Recent Trends in

Humanities

and

Social Sciences

Ishfaq Hussain Bhat
Javeed Ahmad Raina

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Author's Detail

Ishfaq Hussain Bhat

Former Student,

Department of English,

University of Kashmir.

J&K, India.

Eshfaqbhat786@gmail.com

Javeed Ahmad Raina

Teacher, School Education Department, Govt of J&K,

M.A., SET English, University of Kashmir

Cell: 09596412085

Javied34@gmail.com

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CHAPTER-1

DIGITAL ADDICTION: AN OVERVIEW

-Ishfaq Hussain Bhat

Much has been written of the negative consequences of digital addiction. Digital addiction is, more or less, like substance addiction in many ways - the difference is that it is a novel and more engaging form of addiction. Substance addiction involves the ingestion of the substance that feels good/great in the short term but, in the long term, it harms your well being - it harms a person physically, biologically, financially, psychologically. It can harm your social life, it can cause you spend and, thereby, waste too much money. Therefore, it can have numerous/enormous disastrous negative effects on your life. The digital addiction is similar to other forms of addiction but the major difference is that the digital addiction does not involve the ingestion of the substance - it is newer and a recent phenomenon. Substance addiction has been around for a very long time it has been there for thousands of years. To get addicted to a substance or technology means that you are enjoying a particular substance or activity in a short term and you keep returning to it over and over again but, in the long term, it harms your wellbeing in different respects - social, financial, physical, psychological. In the short term you enjoy it and it gives pleasure to you but, in the long turn, it has disastrous consequences on your life, on your health, on your relations with others. It makes your life miserable.

Since it would be absurd to talk about digital addiction - its types, its consequences, and possible catholicons for conquering it - without first defining and understanding the term, let us first go through various definitions of the term:

1. *"An inability to stop doing or using something, especially something harmful; the need or strong desire to do or to have something, or a very strong liking for something."*[1]
2. *"An addiction to something is a very strong desire or need for it, or, the condition of being abnormally dependent on some habit, especially, compulsive dependency on narcotic drugs."*[2]
3. *"The fact or condition of being addicted to a particular substance or activity."*[3]
4. *"To devote or surrender (oneself) to something habitually or obsessively, or, one who is addicted especially to a substance."*[4]
5. *"A conscious (and unconscious) action characterized by repetition and obsession. It is possible to become addicted to basically anything, sometimes the tendency may be rewarding but often it is problematic and self-destructive; nevertheless, a feeling of satisfaction is achieved."*[5]

6. *"A disease of the mind characterized by compulsive repetitive behavior without regard for the consequences to one's life."*[6]

7. *"Addiction is a psychological and physical inability to stop consuming a chemical, drug, activity, or substance, even though it is causing psychological and physical harm. The term addiction does not only refer to dependence on substances such as heroin or cocaine. A person who cannot stop taking a particular drug or chemical has a substance dependence. Some addictions also involve an inability to stop partaking in activities, such as gambling, eating, or working. In these circumstances, a person has a behavioral addiction... When a person experiences addiction, they cannot control how they use a substance or partake in an activity, and they become dependent on it to cope with daily life."*[7]

8. *"An addiction is a chronic dysfunction of the brain system that involves reward, motivation, and memory. It's about the way your body craves a substance or behavior, especially if it causes a compulsive or obsessive pursuit of "reward" and lack of concern over consequences.*
   Someone experiencing an addiction will:
   - *be unable stay away from the substance or stop the addictive behavior*
   - *display a lack of self-control*
   - *have an increased desire for the substance or behavior*
   - *dismiss how their behavior may be causing problems*
   - *lack an emotional response."*[8]

9. *"Addiction or mere dependence? It is a fine line. However, developing a compulsive need to use your digital devices, to the extent where it interferes with your life and stops you from doing things you need to do, is the hallmark of an addiction."*[9]

I.   TYPES OF DIGITAL ADDICTION:

It is a fact, universally acknowledged, that there are many types of addiction – alcohol addiction, drug addiction, and the latest – digital addiction. The common feature or trait that links all these addictions together is that they all have enormous disastrous consequences on the lives and health of people – they affect you socially, politically, economically, psychologically, financially, they affect your relations with others, and that they not only make the life of the addict miserable but also the life of the persons associated with him.

In order to get an insight into the subject under investigation, let us go through the report of U.K. Charity Action on Addiction:

"According to U.K. Charity Action on Addiction, 1 in 3 people in the world have an addiction of some kind. Addiction can come in the form of any substance or behavior.

The most well-known and serious addiction is to drugs and alcohol. Nearly 1 in 10 Americans have an addiction to both. Of the people with a drug addiction, more than two-thirds also abuse alcohol.

The most common drug addictions are:

- nicotine, found in tobacco
- THC, found in marijuana
- opioid (narcotics), or pain relievers
- cocaine
- Substances or behaviors that can trigger addiction"[10]

In 2014, Addiction.com, a website devoted to helping those with addiction, listed the top 10 types of addictions. Besides nicotine, drugs, and alcohol, other common addictions include:

1. nicotine
2. drugs
3. alcohol
4. coffee or caffeine
5. gambling
6. anger, as a coping strategy
7. food
8. technology
9. sex
10. work

"Some habits or social behaviors look like addiction. But in the case of an addiction, a person will typically react negatively when they don't get their "reward." For example, someone addicted to coffee can experience physical and psychological withdrawal symptoms such as severe headaches and irritability."[11]

Though there are many types of addiction, in this chapter, we would focus on four interlinked types of addiction – phone addiction, internet addiction, social media addiction, and gaming addiction:

1) **Smartphone Addiction:**
   Phone addiction, to be precise, is the overuse of smart phones by the users which affects their normal life and has, in the long term disastrous consequence on their lives and health.
2) **Social media addiction:**

Social media addiction refers to the addiction to spend too much time on social networking sites and applications like whatsapp, facebook, snapchat, instagram, tik tok, etc. People nowadays spend hours on social networking sites which, considerably affects their social, psychological, physiological, financial life.

3) **Internet Addiction:**

Internet addiction is another type of digital addiction which has ruined the life of people and has affected their productivity and overall potential. It is through internet that people have got access to playing online games, chatting on social networking sites, etc which if not used judiciously, becomes a means to indulging in immoral and illegal activities.

4) **Gaming Addiction:**

It is another type of digital addiction which has resulted in the wastage of time, energy, and resources of people in general and the youth in particular. It is considered an impulse control disorder which is characterized by a person's obsession with playing games for hours. It, in a way, results from a need of escapism, from a need to kill time.

II.   SIGNS

Most signs of addiction are related to a person's impaired ability to maintain self-control. This includes changes that are:

- Social: such as striving for a state of affairs that are related to the substance of behaviour to which the person is addicted.

- Behavioural: such as increased tendency to spend more and more time in solitude, and other behavioural disorders.

- Health problems: such as, dementia, insomnia, not being able to sleep properly.

III.   REASONS:

Studies show that people spend about 3 hours a day on average using their smart phones, which is pretty staggering because that is a huge chunk of the day of the waking hours that we spend, when we are not at work. What that means is that they are spending a lot of time returning over and over again, to check Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Twitter, and so on. However it has to be taken into consideration and thereby acknowledged that, people generally check these social networking sites for a number of reasons:

1) The main reason is that these media are bottomless - you are constantly checking for new information because there is always something new that you tap upon. You live with a constant fear of missing out (FoMO), you want to be in touch with the outside world even though you are not aware of the person sitting next to you.

2) The next thing or reason behind checking these sites over and over again is that if you happen to be a poster of a content, you are always curious about getting rapid feedback as to whether people approve of that or they are not interested in it. So, we spend a lot of time to return over and over again, compulsively, to check new notifications, comments, to get a positive feedback that we seek when we post content on the social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, WhatsApp, and so on. What we do when we post content on these sites is that, basically, we are testing the social rewards, getting a sense of whether people see the world the same way as we do, which is very important to us as humans, and also getting a sense of whether they approval of us. Here, it is imperative to mention that social approval is very important - we are even willing to receive negative feedback because the worst thing that can happen to a human being is to be ignored. It is actually far worse to be ostracized and to be ignored than it is to get negative feedback. Therefore, when we put that all together, the idea that now we have access to, theoretically, billions of people in the world, at all times, whenever we need, and wherever we are, it is what makes smart phones, internet, social networking sites like Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, etc addictive. The desire to get rapid feedback from other people on social networking sites and to get a sense of whether people approve of our content posted on social networking sites is what makes us return to such sites over and over again, and makes us heavily dependent on these sites/apps and in the long run makes us addictive.

There are many reasons why we have formed these new forms of addiction – smart phone addiction, internet addiction, social media addiction, gaming addiction. But two main reasons are: 1) advanced and sophisticated technology; and 2) media designed to deliver service, etc that appeals our desires.

1) The reason why we have developed these new forms of addiction - Technology addiction or internet addiction, smart phone addiction - is that, technology, nowadays, is much more sophisticated, and advanced than it was even 20 years ago: now, you are able to deliver the cons or rewards that you need for a system to be addictive. Basically, what people are looking for is '**unpredictability**' and '**rapid**

feedback' of either rewards or if it is negative, then, negative experiences. Being Humans, we need that mixture of positive and negative feedback just as, for instance, when you post something online, sometimes you get a lot of hits or rewards and sometimes you do not. And, to be precise, it is this unpredictability that we find so compelling that we return to our smart phones and social networking sites over and over again. Since you need to be able to deliver those rewards very rapidly, and for that you need the internet with the right kind of bandwidth, to be able to deliver those rewards.

2) The second most important thing that has happened , and for which companies are very much concerned, is that they are employing behavioural experts to tell them how to design the media, how to design the vehicles that deliver those media – smartphones, smart watches, Ipads, etc. For that reason, it can be said, they are delivering products to us that are harder for us to resist because they have certain features built in that we find very hard to resist, and we end up developing addictions to them. And, by some accounts, that applies to half of the population of the developed world which implies that half of the population of the developed world has become addicted to this new form of addiction. However, it has to be taken into consideration that it is not addiction to the device itself - the device is just an incredibly effective way of delivering addictive content. Therefore, when we are addicted to a screen, it is not the screen itself that you cannot resist but, on the contrary we are addicted to what it is providing. Therefore, the reason, why we are addicted to screen or to the content that they provide us, is that they travel with us wherever we go, and that is relatively new. So, for instance, if you played video games in the 1980s or 1990s or even the early 2000s, they did not really go wherever you went as much as they do now, especially those games that were tied to the internet; you were tied to the PC and you played where you were - you did not really leave with them as much. No doubt, you had some portable devices but those were, more or less, primitive. Today, with the Iphones, you can connect to other people on a go, you can always have access to games, you can have access to emails, you can have access to the internet and you always have access to social media. And they are great vehicles for providing the needs when you need them. And basically, we tend to develop addictions when we have a psychological need and we get those whenever we are bored, whenever we feel a little bit lonely, and whenever we are not sure what to do with ourselves next, whenever we don't feel, particularly, effectuation - when we are not having an effect on the world that we want to be having, and those are the moments when we are looking for what some people call pacifier. Smart phones, social media, play the role of pacifiers because at those moments, you turn on your screen, you swipe, and you feel relaxed again and that is

how people, generally, describe the experience. Therefore, they tend to be excellent devices for delivering the hits that we look for. Social media as such is a great example - it, to be precise, now travels with us. In the past we used to be, largely, confined to the home computers, which no longer is the case.

IV.   CAUSES

"Addictive substances and behaviors can create a pleasurable "high" that's physical and psychological. You'll typically use more of certain substances or engage in behaviors longer to achieve the same high again. Over time, the addiction becomes difficult to stop.

- **The brain**

Some people may try a substance or behavior and never approach it again, while others become addicted. This is partially due to the brain's frontal lobes. The frontal lobe allows a person to delay feelings of reward or gratification. In addiction, the frontal lobe malfunctions and gratification is immediate.

Additional areas of the brain may also play a role in addiction. The anterior cingulate cortex and the nucleus accumbens, which is associated with pleasurable sensations, can increase a person's response when exposed to addictive substances and behaviors.

Other possible causes of addiction include chemical imbalances in the brain and mental disorders such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder. These disorders can lead to coping strategies that become addictions.

- **Early exposure**

Experts believe that repeated and early exposure to addictive substances and behaviors play a significant role. Genetics also increase the likelihood of an addiction by about 50 percent, according to the American Society of Addiction Medicine.

But just because addiction runs in the family does not necessarily mean a person will develop one.

