

The Indian Development of Women Journalists and Human Rights

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Abstract

The concept of women's human rights owes its success and the creation of its use to the fact that it is revolutionary. The idea of women's human rights makes common sense. It declares that as human beings women have human rights. Anyone would find her or himself hard pressed to publicly make and defend the contrary argument that women are not human. So in many ways, the claim that women have human rights seems quite ordinary. On the other hand, "women's human rights" is a revolutionary notion. This fundamental recovery of humanity and the corollary insistence that women's rights are human rights have profound transformative potential. In the 1980s and 1990s, women's movements around the world formed networks and coalitions to give greater visibility both to the problems that women face every day and to the centrality of women's experiences in economic, social, political and environmental issues. In the development of what is becoming a global women's movement, the term "women's human rights" has served as a locus for praxis, that is, for the development of political strategies shaped by the interaction between analytical insights and concrete political practices. The critical tools, the determined activism, and the broad-based international networks that have grown up around movements for women's human rights have become a vehicle for women to develop the political skills necessary for the 21st century.

Keywords: Human Rights, Women Journalist, Development, Movement etc.

Introduction

The constitution of India also guarantees the right to equality of status, equal opportunity in education and public employment with grants special favor to women. The involvement of women in nationalist movement automatically led the constitution of India to give women their fundamental right to vote from the beginning of independent period. The first set of law reforms aimed to circulate the women's rights relating to the access of women's education, the avoidance of child marriage, the prohibition of dowry, the recognition of widow remarriage including the rights to inherit property, abortion and divorce. Assorted facts of the status of Indian women today reveals that though Indian society. Now it is progressing towards the twenty first century, a lot needs to be done for the upliftment of women, who constitute half the population of the country.

It may be notable that though in the beginning of independent period, women in professions had occupied themselves with traditional jobs like teaching, nursing and social work. In course of time there has been a slow switch over in employment of women from traditional occupations to more remunerative and higher status jobs like administrators, educators, doctors, engineers, architects, town planners, nuclear physicists, officers in community development projects, journalists and other

professions. The opportunities for entering an occupation and progressing of educated women in these professional jobs have not increased proportionately. These jobs have become popular only in bigger cities. It is interesting to discover that while women from lower and middle class work to supplement their family's income, women in the upper class work mainly to develop their talent and raise their own status. As of 1947 onwards, Indian government has issued a variety of legislature. There was an attempt to establish legal equality between men and women and reduce the discrimination against women on the grounds of sex. As a result, the industrial law with special enactment for women was promulgated. According to this law there are provision relating to the same salary for women, maternity benefits, protection of women from being dismissed in case of maternity leave and miscarriage leave. Lack of awareness among women themselves was claimed to be the factor influential the low status of women.

Pre-independent period

In pre-independent period helped ingenerating a climate, which encouraged women to organize themselves and to create an atmosphere to raise the status of women, as women started coming out of the four walls to assert their political rights in the form of social equality on the other hand its consequence provided the benefit only to the women of urban middle and upper classes. In this account the increasing entry of women in higher education and employment only within middle class urban. The emergence of women politicians, writers and journalists, who were the leadership of the first wave of the women's movement, are the distinctive examples of women being beneficiaries of the movement. The first women's movement under the leadership of upper middle class women fell into during 1950-1970. Around 1970s the period had witnessed the rise of the second wave of the women's movement. During this period, the new women activists attempted to redefine conventional idea of women's issues

19th early 20th century period

The first wave of the women's movement in late 19th early 20th century, under the leading traditional women's organizations like Women's Indian Association, India Women's conference and lots of regional and local women's clubs, Mahila Samitis, Mandals, aimed at the development of the status of women without challenging the elementary ideology or value system of patriarchy. The second wave of the women's movement in independent period particularly from 1975 to 1985 by the new established women's organizations like Sharmaik Stree Mukti Sangathana, Nari Sangarsh Samiti, Forum against oppression, Sabale, Mahila Sangarsh Vahuru, Women's Aid Centre, feminist network, professional organization, etc. started questioning patriarchy. The second wave of the women's movement, according to feminist media scholars, plays a significant role in contributing a great number of women in modern Indian journalism. The women's movement has been directly related to the emergence of women Journalists from the dawn of journalism history. These new autonomous women's groups, which essentially defined themselves as 'socialist feminist' raised the radical issues existing in their contemporary time such as dowry, wife beating, rape, persistence of child marriage and the stigma against widows, economic hardships, the projection of women as a sex symbol by the media, working conditions, etc. Along with these mentioned issues, certain issues relating to the suffering of the underprivileged people such as anti-price rice movement, anti-corruption movement, Chipco movement, peasant movement, distribution of land, unemployment, etc. also captured their interest. The second wave of the women's movement focused on the gender issues and its social, cultural, economical and

