



Research Paper

Role of NGOs in Promoting Women Empowerment

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ABSTRACT:

Woman, the very creation of God that makes living beautiful is often at the receiving end of trauma. It is an observed fact that, they are often in great danger in the place where they should be safest within their families. Unfortunately, women in India are mostly unaware of their rights because of illiteracy and the oppressive tradition. Women's empowerment does not occur easily or overnight. Of all these facets of women's development, social and economic empowerment is of utmost significance in order to achieve a lasting and sustainable development of society.

The paper tries to explore the relation between globalisation process and NGOs in promoting 'Women Empowerment'. The study examines the crucial role of one of the important NGO 'The Women's Welfare Society', in Belgaum city of Karnataka state, which is serving for the augmentation of violated women and children in particular and rest others in general, from the last few decades. It has taken roles such as advocacy, education and training, and have been active in monitoring what has, or has not, been achieved. During the past few decades it has actively advocated, that the fullest recognition should be given to the enormous contribution that women make to the family, society and development. Thus, such NGOs are regarded as transmitters of opinion and concern but as sources of ideas and energies. NGOs have provided protection to women's rights as human rights. Their work is commendable and they should be encouraged.

Key Words: woman, violence, illiteracy, globalisation, NGOs, monitoring, human rights.

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I. INTRODUCTION:

The democratic state of India has the eventual task for steering development to its people. It is through the progressive interpretation of the Constitution and its laws and policies, the extent of development has been significantly broadened to include not just economic progress for citizens, but also promotion of social justice, gender equity, citizen's awareness, women empowerment and improved quality of life. To accomplish this holistic vision of development, the state requires the constructive and collaborative engagement in the society in its various developmental activities and programmes. The process of 'Globalisation' and the 'Non-governmental Organisations' (NGOs) as the operational arm of the society have an important role in the development processes, especially empowering the women.

Now-a-days, the news channels and the newspapers highlight so much of violence against the women in India that they draw attention to many women atrocities. For instance- women being kidnapped, rape and murder, sexual abuse, set on fire, burnt alive and so on. Their basic human rights are denied and their lives are stolen from them by the ever present threat of violence within the domestic sphere. It is an observed fact that, the conditions of women is often in great danger in the place where they should be safest, basically within their families. The number of sexual abuse and domestic violence cases against women clearly throws light on the fact that the existence of women in India has become difficult and their health, education and empowerment unfortunately take a back seat under such a scenario. Usually, the NGOs have always been in the forefront in protecting women's rights as human rights and attempting to bring out progress in women's empowerment.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN - A HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION:

Violence against women is rampant in all corners of the world. Such violence is a human rights violation that manifests itself in a number of ways, for instance- dowry, sexual harassment, kidnap, rape, polygyny marriages, domestic abuse etc. which are affecting the lives of millions and millions of women

worldwide, in all socio-economic and educational classes. It cuts across cultural and religious barriers, hindering the right of women to participate completely in society, further, all violations are of the most fundamental human rights. In the platform for action, the core document of the 'Fourth World Conference on Women' in Beijing, in September 1995, it was declared that "violence against women constitutes a violation of basic human rights and is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace". Thus, violence against women has become a 'Global Pandemic' (Virus). Without exception, a woman's greatest risk of all such violence is from someone she knows. It's a violation of a woman's right to physical integrity, to liberty and all too often, to her right to life itself.

Perpetrators of violence against women are rarely held accountable for their acts. Women who are victims of gender related violence often have little choice because many state agencies are themselves guilty of gender bias and discriminatory practices. Many women opt not to report cases of violence to authorities because they fear being hated and shamed by communities that are too often quick to blame victims of violence for the abuses they have suffered. When women do challenge their abusers, it can often only be accomplished by long and humiliating court battles with little sympathy from authorities or the media. Very few women with courage express their violations to the trusted NGOs.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:

There are many definitions on empowerment choosing between, defining it as a largely individual process of taking control of and responsibility for one's life and situation, and defining it as a political process of granting human rights and social justice to disadvantaged groups of people. The empowerment of women is located within the discourse and agenda of gender equality and is increasingly being taken in the agendas of international developmental organisations, perhaps more as a means to achieve gender equality than as an end in itself. Empowerment would become more relevant if women are educated, better informed and can take rational and balanced decisions. There is no doubt about the fact that development of women has always been the central focus of planning since independence. Empowerment is a major step in this direction but it has to be seen in a relational context. A clear vision is needed to remove the obstacles to the path of women's emancipation from the government and women themselves. Efforts should be directed towards an all round development of women from all spheres of the society.

