

Women's Education in Refugee Communities of Post-Colonial Bengal

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Abstract:

The word education is inextricably linked with our way of life. Because education makes people's intellectual and cultural heritage creative and dynamic. This education organizes people's mind, intellect and taste. In Bengal after the partition of British India in 1947. The refugees, coming from the eastern part of the erstwhile province of Bengal, spread all over West Bengal and in other parts of India. Many refugee 'colonies', which were a novel and distinct spatial arrangement in the urban morphology, came up in the Calcutta region and almost all of these had a primary school. The study of these schools and the general role of education in these settlements will reveal complex socio-economic dynamic of a population trying to carve out a niche on a new terrain. On the other hand, the government, from time to time, came up with various policies to meet the pressing demands that this huge influx of people put on it. Education and training were crucial part of the post-Partition regime of rehabilitation of the refugees.

Keywords: Education, Women, Refugee, Bengal, Independence, Refugee education, Post-partition Bengal, Refugee colonies in Calcutta, Socio-economic dynamics of refugees, Education and cultural heritage, Urban morphology, Government refugee rehabilitation policies

The word education is inextricably linked with our way of life. Because education makes people's intellectual and cultural heritage creative and dynamic. This education organizes people's mind, intellect and taste. The origin of the word education is from the Sanskrit 'shasa' dhatu. Generally speaking, education is the desired, undesired and positive change in human behavior. Throughout the ages, various thinkers have defined education in various ways. Again, the definition or concept of education has also changed with time. Learning can be institutional while important learning can also come from other sources outside the institution. Now let's talk about women's education. Generally by women education we mean acquisition of knowledge related to women's overall rights, lifestyle and empowerment. Here the issues of rights and empowerment come apart because of the presence of traditional patriarchal knowledge structures.

Institutional participation of women in education has a long history. It will not be possible to open the doors of Bengali women's education without the historical background of education system in ancient Bengal. Indian subcontinent had a free and natural life. If we look at the ancient philosophy and mythological history of the subcontinent, we see this form of women's freedom. Tantra and Sankhyadarshan are particularly significant here. As Deviprasad Chattopadhyay says, Among all the scriptures only Tantra is possible for a girl to become a Guru, and it is better to take initiation from a girl. Moreover, as the ancient agrarian society was matriarchal, it was customary to worship the fertility

power and respect the food-giving power Where Prakriti and Purusha stand in Sankhyadarshan, Prakriti means not only material things, but Prakriti means Annadayini Shakti. Therefore, women were respected and respected as a reservoir of immense power like nature. Later, as a result of the entry of the followers of the Vedas into Bengal, a similar picture was seen in the field of education, along with the decline in the dignity of women in the society in different eras. From the beginning of the Vedic period to the Middle Ages, women's education was of no importance. But in spite of that, some notable women of that era were educated in religious ways They are- Apala, Ghosha, Lopamudra, Visakha, Mamta, Gargi, Maitreyi, Khana etc. wise women. If we look at the history of the education system in ancient Bengal, it will be seen that the spirituality of ancient India and Western thought still exist in our knowledge.

Although in the Vedic period women had access to education in India, they had gradually lost this right. However, in the British period, there was a revival of interest in women's education in India. During this period, various socio-religious movements led by eminent persons like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidya Sagar emphasized on women's education in India Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, Periyar, and Baba Saheb Ambedkar were leaders of the lower castes in India who took various initiatives to make education available to the women of India. However, women's education got a fillip after the country got independence in 1947 and the government has taken various measures to provide education to all Indian women. As a result, women's literacy rate has grown over the three decades and the growth of female literacy has in fact been higher than that of male literacy rate. While in 1971 only 22% of Indian women were literate, by the end of 2001 54.16% female were literate. Begum Rokeya's words are particularly significant in the promotion of women's awakening and women's education in Bengal. Her appearance as an ambassador of light to the beleaguered women of Bengali Muslim society. Apart from opening the doors of women's education, Rokeya also conveyed the message of awakening and liberation to the women of this country through thoughtful writings. His Sakhawat Memorial Girls' High School established in 1911 was the third Muslim girls' school in Calcutta for Muslim girls. The first Muslim girls' school in Calcutta was established in 1897 under the patronage of Nawab Begum Ferdous Mahal of Murshidabad. In 1909, Khujista Akhtar Banu established a second girls' school named Suhrawardy Balika Vidyalaya for girls.

In the middle of the 19th century, the door to women's education was opened in Bengali society, but the path was not easy for Muslim women. It was difficult for women. to get education by breaking the religious precepts, caste system and strict social chain. Today women's progress in the field of education has increased manifold after overcoming many obstacles. The women of this country are proving again and again that they too are complete human beings and they too have the right to live with dignity as human beings.

