that nobody should be at disadvantage because of their sex. Gender inequality concept debates the issue of unequal power relations between male and female. It violates the basic rights by limiting their choices, and its negative aspect curbs the ability of the people to have recourse to the benefits. It becomes a hurdle in their way of making contribution towards the social, political and economic development. The tribal population is counted as one of the most economically weaker and marginalized groups in India as well as in Jammu and Kashmir. The fact of gender difference within the tribal societies and social groups of Kashmir is extremely complicated and diversified. It is prevalent in each field, especially education, employment opportunities, economic- opportunities, health, and cultural issues, social, economic and political areas. As per the survey conducted by the Tribal Research and Cultural Foundation which revealed that various issues like child marriage system, illiteracy, poverty and nomadic way of life causes dark shadow over the future of tribal women, who constitute more than 14% of the population in union territory residing in the far flung areas. An attempt is being made to find out the causes and factors responsible for gender discrimination in tribal societies of Jammu and Kashmir. This study can commit to highlight the multi-dimensional context of gender inequalities prevalent. Overall, the study can try to indicate the inequalities in economic, social, cultural and legal biasness which pose a great threat to the policy makers and legislatures so as to establish equality in entire society.

Keywords: Gender inequality, feminism, tribal women, education, developmental schemes

Introduction

“Injustice to tribal people of India is a shameful chapter in our country’s history”.

(Justice Markandey Katju & Gyan Sudan Mishra.Cr.appeal no.11, 2011.SL)

“I ask you all so earnestly to open girl’s school in my village and try to uplift them. If the education of the women raised, then their children’s will, by their noble action, glorify the name of the country” (Swami Vivekananda)

Equal opportunity and legal protections are two components of gender equality. It encompasses gender roles and obligations, as well as issues of material and behavioral equality, in the absence of attention to structural inequality. As a result, gender equality is achieved when men and women are equally regarded in society for their unique responsibilities, as well as for their similarities and differences. Gender inequality is the most prevalent form of socioeconomic disadvantage. Women are essential in the intersection of financial stability and development, as gender significantly influences the organization of reproduction and production. Therefore, the inquiry concerning gender disparity is not whether it is present in all cultures, but rather whether it is present across all socioeconomic strata. This situation has a greater impact on women. This tribal community is among the most economically and socially disadvantaged populations in both Jammu and Kashmir and India. There is no explicit definition of the term "tribe" in the constitution, and no one has ever endeavored to provide one. The president of the country is the sole authority over administrators, which are groupings of Indian individuals. The general public envisions "simple" individuals residing in mountainous and wooded areas with "exotic" traditions and rituals, while individuals with a more sophisticated definition of the term perceive "vibrant" individuals who are renowned for their dance. ILO Convention 107 (1957) defines "tribes or aboriginals" as economically and socially disadvantaged populations within sovereign states that are semi-tribal or indigenous and have their own set of norms and practices regulating behavior. The term "tribe" is not defined in Indian constitutional law with precision; however,

Corresponding Author:
Shazia Manzoor
Research Scholar, Department of
Law, University of Kashmir,
Jammu and Kashmir, India

the term "scheduled tribe" is defined as "the tribe or the tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribes or tribal communities which the President may specify by public notification (Article 342)." Jammu and Kashmir's strategic location on the Pakistani border has attracted numerous indigenous communities to establish their residences in the area. Jammu and Kashmir were devoid of any Scheduled Tribes for an extended period. In 1989, the Constitution STs Order Act established eight communities, and the Amendment Act followed in 1991 with the addition of four more. The 2011 census marked the initial official enumeration of these indigenous communities. Women constitute approximately half of a nation's potential human resource, and their absence would result in significantly weaker growth. The modern era has presented critical concerns regarding gender inequality and women's empowerment, which are two cornerstones of societal progress.

Objective

- To study the gender inequality in Jammu and Kashmir in the field of education.
- To analyze the impact of educational developmental schemes on tribal women.

Research Methodology

The data is mostly sourced from the 2011 Census of India, augmented with information from the State Digest of Statistics and other published materials. This paper is the outcome of my own inquiry and observations. My study indicates that Jammu and Kashmir has a gender imbalance similar to those of other Indian states.