Environment and culture also play a role in how a person responds to a substance or behavior. A lack or disruption in a person's social support system can lead to substance or behavioral addiction. Traumatic experiences that affect coping abilities can also lead to addictive behaviors."[12]

V.   CONSEQUENCES:
1) There are a number of enormous disastrous consequences on humans that have resulted from getting addicted and, heavily dependent, on smart phones, computers, social networking sites. When we become addicted to something, especially to

digital media, it results in enormous negative consequences on our health - it affects our attention, our time, our productivity, our connection to others, our energy, our happiness, and ultimately overall potential. It also affects our productivity and it results in an extension of the costs with emphasis on productivity - when we consider deep workflow vis-à-vis continuous **partial attention** and **task switching**, a lot of people believe that they can go from one task to another and they can make best of it and not suffer any consequences on their productivity, etc. However, when we switch from one task to another it takes a lot of time and energy to do very easy and simple works and tasks. This task switching and partial attention to our work can be considered, and it can be compared to junk food because when we eat junk food we feel great for a moment instantly but, it is not good for our life and health in the long run. On the contrary, in so far as the healthy food is concerned, we can discipline ourselves to enjoy it both now and in the long term. Therefore, this task switching and partial attention to work instead of making us creative and increasing our productivity, hinders our productivity. It is a fact that there are times when our mind is in the **supercomputer mode** – when it is most creative, when we can have our best ideas and thoughts, for example, when we are having a shower, etc. But what happens is that we are not constantly stimulating because in order to get the most creative ideas we need to allow ourselves to get into that supercomputer mode which we are not able to do.

Therefore, some negative and disastrous consequences of the digital addiction are the following:

- It affects our attention.
- It results in waste of time.
- It has negative consequences on our health.
- It affects our relationship/connectivity with others – we live in a digital/virtual relationship but not real one.
- It off targets our energy.
- It makes our life miserable.
- It affects and thereby, decreases our productivity – we tend to give partial attention to our work, and indulge in task switching, which, in turn, affects our productivity and creativity.
- It affects our overall potential.

2) "Some behavior and emotional changes associated with addiction include:
  - unrealistic or poor assessment of the pros and cons associated with using substances or behaviors

- blaming other factors or people for their problems
- increased levels of anxiety, depression, and sadness
- increased sensitivity and more severe reactions to stress
- trouble identifying feelings
- trouble telling the difference between feelings and the physical sensations of one's emotions."[13]

VI.   HOW TO CONTROL/ CONQUER IT?

Tools and technology has been around for, literally, millions of years. We have always been addicted to some substance, activity, and the like. Moreover, we have always strived for exploring and developing ways to conquer addiction. But by conquering addiction, in our case digital addiction, we do not mean smashing the technology, on the country, what we actually mean and aim at is not getting addicted to it, not becoming addicted users of technology. By conquering technology we mean making a judicious use of technology, smart phones, social media, and internet in general. Our addiction to the technology and social networking sites like WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram et cetera, results in our mind being hacked and, to be a bit more technical, it is not only about our mind being hacked but we also pay for that hacking. It has to be taken into consideration that the mind hacking attention industry is a 7 trillion dollar economy and they not only make us dependent on our smart phones et cetera but also make us pay for that. And another interesting thing that we need to take into consideration is that, generally speaking, there are only two industries that refer to their customers as users: which is the drug industry - the drug dealers refer to their customers as users and the second one is the technology companies which refer to their customers as users. So, there you can make a comparison between these two industries which make people addicted to their products i.e. drugs and technology such as smart phones and social networking sites.

"Over time, addictions can seriously interfere with your daily life. People experiencing addiction are also prone to cycles of relapse and remission. This means they may cycle between intense and mild use. Despite these cycles, addictions will typically worsen over time. They can lead to permanent health complications and serious consequences like bankruptcy. Some habits or social behaviors look like addiction. But in the case of an addiction, a person will typically react negatively when they don't get their "reward." For example, someone addicted to coffee can experience physical and psychological withdrawal symptoms such as severe headaches and irritability."[14]

Someone with an addition won't stop their behavior, even if they recognize the problems the addiction is causing. In some cases, they'll also display a lack of control, like using more than intended. Some measures, that can be significant and that can considerably decrease the rate of addiction in people are the following:

- General awareness about the consequences of digital addiction among the people.
- Providing more information.
- Parents, teachers and religious preachers should take cognizance of the matter and explore ways and methods for overcoming the menace. Parents, in particular, should play a more responsible role in fighting this nuisance which has had enormous and disastrous consequences on our lives.
- Guidance on prevention of mental and substance use disorders.
- Using flip phones instead of smart phones.
- Inculcating a sense of responsibility in the youth towards themselves, towards their family, their society, towards nation, and towards world as a whole.

VII.　CONCLUSION

To conclude, it can be said that it is a fact, universally acknowledged, that we have become programmed and habituated to look to our mobile phones rather than to the real world. Being addicted to smartphones and the media that they provide implies that instead of living in a real world, we are living in a digital or virtual world – our relations with others are digital/virtual, our life style has become digital, we have heavily become dependent on our smartphones, social networking sites, internet, and so on. Using internet, smartphones, social networking sites, games, so much that it starts negatively affecting our health and life as a whole is addiction. The worst addicts/victims of the digital addiction are the children and teenagers. They become victims of the new type of addiction because they have an urge and desire to explore things around them. Internet, particularly, social networking sites, games and online shopping applications use a set of motivational and persuasive techniques to hook the users. They provide the media is such a manner that we find it very hard to resist and return to them over and over again. This, in turn, results in enormous negative consequences on our lives – it negatively affects our health, it affects our behaviour, our attention, our productivity, and destroys our overall potential. However, it has to be taken into consideration and thereby acknowledged that, unlike other forms of addiction, for instance, alcohol, technology does not have only negative effects on the lives of the people who become addicted to it. On the contrary, it plays a deterministic role in the life of an individual, a community, nation, or, the world as a whole. It is all up to the users how they use it. If it is used judiciously, it would become a blessing; and if used in a wrong way, it would become a curse and degrade humanity. I would conclude the chapter by quoting the people who tried to fight against digital addiction which, in a way, might be helpful and encourage others to fight against it as well:

"I wanted to test how I would react without my phone. Generally I felt much more relaxed and with better concentration. From this experience I know that I can live without my

phone. I'm going to encourage other people in my life to develop this ability a bit more too!"[15]

Sophie - Stylist

"I found myself connecting much more deeply with the people around me. Without distractions, our conversations were much richer and more interesting."[16]

The Huffington Post - May 2016

"A really great experience. I will be implementing a restricted phone and digital regime at home, i.e. no screens on a Sunday and no phones in the bedroom. I'll also take off work email from my phone and be really mindful during the week of when I use the phone and Internet".[17]

Sarah-Conservator"

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CHAPTER-2

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SOCIO-CULTURAL BARRIERS TO WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN RURAL KASHMIR

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- Javeed Ahmad Raina

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INTRODUCTION

When we observe the world with our least sense of history, we find that throughout human civilization, Women were always excluded from the mainstream culture and literature owing to the long history of male dominated social codes and literary canon. The historical superiority of men over women makes the very concept of social justice as obfuscating, obdurate and relatively evocative, thereby serving the root cause for othering and annihilation of feminine identity. The men's supremacy appears more evident in rural areas of the country where women are still looked through the gendered lens and are forced to perform defined traditional roles. The census and other statistics show that rural women are far behind to urban women in terms of education, social liberty and financial independence, despite the large scale development and progress in the 21st century in every sphere of life. It is a fact that from domestic violence to social ostracization, and amidst the political marginalization, the rural women find themselves at the crossroads of reductive self and fetishistic body. In the remote and cut off villages of J&K, women do not fully enjoy rights which include, personal, political, economic and social right to equality. They are virtually silenced and hence compelled to live the life in their massive silence, between- loyalty and fluency, submission and subjugation. The present chapter as such, is an effort to cross-examine those socio-cultural impediments that mainly account rural women's exclusion from the main stream society and culture and hence serve as the root cause for their educational deprivation and socio-cultural subordination.

DISCUSSION

If we carefully observe that in almost all communities, the patriarchal structures of society play a key role in consigning a subordinate status to women, limiting their role only to child bearing and child rearing. The male centric power drive, have always justified women as an emotive, inferior, docile, passive, weak and obedient creature of mere whims and fancies. The phallocentric discourse, surrogating women to an inferior other, casts an ugly shadow on the pages of history of civilizations. There are various modes or disguised operations of these discourses, used in both, latent and potent ways to suppress the voices of the women in general, and rural women in particular. The intuitional anathema and the organized exclusion of J&K rural women from the mainstream culture represent one such dominant or powerful device of hegemony- the use of authority over other. The domestic violence represents other covert or hidden type of violence perpetuated on the rural women through male centric social indoctrination and practices like teaching girl child how to act

and react in a society that essentially operates through masculine codes of contact, thereby denying them to pursue educational and literary ambitions. While situating the plight of JK's rural women in context of the contemporary feminist theories, it appears that the feminist resistance against the male ideology as well as their reawakening of female subjugated class has not yielded much in our rural areas. Rural women are continuously discouraged to garner academic as well as literary ambitions, disabling them to generate and utilize their immense potential for greater human good. They are instead encouraged to perform all those hard and difficult daily labour that requires great muscular strength as well as extraordinary effort to execute. The routine tasks assigned to rural women include but are not limited to working outside homes in the fields- tilling, hauling manure, sowing, harvesting, collecting fuel, managing vegetable garden. Similarly, they also tiresomely work inside their homes and closed confinements to perform extensive household chores- milking, winnowing, washing, cleaning, mopping and so on. In case of working rural women, they also find themselves at the receiving end. Apart from performing all these home social assignments, they have to work shoulder to shoulder to men and hence become double oppressors. So, the arguments presented above, illustrate that those rural women, whether simple housewives or working in offices are caught in the constant cycle of men's monopoly where from, their escape or atleast access to social justice seems a distant dream. The irony is that man has so much extended the kingdom of domination from social discourse to political ascendancy that it has become a cultural norm to exploit women folk. The feminist re-awakening and their rational challenge to the men's overall supremacy, spanning from domestic affairs to cultural domains and literary endeavours had long been initiated, but still in 21st century, it has not reached to remote villages of the country to empower rural women.

While analysing the statistics, we observe that rural women in the state of Jammu and Kashmir constitute half of the rural human resource potential, but this half population face severe personal, educational, economic and political problems in traditional rural households, which essentially adhere to the old customs and value system. These norms restrict women's exposure to the outside world and force them to surrender before the mighty towers of sociopolitical dogmas and cultural restrains and as a result compel them to abandon the future dreams of living a prosperous and happy life. The rural women are enforced to perform all those roles which do not provide her ample chance to think of her own health, education or exercise the free choice in her personal or day to day life matters. They are encouraged at home how to handle household assignments related to common chores of washing dishes, sweeping and other odd and laborious tasks in the fields, which in the long run could help family in one or other way. These day to day activities and other home assignments habituate women to cooperate in their own subordination and in the long run becomes a leading cause of the rural women's educational backwardness. The other type of impositions which hinder rural women's progress include but are not

restricted to social ostracization, political marginalization and internalization of male centric values, beliefs in the process of socialization.

In the contemporary era, much focus has shifted towards women and their legal as well as social rights. It helped feminist thinkers and other Social Rights Activists gain much needed momentum to further the encouraging move towards restoring women's dignity in all sphere of life. But it is also reality as stated above that J&k's rural women's pathetic condition has not substantially improved as yet. They still need socio-religious and political awakening about their rights and place in the contemporary society. When the rural women are awakened, the country's reservoirs of knowledge and new ideas will flourish from all corners and this will render a promising prospect for generations to come. As Mahatma Gandhi had long envisioned that "educating women is the sole means to educate the whole nation." So, in order to build this multi religion, multi-faith and multi-ethnicity nation, the need of the hour is to give power, encouragement and ample opportunity to hard working rural women, the personal, political, social and intellectual liberty to exercise their free will in all matters of life. The following factors act as the most obvious impediments, which by one or other way hinder rural women's overall personality development and become constant source of worry and hence long lasting bearers in their empowerment. So, in order to facilitate Kashmir rural women's entrance into the mainstream culture, these bearers and obstacles must be effectively tackled both socially as well as legally.

Domestic Violence: In rural areas, the incidents of domestic violence against women are usually swept under the carpet. The violence perpetuated on the rural women ranges from sexual assaults to the physical, psychological and emotional tortures. They are at high risk of emotional stress, oppression, poor health and assault. The domestic violence such as beating, harassment, denial of basic rights and needs of women, demand of dowry, grabbing of working women's money, threat of divorce to wives, eve-teasing of girls and denial of due property rights.

Social Ostracization: In rural areas of Kashmir, strict traditional customs and socio-cultural dogmas obstruct women to realize their potential through education and through those areas they are inclined to. Those women who try to work independently outside their homes are ostracized first by own male members and then society adds their further alienation. They are looked down by the vigilant onlookers as well as in-laws at home which in the process become their constant source of worry and even the greatest cause of emotional and psychological stress.

Political marginalization: the representation of rural women in the government offices is very dismal and negligible throughout the country because rural women are actively discouraged to pursue academic dreams in order to serve society and the state. They are instead used only for singing choral songs to celebrate the great feasts of political leaders

who in turn only ensure them reservation and political representation without actually giving them any such advantages.