In Bengal after the partition of British India in 1947. The refugees, coming from the eastern part of the erstwhile province of Bengal, spread all over West Bengal and in other parts of India. Many refugee 'colonies', which were a novel and distinct spatial arrangement in the urban morphology, came up in the Calcutta region and almost all of these had a primary school. The study of these schools and the general role of education in these settlements will reveal complex socio-economic dynamic of a population trying to carve out a niche on a new terrain. On the other hand, the government, from time to time, came

up with various policies to meet the pressing demands that this huge influx of people put on it. Education and training were crucial part of the post-Partition regime of rehabilitation of the refugees, Girl and women refugees are more likely to be discriminated against when it comes to education, and the additional needs of caring for the family often fall to them "when catastrophe strikes whether in the form of illness or conflict, displacement or hardship, women and girls, from 65 to five years old, are more likely to shoulder the burden of keeping family and household together." This has consequences on their ability. to support themselves and contribute economically when the crisis has passed, further disempowering them.

Various refugee committee had their as sumptions regarding the class of women who were thought proper for the vocational training schemes. In their view, "The women from middle class families with sons above the age of ten form a class altogether, and their rehabilitation will be a difficult task. They recommended that these women should be given built houses in government colonies located in industrial areas where they can go to small industries for their job Their children could go to the local schools for their education and "later get absorbed in the industries sponsored by Government where preference will be given to the boys and girls of the middle class refugee settlers "Apart from the government, various non-govern- mental groups like the Nari Seva Sangha came forward to help these women.

Most of the early refugees from east Bengal belonged to the upper or middle caste groups, the bhadraloks, as they came to be known as from the colonial period. They tended to gravitate towards the urban centres, more specifically to Calcutta Almost 60 per cent of the migrants up to 1949 were non-agriculturalists. Acute housing problem forced them to erect squatter settlements on the fringes of the city. After securing the basic necessity of life, the members of the colony would look to establish a school, as they regarded education as the utmost important element for their children, the only way to survive in the new land. Most of the upper caste people coming from eastern part of Bengal had prized education as a mean of eaming livelihood for centuries Education would not only help them establish in the new country and alleviate poverty in economic sense, but also help them consolidate their social and cultural position among the citizens This way schools came up in the colonies, the land taken for them, and the financial situation Colony-life was harsh on the inmates. It pushed men as well as women to 'come out and look for a job. Many women started teaching in these newly-established schools. In a sense, this was also an issue of empowerment for them. Education gave the women a way to move out and share a hand in the family's income. When teachers came from out- side the colony, this was a step toward establishing certain contacts with the rest of the city. This was an important matter as the refugee-identity carried pejorative connotation for a long stretch of time The question of women's respect and dignity in society is connected with women's education. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss the place of women in the society and how much the society values women. An analysis of the situation in our country shows that the male dominated women here are neglected and oppressed. Girls are victims of social injustice and injustice. This is directly reflected in the education system. So it can be seen that girls are lagging behind in all levels of education and especially in terms of literacy rate. Although this disparity is gradually reducing, girls still do not get the respect and dignity they deserve. Not only educational backwardness but also economic exploitation of girls. In this situation, the

Government of India has taken several programs which are directly and indirectly improving women's education and helping to improve the quality of life of women.

After independence various commission for women education also set up. The recommendations of various commissions in the field of women education are- Radhakrishnan commission (1948-49), Mudaliar commission (1952-54), Kothari commission (1964-66). Recommendation of various committees for women's education. Just as various commissions have been formed for women's education, some committees have also been formed. The committees are- National committee of women's education (1958), Hansa Mehta committee (1961), Bhakta Vatsalam committee (1963).

Government also take some initiatives for the development Of Women's Education. The State and Central Governments have played equal roles for the development of women's education in India. Following are their steps. A) Step Taken by The State Government for The Development of Women's Education are- Mohila Sangho, Kanyashree Scheme, Ruposhri Scheme, Swami Vivekananda Scholarship, Minority Scholarship, Uttar Kanya Scholarship, Jagdish Chandra Bose Scholarship. B) Step Taken by The Central Government for The Development of Women's Education are- Digital Gender Atlas, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Udaan, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme, Dhanlakshmi Scheme. National Program for Education of Girls at Elementary Level. Like- Single Girl Child Scholarship, Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship Scheme, National Scheme of Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education. Like- Sakshar Bharat Mission for Female Literacy, Sukanya Samridhi Schemes.

Women education in India plays a very important role in the overall development of the country. It not only helps in the development of half of the human resources but in improving the quality of life at home and outside, Educated women not only tend to promote the education of their girl children but also can provide better guidance to all their children. Moreover educated women can also help in the reduction of infant mortality rate and growth of the population. Gender discrimination still persists in India and a lot more needs to be done in the field of women's education in India. The gap in the male-female literacy rate is just a simple indicator. While the male literacy rate is more than 75% according to the 2001 Census, the female literacy rate is just 54.16. Patriarchal social culture also creates gender inequality in education. In the patriarchal social structure, parents are not expected to use the income of their daughters. Therefore, in several cases, they do not encourage their daughter to get higher education or to do better in the educational field.

But education of women is the most powerful tool of change of position in society. Education also brings a reduction in inequalities and functions as a means of improving their status within the family. To encourage the education of women at all levels and for dilution of gender bias in providing knowledge and education, established schools, colleges and universities even exclusively for women in the state. To bring more girls, especially from marginalized families of BPL, in mainstream education, the government is providing a package of concessions in the form of providing free books, uniform, boarding and lodging, clothing for the hostilities midday meals, scholarships, free circles and so on.

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