

**FACTORS INHIBITING AND PROMOTING CHANGE IN WELFARE
AND EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES AMONG RURAL WOMEN:
A Study of Durgi Mandal in Guntur District, AP.**

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Chapter – V

CONCLUSIONS

With a population of 586.47 million (2011 Census) the women in India exceeds the total population of many countries in the World. They constitute 48.43% of the Indian population which is estimated at 1.21 billion (2011 Census) and such a viable segment are relegated to a secondary position compared with men. In addition to their reproductive and household duties, they contribute a significant percentage in Indian economy. In spite of their contribution, women are still dependent on male member of the family for protection. The culture which is mainly man centric and the enculturation process is influencing their mindset and the women have no freedom to take decisions on their life. The socio- economic and cultural factors which facilitate the preference towards a male child resulted in female feticide, which is rampant in India, especially in the states of Punjab and Haryana which results in the declining sex-ratio at an alarming rate. Many gender based atrocities are committed on the women, like eve teasing, sexual exploitation at work place, molestation and rape.

Domestic violence is a major form of atrocity committed on the women in a familial set up on account of the universality of male dominance and female subordination which is deeply rooted in Hindu culture and wife beating is considered as a private matter by the society to be settled with in the family. The consequences of such violence are the bodily pains, injuries, emotional disturbances, emotional phobias, headaches, memory loss, obsession, insomnia, hypersomnia, emotional imbalance and nervousness besides sexual incapacity and gynecological problems and miscarriages.

The secondary position for women in the society has its genesis since historical times. It was stated by many scholars that the women enjoyed equal status along with men during Vedic period, but a few historians disagreed with the above view and pointed out the preference of male child during the Vedic period.

In the Post Vedic period, the Hindu culture revolves around three concepts i.e. the preference towards the male child, the unconditional obedience of a women to her husband and treating her as a perpetual minor throughout her life. Widow re-marriages are not permitted by the society. Excessive emphasis placed on physical chastity of the women resulted in the emergence of widow burning (Sati) in higher communities and the child marriages, as the family honor is linked to girl's virginity. The position of women further declined during the advent of Muslim invasion. Purdah (veil) system is imposed on women where by the women has to cover her body completely and is prohibited from showing their face in public, resulting in their confinement to their homes.

An attempt is made to protect the women from several atrocities by the British, by way of regulations, to abolish Sati, ban on female infanticide and introduction of Indian Penal Code which prescribe severe punishment to offences related to molestation, rape, cruelty, bigamy and adultery. In addition widow re-marriage act, and the child marriage restraint act were enacted for ameliorating the conditions of women. Recognizing the need for female education in India and with the support from social reformers, many schools were started exclusively for girls. However the benefits have not percolated to the majority population.

After India attained independence, the national leaders realizing the plight of women in different spheres and considering their backwardness owing to lack of

education facilities etc., have made many provisions in Indian constitution. The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favor of women. Under part III of Indian Constitution, Fundamental Rights are guaranteed to the citizens. Article 14, 19 and 21 of the fundamental rights which are known as the golden triangle guarantees the citizens equality before law, freedom of speech and expression and various kinds of freedom and right to life and dignity irrespective of sex, caste, social position and religious affiliations. In addition special provisions for made exclusively for women.

In consonance with the constitutional directive, welfare of the women were accorded priority during the five year plans. Female education, maternity and child health, nutrition, economic empowerment through income generating schemes and provision of microcredit, through self-help groups have been accorded a highest priority.

These measures made a mark up to a certain extent with marginal improvement. But however, the overall development is not up to the expectation of the policy makers. While some of the programs are successful, up to a certain extent, the majority of the programs have not yielded desired results and some were a decimal failure even in the incipient stages. It is suggested by the experts that the cultural dimension in technological development as a vital factor not fully understood by the development planners. Researchers all over the World basing on their studies brought out the importance of the cultural, social, and psychological factors in development in traditional societies. A significant study is made by Foster G.M (1973) basing on his experience and that of hundreds of social scientists which is first

of its kind to bring out the importance of vital elements of culture and their articulation in programs of change in traditional societies bringing out the crucial role played by the social, cultural and psychological factor in technological change.

In the present study it is elicited that the cultural, social, economic and psychological factors played a vital role in the implementation of various programmes aimed at ameliorating the conditions of the women. In the study, these are identified as factors inhibiting and promoting change in the areas of health which includes maternity and child care, nutrition, female education and empowerment of women.

To arrest the malady of maternal mortality during child delivery, the Government has initiated Janani Suraksha Programme under which the expenses relating to hospitalization and deliveries are met by the Government in addition to a financial incentive for hospital delivery. A special nutritious scheme is devised for pregnant women implemented through Anganwadi to address the problem of malnutrition. The study revealed the articulation of socio-cultural elements acting as barriers for this programme.