Ideological bothering: Rural women's docile nature, illiteracy, selflessness and lack of particular identity allow men to acquire ideological and epistemic supremacy over women and serve as an easy means to impose their ideas, beliefs and values on them and artfully exclude women from the mainstream cultural discourse.

Equal Access to Education: The above mentioned factors corner rural women from all corners and take away their future. They are as such denied to foster academic ambitions and miss the opportunity to be blessed with treasure of knowledge and education. This is the reason that most of the rural areas in the state of Jammu & Kashmir are still at the receiving end and hence at the periphery of modern education and technological progress. This overall backwardness of rural Kashmir in turn poses a limit to the women's exposure to the outside world and thus restrict women's role only to child bearing and child rearing and as such they are not able to take benefits of equal access to education, personal liberty and social justice.

These factors directly or indirectly impede the progress of rural women and render them as unfit citizens of the world. As per census report 2011, the literary rate in Jammu and Kashmir is 78.26 percent for males and 58.01 for females. The female literacy rate is less than the male literacy rate. The literacy rate for rural families is 53.36 percent and 70.19 percent for urban females. Earlier in census 2001, it was 36.7 percent and 61.9 percent at rural and urban level, respectively. Thus there is a large gap in the male and female literacy rates as well as the literary rate of rural and urban females. The foregoing discussion brings out the fact that a sustainable work needs to be done to uplift the educational and social standards of rural women. The United Nations Report (1986) should serve as a vision document to safe guard civil and educational rights of women, which confirms that:

"Development is a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process, which aims at the constant improvement of the well being of the entire population and of all its individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of benefits resulting therefrom"(26)

CONCLUSION

Thus, Women Empowerment is the ability of women to exercise full control over one's actions. In the contemporary era, rural women are treated as mere house-makers. They are expected to be bound to the house, while men would work in public private offices. This division of labour which is still persistent in rural parts of the country act as one of the major reason for certain evils that take birth in our society like child marriage, female infanticide, women trafficking. Therefore, in order to achieve holistic development of rural women, the need of the hour is to elevate socio-economic and the educational status of

rural women so as to enable their easy entrance into the mainstream culture and provide them equal opportunity to make them at par with the urban women. If we keep either curbing or limiting women's potentials in pretext of socio-cultural or religious doctrines or through other deceitful narratives, we will soon witness the time when their ignorance will emerge as a disaster and an unavoidable calamity for the progressive world. Therefore, the onus lies on the intellectual fraternity as well other social organizations to raise not only voice but also awaken masses about the rights of these marginalized women so as to facilitate rural women's entrance into the main stream social strata of the society and make them excel at par with the urban women.

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POSSIBLE CATHOLICONS FOR DEALING WITH CHRONIC STRESS

-Ishfaq Hussain Bhat

Chronic ongoing stress and anxiety can be extremely debilitating. The stress results in many physical and psychological issues and diseases. Chronic stress and anxiety is very pervasive in the world. Insofar as the types of stress are concerned there are two types - one is good and the other is harmful for health. The good type of stress allows us to get up, everyday, in the morning, it allows us to do our work, go to office or school, and live a normal and healthy life, it helps us to socialize and make healthy relations with other people. On the contrary, the bad stress, also called chronic stress, manifests itself by many diseases - psychological, physiological, biological, etc. It results in the fast pulse, inability to function, inability to sleep, inability to live a normal and healthy life, it causes fatigue and tension in all the muscles. These, to be precise, are the usual signs of chronic stress. Since it would be absurd to talk about chronic stress, its causes, consequences, and possible catholicons thereof without first getting an accurate understanding about the term itself, let us first go through some of the definitions of the term.

CHRONIC STRESS DEFINED:

1. "Chronic stress is the response to emotional pressure suffered for a prolonged period of time in which an individual perceives they have little or no control. It involves an endocrine system response in which corticosteroids are released. While the immediate effects of stress hormones are beneficial in a particular short-term situation, long-term exposure to stress creates a high level of these hormones. This may lead to high blood pressure (and subsequently heart disease), damage to muscle tissue, inhibition of growth, suppression of the immune system, and damage to mental health."[1]

2. "Stress is often described as a feeling of being overwhelmed, worried or run-down. Stress can affect people of all ages, genders and circumstances and can lead to both physical and psychological health issues. By definition, stress is any uncomfortable 'emotional experience accompanied by predictable biochemical, physiological and behavioral changes'. Chronic stress can occur in response to everyday stressors that are ignored or poorly managed, as well as to exposure to traumatic events. The consequences of chronic stress are serious, particularly as it contributes to anxiety and depression. People who suffer from depression and anxiety are at twice the risk for heart disease than people without these conditions. Additionally, research has shown that there is an association between both acute and chronic stress and a

person's abuse of addictive substances. Untreated chronic stress can result in serious health conditions including anxiety, insomnia, muscle pain, high blood pressure and a weakened immune system."[2]

3. "A state of prolonged tension from internal or external stressors, which may cause various physical manifestions e.g., asthma, back pain, arrhythmias, fatigue, headaches, hypertension, irritable bowel syndrome, ulcers—and suppress the immune system."[3]

4. "Constraining force or influence: such as
   - a force exerted when one body or body part presses on, pulls on, pushes against, or tends to compress or twist another body or body part especially: the intensity of this mutual force commonly expressed in pounds per square inch
   - the deformation caused in a body by such a force.
   - a physical, chemical, or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension and may be a factor in disease causation
   - a state resulting from a stress especially: one of bodily or mental tension resulting from factors that tend to alter an existent equilibrium."[4]

5. "Chronic stress is a long-term or continuous state of nervous arousal where an individual perceives that the demands on them are greater than their ability to meet those demands. For example, an emergency room doctor is under lots of stress all the time, so they stay in a high-arousal state for so long, that it can start to wear the person down. Overtime, this can cause all sorts of physical problems as well as emotional issues."[5]

6. "The first definition for stress was created in 1936 by Hans Selye. He stated that stress is 'the non-specific response of the body to any demand for change' (Institute of Stress). Selye's definition allows others to understand that stress is not merely a reaction to something bad, but merely a reaction to a change in situation. This definition lacks an explanation as to what kind of response the body has. Stress is not only a change in a body response but more specifically a "physical, mental, or emotional strain or tension" (Institute of Stress). In order for stress to form, whether it is from a good or bad situation, there must be a stressor causing tension to appear."[6]

7. "Unfortunately, much of the stress we experience is not short-lived but ongoing. Say, for example, a loved one spends many days in the hospital, job demands seem relentless, or an important relationship is dissolving. When stress is prolonged, or chronic, the body tries to keep up by releasing the same hormones that it provides during short-term stress; however, our bodies and minds can't remain in this state of high alert for very long. Over the course of weeks and sometimes months, the

very same hormones that initially gave you extra strength and mental clarity are now starting to work against you."[7]

8. "If your stress system stays activated over a long period of time (chronic stress), it can lead to more serious health problems. The constant rush of stress hormones can put a lot of wear and tear on your body, causing it to age more quickly and making it more prone to illness."[8]

9. "Stress is a feeling that people have when they are struggling to cope with challenges related to finances, work, relationships, environment, and other situations. Moreover, stress is felt when an individual perceives a real or imagined challenge or threat to a their well-being. Chronic stress is the most harmful type of stress. If chronic stress is left untreated over a long period of time, it can significantly and often irreversibly damage your physical health and deteriorate your mental health.

For example, long term poverty, repeated abuse in any form, unemployment, dysfunctional family, poor work environment, substance abuse, or an unhappy marriage can cause significant chronic stress."[9]

SIGNS OF STRESS

"Children who are exposed to toxic stress exhibit:

- Poorly developed executive functioning skills
- Lack of self-regulation and self-reflection
- Reduced impulse control
- Maladaptive coping skills
- Poor stress management

Research on children who face continued toxic stress shows they have:

- More trouble learning in school
- More difficulty trusting adults and forming healthy relationships and an increased chance of divorce as an adult
- Higher incidence of unhealthy behaviors such as substance abuse, sexual experimentation and unsafe sexual practices, engaging in high-risk sports, smoking and alcohol abuse
- Higher incidence of depressive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD), behavioral disorders, and even psychosis
- Poor health outcomes such as obesity, heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and a higher suicide risk."[10]

Stress makes the life of a person miserable. Living a stress-free life is a key to living a good/better/successful life. Stress is the condition that makes life unsatisfactory for us and stress is what actually makes life difficult and hard. The stress response is very important for us biologically - it keeps us alive in dangerous circumstances and makes us react positively to certain situations. Basically, it is the body's way of getting us into a gear to tackle different and dangerous situations. If the stress response happens when we need it, it becomes helpful but when it happens chronically, when it happens throughout our lives, or, for a significant portion of our day, then it can become a real problem and that is what many of us know firsthand. In this chapter I would be dealing, primarily, with Robert Sapolsky's work, "Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers". Robert Sapolsky, an American professor of neurology, a neuroscientist, wrote this significant book insofar as the study of chronic stress is concerned. In this very book he is trying to say that animals, living in the natural environment, do not have chronic stress - he propounds that even if they have stress, they have it for a particular reason/cause and then it goes away.

PROBLEMS CAUSED BY CHRONIC STRESS:

1) **High Blood Pressure:**

   It is the first problem that can be caused by chronic stress. Chronic stress causes chronic blood pressure. The chronic blood pressure can damage the blood vessels because they stretch beyond their normal capacity and, in turn, make the life of the person suffering from chronic blood pressure or chronic stress miserable.

2) **Overeating:**

   This might sound absurd but it is a fact that when people are stressed, they tend to eat more. It is a way to compensate for stress by means of distracting ourselves with eating food, and the like. It is because of eating too much, overeating that we ultimately get into the issues of potential obesity, etc.

3) **Flare-ups of Autoimmune Disease:**

   The autoimmune diseases refer to diseases where the body is, in a way, attacking itself in various ways. People with autoimmune disease can often observe that stress can cause these to flare-up to some degree, probably, due to the mediation of some hormones.

4) **Higher Pain Sensitivity:**

The fourth problem that is caused by chronic stress is higher pain sensitivity. Stress can cause us to be more sensitive to pain, and it can bring up potential problems of chronic pain by either giving chronic pain to people who would otherwise overpower it or, by worsening the condition of people with different kinds of chronic pain conditions.

5) Problem with Memory:

Another issue related to chronic stress is the problem with memory. Chronic stress can cause enormous/disastrous consequences insofar as the memory of an individual suffering from chronic stress is concerned. The stress hormones can cause problem in their hippocampus - the area of the brain that mediates memory. And therefore, it can cause memory problems - loss of memory, difficulty remembering things, et cetera.

6) Difficulty Sleeping:

Another importance and significance problem that caused by chronic stress is that the person suffering from chronic stress finds it very difficult to sleep. The chronic stress can cause insomnia, a loss of sleep or lack of sleep, it can make it hard to sleep. A person suffering from chronic stress would find it very difficult/hard to sleep over long periods of time and that itself can be a problem because sleep is biologically necessary and when a person does not get enough sleep, when he is not able to sleep, he tends to develop stress. Therefore, there is a close/cyclic relation between chronic stress and insomnia – not be able to sleep aggravates stress.

7) Can Affect the Physiological State:

Stress as has already been implied, can cause depression. Stress can make people feel worthless, inferior, etc. Chronic stress can also cause the condition called anhedonia, which is the inability to find pleasure in any aspects of life. People suffering from chronic stress generally do not find any pleasure in the life or in the activities that they do. Among others, anxiety and anger are two physiological states geared up by stress. Stress is a kind of anxiety itself - if we are anxious about things in the world, anxious about people, anxious about situations -stress can make that worse. And we all know that the people stressed out at work places, etc get angry very easily, and every now and then. Stress, therefore, is a kind of a gateway towards a lot of unhealthy, unwise and absurd emotions - emotions that make our life difficult and miserable, emotions that we may call unwise and unwanted, emotions that are unkind, emotions that become very difficult to regulate in our lives, to pay attention to, and to deal with in a useful manner.

