



Human rights, women rights and culture in India

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Abstract

On the international level The United Nation Organization have declared united nation human rights, human right declaration and international human right law where women rights considered as human rights. This all directions are for nations to their policy, institution, constitutional and law for fixing women rights as human rights. But there are paradox relation between regional, religion, caste based societies culture and women rights. We can see here that how the rights provision in constitution, law and charter declaration have a contradict relations with their implementation in society. This is a main reason of struggling position to demanding women rights as human rights in India. So my paper discussed about the human right position in U.N.O declaration, constitution of India, laws, through judicial activism, and its practical status in ground of society culture. If the human rights don't practices in the society they have not any importance and we have to take deep look on reason behind this.

Keywords: human rights, women rights, culture, region, religion, caste, class

Introduction

We humans live in a developed civilization and as a human every individuals have some natural or important rights to live a valuable life. And every civilization and community is a union of both sex, male and female so whenever we talking about human rights there should be a sense of equality in human rights for both of them. But reality is maximum women are far away to enjoy their human rights because of gender based discrimination. In third world developing countries this situation is worst and in India the gender inequality roots lies in its culture. We can see Cultural practices, myths, beliefs in every region, religion, caste and class of India. Through this woman face lack or absence of freedom, equality, opportunity, participation, dignity, and satisfaction of life what she values in her life. On the international level The United Nation Organization have declared united nation human rights, human right declaration and international human right law where women rights considered as human rights. This all directions are for nations to their policy, institution, constitutional and law for fixing women rights as human rights. But there are paradox relation between regional, religion, caste based societies culture and women rights. So here I will analysed the current international status, Indian constitutional and Indian law adjustment of woman rights as human rights with these empirical ground contradictions with Indian culture specified with region, religion, caste and class. So in my first section I will discuss briefly to United Nation charter and declaration, Indian constitution, law and judicial activism regarding women's human rights. In The second part of paper I will discuss Human right as women right status in culture of India. The regional culture patriarchal which we can see in their daily life duty, clothes, custom, arena of work freedom. In religion of Hindu and Muslim, women face a different status in birth, childhood, marriage, divorce, paternal or ancestral property

and customs of follow respective religion. In Caste the identity of caste existence and future is depend on women sexuality, purity and control on it. Therefore the caste social laws like social relation, endogamy, patrimony, patriarchy, food relations, occupation hierarchy, separate segments of group extra practice, all this have a direct negative relation with women rights. In the class differences probability of lower class women human right violation or excess to opportunity of human rights is lower than upper class women. If I say here that maximum numbers of women who do not able to consume their human rights are more in backward region, lower caste with lower class, than this should not be exaggerative.

Legal Framework for Woman Rights as Human Rights

United Nation framework

United nation from his young try to find human rights problem affecting women and men differently, their root causes, the gender dimension of human rights violation, human rights violations in the private sphere monitored, How do such violations affect women, girls, female and male rights holders different coping mechanisms and access to protection measures and to remedies, corrective actions to benefit women as well as men and strategy aimed at achieving greater gender equality. For this purpose the young UN was established the Commission on the Status of Women, which was set up in 1948. But the first draft of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights exhibited a fair degree of gender insensitivity by starting off its first article with the statement "All men are brothers." Thanks to the efforts of the Commission on the Status of Women draft was change – first to apply to "all people" and finally to "all human beings". Thus the women right equality in human right on international level started with here. Some important person of U.N.O said-

“The struggle for gender equality is actually a struggle for justice and human rights; and, as in the rest of the world, the struggle for justice and human rights is never completed. Even in those countries which are regarded as mature democracies, the struggle for justice and human rights is still continuing; the women remain discriminated in those democracies. This is not to say that the battle against gender-based discrimination and injustices will not be overcome.

Rather, it is a warning that we must prepare ourselves for a long drawn-out struggle against the forces of tradition, conservatism and reaction. Our success in the struggle for gender equality is certain, as long as we remain constantly aware of the urgency to achieve this goal and are prepared to continue the necessary actions to this end.”(President Sam Nujoma

SADC Council of Ministers Meeting, Windhoek, February 1997)

“The movement for gender equality the world over has been one of the defining developments of our times.”(UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 15 September 1995)

“Empowering women means not only better lives for women, but better lives for all.”

(UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, 2001)

The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, defines human rights broadly and symbolises a world vision of respect for the humanity of all people. In article 1 and 2 assume all human beings are born free and have rights and freedoms equally. Article 3 gives right to life, liberty and security on the other hand article 7 produce equality before the law. Article 5 prevent humans from subjected to torture or to cruel. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights provide some important type of freedom in Article 13; right to freedom of movement and residence, article 18; right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, article 19; right to freedom of opinion and expression and article 27; right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community. The article 21- 23, 24 and 26 gives social and economical security as right to social security, right to work, to free choice of employment, has the right to equal pay, right to rest and leisure and right of education. Article 25 -1. Talks about right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself/herself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, security, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. Article 25-2 Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. Most important human right which is clearly mentioned the equality for women and men are article 16 – 1. Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage and at its dissolution. 2. Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

The all rights are equally subjected by man and women. Sub-Commission on the Status of Women under the Commission of Human Rights. Its mandate was defined in 1946 as being: The Division for the Advancement of Women was established in 1946 in UNO. The International Covenant on Civil and

Political Rights was adopted in December 1966 by the UN General Assembly. It entered into force ten years later, in March 1976, With respect to women, it makes the principle of equality before the law and the principle of non-discrimination binding (Arts. 2-3). It also provides for equality between men and women at marriage and at its dissolution (Art 6), protects the right to participate in public life without discrimination (Art. 25), and prohibits the use of the death penalty on pregnant women (Art. 23). It includes the right to life (Art.6), the right to freedom and security (Art. 9), and the respect of privacy (Art. 17). It prohibits torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatments (Art. 7). It recognises freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Art. 18), freedom of movement (Art. 12), The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 16 December 1966. Like the ICCPR, it entered into force ten years

later, in January 1975, after 35 Member States had ratified it. With respect to women, the Covenant once again emphasises equality and non-discrimination (Arts. 2-3) and includes the principle of equal pay for equal work (Art. 7). It provides for the protection of motherhood (Arts. 10, 12), and calls for paid maternity leave or leave with adequate social security benefits (Art. 10). In 1965, the Commission embarked in the preparation of what became later, in 1967, the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women also approved by the UN General Assembly. Since the adoption of above declarations and conventions are come in force States have repeatedly emphasized the universality and indivisibility of human rights. Non-discrimination and equality between women and men in legal framework try to establish by states.

Indian Constitution and Legal framework

legislation and litigation which have facilitated the increased participation of women in political activities as well as in the socio-economic development activities and the increase appear to be more likely at the lower level than at the highest centres of decision making. Through the constitution try to fix the women rights as human rights. In constitution’s Article 14 of Indian Constitution says that the state shall not deny to any person equality before or equal protection of the law, Article 15 says that no women can be discriminated against on the ground of sex, Article 15 (3) emphasis that the state shall make special provisions for women and children and Article 16 provides equality of opportunity in matters relating to employment by the state. In Article 39(a) emphasis that the citizens men and women equally,

have the right to an adequate means of livelihood, in Article 39(d) it says that the state should secure equal pay for equal work for both men and women and in Article 34 it provides that the state shall make provision for securing just and good condition for work and for maternity relief. The 73rd and 74th Amendments of Indian Constitution in 1993 are the milestone in the history of India, which provides lot of powers for the local bodies. It paves the way for decentralisation, empowers the poor people as well as women. According to these amendments not less than one third of the seats, meant for direct election of members at each tier of Panchayats are to be reserved for women and not less than one-third of the seats of chairperson at any level reserved for women. And The

Government of India in the year 2001 adopted a National Policy of Women for advancement, development and empowerment of women. The Ministry of Women and child development takes care of various aspects of women's development and empowerment. The aims and objectives of the policy are looked after by the Ministry to achieve self sufficiency of Indian women.