GLOBALISATION AND WOMEN:

Globalisation in context to women means, to know about the social, political and economic empowerment of the women through their status. Globalisation process is empowering the women across the globe. It is a mode of sharing the experiences, exchange of ideas, technology and network of the institutions and organisations through bilateral and multi-lateral arrangements. It is paving a way for the women to know about their rights and to make them empower, so that they become independent. Due to globalisation women are working in different spheres of the world like political, social, economic, cultural, sports, corporate, film industry and in various other fields. Globalisation has given women a power they lacked in the past, the benefits of family planning, child care, good health and etc. and the power to end the system that breeds poverty, exploitation and oppression to some extent to the elite group. With changing attitude towards women, she can prospect higher and quality education- who can afford them, economically and socially. New 'Information and Communications Technology' (ICT) have improved the access of women to micro credit, employment opportunities in technological and other advanced sectors and information in general.

Approaches are designed to enhance the capacity of women and empower them to meet the negative social and economic impacts, which may flow from the globalisation process. Positive approach to economic and cultural migration will facilitate women to be exposed to better prospects at the global level.

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (NGOs):

With the augment of 'Non-governmental Organisations' (NGOs) in the 21st century, various organisations have been established and created to preserve the rights of women around the world and to further their advancement. India is estimated to have more than two million NGOs and the number is constantly escalating. From the information made available by the state governments and presented in tabular form by the CBI to the *Supreme Court*, there is one NGO per every six hundred (600) people. In India, it was in the 1970s that saw rapid growth in the formation of formally registered NGOs and the process continues to this day. They are legally constituted organisations created by private organisations or people with no participation or representation of any government, based on the principles of equality, altruism and voluntary work spirit to promote human development (including environment and biodiversity) and nation building. Most of the NGOs have created their respective thematic, social group and geographical priorities such as poverty alleviation, community health, education, housing, human rights, child rights, women's rights, women empowerment, natural resource management, water and sanitation; and to these ends they put to practice a wide range of

strategies and approaches. Primarily, their focus has been on the search for alternatives to development thinking and practice; achieved through participatory research, community capacity building and creation of demonstrable models. The review of some of the work done by NGOs over the past few decades, it's found that, they have contributed wholly to nation building. Many NGOs have worked hard to include children with disability in schools, end caste-based stigma and discrimination, prevent child labour and promote gender equality resulting in women receiving equal wages for the same work compared to men. NGOs have been instrumental in the formation and capacity building of farmers and producer's cooperatives and women's self-help groups.

A number of imperative NGOs in India like: '*Indian Red Cross Society*', '*Child Relief and You*' (CRY), '*Shepherd Widows Home*' and '*Special Cell for Women in Distress*' both in Mumbai, '*Spurthi Mahila Mandal*' in Vijapura, '*Vathsalya Charitable Trust*', Bengaluru, Karnataka, and one such significant, inimitable and exemplary organisation in the Karnataka state is "*The Women's Welfare Society*" in Belagavi city, which are helping women stand on their own through various socio-economic, vocational training and other programmes. The women here undergo a yearlong rehabilitation process where they learn new livelihoods and are educated about political and economic rights.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

To recognise the harassment going on against the women and highlighting the role of the *Women's Welfare Society* (NGO) in empowering women.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY:

The paper reveals the functioning role of a particular NGO named '*The Women's Welfare Society*', situated in Belagavi city of Karnataka state. Qualitative research methodology has been used as a research methodology to analyse the role of NGOs in empowering women along with primary and rich secondary source which also includes selected academic articles, to comprehend the paper.

NGO - THE WOMEN'S WELFARE SOCIETY:

The '*Women's Welfare Society*' is the most distinguished nationwide NGO. It is a non-profitable acknowledged voluntary organisation for the enhancement of women and children in particular and rest others in general. It was established in the year 1977, with prime vision to reach out the women and children especially poor, needy, destitute and rural women for creating self-reliance on the road to recover the quality of their lives. It's welfare service for the benefit of people irrespective of caste, creed, religion and nationality, has extended to wide range of activities like: *family counseling, education, health, empowerment, rural development, environment awareness, youth development* and so on. The organisation has more than twenty units engaged in various areas for more than three decades.