political manifestations. The significance between the upcoming of women journalists and the second wave of the women's movement in independent period, from the early days of independent India until the present time can be drawn into 4 phases. Every phase is resolute by the unique socio-economic and political factors. It is yet to be noted that these four phases somewhat overlap. The first phase began in the year of 1947 and carried on to the 1960s, the second phase can be traced from 60s early 70s, the third phase covered 1975 to 1985 and the fourth phase started from 1990 to the present time.

Social welfare activities

In social welfare activities, the Government of India in 1953 recognized a Central Social Welfare Board with a nationwide program of grants-in-aid, for promoting welfare and development services for women, children and underprivileged groups. The programs were guided by the First Five Year Plan (1951 to 1956) focusing on education, health, welfare, etc. Second Five Year Plan (1956 to 1961), emphasizing on social, moral, hygiene, post care services, including unequal pay, lack of adequate training facility and lack of opportunities for part-time jobs, etc., issues. The founding of CSWB, to a large extent had significant impact on women's organizations. This was voluntary to the fact that the traditional women's organizations and the large number of voluntary women organizations, which proliferated in this period, received sponsoring from the government besides; the slow pace of women's higher education was another factor that barred women from step into the professions. Frene Talyakhan was the first woman to edit two magazines - 'Trend' and 'Flair' at a time when women's magazines were still overseen by men. In 1959, after selling Fair to The Times of India group. She became the first editor of Femina, its new women's magazine. The staffs of Femina under the editorship of Frene Talyakhan were Ina Sen, who worked as the assistant editor, Vimala Patil, Anita Sarkar and Nina Merchant. In 1966 Patil, was the assistant editor, replacing E-wing, who had move to 'Eve's Weekly'. She became the editor of Femina in 1973 and was the third editor of this magazine and second female to be so. Patil remained at the post for 20 years. During this particular time appeared also a few number of freelance journalists. Hilla Vaikil and Geeta Sinha were among the early freelancers, while Nuru Chagla was another name working around the same time. In Delhi, Kamala Mankekar was among the handful of women in the mainstream newspapers. After a few months in the 'Indian News Chronicle', she joined 'The Times of India' in 1950. 'The Statesman' had two women on the staff in the capital: Raj Chawla who was on the desk and Amita Malik, who reigned supreme among the film critics of the capital and began the first radio column in the country known as 'Listening Post'. In addition, Pramila Kalhan wrote for 'The Hindustan Times'. Aruna Mukherji and Amrita Rangaswamy, both of 'The Indian Express', were among the first women to become assistant editors of a major newspaper. Anjali Sinha wrote first 'The Hindu' and Shanta Rungachary - earlier the first woman trainee in 'The Indian Express' work for 'The Statesman', while Vidya Nehru who joined the 'National Herald' in Lucknow was the first woman to work on the night shift. The other women journalists in English press during this specific time were 'Blue' Rangnathan, M. Ratnakumari and Anjali Sarkar nee Sengupta, Shakuntala Srivastava Manasi, Mrs. B. K. Karanjia and Uma Anand the original 'Aunty Wendy' of the Illustrated Weekly (Mumbai), Mrs. Kooper (Bangalore) and Coleen Gantzer (a Kochi base freelance travel writer). One fact which is strikingly apparent in this phase is that though a number of women journalists made their contribution both in English newspapers and women magazines, the editors of both medium were still men. In the vernacular press, there are few credentials about women journalists. The prominent ones were Jaloo Kanga, Leela Parulekar and K. Rama Lakshmi. In Parsi Gujarathi, language, Jaloo Kanga a teenaged bride, was catapulted into the world of journalism

