

OBSERVER

Spark in darkness

ADITI SONI

Dictionary meaning of the word 'women' is female human. But many a times it has happened, is happening and I just hope won't happen in future is the fact that the word 'human' is forgotten.

Of the 1.3 billion people who live in absolute poverty globally, around 70 percent comprises of women. Rather its more sad to say that poverty is not just limited to the scarcity of food and comforts but deprivation of basic rights, and freedom which they deserve like every other human being. Thus, all this has lead India to stand 114 out of 128 on Global Gender Gap Report 2007 with Sweden being the first one. This reflects the fact that India still has a long way to go cover the gender gaps in labour force participation and wages.

So, our democratic government came up with some measures to so as to improve the already prevailing conditions of women and to empower women.

Hindu Marriage Act (1955), Dowry Prohibition Act (1956), Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act (1971), Equal Remuneration Act (1976), Child Marriage Restraint Act (1976), to name a few, reflects some of such measures.

With the introduction of the National Policy for Empowerment of Women, the Government of India had declared year 2001 as Women's Empowerment Year. It was said, "Our vision in the new century of a nation where women are equal partners with men". Many new projects were launched like Swashakti and Stree Shakti for women's empowerment; Swayam Sidha to benefit 100,000 women through micro-credit programs, Balika Samrudhi Yojana for the girl child and many more.

This makes us wait more eagerly for the Women Reservation Bill in the winter session of Parliament this time. With so many controversies attached to it and bill being rejected six times, still the ray of hope is there that this time it definitely won't be a failure.

The male chauvinistic politicians are reluctant to give space to women in Parliament. Now what exactly is the reason for it? Is it out of fear of good competence or is it some insecurity, the politicians know it better. But still even after having the consensus, bill is still an

issue.

Apart from this bills and acts, one of the most important emerging lessons is that women's groups themselves, in their social aspects, play a role in such empowerment.

Perhaps, with the world changing today, we cannot afford to ignore all Indian faces, which made India stand on the world map proudly. The names include Indira Nooyi, Sania Mirza, Kiran Bedi, and Sunita Williams with so many more coming up. For that matter, women like Medha Patekar gives the perfect picture of self empowered women who cannot be suppressed and who fight endlessly for social rights. These are their real examples of how 'empowered' the women are. Proving themselves not just at their professional front but balancing their personal lives perfectly too, reflects their bold persona to win the world.

But such picture is not prevalent in every corner of India. When we talk of empowering women on one hand, we cannot ignore the instances when the same woman gets raped in her own hope by brother-in-law.

So ultimately, revolution is needed not just in Parliament Acts but in the mindset of people as well!

No matter how much we underestimate the capacity of women, but below lie few basic facts that are definitely worth giving a thought. According to United Nations Millennium Campaign:

Women work two third of the world's working hour, Women earn 10% of the world's entire income,

Women earn less than world's entire property, Women make up two-thirds of the estimated 876 million adults worldwide who cannot read or write.

Thus, it's not women but their circumstances that have kept them behind men. But the scenario is changing now. Today there are many role models to prove and encourage other women to walk along with men or at times ahead of them.

So definitely woman cannot be considered as the 'weaker' sex. Rather the people who are so narrow minded who underestimate women at every level reflects their weakness and fear to compete with women, hence proving themselves as 'perfectionist'!

Ravaged by political fire

RATUL SUR

The Nandigram SEZ (Special Economic Zone) controversy started when the West Bengal government decided that the Salim Group of Indonesia would establish a chemical plant a SEZ at Nandigram. This would require the acquisition of over 14,000 acres (57 km²) of land. Then the obvious question arises - Why Nandigram? Its location and facilities and that Nandigram is located about 150 kms from Kolkata on the south bank of the Haldi River, opposite the industrial city of Haldia.

In March 2001, Nandigram II Block of Midnapur District claimed to have achieved full toilet coverage in the entire block. So all these seemed favourable to the Left government who after competing with nine other Indian states finally won. Most of the land to be acquired is multi crop and would affect over 40,000 people. Expectedly, the prospect of losing land and thereby livelihood raised wide alarm in the predominantly agricultural populace, who in turn turned hostile. However, fresh violence brewed again on 5th November in which the CPI (M) cadres recaptured block II of Nandigram.

On 9th November violence escalated again in which one person was killed and several others injured. Though the miscreants are not identified, Trinamul Congress leader Subhendu Adhikari claimed that three bodies found near Maheshpur area where 40 Bhumi Uchedh Pratirodh Committee (BUPC) workers were injured in a bomb attack and firing by the CPM. He even claimed that some persons went missing whereas the police reports don't show any missing reports. But, if we go by the police report, we can question as to why did the police leave the spot in a hurry when the CPI (M) cadres recaptured block II of Nandigram, as an eyewitnesses said.

