

About the Book

In this book, the status of women from the Vedic period to modern period has been outlined. Also, in the modern environment, what kind of difficulties women have to face in the new fields in which they have stepped. An attempt has been made to analyze what kind of changes is being reflected in the identity of women after globalization. Theoretical and empirical articles have been presented in the context of the status of women in post-modernism. Apart from this, women have to face social problems like problems in their workplace, domestic violence etc. These are also analyzed in this book.

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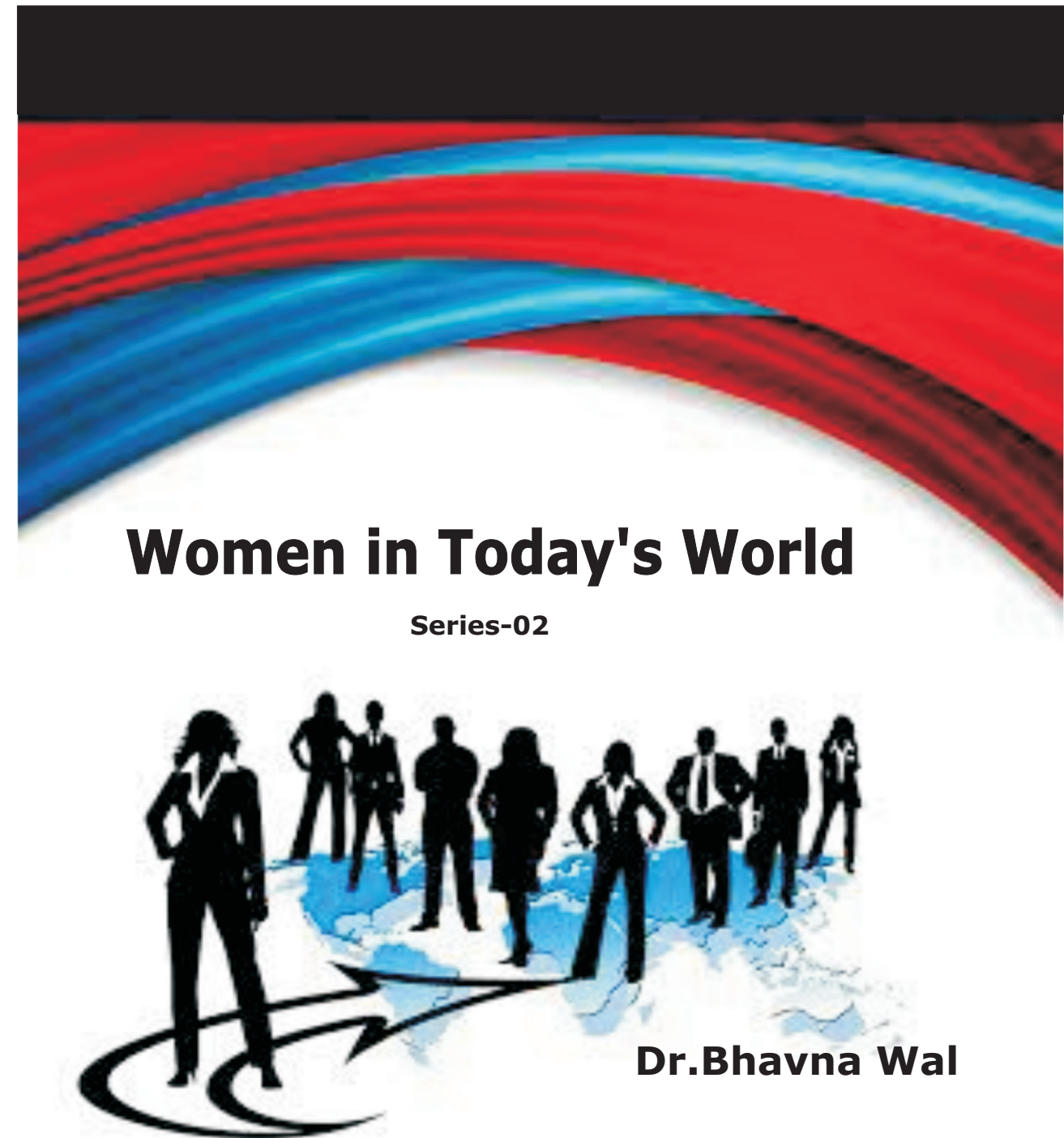