Following are its unique features, serving towards the care, and security to the women in need:

- **SANTWANA - Women's Helpline Service:**

Realizing the needs of rehabilitation of the women, who fall prey every moment to the ill wills of the society. The twenty four (24) hours help line for women give immediate service to its clients who are harassed to dowry, physical, mental, sexual harassment, teasing, beating, abuse etc. In the year, 2018-19, 152 cases were disposed from 176 registered cases, where 73 cases were settled, 18 were moved to court, 04 were referred to other santwana and 57 of the cases were dropped out.

- **ASHRAYA - Short Stay Home:**

'*Ashraya*' - *Short Stay Home* provides institutional services to the needy, impoverished, neglected, widow and deserted women of the society. About 30 women are residing at the home with free, shelter, clothing, medical facilities and vocational trainings. They are programmed with apt guidance, counseling, medical and psychiatric check-up for the inmates. Ashraya performance reveals the fact that, of the total 47 registered cases in the year 2018-19, 18 women were made to re-union with their husband, 22 were restored to their parents, 03 of them were employed and 04 of the women were referred to the old age home.

- **SANGATI - Family Counselling Centre:**

'*Sangati*' is one of the proud and innovative doings of the organisation started in the year 1992. The centre offers counseling services to matrimonial disputes. During the year 2018-19, 105 family disputes were registered and among them 104 cases were inclined. Out of them 51 of the women were disposed by the way of reconciliation, 19 of the cases were moved to court, 33 of them were dropouts and 01 was mutually divorced. Various legal awareness programmes, workshops, pre-marriage counseling sessions etc. are organised frequently in reaching out thousands of target people.

- **ADHAR - Working Women's Hostel:**

There is not a single job which a woman cannot perform. The more advanced education of many women has further increased their usefulness to extensive employment opportunities in urban centers. Working women migrating to urban centers need a safe and secure lodging. Shelters for the single woman should be planned and constructed on the basis of non-exploitative and non-sexist values. Therefore, '*Adhar - Working Women's Hostel*' (sponsored by *Central Social Welfare Board, New Delhi*) provides a safe, secure, decent accommodation to working women, fulfilling the role of a '*home away from home*', which is imperative for the migrant working woman, who makes her home in cities.

- **WOMEN SELF EMPLOYMENT COUNSELING CENTRE (WSECC):**

This centre which is sponsored by *Karnataka State Women's Development Corporation (KSWDC)*, Bengaluru, provides an immense service to women like: '*empathetic business counseling to start micro enterprises*', '*business counseling for growth of women entrepreneurs*', '*creating awareness on the developmental schemes, projects and programmes concerning women entrepreneurship*', '*guidance for preparation of business place*', '*credit referral services*' and providing access support through the organisation like: government departments, banks and other NGOs to enable the counsellor to start their micro enterprises. In the year 2018-19, more than 360 women were counselled through awareness camps and training programmes that were conducted in reaching out for thousands of women.

- **SELF HELP GROUPS (SHG):**

The organisation has also involved in the formation, strengthening and training of '*Self Help Group*'. In the year 2018-19, about 100 '*Women Self Help Groups*' were formed in about 30 villages of Bailhongal taluk, Belagavi district, Karnataka state. Active participation of women and their employment is one of the most significant achievements of this project. Apart from this the organisation provided trainings in accounting, socio-economic activities to SHG members for strengthening the groups.

- **OTHER UNITS:**

The NGO has other units in its credit in serving the needy women in particular and society in general. The other units are: '*Urban Family Welfare Centre*' (sponsored by the *Department of Health and Family Welfare*) functioning in *Vadagaon* area a suburb of Belagavi city. It provides health and family welfare services, like: *family planning, mother and child health, immunisation, schools andanganwadi children's health checkups*, etc.