Again, there is disparity between the statements made by the opposition. Provas Ghosh, Secretary of the Socialist Unity Centre of India said that six people were found dead where 60 BUPC workers assembled at Maheshpur. But this acrimonious project by the CPI (M) is not at all supported by the Left Allies. PWD minister Kshiti Goswami called the whole thing a complete failure on the part of the government. He condemned that CPM is solely responsible for the violence in Nandigram. He also said that CPM had taken the thing for revenge and hence submitted his resignation. Buddhadev Bhattacharya declared that the spot of the SEZ has been transferred to Nayachar, 30 kms. from Nandigram and appealed people to come back to their houses who left their houses since January this year.

But those people returning to their home would find their houses burnt and property destroyed. To that he said that there was no government fund available for reconstruction. To counter the questions raised by the opposition about the presence of armed cadres in Nandigram, he said that CPM cadres were unarmed. If this was true then how come eight armed CPM cadres were arrested from Tekhalibazar by the CRPF? Police Superintendent, East Midnapur, Satyeshwar Panda said that these cadres were moving in a motorbike for 'area dominance'. If they were unarmed, then how did the CRPF personnels discover arms from them? CRPF DIG Alok Raj said that CRPF personnel recovered arms and ammunition, including 76 detonators, 25 kg of explosives, some explosive devices, 15 rounds of ammunition and 50 unfinished country-made guns from a pond at Sonachura area which is a CPM dominated area.

Social activist Medha Patkar referred to the situation as the silence of the graveyard. Reacting

to this statement Buddhadev Bhattacharya said that those who tell that it is the silence of the graveyard they must remember that for the last 10 months Nandigram was not living in a heaven. The Chief Minister admitted that Nandigram is free of terror then why was Mamata Banerjee's convoy attacked at Tekhali bridge which the CPI (M) cadres had occupied?

Mamata Banerjee as a protest against this violence submitted resignation from the Lok Sabha in protest against the 'continuing bloodshed' at Nandigram and said her party would 'paralyse' West Bengal but was not the solution to this problem. When asked whether or not she supported the SUCI strike, she said that that 'everyone will be together'. Curbing government machinery and people's activity caused a loss of huge amount of money and the government had to bear this loss. This is the seventh strike in a row.

At the end of the day she would form the government, which is responsible for shortage of money. If Mamata is fighting for the cause of the people then she must remember that Gandhiji called off his non-cooperation movement in 1922 after violence broke out in east Indian villages. If Buddhadev Bhattacharya shifts the site of the SEZ, then why cannot she stop the agitation? In a single strike the workers of Bengal who work on daily wage basis are badly affected. So what comes out of this battle royale is suffering for the poor people. These two parties instead of giving plough in the hands of the people are instead providing them with ammunitions. What lies at the core is that these two parties in the name of people are fighting for grabbing maximum power by slaughtering innocent people. government of present day should revisit the policy concerning to Special Economic Zone and show it's concern for the general public.

Chuck de NDNC Registry

J.JAGANNATH

Rogue economy is anti-neocon phrase, which is yet to enter into the lexicons. But ask any Pakistani and he will start prattling. Rogue economy is something, which fuels a country's growth even though most of the indices are defunct. In Pakistan the terrorists are contributors and India is also becoming a rogue economy albeit it's the MNCs, which are major contributors of this economy. Now a sense of lugubriousness is fast setting in and this blame solely lies on you, the mobile user. The numbers getting registered at National Do No Call (NDNC) Registry is increasing at a gargantuan pace. Reason: telemarketers are making unsolicited calls. All I want to ask these people is: do they want their country to revert back to the days of "Hindu rate of growth"?

BPO is a cottage industry, which has generated close to six lakh jobs till date. BPO is an \$ 8.4 billion gorilla and it has become an

inextricable part of the "resurgent economy". No other sector pays such obscene amount for what is clearly monkey work. People have stopped studying after 10th standard because they get paid 15 grand for reciting the FAQ's verbatim. Coming back to telemarketing, the corporates do not leave any stone unturned to improve those quarterly results of theirs. And the "executives" (a glorified tag for a clerk job) are given ludicrous targets to meet.

Thus, they are ensconced in an ergonomic chair in a Siberian pigeonhole called a cubicle and they start reciting their parrot work. And anyway, since when did we Indians start taking care of our privacy when we always wash our dirty linen in public? Telemarketing is a very useful tool for those entire attention deficit people who can pretend talking or who want to show that they are the busiest persons on terra firma. The world is increasingly getting 'flat' and India is considered global only

because of the exploits of its BPO employees. Western influence in India will get eroded if these BPOs are, god forbid, closed. These "executives" flush their toilets with cash and a pair of Diesel jeans is no more a prized possession.

If at all these BPO employees are to be rendered jobless then indirectly many will become unemployed in India. The condom manufacturers, satin couch producers, people who work in shopping malls, multiplex owners, and fast food outlets are some of the immediate casualties if you register your number with the NDNC registry. If you are a committed Indian citizen and if you think that our population will be our nemesis in the future then start supporting the proliferation of BPOs. Low sperm count and reduced fertility rate are byproducts of BPO. Hence, support our telemarketers, so what if you get a lifetime offer from a network provider when you are in a funeral?!

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