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Women in Today's World
Series-02

Dr. Bhavna Wal



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Women in Today's World

Series 2

Dr. Bhavna Wal

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Series 2

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पर्शियन साहित्य विभाग प्रमुख

यशवंतराव चव्हाण कला व विज्ञान महाविद्यालय मंगरूळपीर

Chapter-12

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PREFACE

In early times, the status of women in India was inferior to man in the day-to-day life. However, they had a privileged status in scriptures. They are considered as the perfect homemaker in the world. With their incomparable quality of calmness of mind, they can easily handle the toughest situation. Indian women are completely devoted to their families. They are preached in the name of *Saraswati*, *Durga*, *Parvati* and *Kali*.

Traditionally, women were considered to be caretakers of home. They had to look after the running of family smoothly, they had to manage the expenses in the most economical way possible, they had to look after aged in-laws, nurture the child, etc. They were expected to obey orders of their husband, elders of the family, but kept in isolation when it came to major decision related to the family. The women were not too educated (formal education) in the past eras. They would be married off one day to their in-laws place and hence would not need too much knowledge was the previous thinking. There were women in older days too, who were well educated and led paths of success in many sphere of life, because of support from their families. It is these women who lead paths of change and brought about a transformation in the way people viewed women in the society.

The scenario of women is slowly changing in recent years especially after the globalization. We can see a slow and steady rise of women in all fields of importance. Women of today are not just restricted to cooking and taking care of their households, they have to step out their comfort zones to create their own identity in the outside world as well. This is in short, can be termed as women empowerment. Society has now changed its stand and the way it looks at women, due to the progress achieved by women in all spheres of life. Men today are more understanding towards the women in their lives, yet we here many cases of harassment against women.

The women have completely transformed in the modern day, the urban women specially has changed from being a mere homemaker to the modern day multitasking women, handling responsibility without fear. She had taken on the world with confidence. Women of today handle their duties and chores at home, manage a career outside their home, nurture their children and balance their family lives with their professions. This is the scene in most of the urban households today. Modern day women are independent, takes right decisions boldly, stands up for their rights and walks the path of success. Women are well educated, they have crossed horizons, and their presence can be felt in male dominated areas. Women have been sent on many space missions. We see women rise as journalists, politicians, doctors, engineers, lawyers, actors and in many other professional spheres. Women of today, choose the right career paths that determine their future and thus we see them excelling in every walks of life.

Now a days, the status of women in India has greatly improved and there are many women who are holding high and prestigious position in the government offices and private organizations. The activities of women are in all sides of present day economy in India. This has proved that, women can be even better than man if they are given an opportunity. The women should be given equal opportunity like their male counterparts by the central and state governments of India. Women's day is celebrated, not to glorify the beauty and grace of women, but to bring about awareness among the public regarding women's safety. Women need to be strengthen themselves by building up their inner strengths. They should work on increasing their moral strength and face the world without fear. Women are taught to be bold and outgoing in these days of modernism. We should empower the women in our lives to lead independent lives. They should be taught to be self reliant and should not depend on anyone to meet their goal.

Chapter-8

Women Empowerment in Slums of Varanasi: An Analysis of Education, Health and role in Decision- making

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Abstract

Though women in slums are bread earners for their families, they are still lagging. The story of women in urban slums is very different from other women as they have to live a very challenging life. Women slum dwellers often get deprived of their necessities like nutritious food, health, etc. and this deprivation leads to problems related to physical as well as mental health, hygiene, education, social security, etc. Women work at par with men in several domains yet a huge portion of this so-called 'second sex' is still fighting their war of equality and empowerment. Empowerment refers to economic empowerment often, while there is very little emphasis is given on education, health (including mental health) and psychological empowerment including a strong role in the decision-making process. The study

is based on a primary survey of slums of Varanasi city and aims to analyse three dimensions of women empowerment i.e., education, health and participation in decision making across different geographical zones in the city. The study also tries to analyse different socio-economic and psychological factors affecting the conditions of women and are responsible for the lower level of women empowerment in slums of the city. It is revealed that most women living in slums are experiencing an unsatisfactory and low level of basic services and resources which are necessarily required for their empowerment. The study also found that low socio-economic conditions, low level of literacy, patriarchal mindset and religious dogmatism are affecting the conditions of women and are responsible for the lower level of women empowerment in slums of the city.

