



## **Book Launch & Webinar**

on

# **Women Empowerment & Welfare: Recent Issues & Trends**

**Organised by**

**Indian Institute of Human Security & Governance, Delhi**

**&**

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## **Media Report**

Indian Institute of Human Security and Governance in collaboration with Amity Institute of Liberal Arts, Amity University Mumbai organized a Book Launch & Webinar on “Women Empowerment and Welfare: Recent Issues and Trends” on 24<sup>th</sup> December 2020.

This virtual session commenced with Welcome Address by the Editor of the Book, Dr. Nandini Basistha, Assistant Professor, Amity Institute of Liberal Arts, Amity University Mumbai. She illustrated how this book depicted recent trends of the condition of women in spheres of empowerment and welfare. In twenty-five essays, authors collectively explored situation of women in the South Asian scenario in several domains including the women condition in workforce, domestic arena, Covid 19 period; their manifestation in public policies, literature and visual arts in India, Bangladesh and Nepal. This book discussed how strongly women managed to survive through many traditional as well as modern crisis-management techniques during pandemic and with many traditional ‘knowledge’ or skills of ‘Home Management’, women are not only self-reliant, but can be backbone of the society where ‘conventional economy and security system’ shutters and whole world engulfed into a dark depressed situation.

In Presidential Address, Prof. Dr. Alka Parikh (Director, Amity Institute of Liberal Arts, Amity University Mumbai) remarked, it should also be realized that the process of empowerment often comes as a welfare measure. If we educate women, they will be empowered easily. She also analysed why should there be a special concern for women during disasters with ample examples.

The Guest of Honour, Prof. Dr. Paula Banerjee (former Honourable Vice Chancellor of Sanskrit College and University, Kolkata) illustrated the need to break ‘patriarchal’ as well as ‘stereotyped’ notion of womanhood and asked for

collaborative movement for women's empowerment and welfare and also urged to talk not about women as an individual but women as a community.

The Guest of Honour, Dr. Aurora Martin, Senior Advisor, Embassy in Romania shared her insightful perspectives and experiences of situation of women throughout the world in different domains.

This Book is an outcome of collective research work done by various researchers from all over South Asia. Several chapter authors of the book also discussed the content of their writing in this Webinar.

Dr. Sarita Nandmehar (Centre for South Asian Studies, SIS, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi) illustrated her chapter, *"An Indentured Subjugation of Kamlari Women in Nepal: Past and the Present"* and described reintegration and rehabilitation programmes have worked toward the betterment of the livelihood, lifestyle, educational reach, and health facilities of Kamlari women since the Kamlari system was outlawed in the year 2013. She remarked, it has been a long struggle led by the individuals, civil society and NGOs that the Government brought laws to abolish Kamlari system. But, according to her, the system might have been abolished the system in law, but the on-ground reality of the life of freed Kamlaris is different than presented. Her study discusses the present-day situation of the young Kamlaris who have been rescued and are known as Freed Kamlari.

Dr. Sujit Kumar Datta (Associate Professor, Department of International Relations, University of Chittagong, Bangladesh) spoke about the *"Women Empowerment in Bangladesh: Implications for Global Policy"*. According to him, existing gender inequality is seen as one of the obstacles to building a hunger-free and self-reliant Bangladesh. There is no way to achieve sustainable development by keeping women down. In most economic activities, women are far more creative and responsible than men. Increasing the rate of female education increases the overall education rate in society and reduces the medical expenses and crime tendency of the family. If women are involved in the decision-making process, it is possible to formulate gender-friendly laws and policies. So thinking of development without women is nothing but living in a fool's paradise. The progress of Bangladesh's development has begun, and in order to sustain that development, equal participation of women in every field needs to be further enhanced. The full development of women is not possible without the participation of women in the decision-making process. Therefore, the present government has placed special emphasis on the political empowerment of women from the grassroots level. Bangladesh will be able to emerge as a developed country if it can enable women to take equal part of men in every field. Above all, it is possible to promote women in Bangladesh through the implementation of various policies and measures adopted by the United Nations.