In Indian customary personal Law India try to balance the nature of religion, custom, arranging multiple community interest in same subject of law. Smartly try to adjust these concepts with modern phenomenon of liberty, equality, socialism, development, morality, social justice and legitimacy. In pre-independent India, few laws were passed in response to social demands and on the basis of humanitarian consideration. They are Bengal Sati Regulation Act of 1829 and similar Anti-Sati laws in Madras and Bombay, Hindu Widow Remarriage Act 1856, the Hindu Women's Right to Property Act in 1937, (The Muslim Personal Law) the Shariat Act 1937 and the Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act 1939. But, on the other hand, the colonisers modified and unified some religion-based practices through legislation where the practices were found parti-cularly unjust, "backward" or "barbaric" and where there was (alleged) support of the local elite or some local reformers. Muslim personal law, for instance, underwent a significant process of reform and unification in the 1930s, with the enactment of the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act in 1937 and the Dissolution of muslim Marriage Act (DMMA) in 1939 through the legislature of British India. Unlike in traditional Hindu law, marriage in Muslim law had always been regarded as a dissoluble contract. Williams (2006) ^[18] regards the politics of the personal laws as a prime example of continuity in the politics of the colonial and postcolonial Indian state. Looking at the political rhetoric of "non-interference" in different phases from the colonial period till 2004, Williams (2006, pp.45) ^[18] discovers a "gap between rhetoric and action". Williams proves her argument by analysing the reforms of the Muslim personal laws in the 1930s, the Hindu Law reforms in the 1950s and the politics of the mid-1980s and opines that "the rhetoric of non-interference was used more as a tool to justify government policies, based on changing political interests, than as an actual guide to formulating policy" (Williams *et al.*, 2006) ^[18]. Ghosh (2007) ^[6] in his work understands law as a "political subject", stating: "The essence of law is politics". Not only parliamentarians, he argues, but also judges are influenced by the socio-political factors around them. He reasons that the answer to the question whether a Uniform Civil Code is feasible in a specific country depends on the socio-political climate in the country (Ghosh *et al.*, 2007) ^[6]. Same as The concept of Hindu law is deeply rooted in Hindu philosophy and Hindu religion. According to Hindu philosophy, the ultimate aim of life is to achieve salvation: Moksha from this physical world as Manu said. According to philosophy of karma is most important in whole life of human. That's why Shashtra create a particular way to live life to follow "Varna Dharma and Ashrma Dharma" present Hindu law and legal system have essence of it. The Smritis/dharamshashtra (rigveda, yajurveda, samveda, atharveda, Yajnavalkya, narada, parashara, brihashpati smiriti, sruta sutra, griha sutra, dharma sutra, dharma shashtra of

Narada – Vishnu-Vrihaspati,-Katyana- Vyasa, puranas,) and The commentaries (Mitaksharas a commentary by Vijnavalika, Dyabhaga by Jimutvahana, Viramitroda, Vivada, Dayatattwa, Dayakramasangraha by shri Krishna, shmruti Chandrika, parasara Madhviya, Vyavahara) philosophy have impact on hindu Law. This is the reason behind rooted inequality for in given justice differently to men and women through hindu personal law. So we can see here the contradiction between two legal contexts in a dialectic relationship. Where the constitution give equality of law, opportunity, freedom and opportunity beside that the personal law break these human rights of woman through traditional laws. As Archana Parashar said "Different groups in India have separate religious personal laws (RPLs), However, these laws have generated debate about the meaning of gender equality in India, since all RPLs to various extents give women fewer rights than men, but Indian women have been promised equality as a constitutional right. Though the RPLs allow for inclusiveness in religion, the history of these laws in India shows that they have been used selectively as a tool of governance and often to the disadvantage of women Gender (Inequality and Religious Personal Laws in India, 2008)". The personal laws of hindu and muslim both have different aspects for men and women in adoption, marriage, succession, divorce, dowry, karta and property. Herklotz (2015) ^[7] include this contradiction with take a look on civil procedure code issue, she said "This, many argued, contradicted the right to equality, laid down in Article 14 of the Indian Constitution, which reads: "The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India". Two aspects are mentioned in this context: the different treatment of the different religious communities as such (for instance, the right to practise polygamy is granted to Muslims but to no other community) and the different treatment of men and women within the same religious community (for instance, within Muslim personal law, men are allowed to have more than one wife, but women are not allowed to have more than one husband). While public discourse mainly stressed Muslim men's rights to polygamy and to unilateral divorce by pronouncing talaq as problematic, feminist authors have tried to disrupt the notion that only Muslim personal law was discriminatory against women. In other hand the Supreme Court of India has interpreted various provisions of international instruments correlated with Constitutional law of India. India is a signatory to various International Conventions and Treaties. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted on 10th Dec. 1948, has greatly helped to create a universal thinking that Human Rights are supreme shall preserve. In Madhu Kishwar v. State, Supreme Court has considered the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979 and held that it is a mirror image of Part III and Part IV of the Constitution of India. We can say that the woman right in its widely context includes Participation and inclusion, Equality and non-discrimination, Institutionalizing gender equality, Gender balance and equal participation and freedo. But rather than it studies have revealed that women as a human being hampered since ancient time. Dominance on women in the society resulted into backwardness of women in the civil, political, social,

economic, political and educational spheres. Through this judicial activism judiciary come as a mediator of this conflict and trying to resolve this.