Introduction:

Living in slums has always been very challenging and it is more challenging in developing countries like India especially for marginalized groups. Though the definition of slum varies from study to study which has its obvious implication on the connotation of the term and ultimately on the estimate of slum population (Mitra, 1994) but slums are generally the most pitiful, deprived and excluded form of the informal settlements, characterised by poverty and large agglomerations of dilapidated housing often located in the most hazardous urban land (UN Habitat, 2015). Census of India operationally defines a slum as an area of the city either 'notified or recognised by Union/State government' or 'a compact area of at least a population of 300 or about 60-70 households or poorly built congested tenements, in an unhygienic environment usually with inadequate infrastructure and lacking in proper sanitary and drinking water facilities' (Census of India, 2011).

Life is tough in the slum where no basic facilities are offered and for women, the difficulties are particularly more serious (COHRE, 2008). In the awful living state of slums, while taking care of other family members women often get deprived of their necessities like

nutritious food, health, etc. and this deprivation leads to problems related to physical as well as mental health, hygiene, education, social security, etc. (Jha, Harshwardhan & Tripathi, 2015).

Women often arrive in the city with inadequate resources and skills for livelihood, however, many of them end up in urban slums which are close to commercial areas and work opportunities (COHRE, 2008).

According to Census of India 2011, about 65 million people live in urban slums in Indian cities and the slum population sex ratio jumped from 887 women for every 1000 men in 2001 to 928 in 2011. It is better when compared to the leap in the sex ratio for the rest of the urban population which improved from 904 in 2001 to 929 in 2011. It is also interesting to note that women of the slums represent one of the strongest forces for the progress of millions of urban families living in poverty. They take care of the different households and are also often the core breadwinners for their own families (UN Habitat, 2014).

Numerous studies and researches have already been done to know about the socio-economic as well as psychological conditions (For example, Tripathi, 2010; Malhotra & Shah, 2015) of women living in slums of India but still more exhaustive study is required to identify the concrete picture. The living conditions and quality of life in slums represent the worst of urban poverty. People living in slums face serious challenges in their efforts to survive and urban lack basic services and infrastructure (Ishtiyak & Kumar, 2011; Bandyopadhyay and Agrawal, 2013; Cohen, 2014; Jha and Tripathi, 2015; Tripathi & Harshwardhan, 2016). The study of Mittal and Ketkar (1970) found socio-economic factors such as education, religion, place of residence, and standard of living, are some important factors, which exert an influence on individual personality. Pande (2005), states that the socio-economic condition of slum women is usually more critical and pathetic than in non-slum areas. Goswami & Manna (2013) discusses the strong linkage between economic prosperity and enriching the quality of life. It is reflected by psycho-social indicators of health, longevity, literacy and environmental sustainability and these, in turn, present a pathetic picture of the living conditions of slums dwellers. Jha and Tripathi

(2014) reasoned that the situation of slums is nastiest in developing countries like India and presents a pathetic picture of life in slums of Varanasi due to unrestrained and rapid urbanization.

Recent Studies on women living in the slums indicate an optimistic picture. Even though many risk factors like violence, low literacy rate, dowry issues and few more were identified by Jungari, Chauhan, Bomblec, & Pardhidwere (2020). There is a beam representing the literature which speaks a lot about financial inclusion (Bhatia & Singh, 2019) and providing freedom to the women in every sphere of their life so that they are able to operate firmly in the society. Empowerment is preventing them from being trapped under the societal norms and helps them in combatting against domestic violence (Donta, Nair, Begum, & Prakasam, 2016). Within a scenario which is witnessing a momentum of change towards the betterment of women, ground level analysis required to be conducted to address different issues which women face in the urban slums.

The study aims to analyse three dimensions of women empowerment i.e., education, health and participation in decision making across different geographical zones. The study also tries to analyse different socio-economic and psychological factors affecting the conditions of women and are responsible for the lower level of women empowerment in slums of the city.