Main Finding Part

Gender Inequality and Education

The educational environment for women was bleak and discouraging before independence. Women in Jammu and Kashmir were often subjected to persecution, discrimination, and inequity. The education of women was disregarded owing to societal conventions. Only a few big cities served as educational hubs throughout the time of independence. At the time of independence, Jammu and Kashmir's literacy rate was very low; yet, the administration's efforts have markedly improved the circumstances. While gender imbalance occurs in both urban and rural regions, it is more pronounced in rural areas. The gender gap in literacy has decreased with time, from 25.06% in 1961 to 21.59% in 2001, and finally to 10.68% in 2011. In 2001, the literacy percentage of women in Jammu and Kashmir rose from 12.71% in 1961 to 23.60%. The 2011 Census indicates that the literacy rate among the tribal people in Jammu and Kashmir is markedly inferior to the national average for all Scheduled Tribes. The current number is at 50.6%. The literacy rate among indigenous women is at a mere 39.7%, far below the national average of 49.4%. The literacy rate among tribal men is at 60.5%, below the national average of 68.5%. Despite over six decades of development and planning, about 60% of indigenous women in this state remain illiterate, a statistic that surpasses the national average of 50.6%. The majority of indigenous persons are largely uninformed of their rights, with an even smaller number recognizing their existence. Despite potentially contravening the law, some individuals remain oblivious to it. It is very regrettable and contradictory that legislation designed to protect indigenous peoples continue to be enacted and enforced. This results from the inability to

execute certain constitutional requirements and the previously stated laws.

The position of women differs across several cultures and ethnic groups. Conversely, indigenous women often have an inferior social rank due to their limited autonomy, expertise, and resources. The aforementioned federal and state governments have launched many developmental programs to enhance the lives of indigenous women. These projects include efforts aimed at the enhancement of social, economic, and educational sectors of Jammu and Kashmir. The family collectively gains when a woman's power is elevated. It is very distressing to see the persistent disdain and neglect of women in every facet of life. They have been excluded from participation in the nation's growth and are inadequately represented. Women assume a key role in indigenous communities and families. Women are crucial and important to the evolution of sociological, cultural, economic, and religious dynamics of a tribal community. Nonetheless, there are several aspects of life in which they persistently behind, including economic empowerment, employment, health, and education. Women in tribal societies have lower literacy rates compared to women in all other socioeconomic categories. Their enrollment rate, school attendance, and literacy rate reflect their educational standing.

Constitutional Provisions

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 was a critical juncture in the history of Indian women's participation in the grassroots development of democratic institutions. Gender representation has been integrated into the decision-making process, which is a critical factor. The measures for the extensive and targeted care of the marginalized, impoverished, and disadvantaged populations of India are outlined in Article 46 of the Indian Constitution.

It is the contention of this article that the state is obligated to protect disadvantaged groups from discrimination and exploitation, with a particular emphasis on the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The economic and educational needs of these groups should be prioritized. This situation is characterized by gender inequality.

A number of fundamental liberties are guaranteed by the constitution, with a particular emphasis on safeguarding the most vulnerable members of society. Particular protections for women and children are stipulated in Article 15(3). Additionally, 15(4) explicitly addresses the advancement of marginalized communities. According to Article 16 and its numerous sub articles, individuals who are members of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes are eligible for employment in the public sector. The government has initiated and is currently executing numerous developmental initiatives and projects in order to close the development gap and advance indigenous women. Federal and state administrations are actively involved in the development of projects to support indigenous women, particularly in the field of education. This nation is acknowledged for its extensive social programs.

Welfare Measures for tribal's in Jammu and Kashmir

The Department of Social Welfare has been strategically divided by the government of Jammu and Kashmir, with two separate departments: one that is dedicated to tribal concerns and the other to general social welfare. Policy planning and program coordination regarding the development of Scheduled Tribes will be managed by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, which was previously known as the Department of

Tribal Affairs. In 1975, a distinct welfare commission was instituted for the Gujjar and Bakarwal communities. In numerous sections of the Indian Constitution, such as the Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties, and Directive Principles, gender equality is affirmed. The Constitution not only ensures the equality of women but also grants the state the authority to enact legislation that may intentionally disadvantage women. The primary focus in addressing women's issues has been development, which has surpassed humanitarian considerations since the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-1978). In 1990, the National Commission for Women was established by parliamentary legislation to safeguard the legal entitlements and privileges of women. In order to encourage and recognize the active involvement of women in the advancement of society, it is imperative to establish policies that are advantageous to them. Numerous innovative programs are being implemented to emphasize women's developmental initiatives.