8) The Effects of Stress on the Brain and the Body:

"The brain is the central organ of stress and adaptation because it perceives what is threatening and determines a behavioral response that may include fighting, fleeing, vigilance, and anxiety toward possible danger. The brain also determines health-damaging behaviors such as eating too much, smoking or drinking, and sleeping poorly. The brain regulates body processes through the nervous system, the neuro-endocrine system, and the immune trend metabolic systems, which work together as a nonlinear network that concurrently affects many body organs, such as heart, liver, kidneys and brain. The brain

also responds to stress, sex, and metabolic hormones, which can alter neuronal architecture and alter behavior as well as the regulation of those body processes. For example, chronic stress, including sleep deprivation and jet lag, can produce changes in brain architecture, increase anxiety, alter mood, and decrease memory and cognitive flexibility. Fortunately, these changes in neuronal circuitry are reversible in a healthy, resilient brain. When they do not reverse after the stressor is removed, chronic anxiety and depression may occur that require treatment by behavioral and pharmaceutical means."[11]

POSSIBLE CATHOLICONS:

Now, before we get to some of the catholicons/solutions to affect stress in a good way and to lessen and reduce stress in our lives, one thing that really bears mentioning here is that, one of the major causes of stress is low socioeconomic status. There is, in fact, what is called a kind of health gradient that goes down with economic status and part of that seems to be related to stress. People who have low socioeconomic status tend to be in higher conditions of stress, they tend to be more vulnerable to chronic stress. Therefore, when we look into the health gradients, one third of worse health condition is due to bad lifestyle - smoking too much, drinking alcohol, et cetera. But two third of the worse/bad health seems to be due to the stress of lower socioeconomic status that is always there to haunt people who belong to lower strata of society and who are economically not so sound. Obviously, there are other issues also which cause stress, for instance, not having access to healthcare, not having access to proper education, and so on. Therefore, in order to get an idea about reducing stress and thereby making it beneficial for us, let us discuss some of the possible solutions/catholicons for the problem of stress which has become an endemic disease.

1) Reduce Socio-economic Inequality:

Socioeconomic status as has already been mentioned is very significant insofar as the study of chronic stress is concerned. We should strive to lower and minimize the socio-economic inequality prevalent in our society in order to make sure that the stress level among people is reduced and decreased. Because, among other things, it is an issue of heath as well - the socio economic inequality ultimately, in the long term, affects the health of the people. It is a cause for bad health and people with bad health are not as productive and as useful to society as people with good health.

2) Having a Healthy Lifestyle:

Another solution for reducing stress is to have a healthy lifestyle. We should give priority to our health vis-à-vis things that are very difficult to achieve and we should not make our life miserable for them. Having a healthy lifestyle i.e. not eating too much, not over eating, not becoming drunk and not smoking, and not cultivating any in any such habits/hobbies which are harmful to our health will ultimately, help us live a stress-free life. Therefore, it

is imperative to strive for and maintaining healthy lifestyle in order to reduce, fight and overpower chronic stress.

3) Developing Hobbies or Pastimes:

Another very significant way of dealing with stress is developing useful hobbies and pastimes. We often tend to get more stressed when we are free, when we do not have any work to do, and in that case having a hobby or a healthy pastime keeps us busy. It is a fact, universally acknowledged, that we enjoy our hobbies which, in turn, can help us reduce stress and lead a relatively happier life in the long term. Since, we often have spare time but not a hobby to enjoy, this leads to developing chronic stress in people. Therefore, cultivating a hobby can remarkably reduce stress.

4) Strive to be Socially Connected:

The fourth importance and significance panacea for reducing stress is to be socially connected - to have good friends, to have good relations with your neighbours, colleagues, to have a good/happy/succesful marriage. However, it has to be acknowledged that not every marriage can be helpful and successful in fighting stress. A bad marriage, of course, can make your life more miserable and even more stressful. Therefore, it is imperative to make sure that you develop a very friendly relationship with your partner. And striving to be socially connected also implies that you need not spend too much time alone, you always have to strive to be with other people, communicating with them, sharing your ideas, your views, your opinions and getting feedback from them. Therefore, the social support is very useful and seminal insofar as reducing stress and living a happy life is concerned.

5) Exercise:

Exercise, to be precise, is one of the premier ways of dealing with stress. People who are in chronic stress are the people who need daily doses of it i.e. exercise to help them reduce stress. In order to reduce stress and lead a happy life you should always be doing something everyday - walking, getting out with your siblings, friends or colleagues, running, et cetera. Because sitting all the time is not only harmful for your health but also for your stress level. Sitting idle, in a way, aggravates stress. Exercise, it has to be taken into consideration and acknowledged, releases our tense muscles because we allow them to relax. Why exercising regularly, we not only reduce stress level but also feel better and relaxed. We feel more energetic. It may sound paradoxical but spending energy regularly on exercise, actually, does provide us more energy and strength in the long term. No doubt in the first couple of weeks, we may get exhausted after a long period of exercise but, once we get into it, once we start practicing it regularly, we find that it does provide us energy and we actually have feel energetic after having exercise than we were before it. Doing exercise daily does not

only provide us energy but also helps us reduce the stress level and thereby, feel better. Even if we exhaust ourselves while exercising, we feel more energetic.

6) Meditation:

Meditation is an extremely important factor/strategy/solution in reducing stress and living a stress-free - a life characterized by happiness. It is one of the ways, besides exercise, that really has the most positive and immediate benefits insofar as reducing stress level is concerned. However, it is the activity that has to be done regularly. Because if you meditate for a week and then stop, you will once again, in a want, plunge into the river of stress and it would not be beneficial at all. Jon Kabat-Zinn's Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) propounds a general idea to develop a meditation in terms of a course, probably an eight week course, to reduce stress.

7) Reconsider Your Priorities:

Reconsidering your priorities is another factor that can reduce stress and can be helpful in leading stress-free life. Most of us get stressed because we have the priority to making, for example, a lot of money, or, becoming famous, or, becoming powerful and influential. And it is a fact, universally acknowledged, that in order to do that - making a lot of money or becoming famous, powerful and influential - we have to basically sacrifice a significant portion of our lives and may be our health as well in order to get there. We often come across people who suffer from chronic stress for decades and when we look for the reason, we come to the conclusion that they have exhausted themselves in trying to get there. Therefore, in order to deal with stress, we need to reconsider our priorities. We need to judiciously think over it as to whether we need to sacrifice a significant portion of our lives for the thing we want to get. And here I would like to add another point that is the role of religion in reducing stress. Religion can play a very seminal role in reducing and fighting stress because it teaches that all that you can do is to strive for something but it is ultimately up to the Almighty God whether you succeed or not. And if you do not get there, you need not panic.

8) Cultivate a Wise Approach to Life:

Cultivating a wise approach to life to reduce stress is, more or less, related to the previous point. Having wisdom to understand that we should always strive to change things through practice, and accepting that, there are certain things that cannot be changed can play a vital role in dealing with stress. In order to reduce stress, we have to understand and acknowledge that our ability to change things is very limited and this sensibility can be beneficial and useful in dealing with stress. And another strategy for cultivating a wise approach to life is that we should try to avoid becoming identified with things in the world, or, our own ideas, views and concepts. We should be aware of the fact that, all these things

do not personify us. We, being humans are, actually, a dynamic being which is always changing.

9) Awareness About Medical Interventions:

Another thing that can be useful in dealing with stress and overpowering it is that, we should be aware of the medical interventions. In order to deal with stress, we should be aware that there are medications that we can take in case we find it difficult to overpower stress or get the stress away from us; and, in case, other kinds of psychological and physiological issues are affecting our stress level. There are doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists who may be able to direct and guide us in dealing with stress. They, in certain circumstances, can prescribe useful medications which ultimately would help us deal with stress in a positive manner.

10) Regular Exercise and Proper Nutrition:

When one is chronically stressed, the immune system - killer B and killer T immunoglobulin -become depressed and when these are depressed, the psychological and physiological diseases emanate. There are many diseases that emanate as a result of chronic ongoing stress and anxiety. This, in turn, has a severe effect on the body organs in so much as they function very poorly. Because of this, some people do not sleep properly or some oversleep which, results in weight gain, and sometimes weight loss, migraine, and the list goes on and on. There are so many people who suffer from chronic stress and their nutrition is far below what it actually needs to be. They often get up and have a cup of tea or coffee or may be a slice of toast, and they go to the office or school, and then at around 10:00 a.m. there blood sugar level starts dropping which emanates the stress. May be, they will be having something for lunch or maybe not, so, with low blood sugar level, there stress is becoming aggravated. Therefore, in order to fight and conquer chronic stress you have to have an adequate nutrition programme. Nutrition is of extreme importance insofar as reducing stress is concerned. One should have an adequate breakfast, decent lunch, and a reasonable dinner. Because just by improving your nutrition and working/exercising for about 20 to 30 minutes daily helps you prevent and reduce the chronic stress. Therefore, nutrition and exercise plays a very significant and important role in reducing the stress level.

11) Medical Hypnosis:

Hypnosis is a nontoxic, free of side effect method that you can use to fight chronic stress. It functions through a system called PNI (psychoneuroimmunology). The psyche is your mind, the neuro is your brain and the immunology is your immune system. Therefore, when the psyche is intact, and the immune system is kept high, physical and physiological ailments do not occur. On the contrary, when you have chronic stress, you tend to develop physical and psychological diseases and your stress due to these diseases and issues

becomes aggravated. Hypnosis works physiologically through the PNI system because it assists you to help yourself raise your immune system, your immune globulin, your killer B and killer T cells i.e. the white blood cells and then, all of a sudden, your stress is markedly decreased. Therefore, medical hypnosis, nutrition and exercise assist in prevention and treatment of the stress and anxiety in a holistic manner. Therefore, these are the holistic methods that anyone can do to help their chronic stress and anxiety.

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KASHMIR CONFLICT: A CHALLENGE TO ENSURE HAPPY CHILDHOOD

- Javeed Ahmad Raina

In the ongoing Kashmir armed conflict, many fatalities have been reported regarding children on daily basis- detention, torture, pellet firing, custodian killings are few persistent recurrings. The gods of war have deprived these innocent creatures to breathe lively vigor of the blissful childhood days. The pages of history document how children of Kashmir are being beaten, intimidated, humiliated, tortured and mercilessly killed in an open space. The children in besieged Kashmir are exposed to all forms of violence, whether physical or psychological, annihilating their youthful hilarity with voices of woe, suffering and agony. The recent pellet blistering on the minor victims of Kashmir finds its mention even in the hegemonic history but still the lullabies of death and destruction did not soothe the conscience of blood thirsty man masked vultures. Similarly, Kashmir holocaust not only terrorized the mighty of the mightiest, but also left infinite wounds on the women and children, the more vulnerable and fragile population in the social ladder of all communities. This chapter as such is an effort to expose the unbearable and cataclysmic impact of Kashmir conflict on the innocent children. While, voicing the children's plight, the current study will also skew how political violence fetches roots of disgust in young children and in the process becomes continuous source of trauma, annihilation and fatality, engulfing young and innocent, pure and white human resource potential.

The Kashmir holocaust has given infinite wounds to the people irrespective of class, race or religion. The ruins of this long conflict can be traced from all over the subcontinent in the form of forced migrations, violent communal disruptions, resulting in lynchings, arrests and more worrisomely, creating sectorial and communal divisions among the people. The recent trend of nocturnal raids in the valley as well as witch hunting of Kashmiri students outside the state has contrived a vicious atmosphere in the subcontinent. Thus, making the subcontinent volatile war zone and the hot bed for communal rhetoric, that at any point can trigger a bigger calamity. The mere glimpse into our past history, when Indian subcontinent used to be the common landmass for all socio-culturally different communities for almost a millennium reveal some soul soothing facts and should serve as an eye-opener for those who are hell bent to destroy the social fabric of the country. Those bygone times enlighten dead souls to recognize urgency and common brotherhood exhibited by the people who fought together against colonial oppression regardless the apparent differences. But the history of that very land abruptly changed into violent gloom during and after the partition and now the same land has awfully been a breeding ground for communal rhetoric between the very people who once cogently dislodged colonial powers. This shift from the common brotherhood to communal hatred has turned subcontinent into a battle field between

different communities. The process of decolonization also gave numerous pains and pangs to the people, first, in the form of bloody Indian partition which de-humanized human creatures to an extent that they tossed human skeletons to celebrate the new dawn of lately born independence and then Kashmir conflict emerged like a deadly forest fire, surpassing gruesome incidents of the past, annihilating young and white, poor and rich equally.

The princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, a sprawling, poly-glot entity of diverse regions and peoples, was born through different agreements and now resembles the ruined tripolar prison, surrounded by vigilant nuclear giants. The place which once used to celebrate diversity not only of different religions but also of multiple ethnicities has now become a hot bed for south Asian divisive geopolitics. Those, possessing the least sense of the sub-continental history will sense something rot in the very lines of partition- the real and imaginary lines, disintegrating not only nations but also people who otherwise had lived peacefully together regardless of the religious differences. With the idea of carving up of the Indian continent into two nation states, and even before that, Kashmir's geopolitics had begun to gather a slow pace and finally with the actual carving up of the Indian continent, Kashmir became the land of every day displacements, forced migrations and broken identities. Today, the gods of war, looming across the borders are hell- bent to push the state towards anarchist mayhem and thereby satiate their own thirst with an innocent blood. The wide spread discontent accumulated mainly due to broken promises which slowly gathered its layers like a sedimentary rock and finally erupted in the form of volcano in early 1990s. Since then, the conflict has engulfed young and old, pure and white and men and women, causing infinite wounds, trauma and tragedy to the people. Among all other people living in this conflict zone, children remain the most terrorized, intimidated and traumatized section of the society. In the conflict hit Kashmir they have not only lost the formative childhood days but also the fundamental right to life, to live happily and with youthful hilarity, and with human dignity. The children in this part of the globe are traumatized by the long cycle of violence and hence suffer from acute disorders- physical and psychological. These gruesome incidents of violence haunt children's memory and as such become part of their psyche resulting in the frequent encounters with the ghosts of terror. According to Cathy Caruth:

"Any encounter with experience of a violent and gruesome event splits the survivor or witness into two selves: the conscious and the dissociated. The images of the actual event, however, sink into the dissociated self to raise their head in the form of nightmares, flashbacks and other psychological intrusions with all their literality and exactness."