Varanasi City and its Slums:

Varanasi city lies between the 25° 15' N to 25° 22' N latitude and 82° 57' E to 83° 01' E longitudes and is located on the proper ridge of *Kanaker* which forms the left crescent-shaped bank of the Ganga River in the middle Ganga plain. The city is a part of 'Varanasi Urban Agglomeration' (VUA) and classified as one of the million cities of India. It is also known as Kashi or Banaras having a continuous history dating back 3,000 to 5,000 years and is known as one of the oldest living cities in the world.

Due to migration from surrounding areas and rapid increase in the population of the city, formal housing market could not meet the

increasing demand which leads to proliferation of informal settlements/slums as migrant population occupied both private and public vacant lands (JNNURM-CDP, 2006). Another factor, which contributes to the formation of slums, is the proximity to the workplace and low level of income and the un-affordability of pucca houses because these workers are mainly labourers, *Rickshaw* Pullers and *Thela* Keepers (JNNURM-CDP, 2006; Tripathi, 2010). Slums in Varanasi city have been continuously growing since 1941 (Jha and Tripathi, 2014) and spread all over the city consisting of about one-third population of the city. According to the Slum free city Plan of Action (2013), Varanasi city has a total of 209 notified slums. The total population living in slums is 407036, which accounts for 34% of the city population as per census 2011.

The majority of the working population in the slums is engaged in silk weaving; making of betel leaves, handicrafts, carpets, rugs, durries, wholesale business, home-based small businesses, rickshaw pullers and as *safaikarmacharis*. On the other hand, women in the families are majorly involved in incense stick making, basket making and domestic help (SFCPA-Varanasi, 2013).

Sample Slums:

Out of 209 slums, 92 slums are located in the middle geographical zone; 72 slums are located in the core, and only 52 slums are located in the outer zone. For spatial analysis, the city has been divided into three geographical zones based on the street plan, land use and morphology. Informal settlements have been categorised into different categories by the house types and physical attributes (Jha, Harshwardhan & Tripathi, 2019). From each geographical zone, four slums had been selected as sample slums to assess the status and empowerment level of women slum dwellers. From every sample slum, 32 households (total 384 households) had been chosen using systematic random sampling technique and every household was interviewed through a structured interview schedule. These slums are located in different parts of the geographical zones. Figure 1: Presents the Map showing the location of the sample slums in the city

