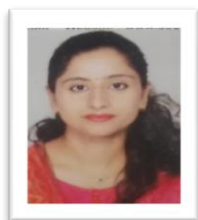


Social Work Intervention in Uplifting Gujjar community in Haryana (With Special Reference to Gujjar Women)



Puneeta Behl

Research Scholar,
Centre for Social Work,
Panjab University,
Chandigarh, Punjab, India

Abstract

India has a deep-rooted caste based stratification which molds the lives of people in many ways. Backward Areas along with backward castes Leads to dual backwardness and patriarchal system further adds to the Struggle of the women from backward areas as they many challenges due to multiple facets of backwardness. It is a noted fact that women are equal partners in development of any country as they contribute into their home and family in every way possible. So focus should be on uplifting these women in the major areas like education, employment, Health etc. which will act as a progressive step in overcoming their backwardness at individual as well as community level.

In Haryana Gujjars comes in Block B category of OBC's with Ahirs, Lodha, Saini, and Meo. This state has considerable population of Gujjars, mostly engaged in dairy farming. They form about 7% to 10 % of the total population. They are present in all the 20 districts of Haryana and comes under Other backward classes. Work is being done by them and government to uplift the community but women at large still face many challenges which lead to backwardness. Status of women is one such concern. Women still follow the age old customs and are more or less confined to their family. Women even if they earn have no right over their earnings and most of them are self-employed, in the sense they help husband in their works related to agriculture and dairy which is their generally practiced profession

This paper will throw light on the socio economic issues of Gujjar women in Haryana i.e. Cultural context of Backwardness, Educational Backwardness and Economic dependence and also put forward the scope of social work Intervention in transforming their lives as social work is the key profession which can help modify lives of individuals at various levels which will lead to social development.

Keywords: Social Work, Gujjar Women, Intervention.

Introduction

Swami Vivekanand has rightly said "It is impossible to think about the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is impossible for a bird to fly on only one wing"

Gujjar community is a very popular community in India as well as Haryana. They are known as a heroic community who have actively participated in freedom struggle and they have always stood up for their rights. Women have always been equal partner of men in the family and invest in every possible manner for the betterment of the family and children. Gujjar Community comes under the category of other Backward Classes in Haryana They have come a long way in various aspects with still struggling in many challenges still in their way to be a developed community in terms of illiteracy, early marriages and old ways of doing things based on culture and religious practices somehow holds back the community in today's world. Gujjar as a nomadic community based in hilly areas of Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh have tribal status as per order 2[Parts I to 3[XIX]6[XX]7[XXI]8[XXII] of The Indian Constitution. But in Haryana they come under the criterion of Other Backward classes.

India is in 72th year of its Independence but still fighting Social Inequality, which stems out of rigid Caste system and Gender Discrimination. Almost 2/3rd of the Indian population is socially and educationally backward. Backward Areas along with backward castes cause dual backwardness and patriarchal system further adds to the struggle. Women from backward areas are facing many challenges due to

multiple facets of backwardness. It is a noted fact that women are indispensable players in development of any country. So focus should be on uplifting these women in the major areas like education, employment, Health etc. which will act as a progressive step in overcoming their backwardness at individual as well as community level.

The status of women in India has undergone many changes over the years. Women enjoyed an equal and respectful status in ancient times to the lower status in medieval period and even worst times after independence when many social evils like sati, purdah, child marriage existed by which Indian women lost their earlier status and in this phase women suffered a lot as they were neglected and ill-treated. The nineteenth century marked the beginning of political and social women movements which started the wave of social work in India, initiated by prominent social reformers. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the pioneer of women movement in India who founded BrahmoSamaj in 1825 and propagated his liberal ideas pertaining to widow remarriage, condemning sati and stopping child marriages. This was the first step towards uplifting the status of women. Further Arya Samaj was founded by Swami DayanandSaraswati in 1875 which worked for better status of women by overcoming social evils like polygamy and encouraging women education. Christian Missionaries, Britishers and Indian social reformers contributed to reform the Indian society by abolishing social evils and other obnoxious practices against women, which had placed them at a marginal position in the society. Even during freedom struggle, Gandhiji advocated women's participation in public which marked the recognition of "Principle of Gender Equity and Equality" in Indian Constitution in 1950. Our Constitution promoted the idea of democracy, equality, social justice and human rights people. Many government and non-governmental initiatives tried to make these communities self-sufficient. Government made the schemes and policies and social workers via NGOs helped to bridge the gap between resources and the needy which is core function of Social Work Profession. Social Workers act as Guides, facilitators, Advocates, Therapist etc to help the people in various ways. But the long established disparities in some way are still ruling in our society. Therefore, there is a need for more intensive and organized Efforts to uplift the backward section of society.