The contemporary Kashmir is replete with such haunting memories of the conflict. The temporal fabric of its history is riddled with violence, bloodshed and tragedy. Infact, it is the land of every day displacements, distortions, mourning and funerals. The long Kashmir conflict inflicted numerous pains and the pangs to the entire generation of people irrespective of race or religion. Apart from the physical violence, the conflict brought social

eruptions in our composite culture. The children become an easy prey to these sudden eruptions. Today, our budding new generation either lives in the migrant camps, in the alien lands, with little or having no touch to their ancestral roots or experience the wrath of the anarchist state in the streets of Kashmir. This results the formation of new broken culture, hybrid language and split identities. The children living in the valley have experienced all forms of violence including the physical tortures. They are exposed to the brutalities of conflict and as such are either disabled for rest of the life or become psychic patients of mental maladies. The socio-psychological effects of the Kashmir conflict has given rise to the plethora of disabilities children had to cope with. The ongoing conflict not only unleashed a reign of terror in the children's psyche, but also become a collective memory in the unconscious mind of the people in general. The children who have directly witnessed the common day gruesome incidents of bloodshed or have been themselves subjected to such inhuman physical tortures experience haunting nightmares of pain, agony and death to such an extent that it becomes impossible for them to set themselves free from such chained manacles of post-traumatic memory. The consequences of the long conflict on the children are manifold ranging from physical disability, educational lack and psychosocial distress and the resultant trauma.

Physical violence: In recent years, the children, particularly living in the valley exposed to the street protests witness the gruesome scenes of violence and suffer from grievous injuries and some of them either remain disabled for the rest of their lives or face sudden and untimely deaths. The exposure to such violence, torture and the resultant painful deaths not only wither away their hopes but also dismantle the conscience of every living soul and as such sinking deep in the unconscious mind while making sudden intrusions from time to time. The contemporary wars happening around the world have taken a large toll of child deaths. These wars also create hostile environment for the rest of the children and thus spoil their childhood days. As per the data retrieved from the well researched paper titled, *Children in conflict zones,* AN Prasad et al make the following observations:

"Over thirty wars are now being waged around the world. One out of four children worldwide live in these dangerous situations. In the First World War, civilians accounted for 5 per cent of casualties. In the Second World War the figure rose to 48 per cent. Today, up to 90 per cent of casualties are civilians - an increasing number of these are women and children. Some 17 million children have been displaced by war, more than 2 million children have been killed due to armed conflict and three times as many have been seriously injured or permanently disabled since 1990. More than 1 million children have been separated from their parents or orphaned"

Psychosocial Impact: The second devastating consequence of children's exposure to gruesome incidents of violence result in the formation of traumatic symptoms like mental stress, hallucination and other neurological maladies. These psychological disturbances have harmful effect on the child's sound physical, emotional as well as mental growth.

They also show poor performance in their educational endevours and finally end up abandoning the very idea of education. These psychological disorders in the long run become fatal and even life threatening, forcing children to commit harmful and suicidal acts. Lisa A. Ghigliazza summarizes the cataclysmic impact of war on children as:

"Children are highly vulnerable to trauma during war. From these studies I concluded that children who are exposed to the violence of war, become a victim of armed conflict or participate in violent acts, often develop a variety of psychological illnesses. The impact of this violence may have detrimental consequences on the child developmentally, emotionally, and socially. Psychological illnesses are not only produced by witnessing violence, but may also be caused by participation in the violence."

Therefore, to ensure happy childhood for our budding new generation, we must create conducive and conflict free environment for them. Unless and until these children are not provided better living opportunities, the chances of ensuring their happy childhood remain fragile and bleak. When the Kashmir children feel free from the ravages of the long conflict, they will certainly prove their varied skills in every sphere of life and enlighten the sate and the world with their creative and new ideas. At present, the future of Kashmir children is darkened by the gloom of conflict yet amidst the ruins of turmoil there exists the hope that one day this long pending issue will be resolved once for all that will help our children to haunt the quarry of knowledge stress freely as other children of the country do. The Kashmir children have every right to enjoy their childhood as per their own whims and impulses; we should not spoil their merry world of youthful hilarity. According to Marry Jane Kehily:

"Children have only one chance of a childhood. They deserve to be protected from harm, to enjoy good emotional, mental and physical health, and to feel that they belong in their home, at school and in their local community… it is never too early or too late to offer helping hand –and to give the most disadvantaged youngsters the chance of a better childhood and a brighter future."

Therefore, in order to allow children enjoy the instinctive vigor and passions of childhood days, we should mend all our differences to give them a chance to live a better life, so that to make the young generation of our state excel in their pursuits and thereby bliss the state once again with heavenly bliss. So, it is an apt time that we shun sword and gun in order to facilitate composite culture to bloom and flourish once again. It will be appropriate to conclude this essay with some verses of Kashmir's best-known contemporary poet, Agha Shahid Ali, who died as an expatriate in the United States in 2001, and who expressed a little more hope from his deathbed, in a poem dedicated to a Kashmiri Hindu friend:

> *We shall meet again, in Srinagar*
> *By the gates of the Villa of Peace*
> *Our hands blossoming into fists*

Till the soldiers return the keys
And disappear.

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CHAPTER-5

GENDERED ASPECT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

-Ishfaq Hussain Bhat

INTRODUCTION

Exploitation and destruction of natural objects, forests, water bodies, to be precise, has had enormous disastrous consequences on the living beings in general, and mankind in particular. Many critics and theorists are of the opinion that, both women and nature, having qualities like, loving, caring, reciprocity, reproduction, and nurturing belong to the same category – the category of the oppressed by the forces of patriarchy. Ecofeminism as an anti-oppression movement and theory, not only denounces the oppression, exploitation and domination of all subordinate groups such as women and children but also condemns the domination and exploitation of nature. The chapter aims to highlight the exploitation of natural resources in the patriarchal society. It also aims to develop a relation between the oppression and exploitation of women and the exploitation of the nature at the hands of the society governed by men. The chapter as such aims to study the basic assumption of ecological feminism that there is a threat to environment not from entire humanity but only from men and institutions of male power – capitalism.

ECOFEMINISM DEFINED

Since it would be absurd to talk about ecofeminism or ecological feminism, and thereby, develop a link between the oppression of women and the oppression and exploitation of nature in the patriarchal society without first getting an accurate understanding of the term, let us go through some definitions of ecofeminism:

"The term Ecofeminism is used to describe a feminist approach to understanding ecology. Ecofeminist thinkers draw on the concept of gender to theorize on the relationship between humans and the natural world. The term was coined by the French writer Françoise d'Eaubonne in her book Le Féminisme ou la Mort (1974)"[1]

"Ecofeminism is widely referred to as the third wave of feminism, it adds to the former feminist theory that an environmental perspective is a necessary part of feminism. Ecofeminism uses the parallels between the oppression of nature and the oppression of women as a way to highlight the idea that both must be understood in order to properly recognize how they are connected. These parallels include but are not limited to seeing women and nature as property, seeing men as the curators of culture and women as the curators of nature, and how men dominate women and humans dominate nature."[2]

"Ecofeminism is a movement that sees a connection between the exploitation and degradation of the natural world and the subordination and oppression of women. Ecofeminism brings together elements of the feminist and green movements, while at the same time offering a challenge to both. It takes from the green movement a concern about the impact of human activities on the non-human world and from feminism the view of humanity as gendered in ways that subordinate, exploit and oppress women."[3]

"Several feminists make the distinction that it is not because women are female or "feminine" that they relate to nature, but because of their similar states of oppression by the same male-dominant forces. The marginalization is evident in the gendered language used to describe nature and the animalized language used to describe women."[4]

Ecofeminism or ecological feminism as such, is based on a basic assumption that women are closely related to nature and the reason for this closeness is that they share some basic qualities - both nature and women are associated with reproduction, and both are associated with nurturing. This closeness to nature informs their approach towards nature which is different from men. Ecofeminists believe that nature is neither an object to be exploited, nor a force to be subdued. Women, being caring, nurturing in nature, find fulfillment in working with nature and not against it. So, the basic assumption of the ecofeminist is that men are destructive, they destroy nature. But, on the contrary, women having the feminine qualities like a nurturing, etc conserve nature and they are not destructive towards nature. Ecofeminists argue that men are not close to nature because they do not have feminine qualities, they do not have nurturing qualities, Ecological feminists draw a relation between women and nature on the basic assumption that both are feminine and are equally oppresses and exploited in the society governed by men. And men, being dominant exploit and oppress both women and nature. Women do not consider nature as a force to be subdued or an object to be exploited. But, on the contrary, when we analyze the situation, we come to the conclusion that nature becomes an object to be exploited and a force to be subdued in a patriarchal society. And, to be precise, men work against the nature, not with it. Moreover, men, due to the masculine qualities are unable to form a link connection with nature.

ORIGIN OF ECOFEMINISM:

Now let us discuss the origin and development of the movement:

"The modern ecofeminist movement was born out of a series of conferences and workshops held in the United States by a coalition of academic and professional women during the late 1970s and early 1980s. They met to discuss the ways in which feminism and environmentalism might be combined to promote respect for women and the natural world and were motivated by the notion that a long historical precedent of associating women with nature had led to the oppression of both. They noted that women and nature

were often depicted as chaotic, irrational, and in need of control, while men were frequently characterized as rational, ordered, and thus capable of directing the use and development of women and nature. Ecofeminists contend that this arrangement results in a hierarchical structure that grants power to men and allows for the exploitation of women and nature, particularly insofar as the two are associated with one another. Thus, early ecofeminists determined that solving the predicament of either constituency would require undoing the social status of both."[5]

Ecofeminists argue that there is threat to environment not from entire humankind but only from men and institutions of male power i.e. capitalism etc. According to them, man exploits and is a master of both women and nature. Ecological feminists as such, try to build a link between the exploitation and oppression of women and the exploitation and destruction of nature at the hands of the dominant male members of the society. Men exploit nature in the same way they exploit women. Moreover, they think it as resource object. Ecological feminists, therefore, believe that it is only by overthrowing patriarchy that we can conserve nature that we can save it from for the destruction at the hands of men. And it is only after the patriarchy is overthrown that we will be able to establish a new relation between society and nature – relation based on female values of love, caring, reciprocity and cooperation.

However, it has to be taken into consideration that, ecofeminism is a part of cultural feminism. Both ecofeminism and cultural feminism is based on the assumption that ecological destruction and women's oppression is caused by same thing/ideology i. e. patriarchy. Women and men are different – women's female traits are superior to the masculine traits of men. Therefore, they must celebrate and promote their qualities and attempt to make society based on female values. According to cultural feminism, male culture should be replaced with women's culture and that patriarchy should be replaced with matriarchy. There are two cultures according to cultural feminism - one is the visible culture i.e. the culture of men which is the culture of the ruling class; and the second culture is an invisible culture and its women's culture which is a subordinate culture. Women are fundamentally different from men and women should celebrate their superior qualities because qualities associated with women are more nature centric and as such, they should become ruling qualities. Therefore, both ecofeminism or ecological feminism and cultural feminism focus on a gynocentric pattern of society - gynocentric in that, it is centred on or concerned exclusively with women, taking a female feminist point of view. And therefore both cultural feminism and ecofeminism propound that women's values should be given superiority.

CONCLUSION

To wrap up the discussion, many things need to be brought together. Women as the marginalized other have almost always been oppressed, oppressed and subjugated. And

nature or environment has also been exploited and destroyed by the humans. Ecological feminists, however, try to build a link between the exploitation and oppression of women and the exploitation and destruction of nature and environment in the society governed by men. They build this connection/relation on the basis of some assumptions – both women and nature share some basic qualities, both have qualities of reproduction, nurturing, caring, reciprocity, etc; and both are mastered and exploited by the dominant men in the patriarchal society. And as such, it is only after overthrowing patriarchy that we would be able to establish a new relation between society and nature. However, there are many loopholes in this view – destruction cannot wholly be associated with the men only. Anybody, irrespective of being male or female, can be destructive in his or her own right.

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CHAPTER-6

SCHOOL EDUCATION IN J&K: THE ROLE OF TEACHER IN QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

- Javeed Ahmad Raina

INTRODUCTION

Education in its wider sense is the process of development from birth to death or from 'womb' to 'tomb.' In this sense, education is a lifelong process that includes knowledge, attitude, skills and experiences. Similarly, schooling is an act of consciously imparting values, knowledge and skills in accordance with the requirements in a formal situation. In recent years, the passing of Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009 marks a historical moment for the children of India. It was first time in India's history that children have been guaranteed their right to quality elementary education. The RTE came into force on 1st April 2010. Under the provisions of this act, every child in the age group of 6-14 years are provided eight years of education in an age appropriate classroom in the vicinity of his/her neighborhood.

