

KURMAGHAR- A SOCIAL PROBLEM

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ABSTRACT-----

There were many misunderstanding about menstruation in Indian society till the scientific facts didn't come up. Today also, in many parts of India, there are certain misconceptions over menstruation. In the context of Maharashtra, if we study the Gadchiroli district specifically, we find unique ritual of segregating the menstruating women of any age group in a hut outside the village. This hut is called "Kurmaghar". It is also known as Kor, Gavkur, Khopadi etc. Kurmaghar means a hut made up of grass, bamboo, branches etc with no essential physical things around. In rainy season, water leaks through the grass ceiling and flooring made up of mixing clay and cowdung create mud inside the hut. A bathroom made up of old sarees or wooden plank. The women are prohibited from entering to the village even for life-essential commodities. If someone break the rule then they have to face the punishment given by villagers and Caste-assembly.-----

INTRODUCTION

City dwellers consider this rituals as horrible but for tribals in Gadchiroli districts, this is age old tradition. Today as well, many women working in tribal villages don't get rented house in village. This is because the working women cannot live in Kurmaghar during the menstruating days. Even there are certain reports for killing of women due to attacks of wild animals. One cannot deny the possibilities of sexual harassments. For all these matters, Kurmaghar has become the social issue and many social welfare NGOs are working towards eliminating the menace of the Kurmaghar.

PROBLEMS ARISES FROM KURMAGHAR

Security- Security is one of the main concern as women living in Kurmaghar has to live alone in hut outside the village where they may get expose to cold, inadequate sunlight, wild animals and sexual predators etc.

Scarcity of Help- During menstruation, no one can touch the menstruating women. This leads to scarcity of help during any emergency such as illness or disease. The woman cannot get timely attention and medical treatment.

Physical Exploitation- Adolescent girls and young women are vulnerable to drunk people and outsiders and sexual predators.

Nutrition- Inadequate nutrition lead to further deterioration of the health of the menstruating women. In total, tribals are poor and they cannot provide nutritious diet to the menstruating women,

Psychological and Emotional Support- Adolescent girls are more vulnerable to the inadequate psychological and emotional support as they have to stay away from home in Kurmaghar.

Death- In many instances, women living in Kurmaghar are vulnerable to death due to over bleeding, snake bites, attacks of wild animals etc.

Abolishing the Kurmaghar Tradition is Constitutional Indian constitution has conferred certain fundamental rights to citizens. Following are the certain provisions in the constitution through which Kurmaghar tradition can be abolished.

1. Gender Equality
2. No Gender Discrimination
3. Equal Opportunity to both Men and Women.
4. Equal rights to education to both men and women
5. Human Rights
6. Abolition of Untouchability
7. Improving the scientific temper.

SOME IMPORTANT SUGGESTIONS

1. Understanding the society and social system is very important before implementing any scheme which aims at changing the ageold traditions. Otherwise there are very less chances of successful implementation of the schemes or planning. Therefore it becomes very necessary to study the culture, tradition of the society in order to successful implementation of planning.
2. Lawlessness begins when ethics falls, when intentionally or unintentionally injustice takes place. Generally, good values, good traditions, standards of the society works for controlling and directing the society. Similarly, some prohibitions are imposed by the society to avoid confrontations and crimes. But when ethics fails, crime increases, injustice occurs then only law takes its own course.

SOME MEASURES**A. Counselling**

- a. Counselling of Women
 - i. Health Education
 - ii. Importance of healthy diet
 - iii. Personal Hygiene especially during the period of menstruation.
 - iv. Illness and diseases occur due to unhygienic conditions
 - v. Biological Process of menstruation
 - vi. Clearing the fact that motherhood directly link to menstruation
- b. Counselling of Men
 - i. Creating awareness about the menstruation among women.
 - ii. Importance of menstruation for motherhood and fatherhood
 - iii. Biological process of menstruation
 - iv. How reproductive system among men and women functions etc.
 - v. Explaining that menstruation is natural process and there is no harm or loss due to the touching of menstruating women.
- c. Counselling of men and women
 - i. Difference between genders
 - ii. Awareness against gender discrimination
 - iii. Gender Equality
 - iv. Physical/Sex Education
 - v. Menstruation- A natural process
 - vi. Link between menstruation and pregnancy.

- vii. Proud natural god-gifted womanhood means menstruation.
- viii. Importance of familiar, emotional and psychological support to women during menstruation.