Why Empowerment of Women

Thousands of tribal women in the impoverished hill and border regions of Jammu and Kashmir face a multitude of challenges, such as early marriage, illiteracy, extreme poverty, and a nomadic lifestyle, all of which contribute to their bleak future, according to research conducted by the Tribal Research and Cultural Foundation. The principal findings of the study were disclosed by Dr. Javaid Rahi, the organization's national secretary, on the eve of International Women's Day: In the districts of Poonch, Rajouri, Baramulla, and Kupwara, 89% of women aged 10 to 65 were identified as illiterate, out of 1000 nomadic Gujjar and Bakerwal households. Their vulnerability to exploitation is a result of their superstitions. Despite the fact that she makes a significant effort, her contributions are not acknowledged or compensated. The prevailing environment and cultural traditions that encourage early marriages result in a limited number of females enrolling in primary education, and an even smaller fraction of them remaining. They are unable to obtain timely access to sufficient healthcare and educational resources due to financial constraints. At present, Doda, Srinagar, and Jammu have an insufficient number of female Gujjar hostels. The report indicates that no applications have been received for the Sawastiki, Indira Mahila, or Balika Smridhi Yojna, which are federally funded programs. This elucidates the substantial gender disparity in educational achievement. The realization of objectives, such as guaranteeing universal access to free education for all, is impeded by a multitude of obstacles, including gender inequality and discrimination against women. It is imperative to address these challenges and ensure that all women have equal access to exceptional education (Sharma, Education and Women Empowerment among Gujjars and Bakerwals, 2014) ^[17]. The following is a list of numerous initiatives that are designed to empower indigenous women.

National Policy for Empowerment of Women

The objective of the strategy is to establish conditions that facilitate the utmost potential of women by implementing social and economic strategies that facilitate their comprehensive development. Consequently, the Scheduled Tribes of India have been the primary focus of governmental educational initiatives.

Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme

From 1944 to 1945, this approach was implemented. This initiative offers financial assistance to Scheduled Tribes students who are enrolled in post-matriculation or higher

education programs, thereby facilitating the completion of their degrees. This initiative provides bursaries to all pupils from Scheduled Tribes whose parents earn a minimum of Rs 1.08 lakh annually.

Schemes for construction of hostels for ST Girls and Boys

During the Third Idea Period, the idea for the ST Girls Hostel was conceived. ST Boys were established using a unique approach in 1989 and 1990. The two programs were consolidated into a singular entity during the 10th Five Year Plan. Through the provision of dormitory accommodations to tribal students who are unable to pursue their education as a result of economic hardship and community isolation, this initiative aims to enhance literacy among these students.

In order to provide support to indigenous children and their families, the Social Welfare Department of the Jammu and Kashmir government has established 23 dormitories throughout the state. Six of the twenty-three dormitories are designated for females, while seventeen are designated for males.

Model Residential Schools and Mobile Schools

Two Eklavya Model Residential Schools are now being constructed to promote the education of indigenous youth. In the 1970s, the J&K government established Mobile Primary Schools (MPS), sometimes referred to as mobile schools, to guarantee that tribal pupils had access educational resources. The Eklavya Model Residential Schools in J&K were created under the direction of Dr. Shahid Iqbal Choudary and are now administered by a governing committee that assembled on July 30, 2021. The organization sanctioned six Eklavya Model Residential Schools: two in Rajouri district and one each in Poonch, Anantnag, Kulgam, and Bandipora.

Schemes for the establishment of Ashram School in Tribal Sub-Plan Areas

This program was used by the 1990-1991 Tribal Subplan. Evidence suggests that the availability of boarding and lodging facilities is associated with increased school attendance rates. The aim of this effort is to increase educational opportunities for students from Scheduled Tribes. Ashram Schools provide an ideal educational setting that encompasses all the comforts of home. This nationally financed project is a cooperative effort between the federal government and the states (Sharma, 2014) ^[16].

Up gradation of merit

The Post-Matric Scholarship program integrated the two prior projects in the tenth five-year plan. Since then, it has functioned only as a PMS sub-scheme. This project aims to provide Scheduled Tribe students in grades 11 and 12 with essential resources for comprehensive development via residential education, consequently enhancing their competitiveness in college applications.

Book Bank

The aim of this effort is to reduce the withdrawal rate of ST students from professional and university programs by providing financial support for book purchases. Federal funds is allocated to Utah and state governments via book banks.