Aim of the Study

Social work is a helping profession which is meant to create a society which is equal for all. Women being the most important component of building any society is neglected in many ways. Women somehow don't have a realization of their importance in family and society. This paper tells about how Gujjar women are economically and emotionally supporting their families and still have a life limited to home and family. It is an effort to understand how social work profession can help women realize their potential and make a better space for themselves.

Methodology

This paper is based on both primary and secondary data. It is based on the informal interaction with Gujjar women and men in Panchkula and Yamunanagar. Focussed group discussions were carried out with different groups of Gujjar women i.e. 18-25 Years, 25-40 Years and 40 and above according to the availability.

Gujjars a Backward class in Haryana

In Haryana Gujjar comes in Block B category of OBC's with Ahirs, Lodha, Saini, and Meo. This state has considerable population of Gujjars, mostly engaged in dairy farming. They form about 7% to 10 % of the total population. They are present in all the 20 districts of Haryana but in different concentration. But still when there is no official document on this community, so on what basis their welfare can be planned. Gujjar Community in Haryana is still on its way to overcome backwardness. Based on narratives from some people who belong to this community and by informal interaction with Gujjar women, it can be inferred that Gujjar women though respected in family and bear full load of family work still are not permitted to move out and work. The decision making powers are still in the hands of male even in matters of spending their own income. Illiteracy prevails in this community, now some people have started sending their children to schools but they are themselves illiterate. Work is being done by them and government to uplift the community but women at large still face many challenges which lead to backwardness. Status of women is one such concern. Women still follow the age old customs and are more or less confined to their family. Women even if they earn have no right over their earnings and most of them are self-employed, in the sense they help husband in their works related to agriculture and dairy which is their generally practiced profession

Gujjar Women facing Dual Backwardness

Gujjar women in one such group which is in the clutches of the old age practices and has not changed much in their social structure and pattern. Only few women have come out in the open and the others are still doing the unrecognized work of their own families to help generate income for them. We need to understand that why these women are so backward in today's world which is so globalised and plan intervention accordingly. Researcher has noticed that all these studies have been done in the tribal areas and hilly region for them. We cannot dismiss the fact that Gujjar's are also in other regions of India like Punjab and Haryana and there exists some contracts among them inspite of the fact that they belong to the same community. As Gujjar's have Tribal status in Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh but they are considered backward in the state of Haryana. Haryana being a progressive state still have these backward communities and for the development of state and country, every community small or large should be analysed and interventions should be planned. Only providing them Constitutional safeguards and making plans will not help, till these communities understand and recognize their needs, rights and get aware.

Gujjar women are very hardworking women as they take care of household and help in the dairy sector which is a most practiced profession among the Gujjars. Gujjar families, even if employed in formal jobs have kept animals and sell milk. The reason being respecting their tradition and income generation. Gujjars link themselves to Yadav dynasty and rearing cows is considered essentially important in this community. They link rearing animals with culture and traditions. Culture is a way of life for Gujjars. Majority of work related to animals is done by women which includes, feeding animals, bathing animals, managing cow dung and milking animals. The selling of milk either to homes or selling milk to dairy is the task done by men in majority of the cases. But the income generated goes in the hands of men. Women get whatever they want from their husband and mother in laws but these women hardly have any direct source of income. With income comes a certain amount of independence in matters of money as well as decision making, as the person earning has a confidence on their capacity. But Gujjar women in spite of being an active part of income generation does not have any control over the money. Gujjar women when asked about this said that they get whenever they want something and do not require money on daily basis as they hardly go anywhere without family and their necessities are being catered. This according to an outsider's view is block in empowerment. But according to most of the middle aged women they are living according to their choice so are happy. But the young, better educated women see this as a block in their development and they wish to make most out of their education. According to them the patriarchal system and traditions ties them and hampers their growth.

It can be rightly said that transformation is taking place in our society but for equality among genders, person of each and every gender should be given equal opportunities and freedom to make choices. So development professions like sole work is the need of the hour where skilled profession through specific methods and skillset reach out to different communities who have their own concerns and issues, can be helped to understand their potential so that they can be beneficial for their own self and the society. Women being considered a weaker section in our society, are tied due to the old age customs and social construction of Gender. Backward class women suffer dual backwardness in many cases as they are confined to their homes and are not able to explore their potential to the fullest, which is also the case with Gujjar women where slowly transformation in status of women is taking place and social work intervention is an important tool while working with women.