B. Efforts to be taken on Government Level

- a. Provide training to ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers, women sarpanch, women Gram Panchayat members etc.
- b. Guidance from expert male or female doctor, social activists etc.
- c. Counselling to girls staying in orphanage, hostels etc.
- d. Organizing workshops at village level by Tribal Development Department.
- e. Distributing the banners and posters over disadvantages of sending women to Kurmaghar during menstruation.
- f. Providing free sanitary pads to the women from Ration Shops.
- g. Providing free special nutritious food packets of pulses, groats to menstruating women through ration shops. There shall be exclusively written that this packet is only for menstruating women. This will further create awareness among tribals that menstruating women need special diet.
- h. Creating fear among tribals by imposing fine of Rs. 500/- by Gram Panchayat if any tribal family sends its women to Kurmaghar during menstruation. Gram Sabha shall pass such order. It shall be controlled by Police Patil.
- i. Celebrating 28th May as Menstruation Hygiene day at urban, rurak, tribal areas. In order to increase the participation of adolescent girls, young women, efforts shall be taken.
- j. Showing Short Films. This can be most effective and motivating way to create awareness about menstruation among tribals. The short films shall depict the women and men who are doctors, engineers, lawyers, teachers, police etc. who don't follow any untouchability during the menstruation and follow the regular routine. This movies shall depict the hygiene maintain by them, usage of sanitary pads and regular affairs etc so that emulation can bring the change.

C. Law of Cultural Percolation-

Constitution abolished the untouchability but avoiding the touch by women during menstruation is also a form of untouchability. Interestingly, before the society, family members themselves follow untouchability against menstruating woman. Irony is so called well educated urban society as well follow this practise of untouchability during menstruation. Beside untouchability, menstruating women also don't allow to enter the temples and kitchen as well. Even, so called educated, working women are also seen following the practise along with men. This is only due to the lack of scientific attitude. This is the reason such women don't complaint against the discrimination and self respect. Recent Shani temple entry case is well known to all. In this age of science, such cases are condemnable. Many times, so called rationalists, liberals also support the segregation of such menstruating women by linking it with rest. Resting means staying with family and not doing any work but resting cannot be define as segregating the women during menstruation. In some families, women are not allowed to enter kitchen and temples but are allowed to do all the works such as washing, cleaning etc.

This is serious paradox. It will not be exaggeration to say that this so called literate modern society is more backward than illiterate tribal society. There are many instances which are common to both urban and tribal societies such as superstitions, black magic etc even if urban society is more literate that previous. Even if there is lack of literacy and awareness among tribals, the crimes such as inequality, rapes, dowry deaths, honor killings etc are not seen to that extent as in urban society. Life killing competition, emotional imbalance, depression, property accumulation are not seen in tribal society due to their attitude of living with nature. In the organizations like 'GOTUL', the traditions like freedom of choosing the life partner and staying in Kurmaghar during the menstruations are not seen as the traditions to create the inferiority complex among the tribal women.

Even after living in the vicinity of nature, this practise of segregating menstruating women in Kurmaghar took birth only to provide rest to the menstruating

women is unbelievable and illogical. Only because of lack of education and scientific temperament, women are subjected to living in Kurmaghar.

There is need of creating awareness for menstruation among tribal societies. Government implemented the project like building pakka house as Kurmaghar and providing amenities like beds, cupboard, bathrooms, toilets. But such projects are useless and illogical as this will not eliminate the root cause instead more strong the evil become. It will not end the practice of Kurmaghar, it will also not bring any change in the attitude of tribal people over menstruation. They will continue to live in the superstition of menstruation as impure and evil of god. It will further slow down the cause of women empowerment.

CONCLUSION

In recent times, tribal society is coming into the contact with urban society. Many tribal children are coming to the cities and urban areas for education and for livelihood. Many women in tribal societies do not wear blouse instead they use single piece of cloth to cover their entire body. But because of contact with urban society and rising the communication, the tribal women now starting wearing the sarees along with blouse. Also, all those tribal children who returned to their village after the education are bringing the changes in the tribal societies. Because of the percolation of education, many tribal people come to understand the biological importance of menstruation and they oppose the practices like Kurmaghar.

All those educated tribal children should oppose the practices of kurmaghar. For this they should take the support of law. Any person, despite of the age, who try to impose the practice like this should be dealt with heavy fine. Women should also oppose the practice by keeping scientific attitude. Now a days, women are getting the pregnancy leaves as well as parenting leaves. There should be provision of providing menstruation leave of atleast one day to the women in menstruating age. For this, women should take initiatives. There should be awareness campaigns over staying with families during the menstruation. The culture of fighting for the rights and against injustice should percolate from urban areas to rural areas to tribal areas.

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