National Overseas scholarship scheme for Higher Studies Abroad

This endeavor started in the years 1954-1955. From 2007 to 2008, it evolved from a non-plan scheme to a plan system. This program offers financial aid to a select group of ST students enrolled in Master's, Doctoral, or Post-Doctoral

programs in certain fields of science, engineering, or technology. Applicants to ST are entitled to four "Passage Grants" annually under this scheme. Candidates awarded merit scholarships for post-graduate studies, research, or training abroad from foreign institutions, governments, or any program that does not include travel expenses are eligible for passage funding throughout the year. The program offers a subsidy for economy class travel from India and back. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs gives comprehensive funding to chosen applicants via the Indian Mission.

Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship

The program began between 2005 and 2006. This program offers grants to support ST scholars in acquiring graduate degrees, including the M. Phil and Ph.D. This project includes all educational institutions recognized by the UGC under clause 2(f) of the UGC Act.

Scheme of Top-Class Education for ST student

In 2007-2008, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs introduced an innovative scholarship program for Scheduled Tribe students, termed Top Class Education. The program offers a stipend to encourage qualified ST students to do degree or postgraduate courses at any institution from the designated list. The program has recognized one hundred twenty-five public and private universities that provide degrees in several areas, including business, management, engineering, law, and medicine.

Vocational Training Centers in Tribal Area

Currently, four vocational training facilities are operational. Jammu, Srinagar, Kargil, and Leh are among the sites where these amenities may be found. Stenography training is offered with other programs. This project has been in action since 1992-1993. The main goals of this effort are to improve the socioeconomic status of ST kids by augmenting their income and providing them with essential skills for diverse vocations and self-employment.

The states, Union Territories, and other entities that oversee this program get all allocated monies.

Coaching for Scheduled Tribe Students

The battle for designated tribal roles is especially fierce among applicants from economically and socially marginalized regions. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs is funding a program that provides financial support for low-income Scheduled Tribe applicants to attend renowned coaching schools, therefore ensuring equitable opportunities for success in competitive examinations for employment or entrance to professional courses. The program provides complimentary coaching to ST candidates for various competitive examinations, including Civil Services, State Civil Services, UPSC assessments like CDS and NDA, as well as professional disciplines such as medicine, engineering, business administration, banking, the Staff Selection Commission, railroad recruitment boards, insurance sectors, and others. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has a more extensive plan to improve the educational experience of female members of Scheduled Tribes in areas with low literacy rates. The campaign aims to eradicate the literacy gap between indigenous women and the broader female community by allowing native girls to join fully.

Some Other Programmes and Policies for Empowerment of Women

The Women Development Corporation was founded in 1994 in Jammu & Kashmir. One of the many goals of this business

was to provide housing and facilities for the benefit of certain populations. Additional aims were the provision of financial assistance to women via funding, commodity processing, and engagement in activities pertaining to animal husbandry, dairy farming, horticulture, design, printing, needlework, tailoring, and embroidery. The objective was to implement a range of centrally financed social activities at the district level. Rural development initiatives, including JRY, IJRY, EAS, and KVIB, provide job prospects for women belonging to reserved castes and tribal populations.

Barriers in the Sphere of Educational Development of Tribal Women

Barriers to female education among the tribal community were recognized in prior studies and governmental reports from the tribal regions of Jammu and Kashmir.

Financial Constraints: In these areas, women are anticipated to contribute to domestic responsibilities owing to the absence of income-generating opportunities. Females have more challenges in securing admission to esteemed universities when their parents assign them domestic responsibilities instead of enrolling them in educational programs. This is the main obstacle these persons face while attempting to get a degree.

Insufficient Educational Infrastructure

The nomads' improvised institutions remain dilapidated, despite the government's earnest attempts. These institutions suffer from a deficiency of essential teaching materials, including tables, seats, chalk, and blackboards, as well as insufficient infrastructure. Furthermore, students at these colleges have further challenges due to a housing scarcity, which intensifies the problem (Suri, 2014) ^[15]. Furthermore, the teachers are unable of performing regular trips to these schools owing to the lack of necessary infrastructure. These instructors exhibit a similar lack of motivation and indifference in their career as the remainder of us.

Nomadic Lifestyle

The Gujjar and Bakarwal communities' cattle and buffalo are always in pursuit of new grazing grounds owing to their nomadic way of life. They are mostly located in hilly areas that are unreachable because to the lack of roads, isolating them from human populations. Gul and Khan (2014) ^[2] found that these physical barriers provide significant challenges for indigenous women in their quest for education within their communities.