In the state of Jammu and Kashmir, the education scenario drastically changed with the implementation of schemes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan, Midday Meal Programme and Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education. It was through these schemes, that large number of schools were established in far flung areas of the state. It was because of such schemes that the literacy rate in our state considerably increased from 2001 to 2011 census. The present essay is an effort to examine the positive imprints of these schemes along with point some inklings of the lacunas in our education system. In the last section, the key role of teacher in encouraging creative development in the students will be briefly highlighted.

The education scenario in the state of Jammu and Kashmir has achieved several objectives since last two decades, particularly through centre sponsored schemes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) which have revitalized the state education sector by catering the needs of far flung areas, which otherwise have always been ignored by the various political regimes from time to time. It was only through these initiatives that schools were established in the uncovered and far flung areas of the state. The wide spread of primary as well as secondary schools made it possible for everyone to cherish and achieve academic dreams. These schemes prepared the ground especially for downtrodden population of our society to reap the fruits of education. These educational institutions became beneficiary for those who had otherwise to cover large distance to pursue academic dreams in a state, which is conflict riddled as well as geographically undulating, surrounded by large mountains and uneven slopes. The census and other surveys reveal that during 2001, the literacy rate in the state was below

average national literacy rate. As per census report 2011, the literacy rate in Jammu and Kashmir is 78.26 percent for males and 58.01 for females. The female literacy rate is less than the male literacy rate. The literacy rate for rural families is 53.36 percent and 70.19 percent for urban females. Earlier in census 2001, it was 36.7 percent and 61.9 percent at rural and urban level, respectively. The significant increase in literacy rate from 2001-2011 was essentially due to implementation of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Scheme, which is a centre sponsored Government programme aimed at the universalisation of elementary education in a time bound manner, the 86th Amendment to the Constitution of India making free and compulsory education to adults between the ages of 6 to 14(estimated to be 205 million children in 2001) a fundamental right. The programme was pioneered by former Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and was made operational during 2000-2001 in the country. The main objectives of the scheme were as:

1. Ensure that all children in the specified age group are in school.

2. All children complete five years of primary schooling by 2007.

3. All children complete eight years of elementary schooling by 2010.

 4. Focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life.

5. Bridge all gender and social category gaps at primary stage by 2007 and at elementary education level by 2010.

 6. Universal retention by 2010.

The other factor behind the increase in student enrolment and literacy rate was Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) scheme which was launched in the State of Jammu & Kashmir in the year, 2009 with the objective to enhance access to secondary education and to improve its quality. The scheme is implemented through Noor Society in the State. It is envisaged to achieve enrolment at secondary stage within five years of implementation of the scheme by providing a secondary school within a reasonable distance of any habitation. The other objectives include improving quality of education imparted at secondary level through making all secondary schools conform to prescribed norms, removing gender, socio-economic and disability barriers, providing universal access to secondary level education by 2017, i.e., by the end of 12th Five Year Plan and achieving universal retention by 2020. The main vision of scheme is to make good quality education available, accessible, and affordable to all young persons in the age group of 14-18 years. To provide secondary school within a reasonable distance of any habitation, this should be five kilometers, for secondary schools and seven to ten kilometers, for higher secondary schools.

Similarly, programmes, like 'Midday Meal Programme' has effectively served its purpose by luring the disadvantageous families to provide free meal as well as education to their wards. These educational schemes and programmes helped not only to cater the needs of the needy, but also effectively helped in generating employment avenues in education sector. As per the records more than fourty thousand job avenues were created through these schemes across the state. There are well qualified teachers engaged in the department for providing the quality education to our budding generation, especially in rural and backward areas of our state. In more recent years the scheme, like Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) was introduced which in the long run will also help in imparting higher education to the poor, needy, and marginalized sections of our society.

The above discussion pertaining to these schemes and programmes envisage two important visions- Enrollment and Quality Education. As for the enrolment of students at primary and secondary stage is concerned, these scheme almost achieved their goal. The wide scale establishment of primary, middle and high schools in urban and rural areas addressed the growing demand and needs of far flung areas. As for the quality education is concerned, many factors still persist that are responsible for average or poor development of students in some of our schools. The factors include- poor infra-structure, lack of modern technology in schools, faulty curriculum, flawed evaluation system and lack of well trained pedagogy instructors at zonal and district level. If a serious attention will be paid to these areas, the school education system in the state will achieve new heights.

It is a fact, universally acknowledged that education develops a country's economy and society; therefore, it is the milestone of a nation's development. Education provides knowledge and skills to the population, as well as shaping the personality of the youth of a nation. Education is the means to empower children and adults alike to become active participants in the transformation of their societies. Learning should also focus on the values, attitudes and behaviors which enable individuals to learn to live together in a world characterized by diversity and pluralism. Education, therefore, has a crucial long-term role in developing a knowledge and understanding of human rights, the values and the skills required to strengthen a democratic culture. In contemporary times no one can deny the immense wealth that education offers to the dead minds, those times are gone when people used to pay little attention to education especially for girl's education. But fortunately, though very lately, rural as well as tribal people recognized that education is the only endeavor to realize the dreams of a just and civilized society. Although, most schools in Jammu and Kashmir lack Proper Infra-Structure facilities like –modern technology equipped classrooms, drinking water, washrooms, proper seating, and electricity or there is uneven teacher student ratio or even number of schools having a single teacher, yet the teacher-student fraternity are not too far behind national picture. However, it may also be admitted that we need to pay much focus on teaching in order to raise the academic standards in our schools. The honest dedication, hard work and proper use of pedagogy

can help teacher to impart quality education to students. The role of teacher in instilling values, discipline and knowledge to pupils can never be underestimated. Prof. A. R. Saleemi takes Gerald Grow's few lines which beautifully explain what a teacher is:

1. To a mind of flint, the teacher must be iron, and strike sparks. To the empty pitcher, the teacher becomes a well. To the fallow mind, a planter of seeds. To the cluttered mind, a gardener to weed, shape, and clear a space for growing.

2. To the lens, the teacher is light, and to the mind of light, a lens.

3. To the sleeper, the teacher is the wake-up call of birds at sunrise. To clay, the teacher is potter, sculptor, and trainer in self-shaping. To the wanderer, the teacher is a knowing guide. To the developed mind, the teacher is colleague, listener, and friend.

Therefore, a great teacher has effective discipline skills and can promote positive behaviors and change in the classroom. The teacher plays an important role in school. He is not simply to impart knowledge but also mould the habits, traits and character of pupils. The good teachers are enthusiastic, friendly, easy-going, able to develop rapport with learners, committed to the growth of their students, approachable, interested in learners as people and always conscious of their status as role models. The following attributes are few key qualities of a good teacher:

1. Teacher's foremost duty is intellectual/creative development of the students.
2. To develop ethical dimensions of the students (motivation, character, self esteem, civic responsibilities)
3. To impart raining for management, decision-making and leadership qualities in students
4. To develop wisdom and understanding about the practical problems of life
5. To develop global vision and be responsible to lighten the future of the students
6. To teach the students respect for individual, cultural, racial and religious differences.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, there is need for infra-structure development in our schools like- modern technology equipped classrooms, washrooms, and electricity, proper seating etc. secondly, proper teacher training in pedagogy through subject specific experts at zonal level will help us to step towards quality education. If the teachers are well trained in Pedagogy, it can help us to have transitions from rote learning to conceptual methods that can keep both teachers and students engaged and engrossed. To foster highest ideals in our budding generation, teachers are key in ensuring the students get the requisite lessons that keep their minds ignited for seeking knowledge. The honest dedication of teachers towards their noble profession can further the prospect of quality education in our state. It is also

necessary that schools should offer advanced learning classroom-based and extra-curricular opportunities to pupils in order to perform well in their studies as well as develop other necessary skills.

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CHAPTER-7

OBJECTIFICATION: *THE PROBLEM THAT HAS NO NAME*

- Ishfaq Hussain Bhat

Objectification – the means of reducing a human being to the status of a mere object of pleasure and desire is the issue/problem that has been of seminal importance insofar as the relation between the two wheels of society is concerned. Objectification does not only reduce a human being to the status of an object but also makes the life of people miserable. Objectification, to be precise, is the problem that has had enormous disastrous consequences on the lives of people. Before moving on let us first go through some of the definitions of the term objectification:

"Sexual objectification is the act of treating a person as a mere object of sexual desire. Objectification more broadly means treating a person as a commodity or an object without regard to their personality or dignity. Objectification is most commonly examined at the level of a society, but can also refer to the behavior of individuals and is a type of dehumanization.

Although both males and females can be the subjects of sexual objectification, the objectification of women is an important idea in many feminist theories and psychological theories derived from them. Many feminists regard sexual objectification as playing an important role in gender inequality. Psychologists associate objectification with a host of physical and mental health risks in women."[1]

"Female sexual objectification involves a woman being viewed primarily as an object of male sexual desire, rather than as a whole person. Although opinions differ as to which situations are objectionable, many feminists see objectification of women taking place in the sexually oriented depictions of women in advertising, art and media, pornography, the occupations of stripping and prostitution, and women being brazenly evaluated or judged sexually or aesthetically in public spaces and events, such as beauty contests.

Some feminists and psychologists argue that sexual objectification can lead to negative psychological effects including eating disorders, depression and sexual dysfunction, and can give women negative self-images because of the belief that their intelligence and competence are currently not being, nor will ever be, acknowledged by society."[2]

"Male sexual objectification involves a man being viewed primarily as an object of sexual desire, rather than as a whole person...Instances where men may be viewed as sex objects by women include advertisements, music videos, films, television shows, beefcake calendars, women's magazines, male strip shows, and clothed female/nude male (CFNM) events...Men's bodies have become more objectified than they previously were. It is known

as "Six-pack Advertising," where men are seen as sexual objects. Because of society's established gaze on the objectification of women, the newfound objectification of men is not as widespread. Even with this increase of male objectification, males are still seen as the dominant figures and so the focus is still primarily on women.

Male sexual objectification has been found in 37% of advertisements featuring men's body parts to showcase a product. These advertisements are a form of sexual objectification."[3]

Objectification is defined as viewing people solely as depersonalized objects of desire instead of as individuals with complex personalities and desires or plans of their own. It is where someone is treated, basically, as a thing to have sex with. Women are very often portrayed as pretty things to look at, and something to try to have sex with. It gets exemplified when we turn on the TV and watch any program, advertisements, and films. Every now and then, we can see both women and men being objectified and presented as mere objects of desire and pleasure. It has become so common that scientists have found that both men and women see women's bodies as mishmash of sexual body parts while as we see men as complete human beings. Objectification is often confused with the thinking that a woman is attracted. Being attractive is not the problem, it is quite natural but what is objectionable is that, women are constantly portrayed as sex objects and objects of desire and pleasure. Objectification of women is magazines being littered with all the things that women do not like. It is using women's bodies in advertisements to sell everything from, for instance, a soap to a car. Sexually explicit representation of women in the media, especially, in the advertisements has become so common and it occurs so often, that sometimes it becomes difficult to understand what they are actually selling - a product or women's bodies. Objectification is the preoccupation with seeing women's bodies in terms of sex parts. We can see in almost every magazine that the half naked bodies of women are presented in order to address the male gaze. It is quite pathetic that men do not consider representation of women in advertisements, in magazines, in the media and TV programs as sex objects objectionable but the hold the opinion that women cannot breastfeed their children in public. No doubt, women should never breastfeed their children in public but they should also not be used to sell petty things and products. When one turns on the TV, one can see only women, so much so that, one's mind always remains obsessed with the sexually explicit images presented in advertisements, et cetera. It is a fact, universally acknowledged, that we have become so shameless that we cannot telecast news without making women read the news. Nowadays, most of the TV channels use women to deliver/telecast the news and the phenomenon is on an increase. Objectification refers to being bombarded with sexual images in every magazine, advertisements TV programs while being told that breastfeeding is absence or a taboo. It is the thousands of comments that we can see on the YouTube videos, social networking sites, especially facebook, whatsapp, instagram, snapchat about the body parts of women. It refers to a flood of movies and TV shows where women are presented are mere objects of desire and pleasure, it is

women's bodies used as sexually explicit background accessories in music videos. It is the idea that men and women cannot be friends because men cannot see women as anything but sexual objects.