by her father-in-law in 1944 while she was travelling from rural Gujarat to metropolitan Calcutta. Her father-in-law founded the Parsi-Gujarathi publication 'Navroz' as his contribution to the nationalist enterprise. According to her daughter, she was only the 'Navroz' joint editor as her father still kept the top notch for him. In the Marathi press, publisher Editor Leela Parulekar was active in the Pune based 'Sakal'. In 1950s, Mrs. Gadgil used to look after the paper's children page in 'Loksatta'. Later in 1960 Lata Raje joined the same paper. In Telegu, a journalist in Hyderabad said Ramaiakshmi, a sub-editor in the Telegu 'Swatantra', was the first woman in Telegu journalism. Unfortunately, there is no record in other dialect languages

Women's movement

The second phase of the relationship between women journalists and the second wave of the women's movement can be traced back from the year of 1960 to early 1970s. From 1960 onwards quite a number of women stepped into the mainstream commercial press. Apart from the advancement of education taken up by girls in general, journalism as a course being available in various universities around the country was another reason that encouraged women to join this profession. Several women journalists of this phase graduated with journalism course, for example, Prabha Dutt, Jyotsana Kapoor and Razia Ismail. In English language, there were many women journalists who contributed to the press both in newspapers and magazines. The prominent ones among them were, Usha Rai, Prabha Dutt (nee Behl), Razia Ismail, Jyotsana Kapoor, Neena Vyas, Modhumita Majumdar, Zinat Imam, Rami Chhabra, Rashmi Saxena, Madhu Jain, Coomi Kapoor and Tavleen Singh (in Delhi), Olga Tellis, Zarine Merchant, Fatima Zakaria, Elizabeth Rao, Bachi Karkari, Dina Vakil and Carol Andrade (in Mumbai), Anjali Sarkar, Gita Aravamudan and Rima Kashyap (in Bangalore), and Kalyani Shankar in Hyderabad 1960s also witnessed a larger number of women participating in vernacular journalism. For example in Maharashtra, Indubai Tilak was one of the first persons to take gain of the first Journalism course offered in Pune, which began in 1962. Afterward she became known as the first woman in Marathi journalism. Indubai was a daughter in-law of Bal Gangadhar Tilak a well known leader of the freedom movement and founder editor of the journal, 'Kesari'.

The Women's Decade

The third phase of the relationship among women journalists and the second wave of the women's movement covered around the years 1975 to 1990, which witnessed The Women's Decade 1975 to 1985. The year 1975, when Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister of India was important to the women of India and also of the world because it was The International Women's Year, declared by the United Nations. The general aim of The International Women's Year was to raise the status of women throughout the world. The arranged report on the status of women published in 'Toward Equality' in 1974, before submitted to the United Nation in 1975 indicated that the equality and justice guaranteed by constitution since 1947 had not been met for women. Authors of this report charged that women's status had not better but had in fact declined since independence. To solve the problems faced by women in this period, the government re-evaluated the welfare approach and came out with the new perspective. The Women's Decade initiated by The International Women's Year stormed a marvelous number of women entering into journalism. The increase in the number of women journalists particularly in print media in this phase resulted in the highlighting of important women's issues. The increase of credibility of women's issues in turn helped women journalists to get more stories and columns. Some women

journalists, who were intensely attracted by women's issues, even went further to form media monitoring groups, such as 'Women's Media Action Group', 'Committee on Portrayal of Women in Media', Women and Media Group in Bombay'. The participants of these groups included journalists, researchers and activists. They organized workshop, Joint programs with women's rights organizations, encouraging full time activists and researchers to write for the mainstream media. Accordingly, many of them had come out with valuable investigative reports on communal riots, Sati, etc

Communication revolution

In the circumstance of communication revolution, which goes hand in hand with privatization, liberalization and globalization, the media has responded in conformity with this trend by being capital intensive. To maintain its own interests, as media itself is a commercial venture in character, it acts more vehemently as the mechanism of capitalism in order to promote 'consumerism'. This trend, indeed, is a continuous process from the very beginning of independent period, but has strengthened since 1980s. Obviously under the pouring wave of 'globalization', various media institutions require plenty of men and women journalists who are able to write anything, merely to fulfill the aim of rising circulation.

