

Chapter-15

IMPACT OF COVID 19 ON WOMEN HEALTH AND FINANCE

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Life loves to flow leaps and bound with beauty of nature and multiplies its charm and attraction with Freedom. Certainly for last many months, we have learnt to live with certain limitations- everyone's freedom was curtailed and compelled to survive the entire lockdown period within their four walls. Very unusual and unprecedented time we are passing through. During this lockdown period we had not heard any word directly from the outside world but Even this time has been enriching for our glossary as we get to add many new scientific and medical terms in our daily usage like Mutant, immunity,. Airborne, cantonment area, anti bodies, herd immunity, RT PCR etc. Life and society has taken a complete different turn from that of routine life we were used to live before 2020. Besides the change in everyone's life, a teacher, a student, a homemaker and a professional, we see transformation and change running deep down and going to be part and practice in our daily life ever after the Covid. The change is now the new order, the new normal.

Some of the main changes that we have added to our daily lifestyle as a result of covid times are: Technology, it had become our only friend and support especially through virtual classrooms, work from home and online teaching and online meetings. Besides, this technological changes and institutional transition during covid 19, --the pains, sufferings, scratches, trenches and harsh consequences are the bitter reality which and consequence of the pandemic which has not come into limelight. The impacts of crisis are never gender-neutral, and COVID-19 is no exception.

Being a patriarchal structure we have COVID-19 times had hit hard to female population of the nation. Here's how COVID-19 is rolling back on women's mental and physical health, economic gains of past decades. In a women life, the deliberations, debates and discussions on gender gaps and issues played remarkably and made us sit here and many other women and girls like us. But not all women are fortunate enough to discuss the prevailing discriminating issues with us. And we have to become crucial to uplift them and bring at par. And this struggle becomes tougher in every such pandemic and adverse situation. Women has always been vulnerable section of the society but we owe responsibility to slow down the pungent consequences reaching her and revert the gains towards gender equality.

No doubt, covid 19 hit the men and women on same scale but like everything is subject to certain exception, these sufferings also have an exception whereby women are major sufferers on the emotional, physical and financial fronts. Covid 19 has infected male and female both but due to some hormonal and biological reasons, male death rate is more than female. But the pressures on women are much more over a female.

India being a patriarchal society has inherent discrimination against women since the day she came in her mother's womb. There has been many theories prevalent in the society so as to ascertain the reason behind this discrimination, few of them are as follows:

- i) **Conflict Theory:** According to the CONFLICT THEORY, conflict occurs in all human relationships including family. By its very nature family is a unit of competing interest which results in conflict. Violence is one of the means of commanding one's command over other's command but unfortunately women were never being in the position of commanding rather she has always remained a door mat and the moment she asserts some interest of her own the conflict arises and this competing interest is used to be curtailed by other competing interest of man by use of violence or by curtailment of her voice. For example, when a less qualified man marries a highly qualified girl are more likely to use force and violence on family in order to maintain his dominant position.
- ii) **Social Exchange Theory:** See Caroline Hodges Persell, "Understanding Society-an Introduction to Sociology". Under the social exchange theory, human interaction is driven by pursuing rewards and avoiding punishments and costs. As per the social exchange theory, domestic violence occurs when costs do not outweigh rewards. As per this theory if one will do wrong he/she have to face the consequences but ultimately the women being vulnerable section has to face consequences at the end of men if she resists any of the needs or demands of her male partner. The social exchange theory offers a basis for law enforcement and prosecution of offender.
- iii) **Learned Helplessness Theory:** The "learned helplessness" theory argued that men battered because they had learned violence in their families as children, and women sought out abusive men because they saw their mothers being abused. This theory only gives an opinion that men has seen their mother being battered and beaten up by their fathers and less importance being given to them in their family by their father or other family members and that is why Men are behaving in that way only with their inmate partners, that is to say portraying the same they had seen in their childhood. While women despite being physically abused still lives with their male partners because women often have very rational reasons for staying. They may fear retaliation against themselves or their children, or they may not be able to financially support themselves or their children.
- iv) **Social Learning Theory:** According to some experts, there is a correlation between people who witness abusive behaviour in their earlier lives and those who

commit domestic violence later. In short, the social learning theory helps to explain why children who witness abuse sometimes grow up to be abusers themselves thereby providing rationale for corrective interventions to “unlearn” abusive behaviour.

