



Condition of Disabled Women in Indian Rural Society

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Abstract:

India mostly lies in villages /rural society and rural society is one of the basic pillar of Indian social system. After independence, many schemes and programs were launched for the betterment of people living in rural society but still there are so many problems are present in rural India that creates obstacles in the development of India. As compared to previous time the ideology, customs, traditions of village are changing but still there are so many groups in rural India that face great discrimination and one of them is the group of disabled persons especially women. Around the world women make up just over 51% of the population. Women with disabilities are most marginalized in Indian society. They are deprived of political, social, economic and health opportunities. Women with disabilities have been largely neglected. The present paper focuses on the condition of disabled women in rural India societies. This paper also focuses on the discrimination faced by disabled girls and women in Indian rural societies and their problems. It also deals with the implementation and work of various programmes and policies by Government of India.

1. Objectives of the paper

1. To highlight the problems faced by disabled girls and women in Indian rural societies.
2. To highlight the discrimination faced by disabled girls and women in Indian rural societies.
3. To highlight the implementation and work of various programmes and policies by the Government of India.
4. To provide suggestive measures for the uplifting of disabled women and girls.

A disability is any condition that makes it more difficult for a person to do certain activities or interact with the world around them. These conditions or impairments may be cognitive, developmental, intellectual, mental, physical, and sensory or a combination of multiple factors. Impairments causing disability may be present from birth or occur during a person's lifetime. The term is used to refer to individual functioning, including physical impairment, sensory impairment, cognitive impairment, intellectual impairment, mental illness and various types of chronic disease. Disability is a conceptualised as being a multidimensional experience for the person involved. There may be effects on organs or body parts, and there may be effects on a person's participation in areas of life. Correspondingly, three dimensions of disability are recognised in ICF (International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health):

- Body structure and function (and impairment thereof)
- Activity (Activity restriction)_
- Participation (and participation restriction)
- Disabilities can affect people in different ways, even when one person has the same type of disability as another person. Some disabilities may be hidden known as invisible disability.

2. Classification of Disabilities

Categories of disability types include various physical and mental impairments that can reduce a person's ability to carry out day to day activities. Disability can be broken down into a number of broad sub categories:

- Physical disabilities

- Brain disability/Intellectual disability
- Vision disability
- Hearing disability
- learning disabilities/Specific learning disability
- Psychological disorders
- Invisible disabilities
- Multiple disabilities
- Spinal cord
- cerebral palsy and so on

3. Condition of Women in Rural Society

In rural communities, women are experiencing contradictions. On one hand she is vested with major responsibility of implementation of household chores, child development, taking care of needs and requirements of elderly family members and so forth. On the other hand she is subjected to various forms of abuse and mistreatment. In some of the rural communities, girls are regarded as liabilities. Their birth is not appreciated and more preference is given to male children. The individuals normally possess the view point that girls should be trained in terms of implementation of household responsibilities and school education is not meant for them. They have to eventually get married, where they will not be able to make use of their academic skills. Whereas boys are encouraged to get enrolled in school and acquire education, as it is believed they would contribute towards promoting well being of their families and communities through their educational skills. Hence in this manner, girls experience discriminatory treatment.

Rural women and girls normally are required to follow the instructions of the male's members within the household. In their natal home, they have to listen to and obey their fathers, in youth, they are required to follow the rules formulated in their marital homes and in old age, they are dependent upon their sons. They are less literate and capable as compared to men. Majority of rural women, not only experience economic poverty but also constraints in the decision making matters.

4. Women and Girls with Disabilities

Approximately 300 million women around the world have mental and physical disabilities. Women with disabilities comprise 10% of all women worldwide. As high as 75.03% of women with disabilities live in rural areas. Most women work in agriculture related activities but orthopedically handicapped and mentally retarded, women with multiple disabilities, cerebral palsy cases and some others disabled women and girls with severe and profound cases are not made for these activities. **The condition of disabled women is not good and satisfactory in rural society.** The following headings highlight the problems faced by disabled women in rural India/society are:

1. Negative Thinking

Society in general thinks about the disabled and handicapped children in a distorted way. Most of the people of rural society take impairment as a curse of God and show their helplessness in this regard. Parents too have a negative attitude towards the handicapped children and take them as a liability. They do not show real concern for the welfare of these children especially women and girls.