Human rights & women journalists

Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 outlines what is considered in this century to be the fundamental consensus on the human rights of all people in relation to such matters as security of person, slavery, torture, protection of the law, freedom of movement and speech, religion, and assembly, and rights to social security, work, health, education, culture, & citizenship. It clearly stipulates that these human rights apply to all equally without distinction of any kind such as race, color, sex, language or other status the human rights delineated by the Universal Declaration are to be understood as applying to women. However, tradition, prejudice, social, economic and political interests have combined to exclude women from prevailing definitions of general human rights and to relegate women to secondary or special interest status within human rights considerations. This marginalization of women in the world of human rights has been a reflection of gender inequity in the world at large and has also had a alarming impact on women's lives. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights defines human rights as universal, inalienable, and indivisible. In unison, these defining characteristics are tremendously important for women's human rights. The universality of human rights means that human rights apply to every single person by virtue of their humanity; this also means that human rights apply to everyone equally, for everyone is equal in simply being human. In many ways, this universality theme may seem patently obvious, but its egalitarian premise has a radical edge. By invoking the universality of human rights, women have demanded that their very humanity be acknowledged.

Movement for women's human rights

The term Women Journalists Human Rights does not refer simply to the theoretical approaches those women's has used to transform human rights concepts, programs and agendas. In addition to being instrumental in the formulation of the conceptual challenges and demands levied by women, the idea of women's human rights has had immense impact as a tool for political activism. The concept of Women's Human Rights has opened the way for women around the world to ask hard questions about the official inattention and general indifference to the general discrimination and violence that women experience

every day. As women's activities developed globally during and following the United Nations' Decade for Women, more and more women raised the question of why women's rights and women's lives have been deemed secondary to the human rights and lives of men. The agreements that are produced by such conferences are not legally binding; however, they do have ethical and political weight and can be used to pursue regional, national, or local objectives. Conference documents can also be used to reinforce and interpret international. The most important international treaty specifically addressing women's human rights is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women which was initiated during the UN Decade for Women and has been ratified by over 130 countries. Local women's groups have integrated the women's human rights framework into their legal literacy programs and legal strategies. Although the framework of women's human rights has been tremendously useful in efforts to lobby for legislative and policy changes at local, national and international levels, it has been an equally as important tool for grassroots organizing. Women's human right not only teaches women about the range of rights that their governments must honor; it also functions as akin of gestalt by which to organize analyses of their experiences and plan action for change. The human rights framework creates a space in which the possibility for a different account of women's lives can be developed. What is so useful about this framework is that it provides women with principles by which to develop alternative visions of their lives without suggesting the substance of those visions. The fundamental principles of human rights that accord to each and every person the entitlement to human dignity give women a vocabulary for describing both violations and impediments to the exercise of their human rights. The large body of international covenants, agreements and commitments about human rights gives women political leverage and a tenable point of reference. And finally, the idea of women's human rights enables women to define and articulate the specificity of the experiences in their lives at the same time that it provides a vocabulary for women to share the experiences of other women around the world and work collaboratively for change.

Conclusion

The idea of human rights as unchallengeable means that it is impossible for anyone to reject her human rights, even if she wanted to, since every person is accorded those rights by virtue of being human. It also means that no person or group of persons can deny another individual of her or his human rights. The idea of indivisibility has provided women with a common framework through which to emphasize the complexity of the challenges they face, and to highlight the necessity of including women and gender conscious perspectives in the development and implementation of policy. By calling upon the indivisibility of women's human rights, women have rejected a human rights hierarchy, which places either political or civil rights or socio-economic rights as primary. Instead, women have charged that political stability, Cannot be realized unless women's social and economic rights are also addressed that sustainable development is impossible without the simultaneous respect for and incorporation into the policy process of women's cultural and social roles in the daily reproduction of life; and that social equity cannot be generated without economic justice and women's participation in all levels of political decision-making.

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