Dr. Sujama Roy (Assistant Professor, School of Hospitality & Tourism Management, ICFAI University, Sikkim) spoke about *"Opportunities & Challenges for Women in Hospitality & Tourism Sector in India"*. She remarked, several global economic and social reports explain Covid 19 is not only a challenge for global health systems, but also a test of our human spirit where recovery must lead to a more equal world that is more resilient to future crises. She takes this situation as a vantage point to look at the opportunities and

challenges for women in India's hospitality and tourism sector. In so doing, her research draws upon some epistemological concerns on women in hospitality and tourism phenomena. Significantly, it not only does focus critically on tourism policy matters but brought into fore the role of Indian Tourism and Hospitality academia and calls for greater reflexive engagement in producing knowledge on gender in tourism especially in India's context. It advocates for more authentic ontological reality that should be reflected in further research on women in hospitality and tourism sector. She also states aptly that not just placing women at centre would be enough but also, it may be the right time to question all the symbolic and normative structures of gender issues that are existing in all sphere of tourism and hospitality sector, to redress that with an upright concern especially in matter of gender policy in tourism and hospitality, gender-sensitive organizational ethos and significantly initiate shift in tourism academia in terms of curricula and research with more empirical authenticity and ontological discretion.

Mr. Jivesh Jha (Judicial Officer, Birgunj High Court, Nepal) spoke about *"Responding to the Coronavirus Pandemic: A Study of Nepal's Epidemic Law Regime"*. He remarked how Nepal's epidemic law regime would have strengthened the federal spirit and had the legislation incorporated provisions allowing the states to adopt plans and policies at their pleasure, not at the sweet will of the Centre. It seems the state is heading towards quasi-federalism or federalism with strong centralizing tendency even after the abolition of monarchy, a unitary system of governance. Nepal deserves to enact comprehensive federal pandemic code in line with the federal principles embodied under the constitution. The political parties - irrespective of their ideology and party line—could stand together to devise a uniform and updated policy to accelerate a fight against disasters that know no boundaries.

Dr. Sheela Yadav (Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, M. R. M. College, Bihar) spoke on *"Domestic Violence during Covid-19: Nature, Causes and Consequences"*. She remarked how we saw more atrocities of patriarchal hegemony which finds a favorable environment to show its 'heinous face' in form of increasing domestic violence. Almost all the causes are same for domestic violence only lockdown 'fuels in the fire'. The patriarchal rules and dominancy, cultural constructionism, and traditional supremacy were continuously torturing women during lockdown. From physical assault to emotional torturing they suffer on every moment of their life. The idea of lockdown keeps the people within the house are not so fit for all the women because every house is safe only to lock the infectious pandemic not the domestic violence. The safety of women on every level cannot be compromised within so called safe places (houses). The time has come to eradicate the traditional and conservative patriarchal behaviors to exploit the women and treat them as a subordinate. This gender-based discrimination on every level of life can be eradicate by cumulative and firm social, political and cultural approach of the people and institution by which they governed and maintain their life. And if we may able to create a gender free or discrimination free society in coming future, then fight with any kind of pandemic will be easier and stronger to save the humanity including Covid 19.

Dr. Madhurima Chowdhury (Assistant Professor, Department of South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of Calcutta, Kolkata) shed light on *“Democracy, Gender Equality and Human Rights: How Far Constitutional Freedoms Address the Issue of Women Rights Violation”*. She remarked, to achieve or gain this equality, Indian woman have to struggle for a long time. Today India is poised in a critical juncture with a fast growing economy, unemployment, rapid urbanisation and an expanding youth population. The journey towards sustainable development cannot be ensured without assuring equal participation of women and girls. A strong commitment towards gender equality and women empowerment requires the awareness build-up among the masses through education. Education can be propagated through electronic media, radio, seminars and public workshops and meetings on the laws having direct bearing on women. India has proved to a pro-active nation when it comes to women and their safeguards. Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India has launched public education and awareness building programs on laws concerning women. Involvement of civil societies, educational institutions, women’s groups and judiciary can strengthen these efforts. Women participation in power structure and their involvement in decision making are very important. Women empowerment comes with women right, until it is acknowledged by the society and effort should be made for equal opportunities. Women empowerment has shifted from welfare approach to a more equity approach. Different obstacles should be identified and more visible and active policies should be taken up by the government. Intensification of awareness programs should also be encouraged by the government and non- government organisations.

Dr. Navneet Saini (Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Guru Nanak College, Sri Muktsar Sahib, Punjab) spoke about *“Unconscious Bias and Gendered Language: The Biggest Blocks to Gender Equality”*. According to her, gendered languages reveals how we, as a society, have failed to step forward in a way we should have. In this scenario, there is a dire need to foster respectful and inclusive environments in our communities, where we live, work, and play. New approaches, perspectives, and ways of understanding and engaging are needed. Organizations need to recognize translucent procedures to make certain equitable outcomes — transparency and accountability are key to success, rather than to hope that aspirations for equity will produce change. When any society progresses, each element has to go hand in hand with that advancement and language is one such element, which is quite essential for progress. Undeniably, we are progressively moving towards an era of inclusivity and structural reforms by counting a multitude of genders and identities in our daily conversations. And all these terms are certainly a product of our thoughts. We must keep in mind that only gender-neutral words and pronouns can bring about change in society. Therefore, the power to build up an inclusive discourse lies in our hands.