'*Mamata Fit Institution*' (Orphanage Home) helps for the all round development of children especially the orphans, destitute, neglected, children of single parents, children with conflict with law are referred by '*Child Welfare Committee*'. The institution undertakes activities like: adoption, mentorship, child participation, etc. It provides free food, shelter and clothing to the children by its own resources and donations from corporate and generous public.

Training programmes like: *Awareness Generation Programme*, sponsored by CSWB New Delhi, *Koushalya Abhivrudhi Training Programme* (Skill Development Training Programme), and the organisation runs twelve (12) '*CRECHE*' programmes at Hukkeri and Belagavi blocks, providing pre-school education, nutrition, health care to '*six months to six years*' children of working and ailing mother.

CHALLENGES FACED BY NGOS:

NGOs are putting across their difficulty in finding adequate, appropriate and continuous funding for their voluntary service. They find accessing donors as a challenging task, dealing with their funding conditions. Though they are legally constituted organizations, government representatives are not present as members of organisation and may or may not be funded by the government. Sometimes, the government provides entire funds, while in some occasions government partially funds the NGOs.

The other problem is about the faculty/ staff, for instance: recruitment, assignments, administration and day-to-day managements were found to be weak at the faculty/staff development career. The staff members receive very less salary, hence, most of the times; staff members invest little of their leisure time in order to fulfill their duties, as not all the people working for the NGOs are volunteers. Therefore, it is very difficult to get trained persons who are either willing or trained to work in the NGOs. Moreover, these professionally trained persons have high expectations in terms of salaries, status, opportunities for their growth in the career of their choice. Moreover, most of NGOs due to lack of funds cannot be able to spend more funds for giving training to the personnel employed in the organisation. Some of the NGOs are in fear and dilemma of personnel who may shift to other big NGOs after the completion of training.

REMEDIES TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGES:

Following are the suggested remedies to overcome the challenges of the NGOs:

- Government should sanction more grants and has to liberalise the rules and regulations of grants in aid to the NGOs, so that they can also pay a good salary to the faculty and for the overall management.
- The government should appoint commissions of enquiry or committees to cross check the misuse of funds by NGOs. The member of committee has to supervise and monitor the activities of NGOs periodically.
- Educational institutions viz., universities, colleges and schools should conduct the international and national seminars, conferences, meetings, symposiums, workshops etc. At the same time, they have to collaborate with NGOs and conduct a campus interviews for the graduates who are interested in voluntarism.
- *Red Cross, NSS and NCC* should encourage students to participate in voluntarism, social work etc.
- The use of media should be taken for showing/spreading the importance of social service and the stories of the great personalities should be shown as role models, their style of leadership qualities, voluntarism, dedication and commitment.

II. CONCLUSION:

Woman, the very creation of God that makes living beautiful is often at the receiving end of trauma. With the process of globalisation, the *'Empowerment of Women'* has become one of the most significant concerns of the 21st century globally. Efforts by the Government are on to ensure gender equality but its initiatives alone would not be sufficient to achieve this goal. As a result insufficient account has been taken of them by the NGOs to the needs of women and girls. The working approaches of NGOs help all the needy in a transparent way, so that there is no such discrimination and care in handling the cases. The victimized feel that, they have been treated or looked after by their own relative/friends. The paper examines the crucial role of one of the imperative NGO: *'The Women's Welfare Society'*, in empowering the women. In true sense, it has been a beacon of hope for the thousands of women who are in need from the past few decades, which is serving for the augmentation of violated women and children in particular and others in general. It has taken roles such as advocacy, education and training, and have been active in monitoring what has, or has not, been achieved. During the past three decades it has actively advocated, that the fullest recognition should be given to the enormous contribution that women make to the family, society and development. Its sincere effort in empowering women *'from victim to survivor... to active citizen is successful'*.

Globalisation offers women unprecedented opportunities, but equally new and unique challenges. Gender inequality comes from many sources, and it is often difficult to decide which forms of inequality are being eliminated by the effects of globalisation, and which are exacerbated. By identifying problems in the protection and enjoyment of human rights and in programming changes in legislation and its implementation, NGOs have provided protection to women's rights as human rights. Their work is commendable and they should be encouraged. In conclusion quoting *Emma Thompson*' quote, *"I've a problem with the word charity because I think that NGOs, as I prefer calling them, really do take the work of moral and social responsibilities that ought to be taken on by governments"*.

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