Social Work Intervention

Social work, a practice profession, is centred around the core values: Social work core values of service, social justice, dignity and worth of person, importance of human relationships, integrity, competence. Social work Profession aims at establishing an egalitarian society. The weaker and deprived members of the society are the prime target of social work intervention. As a problem solving

profession, Social work shares its values, principles, methods, tools and techniques in overcoming the problems of individual, groups and communities at large which will lead to overall development of the nation. Social work discipline is meant for the wellbeing of human beings. The essence of this profession is its multi-disciplinary approach which enhances the skills and potential of social workers to work with different communities in terms of culture, beliefs, lifestyle, etc. Its goal is to provide a service to those who need help, the old, young, poor, abused, mistreated, handicapped and jobless, the sick and the homeless. Its approach is to use available resources to solve problems in order to empower clients to help themselves. The term 'social work intervention' usually is the course of action taken with the individuals, families, groups and communities.

The following set of social work methods can be engaged to make women key players in transforming their lives and community at large:

Case Work Approach

When women are required to realize their self-worth which is main principle of Social work profession. It involves interaction with client or a family unit. The methods like Problem-Solving, Functional Casework, Crisis-Oriented Short-Term Casework and Task-Centered Casework are used to identify the problem and working as partners with clients during tasks and solving the problem. As Gujjar community are still illiterate and in clutches of old age practices so Social workers can help the families with basic literacy programmes in community to raise awareness in the community regarding their environment and their importance in decision making.

Group Work Approach:

Social workers deal with the problems common to the group. This method can be useful for groups of farmers, labours and women for their empowerment. Youths, women and children of the Gujjar community can be organised into groups for some trainings and skill development workshops for them.

Community Organisation in Backward areas

Community development is an integrated development process aimed at improving the overall economic, social, and cultural conditions of a community. It is an attempt to equip people to brush their skills and do well in their occupation. It also sets a community to figure out their collective problems and finding solution. As Gujjar society are doing well in Haryana but their educational status hampers their development. In addition, Recognition of women work as economic partners is one major concern of the community. It includes the co-ordination of existing services, action to expand and modify services, and the creation and organization of new services. Community organizations are involved in many social issues, such as education, housing, health, alienation of youth, economic and social control, labour relations, child care, and immunization programmes. The role of the social worker in community development is to make them understand what to do, or what they need. It is to help the community identify their needs, and find ways of satisfying them and working in sync with

available government schemes. It restores and protects their culture and ways of living as worker works by being part of their community in which they feel good and secure.

Social Work Research

Social work Research is the systematic, critical investigation of the problems in the field and finding out proper solutions. Hence, Social work research shall find purposeful solution for Gujjar community which will help in policy Framework.

Strategies for Social Work Intervention

The Grass Root Level Participation

Members of the community are made the part of the work done i.e. the participatory approach.

The Building of Alliance (Govt., NGOs)

Strong Partnership with allied Organisation Governmental or non – governmental should be made to strengthen the programme functionally, economically and structurally

Networking

Alliances and networks should be formed with the Organisations with similar work structure to strengthen the course of work done.

Training

Specific skill development and vocational training should be organised for women in unorganised Sector, youth and children to make them self-reliant

Building Rapport with Government Officials

Working with the policy makers and proving them inputs for further policies and programmes is very important part of social work profession so that right and necessary intervention can be made.

Challenges

The major challenge lies in making them realise the need to the hour i.e. holistic development. This requires to make them think beyond caste, class and culture which is the most sensitive part in the transformation process. Women still look up to their husband, sons and father for approval of anything. The realisation of self-worth is not there. Women are still the second sex. This require intensive work, building rapport with the people of community and with participatory approach i.e. coming together of Govt., NGOs and community transformation can be done. Govt. officials and procedures are required to be flexible so that desired work can be done so challenges can be summed up as:

1. Deep rooted Cultural Constraint
2. Lack of openness in Women
3. Breaking the barrier and building Rapport
4. Proper channelizing with Govt. Officials