- v) **Power and Control Wheel Theory:** This theory is based on the assumption that the purpose of the violence is to exert power and control over the woman. The perpetrator consciously uses these tactics to ensure the submissiveness of his partner to ensure that he gets his way and to get done what he wants. As per this theory, perpetrators of domestic violence bring into their intimate relationships certain expectations of who is in charge and what the acceptable mechanisms are for enforcing that dominance.
- vi) **Conservative Theory:** According to CONSERVATIVES, the major cause of family problems is the gradual loss of patriarchy. They assume that patriarchal families benefit men by supporting their egos and making them feel strong. There is division of labor between men and women which allows men to relax at home after a hard day's work while women were expected to do household work as well after having a hard day at work front. Supporters of this theory, believe that patriarchal families benefit women by giving them protection and support financially as well as physically.
- vii) **Marxian and Radical Feminist Theory:** According to Marxian and Radical feminists adopt a very different stance. According to them, the basic unit of society that is Family is the source of discrimination against women and subjugation of women was the major problem. However there is difference in opinion among the supporters of this theory some focus that cause of discrimination is because of economic and financial while other supporters believe that the basic biological difference between men and women is the main reason of this discrimination among families with the women.
- viii) **MODERATE THEORY:** According to Moderates, the main reason of violence and discrimination against women in society is the less participation of women in political and economic front of life and in the lack of sharing of responsibilities in child rearing and household tasks. Their solution is to modify the family so that men and women can share and enjoy responsibilities and privileges.
- ix) **Coercive Theory:** According to Coercive theory, male members of the family use force as a source of controlling other female members in the family. As per this theory, husbands used physical force or threat against wives because of

physical force is a coercive form of social control in the family and by this they can dominate their will and command over their female partners.

- x) **Cyclical Theory:** As per Walker's Cyclical theory of violence interaction between husband and wife tends to follow a cyclical pattern, that is to say, with each passing phase in life the nature of relationship between husband and wives keeps on changing. The cycle consists of tension-building phase, an acute phase and a tranquil, loving, non-violent phase. During the tension building phase minor violence such as slaps, pushes may occur. The second phase is the violent burst out. In this, male partner may attack physically or psychologically. In the last tranquil phase, the batterer may express remorse and shower the victims with gifts. This phase is an illusion of bliss because woman may convince herself that batterer will change his violent ways. And with passing time, this cycle repeats frequently and violence between husband and wives becomes more often.

Impact of Covid-19 On Women:

COVID-19 not only has affected World's Economy drastically but has also affected women in the most vulnerable way. It has taken back women's growth to the times that were prevalent decades back. There is need to specifically deal with each aspect of adverse effect on women:

The economic consequences of COVID-19 for women:

In rural areas, women's involvement on farms may go up in regions where there is shortage of labour due to a decrease in the number of migrant labourers. For instance, in India, during this year's harvest season (March- April), many migrants have moved back to their homes due to complete lockdown under the fear of survival. This may result in higher agricultural wages for women in the short-run. Therefore, the demand for women's time both within and outside the household may rise in rural India.

However, in urban areas, due to the greater proportion of nuclear families, women may be needed to support the family by being at home to take care of the sick family members and/or to support the family due to loss of jobs/earnings in the immediate future. In the long- run, however, if working from home becomes the norm, more work opportunities may become available to women who often prefer home-based work? But it has overburdened women with household quos as well as work quos. There has to be strike balance between two.

However, it is to be noted that these opportunities that women got in covid-19 women got was due to lack of available laborers, these opportunities are part-time.

Across the world, **women represent less than 40% of total employment but make up 57% of those working part-time.**

Extreme Emotional stress on women:

Under the threat of the new coronavirus pandemic, women have been uniquely impacted financially, economically, and socially. However, in terms of disease incidence and lethality, women perform better than men. The main reason is that, in addition to women's own hormonal protection, women's immune systems are superior to those of men.