Early Childhood Marriage

The incidence of early marriage in the area indicates that indigenous girls in Jammu and Kashmir have considerable obstacles to overcome before they may pursue higher education (Dabla, 2007) ^[7]. Child marriage is widespread, although the presence of laws that prohibit it. This hinders the girls' comprehensive development and, more significantly, renders the pursuit of further education post-marriage an unattainable objective that remains unpursued owing to cultural conventions.

Illiteracy and Ignorance of the Parents

The majority of indigenous women's parents are illiterate. They are unable to appreciate the importance of education due to their dearth of literacy. They prefer their children to participate in remunerative activities rather than attending school, as they believe that education cannot provide them with immediate financial advantages (Suri, 2014) ^[15]. Consequently, the family income and economy are increased.

Lack of separate Schools for girls

Numerous indigenous women's parents are particularly opposed to enrolling their daughters in coeducational institutions, particularly at the upper elementary level. This is an urgent necessity; the government should establish distinct upper primary institutions for females to guarantee their education. In the event that demands are made, schools and instructors must prioritize women (Showkeen Gul and Khan, 2013) [2].

Linguistic Barriers in Schools

The language problem in the schools becomes a barrier for tribal girls because they are not in a position to communicate well in other languages besides their own mother tongue.

Qui vive of Government

The Model schools are on hilly areas and it is not possible for the Government authorities to make proper checks. These are far and the time consuming, so the teachers remain lethargic and are not doing their proper duties. This lack of Government vigilance, watch and inspection becomes a hurdle for getting education in these societies.

Suggestions for Improving Education of Tribal Women in J&K through Educational Developmental Schemes

1. Although both central and J&K government have been trying to ensure quality education for tribal women. But still there is a lot of space for improvement. While coming to the conclusion, various suggestions need to be mentioned here for the development and improvement in the sphere of education to the tribal women of Jammu and Kashmir.
2. Apart from various schools and schemes the education for tribal girls could be improved by certain initiatives like to provide them free textbooks, uniforms on time so that these things don't hamper their education. Providing these on time in a calendar year will ensure their interest of going to school which due to poverty they are not able to buy. The midday meal scheme should be followed throughout the year regularly and construction of schools closer to their homes. The various schemes like SSA will be a beneficial programme for imparting education in these areas. Government should provide them transport facilities in case the schools are far from their residences.
3. The Government should enhance the admission quotes in schools, colleges, and professional institutions for tribal girls. Whatever, may be needed that should be followed by the Government so that the gap of literacy can be fulfilled.
4. The government should make additional educational resources and other funds so as to make it possible for these girls to attend the educational institutions.
5. Awareness should be made through various modes regarding the schemes and beneficial provisions made by the Government for the tribal women and girls. They should be taught and made aware about their rights and schemes.
6. The most important step for development and improvement of education in tribal societies is the proper implementation of the laws and the various schemes made especially for the development of tribal women. Without proper implementation of these developmental schemes, there is nothing which is going to change on ground scenario in these societies. There should be

proper mechanism for implementation of these scheme so that the goal can be achieved otherwise these remain only in papers.

7. The recent announcement made by the J&K Tribal Affairs Department, for sponsoring students for various courses providing them self-employment opportunities. Various courses like aviation, management, computers and engineering have been started. This could be a great start and more and more programmes and initiatives need to be taken by the Government.

Conclusion

The term "empowerment" is frequently associated with expansion when discussing the advancement of women. This method, which entails the identification, confrontation, and surmounting of obstacles, may grant an individual greater control over the direction of their life and environment. In view of the severe challenges that women encounter, it is imperative to empower tribal women to enhance familial situations and promote development. The involvement of women, who constitute half of our population, is considered to be of paramount importance in reform initiatives. It is essential for social or economic development initiatives to be successful by providing women with the opportunity for constructive engagement, which can only be achieved through education.

The level of economic development in a particular area, community, or nation is significantly influenced by its level of education. Women's empowerment is linked to education. Education is the sole means by which indigenous women can enhance their social and political circumstances. It is imperative to provide indigenous women with education in order to inform them of the privileges and benefits that are guaranteed by the Indian Constitution. The primary objective of indigenous women's education is to alter the traditional practices and beliefs that adversely impact their lives. Additionally, obtaining a degree is the sole method of achieving financial independence and personal autonomy.

The swift implementation of specific laws and programs by governments is essential in order to combat educational disparities and promote self-determination.

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