The study elicited that the age at marriage is a factor responsible for pregnancy and delivery complications. 58% of the marriages in the study villages were performed much below the legal age limit i.e. in between 13-17 years. In spite of the regulations on the contrary, the custom and tradition coupled with excessive emphasis on physical chastity for girls are identified as a factor for early marriages, though considered voidable under law. Since most of the married women are either in the late childhood or in early teenage, where the reproductive system is not very much ready for child delivery as such complications are reported among the pregnant women of this category. The special nutritious scheme for pregnant women is found

to be unsuccessful owing to food taboos which are culturally ordained in the communities under study where in certain types of foods though desirable from the perspective of health personnel, are opposed by the people on account of taboos basing on their belief system. The study revealed that the superstitious belief as a primary factor responsible for the failure of the programme. The eating of eggs is tabooed for pregnant women since the people of the area believed that eating eggs results in baldness of the newborn baby. In addition to that, certain varieties of fruits like papaya and pineapple are tabooed in the belief that they cause the abortion. Some leafy vegetables is believed to cause allergies to the pregnant women. The vegetables such as potato and drumsticks are tabooed because they cause harm to the body metabolism. Certain varieties like sesam are tabooed as they believe to cause excessive bleeding during pregnancy. Taboos also are observed as regards to the consumption of non-veg chicken, fish, etc., since that consumption of these items is believed to be formation of large fetus which causes the problem in delivery. The loci of authority is identified as one of the major factors inhibiting the nutritional programme since most of the families in the study area are either joint families or nuclear families with aged dependents. The decision making as to what type of foods are to be consumed by the pregnant women is to be decided by her mother/mother-in-law, the violation of it is regarded by them as affecting their innate pride and dignity.

Obligations towards kinship is identified as a factor affecting the mid-day meal programme arranged by the Anganwadi centers to the pregnant women, wherein the food intended for pregnant women is distributed to the children of the family as a result of food anxiety.

To improve the health conditions of women, the Government has appointed health workers, Auxiliary nurse midwives in the selected villages with a primary

health center at Durgi to cater the health needs of a people by exposing them to modern medicine. It is elicited that many women were reluctant to utilize the hospital services for gynecological examinations, child deliveries and injuries caused as a result of domestic violence. The study revealed that many women are reluctant to discuss gynecological problems and physical examinations by the male doctor, since in the area under study no one other than one's own husband has any right to physical intimacy. Thus the modesty norms played a vital role in affecting the health programmes for women. However realizing the role played by the norms of modesty, the health department has recently appointed a female physician at Durgi, which acted as a promoting factor for success of the programme in recent years. The respondents stated that they are now availing hospital facilities with regards to gynec problem.

As regards to their reluctance to approach the hospital for injuries relating to family violence, the study revealed that the economic dependence on their husbands is a primary reason identified in the study followed by the public opinion are acting as barriers. Since the hospital admittance involves medico legal cases and involvement of police which results in the confinement of the head of the family which affects the loss of working days and consequent financial difficulties for the family.

In the area of study it is believed that an ideal wife is supposed to bear the indignities with patience including physical injuries on account of domestic violence. In case of medico legal complications leading to the arrest of her husband, the blame is placed unjustly on the shoulders of wife and fearing the public opinion, there is not even a single case of domestic violence reported to the police nor availed treatment in a hospital in the study area.

In order to encourage the girl's education and to solve the problem of wastage and stagnation, the Government has started many primary, middle and high schools in the area of study including ashram schools especially for girls under Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayam Programme. The study revealed that during the first and second ascending generation of the respondents in the study area, the education is almost nil to negligible for girls. The efforts of the Government resulted in a improvement in the ego generation, however the dropout among elementary stages is continued in spite the efforts of the Government. The study revealed that the articulation of cultural factors are responsible for drop out since the excessive emphasis placed on the physical chastity of the girls which is linked with family honor is identified as one of the reasons acted as inhibiting factor for change. In addition it was elicited that the age at marriage for the girls in the area during ego generation and ascending generation is in between 13-15 years and the domestic responsibilities during the tender age are identified as factors of dropouts of the girls.

The perception of the family towards the girl child who were considered as not full pledged members of the family as such their education is non-productive is another factor identified for the drop out of the girls. Domestic violence is another factor found to be inhibiting educational programmes, as one of the responsibilities is placed on the eldest daughter of the family leading to her drop out from schools. Economic factors are found to be responsible for drop out as the girl child is forced to do the work in agriculture season in view of their poverty and consequent absenteeism.

In spite of the socio-cultural factors acting as barriers as regards to wastage and stagnation in education, it is elicited from the study that in recent generations the enrollment of girls in education institutions are on increase in the descending

generation in view of the Government measures for free education of the girls in addition to financial incentives i.e. scholarships and fellowships. The desire for economic gain and desire for prestige and status are found to be the motivating factors for girl education in the area of study.