Though women's death rate is low as compare to men's death rate in COVID-19 Times but still, the adverse impact of covid 19 is observed the most on women. Women face compounding burdens: they continue to do the majority of unpaid care work in households, face high risks of economic insecurity (both today and tomorrow), and face increased risks of violence, exploitation, abuse or harassment during times of crisis and quarantine. Or we can say she has become the most unsafe in quarantine times where her protectors have become the reason behind the violence inflicted on women within four walls of her house.

Women and Girls aged 15-49 experienced sexual and/or physical violence from their intimate partners in past years but during covid 19 the violence especially domestic violence has intensified by and large by 33% to 35%. Women are among those most heavily affected.

Women are at the forefront of the battle against the pandemic as they make up almost 70% of the health care workforce, exposing them to greater risk of infection, but unfortunately they are under-represented in leadership and decision making processes in the health care sector. Moreover, due to persistent gender inequalities across many dimensions, women's jobs, businesses, incomes and wider living standards may be more exposed than men's to the anticipated widespread economic fallout from the crisis.

The travel restrictions, at-home quarantines, school and day-care centre closures, and the increased risks faced by elderly relatives has imposed additional burdens on women, even when both women and their partners are confined only women were expected to continue work from home and to carry both responsibilities single handedly. Nut still the plight of women has not represented in India.

Loss of Education to women: Women who are affected by the suspension of classes:

For women around the world, coronavirus has impacted not only their physical health but also their everyday life. The coronavirus pandemic caused most schools to suspend classes, forcing many working women to take time off to care for their children, which greatly affected their work. Many schools have postponed the start of the academic year, which has forced many women to take leave from work so as to stay at home with their children, affecting their Fundamental Right to work. In addition, the pandemic has impacted industries such as catering and tourism, and many factories have been forced to shut down. Many low-income women financially depend on these jobs and are now facing unemployment.

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) pointed out that coronavirus has spread rapidly throughout Asia. The BBC summarizes the six levels of Asian women seriously affected by the pandemic. As per BBC, Married women in East Asia traditionally bear excessive family responsibilities, and this new coronavirus crisis has made women feel more depressed. In most families, men are considered to be the one who support family in financial way, so they cannot take leave. Therefore, women were compelled to take leave to take care of their children at home. For this reason, many companies' crisis-related layoffs have focused on female employees. On other hand side in Companies, working mothers are considered as a burden, which is reflecting the difficult situation of women and gender inequalities in the workplace, whereby women were compelled to share both responsibilities but were made to face the ill consequences singly.

Women facing domestic violence and divorce:

The spread of the new coronavirus pneumonia pandemic has caused hundreds of millions of people to be quarantined at home, which has also led to a continuous increase in domestic violence and divorce cases. In fact as per the data released by UN women, over more than 34 million have faced domestic violence within four walls of their home. increased unpaid care and domestic work, income loss, and domestic violence under quarantine measures may cause women to fall into a more serious predicament. It is also seen that women are least cared member at families and their health and emotions generally goes unattended. In Indian society the problem of violence against women in the family is not new. Women in our society have been the victims of humiliation, torture and exploitation from the time immemorial irrespective of the fact that they were also worshipped. Family is considered as the first agency, which provides not only emotional and material support to its members but also serves as basic source of personal satisfaction, socialization and social control. Due to

patriarchy in our family system, the family does not give equal importance to all members as role, power and status are strictly determined by age and gender.

Moreover, family being considered as a private domain, even abuse, exploitation, injustice, discrimination and violence are allowed in our patriarchal structure.

Throughout the history, women have traditionally been regarded as inferior to man in both power and status. As in Elizabethan times, in all societies the obvious biological difference between men and women is used as justification for forcing them into different social roles which limit and shape their attitudes and behavior.

Role of Women in Covid-19 Times:

Women who are front-line medical staff:

Women are at the forefront of the battle against the pandemic as they make up almost 70% of the health care workforce, exposing them to greater risk of infection, but unfortunately they are under-represented in leadership and decision making processes in the health care sector. Moreover, due to persistent gender inequalities across many dimensions, women's jobs, businesses, incomes and wider living standards may be more exposed than men's to the anticipated widespread economic fallout from the crisis.