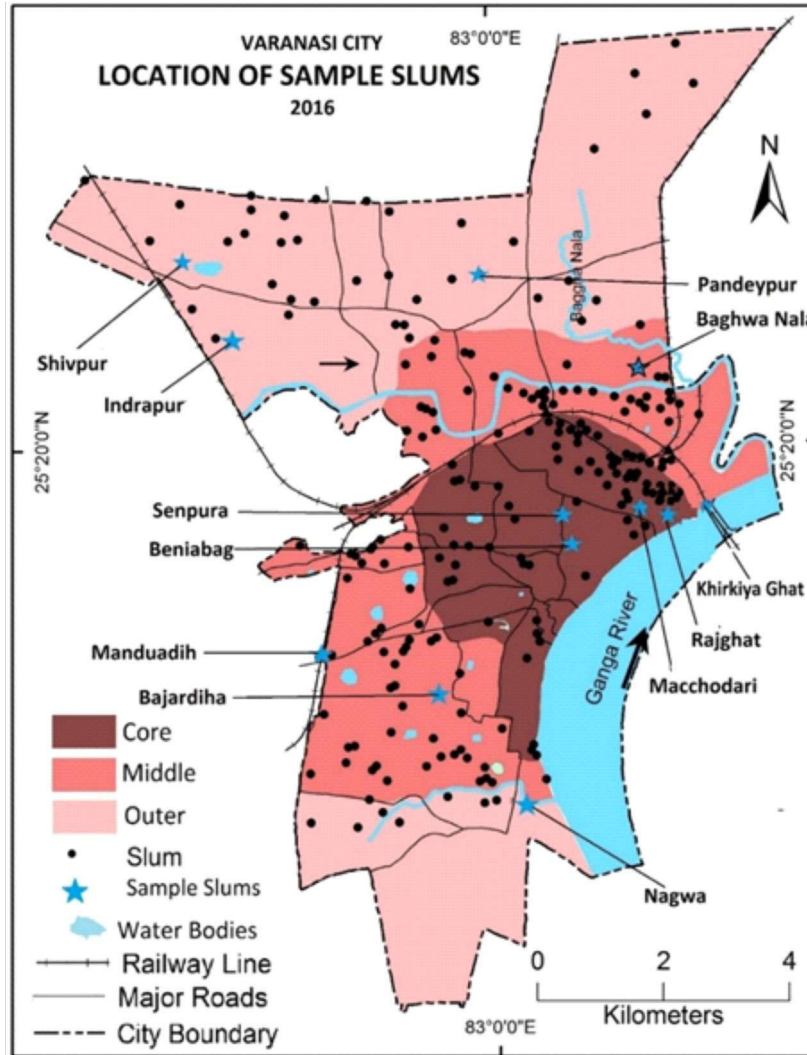


Figure 1

Socio-religious and Demographic Characteristics:

Socio-religious structure of the surveyed slum presents a diverse picture. With more than 98 % of the Hindu population, slums located in the core of the city present Hindu dominance in the core of this ancient and holy city. Whereas, Middle and Outer zone have a higher

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concentration of Muslims than the core recording 44.5 % and 39.1% respectively. The majority of the Muslim population is migrants and emigrated from West Bengal. Some of them are Bangladeshi Muslims settled in India. Two slums (Baghwa Nala and Bajardiha) in the middle zone and two slums (Indrapur and Pandeypur) in the outer zone are Muslim-dominated slums. Bajardiha and Pandeypur consist of only Muslim slum dwellers of West Bengal. Bagwa Nala consists of *Harijan basti* dominated by SC population and *Jhuggi Jhopri* dominated by Muslims. In the core, i.e., the Rajghat slums, only a few Muslims are found.

Caste and the social category have been considered very significant in the Indian social, political and economic system. It can be easily observed that core and outer zones are dominated by Schedule Caste, while the middle zone is dominated by Other Backward Class. The main reason behind this OBC dominance is that a majority of Muslim slum dwellers reside in these zones, who belong mainly to the OBC category. The General category and Schedule Tribes have a very low share in the population of slums in the city. Slum residents belong to the general category only found in the core while ST people are found in middle zone and they are basically migrants who come from the neighbour state of Jharkhand.

Income is majorly affected by the type of work. In the core and outer zone, slum dwellers were engaged in the government sector as sweepers, Multi-Tasking Staff, etc and some others were vendors, these two groups earn more than other groups who work with the private sector and/or are engaged as Labourer, *Rickshaw* puller and Boatmen.

Table 1 gives detailed basic information of surveyed households of different slums located in various zones of the city. The male and female percentage of the total population is almost equal in every zone but variations can be seen at the slums level.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the surveyed slums

Zone	Male %	Female %	Literacy rate	Male literacy rate	Female literacy rate	Total Working rate	Male working rate	Female working rate
Core	50.80	49.20	43.50	50.39	36.39	32.49	54.05	10.24
Middle	49.93	50.07	27.22	37.23	17.24	35.46	44.68	26.26
Outer	52.97	47.03	58.03	65.85	49.23	39.51	45.63	32.62
Varanasi City	51.18	48.82	42.49	51.02	33.55	35.71	48.18	22.65

Source: Personal Field Survey, 2016-17

Rajghat in the core zone and Baghwa Nala in the middle zone are two slums where female percentage to total percentage is more than male, while in other slums male percentage is higher than female. Though literacy rate is low in each zone and each slum but variation can be seen at both zone and slum level. The literacy rate is found to be the lowest in middle zone as the majority of Muslims and migrant workers who do not have an adequate resource as well as are unaware of the importance of education, reside there. Three out of four surveyed slums in middle zone have less than 30 % literacy rate. When we compare the male literacy rate to the female literacy rate, it can be easily observed that female literacy is much lower. In middle zone, three slums have less than 20% female literacy. It is also significant to note that the condition of Muslim-dominated slums, irrespective to their zones, is very bad in terms of female literacy. Senpura and Manduadih are two Hindu SC class-dominated slums where female literacy was found to be the lowest. The total working rate is below 50 % in all zones and female working rate is much lower. It is also notable that female working rate increases from core to outer zone. In outer zone, the majority of women work as house-maids and vendors while in middle and core they work as a sweeper. It is also found that in Muslim settlements more restrictions were imposed on females.