"Martha Nussbaum (1995, 257) has identified seven features that are involved in the idea of treating a person as an object:

1. instrumentality: the treatment of a person as a tool for the objectifier's purposes;
2. denial of autonomy: the treatment of a person as lacking in autonomy and self-determination;
3. inertness: the treatment of a person as lacking in agency, and perhaps also in activity;
4. fungibility: the treatment of a person as interchangeable with other objects;
5. violability: the treatment of a person as lacking in boundary-integrity;
6. ownership: the treatment of a person as something that is owned by another (can be bought or sold);
7. denial of subjectivity: the treatment of a person as something whose experiences and feelings (if any) need not be taken into account."[4]

Rae Langton (2009, 228–229) has added three more features to Nussbaum's list:

1. reduction to body: the treatment of a person as identified with their body, or body parts;
2. reduction to appearance: the treatment of a person primarily in terms of how they look, or how they appear to the senses;
3. silencing: the treatment of a person as if they are silent, lacking the capacity to speak."[5]

 In the world where everyone would be mostly subjects and, occasionally objects, women are only viewed as objects of pleasure and desire. And this is, actually, the status quo for men right now. This is not the status quo for women because about 90% of sexually objectifying imagery is of women's body parts. In the society governed by men, men are granted more sexual power than women which leads us to see the world through men's eyes. We have learned that men's sexuality is active, that they are powerful creatures and they are objectifying women in their life using women for sex in their day to day life. The cultural narrative looks at men as complete beings which gets exemplified by the fact that mostly men's stories are being told and eulogized. Almost 80% of political offices are being occupied by men, men occupy the highest ranks in, virtually, every industry in the world. Because of women's body is subject to constant frivolous criticism, girls learn quickly to self objectify. The objectification, in turn, results in lower cognitive functioning, increased sexual dysfunction and body sham. Moreover, self objectification is directly related to girls pursuing fewer careers. Objectification is a major cause for mental issues

like sleeping disorders and depression which disproportionately affects young women. Sexual objectification contributes to a culture where sexual violence is not taken seriously. It tells us that the male power over women is normal and sexual equality is something that most people do not even understand, that men are sexually more aggressive while as women are sexually submissive, that men should want and women should want to be wanted by men - she should take her harassment as a compliment. It is an established fact that men are mostly sexually subjects and women are mostly sexually objects. "Haslanger suggests that there are four conditions that are necessary in order for person A to objectify person B:

1. Person A views and treats person B as an object for the satisfaction of A's desire;

2. Where person A desires person B to have some property, A forces B to have that property;

3. Person A believes that person B has that property;

4. Person A believes that person B has that property by nature."[6]

It is a fact, universally acknowledged, that men objectify women. Men, to be precise, objectify a lot of things. They find a lot of things lustful and sources of desire - men lust for wealth, authority, cars, men lust for power and they lust for women and in turn, objectify women. But it has to be taken into consideration that, no doubt, they do objectify women but at least they are objectifying women as human beings and not just another object to be used and thrown away once it is no longer of any use. And it has to be acknowledged that they recognize them as a human being - they look at them and, for instance, they say that there is a girl I want to make out with, I want to marry, I want to be with, I want to have in my life or for the rest of my life. That precisely is what men do. However, it has to be taken into consideration and thereby acknowledged that it is not only men who objectify women but women also objectify men. However, in years gone by, especially, before the advent of feminism women would objectify men as a provider or someone who would share the burden of life. They would come together - women would look after the house, they would look after their children, and bring them up and men would do what they were supposed to do. It was like a partnership - men would do what they are good at and women, in turn, would do what they are good at. On the contrary, nowadays women would objectify men as a commodity – they would not see them as a provider or as a man. They would see them as the father of their children, they would see them as a sperm man, or, precisely, as an ATM, or they would see him as someone to get money out of, or someone to give them food, etc. It is all about what they can get with no regard, whatsoever, for the man having desires and plans of his own. It is just literally – 'I want him because of what he can give to me. And that is not, generally, how men objectify women. Men objectify women because they want women. Why they want them is another

matter but they actually want them - they want to make them a part of their life. On the contrary, when objectified, a woman wants a man for what he can give her. Women want men for what he can provide - a man can make women a nice house so that woman can enjoy in that house but the moment a woman is no longer enjoying the things that man can provide, the woman throws the man out, or divorces the man or makes it so in tolerable that the man leaves. These are the disastrous consequences when we render a human being to the status of a mere object of pleasure and desire. In Western countries, divorce is on an increase because of this reason. And it has to be taken into consideration that women, generally speaking, object to being objectified which is quite ironic because when you do not dress properly and when you walk around stimulatingly or fashionably to show off, then you are not supposed to object for you being objectified.

CONCLUSION

Much has been written of the abuses prevalent in the society on the ground of sexual objectification. Objectification is the phenomenon that has rendered the life of both the sexes – male and female – miserable. Objectification as a nuisance results in the treatment of a human being as an insignificant object of pity, desire and pleasure. It makes a person view and treat another person as an object for satisfaction of his own desires. It results in degrading a human being to such a level that he or she can be interchanged with other relatively insignificant objects. It not only takes away the right to inheritance and ownership of the people but also devalues them to such an extent that they themselves are inherited and owned like other objects and animals. It makes the life of the people miserable by making their existence full of artificiality – they tend to live in an imaginary world and thereby focus on their appearance only. Moreover, when we objectify people, we instead of seeing them as a complete human being, view them in terms of parts – sexually explicit and stimulating body parts. Therefore, objectification reduces a human being to mere body parts which can be seen and used as things for desire and pleasure. Therefore, there is an immense need to look into the matter and try to restore the dignity and honour that every human being embodies.

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PLIGHT OF CONFLICT RIDDLED CHILDREN: A LITERARY REPRESENTATION

- Javeed Ahmad Raina

INTRODUCTION

The current chapter is an attempt to analyse two novels, *The Book of Gold Leaves* and *The Half Mother,* and present fictional account of the children's apprehensions and anxiety in conflict riddled contemporary Kashmir. The representation of Kashmir children's plight, agony, dilemmas and fears becomes at once compelling as well as contemporaneous because of the cataclysmic contemporary Kashmir condition. In this part of the globe, children encounter many fatalities and as such suffer from series of severe physical and mental crisis and anguish. The depiction of such unheard voices in the mainstream history finds little or no mention at all. However, there are few fiction works, especially novels, written in English language by some well-known Kashmiri novelists who picture the plight of children in the turbulent Kashmir. Hence, this essay will study two such novels- Mirza Waheed's *The Book of Gold Leaves (2014)* and Shahnaz Bashir's *The Half Mother (2014)*, to present a fictional version of Kashmir children's plight and agony in order to bring their woes and worries to the forefront.

DISCUSSION

The childhood is that period in life which everyone wants to re-visit or live everlastingly, because it is characterized by uncorrupted nature, purity and serenity. But children living in the conflict zones of the world do not enjoy the blissful and instinctively pleasant childhood days of vigor, energy and a free spirit, to roam and bloom in the pure world of dreams and fairy tales. They are even forbidden to hear the tales of fancies and fantasy, deemed to incite libido of resistance, the lures of love and sleep inducing lullabies doesn't satiate them any more in the mists of gloom and glum that surround their small spaces like the shades of the eternal doom. They have been made to surrender their whims and fancies, their charms and heavenly breeze to solace the unrecognized voices of bereavement, mourning and misfortune. In Kashmir, life of children has become a mark of woe and a mark worry. Their fate is akin to and resembles caged birds unable to set themselves free or stretch their wings in order to touch the sky, for fulfillment of sky of dreams. They are literary limped creatures who can neither walk through the lane nor wade into lake; even they cannot waft along the waves as the western breeze smells, the smell of death, the communal rot of conflict, and the debris of dying dreams. The mighty towers of hegemony, the elms of hatred and the alarms of army tear their childhood apart to feel an adult pain; the agony Kashmir's children felt from the ages, through colonial rages and internal ravages. The nostalgic memories and the hostile atmosphere make them to be bolt and

blossoms, dove and hawk, life and death. They taste death in life and life in death. The phony fun of the city life, the battered beats of time, and the world dark and wide castigate them for being their companions and taunt them not harboring the hope to nurture the eerie of childhood dream, of sunshine and flowers, of everlasting enjoyment, happiness and serenity. The long curfewed nights stagnate their future dreams; the lines of division drawn in the middle of the mid night, the accession signed amidst the howling cries create iron walls of anger and mind forged manacles of memory. The vernal breeze asks their sport but the fear of winter chill keep them aloof, the smiling tulips urge them to bloom, but the buds and blossoms beg them to drink an autumn death as the approaching winter will wither them grey.

The childhood comes once, lives for once and is enjoyed by once. There is nothing like twice, thrice or next, there are no backward-forward movements that could transport us into childhood transparency, no elixir to revert us back in order to re-vitalize our days of youthful hilarity. There is nothing, no alchemy to transform human beings to primitive chora or oral stage. The deadlock is locked between semiotic and symbolic, between real and imaginary. There are only mirrors that reflect us along thousand others, only signifiers that trace us within the thousand traces. So what is left is only that we give children chance to seize and enjoy the moments. Childhood days are like blossoms that wither away within hours. It is the carpe diem attitude that will help growing buds, to seize the day and enjoy the most. Marry Jane Kehily while discussing childhood state also suggests measures what to do with children:

"Children have only one chance of a childhood. They deserve to be protected from harm, to enjoy good emotional, mental and physical health, and to feel that they belong in their home, at school and in their local community… it is never too early or too late to offer helping hand –and to give the most disadvantaged youngsters the chance of a better childhood and a brighter future."

The question arises, do we provide Kashmir children a chance to peacefully live their childhood? The answer would be an affirmative 'no'. Infact, the gods of war have not even given them a right to life, a universal and fundamental right, to breathe and explore the world. The contemporary Kashmir history is awfully riddled with violence, bloodshed and destruction. In such turbulent times women and children become an easy prey to gruesome incidents. Among all people, children experience greater and more severe pains of trauma, agony, loss and longing. Their encounter with any kind of violence or experience of the battlefield imprints their mind with the ugly stains of that experience and these impressions remain there in the unconscious mind, thereby making sudden intrusions as nightmares, ghosts and in the form of other dark figures. Hence, the child's exposure to violence becomes detrimental for their later degeneration and downfall, because they are not able to escape from those haunting and traumatic experiences. According to Caruth Cathy:

"Caruth Cathy, while taking insights from Sigmund Freud, says that trauma is the pattern of suffering that is inexplicably persistent in the lives of certain individuals perplexed by the terrifyingly literal nightmares of battle field survivors and the repetitive reenactments of people who have experienced painful events." (Cathy, 2)

The representation of children's painful experience of custodian detention, torture, trauma and killings are portrayed in the works of literature, mostly in holocaust works, which record the frightful and dehumanizing effects of war. In Kashmir context, the contemporary writes take the conflict as an un-escapable and indispensable theme in their works to show the pains and ruins of war. The literary works cannot therefore be separated from the society as Hegel had said "literature belongs and does not belong to the society." The two contemporary Kashmiri novelists, Mirza Waheed and Shahnaz Bashir, writing in Indian English, take the Kashmir conflict as the background in their works to deal with the larger issues of life. In their works, the pains and pangs of children are portrayed very intimately not only to re-construct the history of nineties, but also recount the agony of those who have seen reign of terror and death through their own naked eyes. To substantiate and place my study in that direction let us try to find out the artist response to the death spray that swept across thousands innocent lives. The turbulent tides of war and conflict did a great disservice to the budding generation who are presently struggling to survive in migrant camps or face the wrath of state brutalities in the streets of Kashmir and hence result in broken identities, hybrid language and alien culture.

Shahnaz Bashir's novel, *The Half Mother (2014),* narrates the story of Haleema, a widow, left alone by tyrant tides to struggle against the onslaughts of time and fate, with a milestone in her bosom to whom, she names Imran. She is both father and mother to her son, a wretched man-less woman, divorced by affluent husband and deserted by the ongoing Kashmir geopolitics. She takes care of her lone child as a frightened bitch would do. She searches her dead mother in her father and a good looking husband in her son, a shoulder to hide her fears and anxieties, a hope to re-build her shattered world. But her efforts went vain when she lost both to the war some cunning people profit. First her father and then her son disappeared into the unknown territory, into the mists of dark clouds that loomed very low on the sky. She first buries her father's memory in her fragile chest and then begins for an everlasting quest to trace her son. In search of her lone son she went from torture centres to Army camps, colonial colonies to courts, military hospitals to mighty jails, proactive peers to filtered press, writers to righteous Imam's, ministers to their ministries, but she didn't find him anywhere. During her hunt for her lone son, she observed how children were fascinated by the new wave of Kashmir insurgency instead of books and brooks:

"The insurgency spread everywhere. Schoolchildren took to sketching Kalashnikovs, Chinese pistols, grenades, bullets and masked men on the back of their notebooks. No longer were flowers and fruits drawn…all through the long, cold, grey days of curfew,

Imran longed for school. Education became imaginative. His classmates had begun private tuitions at home. There was no way for Imran to conduct experiments in his school's laboratory." (Bashir, 40)

Again, in her search for Imran, she went to the Army hospital which was behind the Badmi Bagh Cantonment. Its windows were covered with olive-green army blankets. Inside the hospital Haleema recounts the ordeal of small boys as:

"Captive young boys and men recovered from custodial torture, only to become fit again for further interrogations and torture. Haleema saw limbless, fingerless, nailless, hairless, toothless, eyeless, earless detainees- a variety of wriggling, howling, yowling amputated souls. A cold flux ran down her spine. The scene dazed her." (Bashir, 80).