Compared with the male-dominated health care system, female medical staff are more likely to be exposed to the risk of the spread of coronavirus. During the fight against the coronavirus pandemic in all most all the countries, female medical staff had to be at the forefront of the crisis to assist in patient care. In addition, if a female nurse is pregnant, both the nurse and her fetus are at risk of infection, which causes psychological stress to the mother. Wearing protective clothing can restrict the movement of medical personnel, such as going to the toilet or eating. If the hospital lacks adequate protective clothing, it is very inconvenient for first-line medical staff who work long hours, especially women. Female providers may also be uncomfortable during menstruation and unable to regularly change their menstrual supplies, which highlights the additional difficulties faced by female medical staff during the covid-19 pandemic.

Women migrant workers from various countries who face exploitation Women working as domestic helpers, and especially who have migrated from native state are facing scourge of covid 19 heavily. In some places, they have become infected because they do not wear masks. Since their employers do not provide masks, female migrant workers must purchase them at their own expense. However, masks can be expensive, and some women cannot afford them, which makes women vulnerable to infection. Women who are under significant physical and mental pressure

In fact, women may endure a greater physiological and psychological impact because of the pandemic. A survey from UN Women shows that, although men are more likely to die from coronavirus, women may disproportionately shoulder the psychological and emotional impact of the pandemic. For example, increased unpaid care and domestic work, income loss, and domestic violence under quarantine measures may cause women to fall into a more serious predicament. It is also seen that women are least cared member at families and their health and emotions generally goes unattended.

Women who face negative long-term economic consequences:

Economists predicted that global economic growth will be altered due to the coronavirus pandemic, and there may even be a global economic crisis, each field will suffer from grave economic crisis. However, low-income women are particularly vulnerable to slower rates of consumption because they often work in hospitality, retail, or other service industries. Without an employment contract, the pandemic has prevented them from working and has caused them to lose their income. These women are forced to stay at home to exhaust their savings and may take on debt to pay for accommodation.

Positive Side of Covid-19 Panedamic on Women:

As per reports published by WHO, Women have demonstrated better resistance to and a higher survival rate against coronavirus. During the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) outbreaks, male mortality was higher. Recent studies have found that the death rate of coronavirus was 2.8% among infected men in Wuhan and 1.7% among infected women in Wuhan. Another positive impact on women is that some rural women who were always remained behind locked door has come up to the farms though they were allowed because of non-availability of the labors due to sudden imposition of nationwide lockdown. Roots and realities are not the sharp contrast during covid 19 on comparing gender aspects. It is not the covid 19 which has impacted women heavily and face the scourge of pandemic over the other male counterparts. The roots and problems lies in

our social structures and patterns which devastate the sufferings of women even during the pandemic. The gender disparity and gender gaps were existing in our society since ages. Covid 19 has not been the reason but just triggered and added to the intensity and form of discriminations women has been subjugated to.

Conclusion Women have been significantly impacted by the coronavirus pandemic and face difficulties in different aspects whether in economic front, household front or family front. which has caused considerable harm to the health and peace of women. While the incidence of coronavirus in women and the mortality rate among women are much lower than those of men, the relatively weak social and economic situation still requires government attention. In this epidemic, the government needs to plan for women as follows:

1. In the work aspect, to regulate the working conditions of women reasonably, to extend the working hours by medical staff properly compensated, and to provide the quality of work conditions, including appropriate rest and increase the time to go to the toilet;
2. In the material aspect, to provide women's menstrual supplies and protective equipment avoiding wearing clothing longer over;
3. In the social aspect, to take care of women who have been quarantined or infected, to take home epidemic prevention completely and to provide a safe place for accompanying their families;
4. In the education aspect, it is required to strengthen school epidemic prevention measures and to adopt distance teaching methods away from cross infection among students;
5. In the economic aspect, Government should provide women with cheaper epidemic protection equipment, unemployment benefits, lower tax burden, and to increase job opportunities;
6. In the family aspect, there must be awareness camps as to aware family members to give equal importance to women in the family and not to consider them as a working machine and to provide manpower to help women raise children and take care of their families,
7. To provide effective and speedy protection to women who were being victim of violence within their families and Government should provide them financial help as well as job opportunities so as they can support themselves financially.