2. Discrimination

Women and girls with disabilities face double discrimination due to prevalence of traditional gender roles and expectations. The attitude of parents and elders are not very much supportive as compared to non disabled children. More preference is given to non disabled children in the family. Elderly widows with disabilities are more vulnerable.

The combination of discrimination on the basis of gender and disability results in low literacy rates. In rural India, where gender based discrimination is present, women and girls with psychological or intellectual disabilities in particular multiple layers of discrimination. Women and girls with disabilities face unique challenges including sexual violence and denial of access to reproductive health that men do not.

3. Negative Attitude of the Society and Community

The group of disabled and marginalised status children is more likely to be benefitted from education and different courses. But in most of the rural areas parents do not like their children should mix up and interact with disabled children. They consider these children as backward, inferior, uncultured etc.

4. Violence

Disabled women face high rate of violence, both at the hands of family members and of personal assistants. Research indicated that the violence faced by disabled women may be more severe and take some unique forms and disabled women have experienced physical abuse compared to one third of non disabled women.

5. Compromising

The women and girls with disabilities are not easily accepted by the non disabled males. Most of the disabled girls can't marry due to rejection in society and spend whole life alone. In most of the situations, if the degree of disability is mild they can establish family after marriage but compromise with various modes of life like marry with male having more than one disability or widower male. Disabled women also face limitations on their rights to marry and found a family, and often lose of custody of their children. In some countries, it is impossible for disabled women to adopt children

6. Physically and sexually abuse

According to the researches, in rural areas women and girls are physically and sexually abused by their family members, neighbours and other community members. Their parents are mostly worried about their condition and one thing mostly strike in their mind who will take care of their disabled children after our death.

7. Lack of facilities

In rural India, there is no special provision for the development and welfare of these disabled children. Even that the disabled cases are not identified by the government workers in rural areas because more preference is given to the official work instead of field work.

8. Programmes and Policies

From time to time Government of India introduced many policies and programmes for the welfare of disabled persons. But due to lack of awareness and the work of many workers, the can't get any benefit from these programmes and policies.

9. Mental hospitals and institutions

In rural India very limited facilities are provided to these cases and in most of the situations they are neglected by the higher authorities. The condition of disabled women and girls are little bit satisfactory as compared to rural women and girls because of presence of various hospitals and institutions for their treatment and their welfare.

There are reports of high rate physical and sexual abuse against disabled women and girls living in institutions for the disabled. In some areas, disabled women living in institutions are abused at twice the rate as those living in the community.

But according to researches, women and girls with disability are forced into mental hospitals and institutions where they face unsanitary conditions, risk physical and sexual violence, and experience involuntary treatment including electroshock therapy. As women put **in they are treated worse than animals**.

Women and girls with disabilities are dumped into institutions by their family members or police in a part because the government is failing to provide appropriate support and services.

10. Myths

In many rural areas, where the myths that having sex with a virgin can cure a person of dangerous diseases, women and girls with disabilities are targeted for rape because they are presumed to be asexual and thus virgins.

Beside these points there are so many problems and barriers are present in the life of disabled women that creates hurdles in their progress and development. From the above points we can say that the condition of disabled women is not good in rural society. Women and girls are still facing double discrimination as compared to non disabled and also face limitations on their rights and they are largely ignored in the family, society, and community.

11. Suggestions

- There should be proper guidance and counselling cells in the rural areas so that the ideology of parents, elders, community members can be changed.
- Government should take strong initiatives in the hospitals and intuitions so that these girls and women can't be sexually abused by the workers in the institutions.
- Government should identify these cases from the rural areas and should provide a barrier free environment so that they can contribute in the development of nation.
- Intuitions should be opened in the rural areas.
- There should be proper involvement of parents in various programmes and institutions.
- Time to time guidance and assistance should be provided to their parents.
- Govt. and various NGO'S should take initiatives to control violence and discrimination faced by disabled women and girls.
- Vocational services should be provided to mild and moderate cases so that they can secure their future life.
- There should be no place of myths in the Society.
- Parents and community members should provide support system to these cases.