Culture in India and Human Rights of Women

In India, culture have deeply root in its civilization so in every region, religion, caste follow their particular culture very seriously. Class division made this worst for lower section. But a common perspective is patriarchy which we find in every branch of culture. "culture" is a beliefs and practices of another society, particularly where these are seen as closely linked with tradition or religion. But culture is more than that. Culture is part of the fabric of every society, including our own. It shapes the way things are done. About the relations between women and men in other words, gender are shaped by culture. Gender identities and gender relations are critical aspects of culture because they shape the way daily life is lived in the family, community and the workplace. The general pattern of culture is that women have less personal autonomy, fewer resources at their disposal, and limited influence over the decision-making processes that shape their societies and their own lives.

Gender relations are critical aspects of culture because they shape daily life and through this woman face denial of her human right in the daily life. Here I study human right violation and denial with specific culture context of region, religion, caste and class. Instead They also have always a co-relation between them. So I have do analysis their substantive relationship and its effect on women human rights.

To India region based culture we can stratify in north, south, urban and rural. With this difference the culture practice intensity, myths, rigidity are changes and the women's human right violation subjects changes as. In north India the women human right exploitation is in large scale. Because of hariyana, uttar predesh, rajasthan, bihar, Madhya predesh, bangol highly patriarchal culture of work, Public-private division, clothes culture, male dominance on resources, property right, daily life culture, dowry and high population. Here Low birth rate, Early age marriage, low education level, dowry, lack of freedom, denial in decision making power, widowhood, High rape rate, caste purity factors and practice of witchcraft have a negative role on human rights of women. In south women status is better then compare to north India. Jejeebhoy (2001)^[8] says Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu lie at two extremes of the social and cultural spectrum in India, although economically they are similar. Both states are poor and both states are largely agricultural. Yet social development levels differ greatly. Literacy rates (population aged six and older) are much higher in

Tamil Nadu (63 percent) than in Uttar Pradesh (42 percent), and fertility and mortality are much lower while women in Tamil Nadu are expected to have more autonomy than their northern counterparts in Uttar Pradesh, their autonomy is far more limited than that of women in other parts of Asia (Jejeebhoy *et al.*, 2001)^[8]. Further he says that his study indicate that women's autonomy—in terms of decision making, mobility, freedom from threatening relations with husband, control over economic resources, they have limited access to and limited control over resources; their freedom of movement is severely constrained; and few are free from

threat and violence at the hands of their husbands. The evidence suggests that

in the more gender-stratified settings of Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, autonomy is largely the result of factors that traditionally confer status, notably family structure or absence of controls implicit in coresidence with mother-in-law and size of dowry, along with economic activity (in Uttar Pradesh) and a secondary education (in Punjab) (Jejeebhoy *et al.*, 2001)^[8]. The women human right condition in rural area is bad in compare to urban area. In rural region women freedom, opportunity, security, equality human rights insignificant because of strong traditional cuture practice and violence against women cases are more. Because in these areas the orthodox caste, religion social-community laws perform more radically. Lind (2006)^[9] stated that "India's population still leads traditional lives in rural areas. Religious laws and traditions still determine the lives of many people, particularly women. Even if women are formerly entitled to own land and resources social and religious factors make many women refrain from this right in order not to cause distortions within the family. The preference for having sons permeates all social classes in India, which sets the standard for girls throughout their entire lives". In the culture of hindu and muslim religion the women derived from right to freely movement, choose their profession, decision making, interaction with public sphere, health, representation of herself in social, political and economical world and live a life what they value. And there a inter-difference in the level of denial of woman human rights in hindu and muslim too. Jejeebhoy (2001)^[8] said "There is little support for the argument that Muslim women are disadvantaged in terms of autonomy, at least when compared to Hindu women from the same region. In South India, however, there is moderate support for the argument that Hindu women have greater autonomy than Muslim women. In Uttar Pradesh, by contrast, Hindu-Muslim differences in every dimension of autonomy are insignificant. When women from all three sites are considered, Tamilian Muslims exhibit far greater levels of autonomy than do either Hindu or Muslim respondents from Uttar Pradesh and respondents from Punjab (Jejeebhoy *et al.*, 2001, pp.709)^[8]". Caste is another religion function that is a reason for women human right decline in cultural daily life. With Sinha's words (1967, pp. 94), "caste is a hierarchy of endogamous groups. According to him, the total six main features of the caste system are: segmental division of society, hierarchy of groups, restriction of feeding and social intercourse, allied and religious disabilities and privileges of the different sections, lack of unrestricted choice of occupation, and restriction on marriage". In inclusion the caste social laws, endogamy, Social mentality, public share, rights and culture are the main reason for violation of human right of her. Women identify here only from body, sexuality and reproductive power, her priory identification are not her work or mental power. Women sphere and space are limited. Its strongly follow because of the "community power of unity-relational-economical distribution, if women try to break this marginalized area caste complex structure threatened to her. "Women are generally expected to fulfil the reproductive role of bearing and raising children, caring for other family members, and household management tasks, as well as home based production (Reeves