Conclusion

Social work is aims at a positive social change but caste-based hierarchy is a great turn off in transformation of any society and is threat to core principles of the constitution i.e. liberty, equality, justice and fraternity. We cannot have an egalitarian society until everyone get out of caste and class system. The caste sentiment divides the people on basis of emotion and feeling of belongingness to a certain set of values and culture. Lack of exposure and awareness doesn't let them grow and think beyond their communities and culture. The variation of the

caste based identity such as specific physical and mental indication, language, beliefs, names, surnames and localities are major indicators of identify the category and castes in the society. Women in such a scenario gets more vulnerable and their role in helping their family and community is lost somewhere. It develops concern for social work practitioner to work confidently with the community of divert caste background. Thus, the caste concern in social work is a big obstacle in social work in India so these caste based communities need prior attention and their women should be liberated and educated to change the family, community and society at large.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my Guide Dr. Monica Munjalsingh for her guidance and support for doing my work. I would like to thank Staff of Gujjar Bhawan Panchkula to help me getting along with the community members at various level so that I can observe and study about various aspects of lives of Gujjar women very closely.

References

- National Portal of National Commission for Backward Classes*
www.researchscholar.co.in
www.sociologyguide.com
<http://gujjarofharyanamohit.blogspot.in/>
<http://gujjarofharyanamohit.blogspot.in/> 4/2/2014 12:25 pm
<http://gujjarofharyanamohit.blogspot.in/2012/11/population-and-no-of-villages-of.html> 14/8/2014 2:40pm
<http://insightsonindia.com/2013/08/26/one-is-not-born-a-women-but-becomes-one-in-the-indian-context/> 25/8/2014, 1:36pm, Amudhan, "One is Not Born a Women, But Becomes One- In Indian Context", *Insights*, August 26, 2013
http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1320071 4/8/2014 10:00 a
http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/25489/14/14_chapter_06.pdf
<http://www.womenempowermentinindia.com/changing-status-of-women-in-india/>
 Barclay, Heather Haas. (1998), *Validating Tortured Refugees: Reconnection in Social Work Policy and Practice*. *International Social Work*, 41-211-226.
 Batliwala, Srilatha, (1994), "The Meaning of Women's Empowerment: New Concepts from Action", Consultant, (JSI Research and Training Institute), (2002), "Measuring Women's Empowerment as a Variable in International Development", *Background Paper Prepared for the World Bank*
 Dhankar, Sushila. (2013). *Status of Women in Haryana: A Comparative Study of Dalit and Non-Dalit Women*. Maharshi Dayanand University.
 Dhingra, R. (et al). *Knowledge and Practices Related to Mensuration among Tribal (Gujjar) Adolescent Girls*.
 Dominelli, L. (2002). *Feminist Social Work: Theory and Practice*. Palgrave Publishers.

- Dutta, R.K. (2003). *Women Empowerment*. Reference Press. Delhi.
- Eeagly, A. Wood, W. (1999). *The study of Sex Differences in Human Behaviour: Evolved Dispositions Versus Social Roles*. *American Psychologist*, Vol.54 (6).
- Gender Perspectives on Development*. IGNOU School of Social Work.
- Gendering Human Development Indices: Recasting the Gender Development Index and Gender Empowerment Measure for India*.2009.
- Ghosh, B.N, and Chopra, P.K. (2001). *Gender and Development: Theory, History, Policy and Case*. Vol. 1, Wisdom House Publication.
- Gooch, P. (1998). *At The Tail of the Buffalo*. Department of Sociology, Lund University.
- Gupta, A. et al. (2011). *Women Working in Informal Sector in India: A Saga of Lopsided Utilization of Human Capital*. *International Conference on Economic and Financial Research*, Vol. 4, Singapore: IACSIT Press.
- Gupta, Anirudh. (1987). *Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Rights of Women*. *Gujjar Patrika*. (January-February2014).
- Gujjar Today*. (10 November 2013)
- Garland, D.R., and Escobar, D. (1988), *Education for Cross-Cultural social work practice*, *Journal of Social Work Education*, 24.3, 229-241
- Hate, C. (1969). *Hindu Women and Her Future*. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Bombay, New Delhi. Allied Publishers.
- Hirayama, H. and Cetingok, M. (1988), *Empowerment: A Social Work Approach for Asian Immigrants*, *Social Casework*, 69.1,41-47.
- Hokenstad, M.C. and Midgley, J. (1997), *Issues in International SocialWork*, Washington, D.C. NASW Press.
- Joshi S. (1986), *Multi-disciplinary Approach to Community Problemsin Social Work*, M.S. University of Baroda, Vadodara, India p.45.
- Kaha A.J. (1954), *The Nature of Social Work Knowledge in NewDirections in Social Work* ed. Cora Kasius, HHarper and Row, NewYork p.6.
- Thomas E.J. (1984), *Designing Interventions for the HelpingProfessions*, Sage Publications, Beverley, Beverley Hills.