Haleema searched him everywhere. She spent days and nights, months and years in his wait, she sold everything, her jewelry, assets and orchards and used every penny to trace her son. She left no stone unturned from Srinagar to Tihar Jail Delhi. When she was exhausted in her search for disappeared son, she finally files a case against the army; it took Imran's file a month to reach its first hearing. In court Haleema learned that many people were going through the same ordeal as she was. What she observes in court is reflected as:

"There would be children too, in the courtrooms, with pacifying toys or lollipops in their hands. They were bored by the long discussions, and when they grew restless, they would begin to wail, throw the toys away and wanted to be taken outside. Then there were those children whose fathers had disappeared even before they were born. They recognized their fathers only from the photos their mothers carried. Some children would fall asleep in the middle of the proceedings." (Bashir, 139).

Similarly, Mirza Waheed's novel, *The Book of Gold Leaves (2014)* recounts the story of love and loss in the turbulent times of Kashmir conflict. It is a tale of love and romance, death and destruction, life and longing, woven around the love affair between Faiz and Roohi, the two young lovers living in the downtown area of Srinagar. The lately born resistance movement and the counter violence did not let their love to bloom. The fascinating tale also pictures some gruesome incidents of violence that swept across our budding generation and keeping their parents, especially mothers, to mourn rest of their life and allowing ghosts of despair haunt them through post-traumatic disorders. Waheed pictures the brutal scenes of children's deaths as:

'"The soldiers ensure there is a blood soaked headline in the papers every day. Two weeks ago, they killed seventeen boys across Zaine` Kadal Bridge, shot them all dead after trapping them in a lane...the soldiers were so blind with rage that they wouldn't stop firing even after the boys were all dead, mown down next to filthy drains. They continued shooting until no one was left standing...Zaitun's little brother Uzair was shot in the

face...Zaitun slept for three nights by his grave in the Martyr's Graveyard...it is so mad here."(Waheed, 211, 212)

Mirza Waheed minutely pictures the plight of Kashmir children. While, narrating an incident during the 1990s insurgency, he recounts how two young militants attacked the military bunker with rockets. In retaliation, the sentry with his stationed machine gun first fired into the lane where from rocket seemed to have come, then right and left, then everywhere. His blistering continued until fires struck the school minibus. Faiz runs to the spot along with Imam and Rangrez. The incident is recorded in the novel as:

"He doesn't stop on seeing the school minibus. He doesn't even spare the sky. Faiz manages to slide open the small window of the minibus. Inside bus he observes… He doesn't remember the children. He hardly looked at their faces. He doesn't remember their cloths or their bodies. He had tried to imagine they were all sleeping but the uniforms would not let him." (Waheed, 87)

Since, literature gives voice to those who are otherwise silenced. It gives voice to the dead because author's voice is not the private property, it is the voice of those who couldn't cry, the woes and worries of those whose lips are frozen, sealed and buried under the debris of war. Therefore, literature reflects the troubles and triumphs, havoc and heroism, love and loss of the sempiternal nature. It is these reflections that art appeals to all living souls despite the dense disparity and benighted obscurities of an objective truth.

CONCLUSION

The contemporary Kashmir condition is riddled with the history of conflict, wars, bloodshed and deaths. The irony is that innocent children are made object of target in the battle between the sword and gun. They are not spared from the war's brutalities and are objectified as jackals to feed on others happiness. They are happiness hunters in a world which has snatched their childhood days and spoiled their innocent nature with voices of anguish, despair and dejection. They are orphaned or separated from their families and become heads of households which leaves them vulnerable to forced labour and sexual exploitation. Therefore, we must strive for a world where children can grow up safely in their families and be free from ravages of conflict and war.

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CHAPTER-9

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GENDERED ASPECT OF SOCIAL INEQUALITIES AND EXCLUSIONS IN INDIA

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- Ishfaq Hussain Bhat

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INTRODUCTION

Much has been written of the social inequalities and exclusion of women in the contemporary world. The pages of history document the marginalization, the pathetic and miserable condition of women, and the treatment of women as mere objects of pity and desire in a society governed by men. The chapter while highlighting the oppression, subjugation and exploitation of the downtrodden women in the patriarchal society aims to examine the gendered aspect of social inequalities and exclusions in contemporary India. The chapter as such, brings to light the fact that women as the most vulnerable and fragile population in the social ladder of all communities, have almost always been marginalized, oppressed, and subjected to infinite social inequalities and exclusion. The focus, therefore, would be on how public space is denied to women, how they are deprived even of their basic rights, how they are the most Dalit among the Dalits, the most black among the black, and the most poor, or, the poorest, among the poor, so on and so forth. An attempt would also be made at discussing the constitutional provisions and the measures taken by the government, both at the central and the state level, to ensure social equality and justice.

DISCUSSION

Since it would be absurd to talk about social inequality and exclusion without first getting an accurate understanding of the term, let us first go through some of the definitions of the term social and gender inequality:

Social Inequality Defined:

"Social inequality occurs when resources in a given society are distributed unevenly, typically through norms of allocation,that engender specific patterns along lines of socially defined categories of persons. It is the differentiation preference of access of social goods in the society brought about by power, religion, kinship, prestige, race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, and class. The social rights include labor market, the source of income, health care, and freedom of speech, education, political representation, and participation. Social inequality linked to economic inequality, usually described on the basis of the unequal distribution of income or wealth, is a frequently studied type of social inequality."[1]

Gender Inequality Defined:

"Gender as a social inequality is whereby women and men are treated differently due to masculinity and femininity by dividing labor, assigning roles, and responsibilities and allocating social rewards. Sex- and gender-based prejudice and discrimination, called sexism, are major contributing factors to social inequality."[2]

Prejudice based on gender has always been deeply rooted in all cultures. The degree may differ, but the bias and prejudice has always been there. The discourse about women and their miseries occupies a seminal position in the world literature. "Women as the inferior 'Other' have always been marginalized by the so-called superior 'Man'. They have been deprived of even their basic rights. The patriarchal bias and prejudice of the male-dominated society in general and the anti-feminist philosophers, authors and educators in particular, becomes evident from their portrayal of women as mere objects of desire and pity."[3] From the very outset, they have greatly been wronged. They have been, in a way, forcibly enslaved by inculcating in them a sense of inferiority, weakness, submissiveness, passiveness, servility, and the like. Right from the outset, they have been taught to be submissive, subservient, coquettish, shy which represent ideal womanhood and feminine sensibility. Women have been greatly wronged by the male and biased members of the society. Women as the marginalized 'Other' have been denied freedom of choice, thought and decision making. Men have always been portrayed as beings of reason; and on the contrary, women are presented as mere creatures of affection who do not have an identity of their own.

It is a universally acknowledged fact that, empowerment of women is very essential for the advancement of any nation. It is only after providing for provisions and schemes for the empowerment and development of the weaker sections of the population, especially women, a country can advance in the real sense of the term advancement/development. Empowerment of women would mean to be economically independent and personally self-reliant with a positive self esteem and to be able to face any difficult situation. It, to be precise, is a dynamic process that consists of awareness, attainment, and actualization cycle.

Important Measures to Attain Women Empowerment:

Now let us discuss some of the important measures that may be helpful to end gender inequality and discrimination, and in the long term attain women empowerment:

10. **Awareness:** Awareness about the rights is very important insofar as empowerment of women is concerned. In the developed countries especially, in the United States and United Kingdom, this measure plays a very deterministic role because there women are to a large extent aware of their rights. Therefore, the first and foremost

step or measure towards attaining women empowerment is to make them about their rights at all levels - economic, social, political, et cetera.

11. **Improving Standard of Living:** Another important measure for ensuring social and gender equality is improvement in the standard of living. When we improve the standard of living of the people, we are actually, indirectly, raising the standard of women, and thereby, minimizing the menace of social and gender inequality. The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, for instance, was a scheme aimed at enhancing the standard of people. Though the scheme was launched for the welfare of the general public, yet it proved more beneficial for women – it became a means to safeguard their chastity, honour and dignity.

12. **Equal Ownership of Productive Resources:** In order to establish social and gender equality in a country, there is an immense need of making the productive resources available to both men and women.

13. **Better Health Care for Women:** Having access to hospitals, health care centers, and making provisions for ensuring better health care facilities for women is another significant aspect of women empowerment.

14. **Higher Literacy Level and Education:** Higher literacy level and education is another measure to attain women empowerment.

15. **Increased Participation in Economic and Commercial Sector:** Another important measure for ensuring social and gender equality is making provisions for increased participation of women in economic and commercial sector. Role of women in the public affairs and especially economic enterprises, of course is very seminal because, without being economically sound one cannot advance in life or, to be a little more technical, without having access to economic resources, the advancement of this more vulnerable and fragile population in the social ladder of all communities is not possible.

16. **Achieving Self-Reliance/Self Confidence/Self Respect:** Achieving self confidence and respect, to be precise, is the ultimate goal of the measures aimed at empowerment of women.

Constitutional Provisions for Ensuring Gender Equality:

The constitution of India, as the guardian of the rights of the weaker sections of the society, especially women, is replete with provisions for the empowerment of women and thereby, with provisions which aim at ending social and gender discrimination on the basis of sex. When we go through the constitution of India, we come across many articles and provisions which uphold women empowerment. The Preamble, fundamental rights, fundamental duties and Directive Principles of State Policy contain several articles and provisions that ensure gender equality and try to end discrimination on the basis of sex in India. It has to

be taken into consideration and thereby acknowledged that, the constitution of India not only grants equality to women with men but also empowers the states to adopt measures for positive discrimination in favour of women. Positive discrimination, as has already been implied, is the basis for women empowerment - it is the basis for the reservation that women get in local body elections, Legislative Councils and Assemblies, etc; Positive discrimination is the basis for implementation of schemes and programmes in favour of women which, aim at neutralizing the cumulative socio-economic, educational and political disadvantages faced by women in a society governed by men. The constitutional protection of the rights of women is very important, insofar as the happiness and prosperity of women is concerned. The fathers of the constitution of India have made it sure to include several articles and provisions related to weaker sections - women, Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and other backward and weaker sections of society. In India, in particular, the laws, development policies programmes and plans are aimed at women's advancement in different sectors of life. Empowerment of women, as has already been pointed out, is very essential for the advancement of any nation. And in order to empower women and to end gender discrimination, the Constitution of India provides for equality between the two sexes. Articles like Equality before law and equal protection of law, and articles prohibiting discrimination on the basis of different parameters manifest the constitutional protection of women. The Architects of the Constitution of India, by providing for provision in favour of gender equality and prohibition of discrimination on the basis of different parameters – colour, caste, creed, sex, provided constitutional basis for the empowerment of women. As has already been mentioned, there are many articles related to women's empowerment, and these articles are very important in so far as the position of women in India is concerned:

Article 14: "The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth."

Article 15: "Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth."

Article 15 (1): The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them."

Article 15 (3): "Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children."

Article 16 (2): "No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect or, any employment or office under the State."

Article 39 (a): "That the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means to livelihood."

Article 39 (d): "That there is equal pay for equal work for both men and women."

The Constitution of India also provides several provisions for participation and reservation of women in local body elections.

Moreover, the government has been implementing various schemes for the socio-economic advancement and development of the more vulnerable and fragile population in the social ladder of all communities. The schemes, in favour of women, have been launched at the central as well as at the state level. The schemes and programmes launched by government aim at women attaining socio-political participation, economic independence, ownership of productive assets and getting opportunity to leadership. The Constitutional Amendment 73rd and 74th Amendment Act exclusively provides for political leadership of women and makes it mandatory to reserve seats for women in Panchayats and Municipal Corporations. Moreover, in order to ensure gender equality and women empowerment, India has also ratified various International Convention and agreements to secure equal rights for women, especially the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

CONCLUSION

To wrap up the discussion, many things need to be brought together. Women oppression is not based on a single factor of gender but many factors are to be taken into consideration while discussing oppression and exploitation of women. And it is a fact, universally acknowledged, that a woman's condition/experience is determined by the intersection of many factors - class, caste, ethnicity, gender, and the list goes on and on. A black woman, for instance, experiences two disadvantages/discriminations - discrimination on the basis of race and discrimination on the basis of gender. A Dalit woman or a woman belonging to lower caste faces discrimination on the basis of lower caste and gender. Therefore among the Dalits, women are the most Dalit, among the black, women are the most black, among the oppressed women are the most oppressed, and among the poor women are the most poor or the poorest. No doubt, there are constitutional provisions and schemes launched by the government aimed at safeguarding the rights of women but still we have not been able to attain social and gender equality in India.

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