and Baden, 2000) ^[15]. Rana (2014), ^[13] who try to told us women subaltern status in hindu society by using novels. Say's " , Mulk Raj Anand has this to say about the status of women in India: "Obviously woman in India has sometimes been exalted as a doll or kept down and oppressed. most Hindu men do not find anything wrong with this state of things". Inter-caste marriage and honour killing is a important issue regarding violation of human rights of women rights. The Constitution of India guarantees the fundamental rights to equality, freedom and protection of life and personal liberty. Equality of laws and equal protection of laws is the touchstone and the spirit of these rights. Additionally, the Directive Principles of State Policy endeavor that the State shall strive to promote the welfare of the people. However, the empirical fact is that in India when young men and women marry outside their castes or community, it evokes strong sentiments and honour killing happens. Instead there is no bar to inter caste marriages under any codified marriage law. In one such recent decision rendered by the Indian Supreme Court in *Lata Singh vs State of UP*, reported at *Judgments Today* 2006 (6) SC, 173, it was held that the caste system is a curse on the nation and needs to be destroyed for the better. Acts of violence and threats against such inter caste couples are wholly illegal and those who commit them should be severely punished. The administration and police authorities all over the country were directed by the Supreme Court to ensure that no inter caste couple is harassed by anyone, the message of the Court is clear, India of the twenty first century cannot be built on the basis of casteism. But how far can court decisions achieve this?

The rights of "education, career, health, nutrition, property right, suitable circumstances, resources, self- freedom of use to public- private sphere" are directly negatively influenced by culture of social norms, community mentality, custom, patriarchy, endogamy, patrimony and social relational power. Women of Poor class in different region, hindu, muslim and caste face harsh reality of this discrimination and denial of human rights like birth, education, health, maternal facilities, work choice and autonomy. Desai and Pandey (2010) ^[2] observed that parents reluctance to educate daughters has its roots in the situation of women. Parents have several incentives for not educating their daughters. Foremost is the view that education of girls brings no returns to parents and that their future roles, being mainly reproductive and perhaps including agricultural labor, require no formal education'. Gender bias also means that any resource requiring funds such as health, nutrition, and education is denied for poor women. She does not possess the capacity to earn an adequate income. Because a girl's labor is more valuable in the home, mothers prefer to keep them at home. Women bear the highest burdens of household chores (Vecchio & Roy, 1998). This means they wake first, eat last, and sleep late after all chores are completed. Very little time or energy remains for an education. Women thus became less valued over time.

Conclusion

So we can see here how the rights provisions in constitution, law and charter declaration have some contradict relations with their implementation in Indian society culture. This is a main reason of struggling position to demanding women

rights as human rights in India. So my paper discussed about the human right position in U.N.O declaration, constitution of India, laws, through judicial activism, and its practical status in ground of society culture. If the human rights don't practices in the society they have not any importance and we have to deep look on reason behind this. In my thinking if the law itself countered to "father of legal system" means to Indian constitution article then the contradiction in implementation of women human rights would start here. Firstly government should have to remove this dissonance. There should be a accurate policy for representation and reservation in democracy for women with the perfect inner look of denial of their human right in context of culture I region, religion, caste and class. Administration and local government should have a positive relationship with N.G.O, non profit org., and nukkar natak group for spreading to social, legal, human rights awareness in women backwardness region.

Judicial Activism in Laws is A Turning Point. A series of decisions by the Supreme Court of India in the areas of personal law and define to human rights show motivation to positive and well meaning reforms which have become necessary over a period of time. Recent decisions; Enforcement and Implementation of Dowry Prohibition Act,1961, reported as *Judgments Today* 2005(5) SC 71, the Apex Court directed the Indian central and state governments to implement all the interim directions issued by the Supreme Court earlier. This type of judicial activism a positive sign in legal institution improvement towards social justice. All these ways are important to implement woman human rights in empirical social culture platform.

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