With a view to impart literacy skills, reading, writing, arithmetic, to the non-literate adults, the Government has setup adult education centers throughout the rural areas of the country. Women are accorded priority in such a programme with a view to get access to information, access to critical resources of credit, and to create awareness on general health and hygiene. Such centers were started in the selected villages but however the adult education programme are defunct in the area of study. The innate pride and dignity is identified as a causative factor for the failure of the programme. Anthropologists have noted that all over the world, in traditional societies, many technically well designed aid programme have run into trouble because culturally defined forms of pride and desire to avoid humiliation as the result of being cast inappropriate role. The similar situation is noticed in the area of study where schooling is associated with child hood and is considered inappropriate to the adults. Dube's observation as regards to this study that only children are supposed to attend schools, the adult exposes himself to general public amusement when he starts to school with pencil and slate", a view is prevailing in the area of study. The cultural factor that the innate pride and dignity and fear of loss of face is identified as a causative factor for the failure of the programme. The adult education programme though not successful as per the desire of the policy makers, it receives encouragement in the incipient stage since the motivation to learn signature and basic arithmetic in the participation of DWACRA meetings acted as a motivating factor for

the initial success of the programme but however the inhibiting factors prevailed over the motivating factors.

With a view to empower the women and thereby improving their position and status, the self -help groups like DWACRA were initiated in all the villages under study. The micro finance, by way of soft loans to women helped them from the clutches of the money lenders. The study revealed that barring a few groups which are defunct, the scheme is a successful one in the area of study. A study on the defunct groups however revealed the articulation of socio-cultural and psychological factors like the loci of authority where the authority vested in the head of the family is identified as one of the several factors responsible for defunct SHG groups since some women diverted the soft loans to their husband to clear the private debts to the liquor shops and unable to pay back the installments due to the group. However in overall scenario, the study revealed the self-help groups is found to be a successful programmes since barring a few groups the majority of the groups are functioning properly overcoming the obstacles. The desire for the economic gain and prestige were identified as the motivating factors responsible for success.

Another scheme which is considered to be a successful scheme is the Bangaru Talli scheme started to empower the girl child by way of sanctioning financial grants through installments till she completes the higher education. As a result of the scheme, the perception of the parents is slowly changing and the girl child is no longer considered as a burden to a family. The desire for economic gain is identified as motivating factor for acceptance of the programme. To help the people in their old age and to lead their life with dignity, old age pension as a result of which the old people are leading their lives with dignity.

In the field area under study, the mortality rate among men is very high owing to their addiction to intoxicating liquor with the result many women in their middle ages or even in their younger age becomes widows and though widow remarriages is legally permitted, are not accepted by the people of this area. The Government programme of granting widow pensions to the tune of rupees 1000 per month is a boon to the effected women to lead their lives without depending upon the other family members.

There are several cases identified as regards to physically and mentally handicapped persons in the area under study. Which probably can be attributed to the consanguine type of marriages in the study area, however this observation is not based on any systematic study as regards to genetic problems associated with such type of marriages. Since they could not performed normal functions necessary for earning their livelihoods, the Government has initiated PH monthly pension to lead their lives with dignity. These pension schemes are successful since the desire for economic gain and prestige acted as motivating factors.

As regards to the functioning of MGNREGS scheme, the study revealed that though the scheme is beneficial to the poor and the desire for economic gain is a motivating factor, is not functioning as per the objectives of the Government. The socio cultural, psychological and environmental factors are identified as barriers to in the study area wherein during summer season when this scheme is in operation, the temperature are recorded very high sometimes reaching 120 F. The excessive heat during the summer season effects the women and children as there is no proper shelter for taking care of the children. In addition another factor identified for their absence to work is attributed to the modesty norms. Exposing the breasts even for feeding the infant children in public places is considered improper and against the norms of

modesty as there is no privacy provided for lactating mothers in the MGNERS work in the study area. The environmental and the modesty norms are identified as hindering factor affecting the Government measures in this regard. The socio economic elements are identified as factors responsible for hindering the programme. The respondents have informed that their family income for this work is diminished on account of the change in the policy of government where in the work is allotted on the basis of contract to a group of families. The respondents have expressed the view that this change is not at all beneficiary to them as they receive far less than the earlier period. The partial work, meager remuneration and delayed payments are responsible for their absenteeism.

Perception is found to be a hindering factor inhibiting the programmes of empowerment. Misra (2011) basing on his experience in MGNRES scheme has stated that women themselves have requested the project authorities to pay higher wages to the men lest they face problems at domestic front. He says the social relations influenced by the male superiority and patripotestal authority are acting as barriers in this programme. The similar attitude is seen to the women of the study area but with a different explanation wherein it was stated that some types of works require physical strength for which men alone are suitable and should be paid higher wages.

Preference is given to women in allotment of houses under Indiramma Awas Yojana by the Government for empowering the women in the study villages. This programme is welcomed by the women beneficiaries since conferring ownership title elevates their position in the family and the desire for prestige is identified as stimulating factor for change in this regard.