

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF PAKISTAN.

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ABSTRACT

In the context of socio-economic development of women in Pakistan, especially in urban areas development policies and programs tend not to view women as integral to the economic development process. A glance at the socio-cultural scenario of Pakistan reveals that gender –based violence is deep rooted in the society irrespective of language and ethnicity. Women are not given their due roles, rights and respect. This paper examines the present environment which is desperately lacking in social and financial support mechanisms, ineffective implementation of laws. Current research paper is an attempt to bring clarity in the concept of legal security. Patriarchal structure of society, socio-customary practices and discrimination against women are very serious concerns which needed to be understood as multidimensional problem.

Keywords: Empowerment, development, discrimination, legal security

Case study: Lack of legal Security.

Gender based discrimination infringes upon the basic rights of Women i.e empowerment legal security, their economic status etc. The society considers women of less wisdom and its thought that they are socially immature, they have less control over their emotions and hence have less moral control and physical restraint. Moral conduct cannot be over looked especially if it becomes a matter of public knowledge.

Shazia Noreen victimized by Lack of legal Security

Profile

Age: Thirty five years

Living area: Kotli Sattian (Pakistan)

Time: 4.00 pm

Date: 10.07.2012

Culprit: Husband

Shazia Noreen is a Homeopathic doctor by profession aged thirty five years. She has two kids from two marriages. The first husband was unemployed and always hankered her for money torturing her physically and mentally. Always he took money from her; she thought always unfortunately, things may not always turn out the way they seem. She had not sufficient amount for survival of herself and kids. Husband was unemployed as well as his attitude was totally patriarchal context. He showed male domination behavior, never doing for her. Consequently, she got a divorce along with the possession of her kids and continued her work as a Homeopathic doctor in a local hospital. Here society again barred her from remaining single and she was forced to remarry under pressure from the people in her surroundings and her parents. She loses her right of inheritance.

She was forced to customary practices mostly women are forced to withdraw their right to inheritance in favour of male family members seemingly voluntarily or under compulsion. Generally she was not given control and authority over her personal matters. Under these circumstances she was forced to remarry No **Mehr*** settlement at the second time of marriage, again she deprived from her right, total negligence about family laws was main hindrance to protect her, **Mehr*** is not gift, it is mandatory for Muslim marriage.

Second marriage was without her consent, it was matter of family respect. The second marriage was only a formality of sorts as this man already had a wife, a fact that he concealed from her during the marriage ceremony. But later on it became an open secret and he had no regrets about it. However, she continued to live with him and settle down in life. But fate had thought otherwise for her.

During this time she gave birth to her second child. His attitude towards her changed all of a sudden and he started demanding money from her. He would disappear for the whole month and usually turn up at the end of the month demanding money. She tried to reason with him that it wasn't possible for her to give him money as her monthly salary was barely between five to six thousand rupees. At the same time she had to pay the rent of the house along with the utility and household expenses bills. Besides this, she had two kids to feed and cater to their needs. He couldn't understand her reasoning and felt dejected and abruptly returned to his first wife. However, he retained his conjugal rights toward her. Once again she is remaining alone.

Woman is the double victims of this situation. On the one hand, she is kept apart from her own community they will blame her if she get divorce. Now she lives alone with her two kids and tries to make both ends meet. Shunning the idea of a second divorce she was quite apprehensive about it and said that the society, her family and relatives would only blame and accuse her for her ills and that she wouldn't be able to settle down in life for the second time. As a result, she constantly lives under stress and depression complaining about her lack of social security as well as all the public harassment. She hopefully intends to open a beauty parlour as a part time job along with her current job of Homeopathic doctor by obtaining a loan from the Small Industries Corporation.

This was not only one case that suffered and lost her all basic human rights because of cruel custom prevalent in society, thousands of women suffer through this trauma status of women in society. Discrimination against women is a global issue which is not confined to the limits or boundaries of a particular country. Women rights are not considered as human rights completely, even 19th century laws also led to a women's oppression by her husband. In Pakistan, attitude towards women as inferior beings (Mumtaz&Shaheed, 1987)

- Women are considered central to religious, social, cultural biases. In many communities of Pakistan:
- Women are as considered s earning tools.
- Women are use as settle disputes.
- Women are as considered inferior to men.

Problems faces by women in the present system are based on; patriarchal structure of society, social factors such as illiteracy, economic dependence o male partners within family and cultural and social norms. Pakistani women were terribly affected by the Hudood law which is very discriminatory and the set out differences in legal status of women and men. In this situation women protection Bill (WPB) is first step towards alleviating women's sufferings but unprejudiced mind sets are not ready to accept it. Protection also implies the exertion of male authority, to which women have to submit it (Van der veer, 1998) The bulk of the female population in the Muslim households remained under strict male domination. The exclusionary practices of women who dominated feminist discourse have made it practically impossible.

Conclusion

This study examines the extent of Rawalpindi urban women's participation in household decision-making relative to their husbands and other family members. There is a dire need of today to sensitize and to empower the female members of the family to make them understand of their rights and responsibilities. It has to be convinced the male members of the family and community if women become empower and built their confidence they can play the role of the change maker of the family, society and the whole country. Societal &cultural constraint is great hindrance to get legal security for female in Pakistan.

Recommendations

- Existing laws needs to be reviewed.
- There is need to establish a legal assistance centre for female at National and district level.
- There is need to raise awareness among masses against discriminatory practices.
- Women's protection bill, there is still the urgent need to repeal those sections of the statutory laws that have sanctified customary laws.

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