Dr. Sudip Mukherjee (Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Dinabandhu Mahavidyalaya, West Bengal) informed everyone about *“Determination of Women Proprietary Entrepreneurship Status in North-Eastern States of India”*. His research tries to capture the picture of women proprietary entrepreneurs in NER of India in terms of the NSSO 68<sup>th</sup> round employment-unemployment survey. In terms of the NSSO 68<sup>th</sup> round

employment-unemployment survey the women proprietary entrepreneur is define as: *woman worker in the enterprise type proprietary-female with self-employment or employer status*. Secondly, the paper tries to find out the difference in propensity between the women workers of same status towards the proprietary entrepreneurship. Given the objective, the hypothesis is stated as follows: *The propensity of a women worker to be in the proprietary entrepreneurship or not is related to his/her education level, age, social group status, marital status and religion*. According to him, we are in a position to conclude from the above study that the women workers with low education level are likely to be engaged in proprietary entrepreneurship than educated women. As the age increases propensity towards the proprietary entrepreneurship is higher. Women with social group status like General, SC, ST, compared to OBC are more likely to be engaged other than proprietary entrepreneurship. Further, compared to the married women, unmarried, divorced and widow women are more likely to be engaged as proprietary entrepreneurs. So, he concluded that they are in the proprietary entrepreneurship because either they are not able to get salaried job due to their education level or they are keen to do something to support their family, primarily in the informal sector. To develop the women proprietary entrepreneurship in this region education is the primary because it will boost up the ideas among them how to acquire knowledge to prepare a project report. Availability of modern technology and sufficient knowledge to handle this is another precondition for the women proprietary entrepreneurship.

Ms. Sumana Das (Assistant Professor, Dept. of Sociology, Jogamaya Devi College, Kolkata) talked about *“Why Women Can’t Autonomously Decide for Infertility Treatment: A New Dimension of Women’s Empowerment”*. Her research focuses on how women’s empowerment is related to reproductive empowerment and dealing with the issue of infertility, acceptance of ATR treatment, family adjustment level will be measured. The area of research will also cover transition and change of the family system through new reproductive treatment. Science globalization has brought many changes in the society and mindset of people but how infertility is taken care of, this research will investigate on that part also. Preference of family structure has been modified to the nuclear family, thus the role of relatives, extended family member, kin groups are also changing. Other than this impact of education, socio-cultural background, professional level, social status, values, personality influence upon infertility treatment and thus “sense of infertility” vary. From everyday life people grasp knowledge and built their unique life world. This study aims at understanding all the above factors associated with reproductive empowerment which opens a new dimension empowerment and also promotes successful motherhood rights.

Dr. Andrey Shastri, Post Doctoral Fellow, University of Lucknow talked about Women Empowerment in India. She remarked, women are the backbone of a family, a society and a nation. Without empowering this half population, one can't imagine the prosperity of a nation. They are the integral part of our society. The idea of human race can't be achieved without the existence of a woman. Women are considered as the mother of the nation. And it is believed that education of a mother means education of the entire family. Throughout the ages women have played an important role in the economic, social and political sector.

Women literacy is an integral part for over-all development for a civilized society. Women's empowerment is necessary for the positive change. Apart from this women's empowerment is a key factor for achieving sustainable economic growth, social development and environmental sustainability. Women's empowerment and achieving gender equality is essential for our society to ensure the sustainable development of the country. Without gender equality and empowerment, the country could not be just and social change wouldn't occur. Therefore, different intellectuals and scholars agree that women's empowerment plays a huge role in development and is one of the significant contributors of development.

Ms. Rishababiang L. Nonglait, Research Scholar, Department of History, North Eastern Hill University Shillong spoke about "*Women and Welfare: A Study of Women Organisations in Shillong*". She started off with the debate on why women are not often featured in history. She believes it is important to highlight the activities and contributions made by women and women organisations or else their efforts would just die out and be in vain. There are many organisations out there that have done so much for society but are yet to be identified. There are also numerous women organisations that were established, functioned but then fizzled out without being recorded or documented. It is rather obvious, from the above studies and observations presented, that I am an advocate for women and that their efforts and contributions need to be acknowledged and recognised, not just in historical records, but as well as in the public domain. Therefore, these women's organisations require our blessings and support, which would not only assert their confidence but also validate their existence.

Thus this Webinar served as a platform for women and men to discuss the situation of women in pandemic situation and stressed on the importance of working towards the empowerment and welfare of women in all spheres of life.