Education: Education is one of the core dimensions to access socio-economic conditions and quality of life. It is momentous for women's empowerment because it enables them to aspire and work

for their dreams, respond to the challenges, confront their traditional gender roles and change their (Shetty & Hans, 2015) as well as their children's lives. Education enables women to recognize their rights, to help them become economically independent as well as give them voices in decision-making process of the family and the community. In slums, females are more deprived in terms of education and health dimension, so it is very important and necessary to include female literacy and education dimension in the study of empowerment.

Table 2: Indicators of Education

Indicators	Option	Core	Middle	Outer	Total
Are all children of your family going to school?	Yes	63.3%	39.8%	73.4%	58.9%
	No	36.7%	60.2%	26.6%	41.1%
No female household member is literate	---	53.9%	66.4%	37.5%	52.6%

Source: Personal Field Survey, 2016-17

Table 2 provides two basic data about the educational attainment of the slum dwellers. It can be observed that more than 40% of households have at least one school-age child which is deprived of education and it is important to note that the deprived child were girls in a majority of cases. The condition of middle zone is worst which records the highest percent i.e. 60% of households where children are out of school. The other data provide information about the gender dimension in education and it can be seen that 52.6% of households do not have any literate female member. Again, middle zone records the highest score where more than 66 % of households are deprived followed by core. The outer zone performed best in these educational indicators. The factors behind this pattern were religious dogmatism, gender roles in patriarchal families, social systems and lack of resources.

Women's Health in Slums:

Health is a very broad term that encompasses physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (WHO, n.d.). For a long time, the health of women was most neglected both in research and practice even in the best urban parts of the world. But statistics alarmed when the male-female ratio started showing a huge rift, it then started to be considered as important.

The financial crunches which are prevalent in the slums cause deprivation of women even in the case of basic health care and appropriate child delivery services. Despite the government schemes like Pradhan Mantri SurakshitMatritva Abhiyan which has been launched by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW), Government of India, and regular encouragement by different health service providers and NGOs there is a high instance of childbirth at home in the country. In a few slums, women deliver their children at home because of inaccessibility to primary health centers, high cost of delivery, and even due to traditional customs. Additionally, women in slums who have more children are often deprived of good health, nutritious food, and health care because of economic constraints, household responsibilities, etc. Research have indicated that the number of children is one of the important indicators showing the status of women in the family as well as their overall health.

With a growth in the number of slums in the urban area, there was a need to understand and address the challenges faced by female slum dwellers. A study by Kapadia-Kundu & Kanitkar (2002) on urban slums in Maharashtra in 1999 indicated that women living in slums were more disadvantaged concerning antenatal care than were women not living in slums. This was reaffirmed by another study by Sundar, & Sharma (2002) that compared the health status of poor populations in slums and resettlement colonies in Delhi and Chennai and found that slum dwellers had worse health outcomes than those in resettlement colonies. Problems like headache, backache, dizziness, asthma, came across more in number among the women in slums of Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh (Palivela & Prasada, 2018).

Mental health is an integral and essential component of health. It is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes their abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and can make a contribution to his or her community (WHO, n.d.). The mental health of women living in poverty is a growing public health concern, particularly in India where the burden of illness is compounded by critical shortages in mental health providers (Atal & Foster, 2021).

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They did a thematic analysis of women’s descriptions of the word tension and identified three interrelated causal categories: family relationships, social roles, and poverty. Women living in slum areas were more prone to developing mental disorders and poorer mental health (Abdi, Rahnamaei, Shojaei, Afsahi, & Mahmoodi, 2021).

Table 3 shows the two major health indicators collected from different geographical zones of Varanasi city. These indicators are proxy indicators to access the level of deprivation in terms of health.

Table 3: Indicators of Health

Indicators	Option	Core	Middle	Outer	Total
The average number of children per woman in your family	1-2	28.9%	9.4%	21.9%	20.1%
	3-4	60.2%	74.2%	48.4%	60.9%
Place of delivery	More than 4	10.9%	16.4%	29.7%	19.0%
	At home	24.2%	48.4%	43.8%	38.8%
	Trained dai	8.6%	3.9%	7.0%	6.5%
	In hospital	67.2%	47.7%	49.2%	54.7%

Source: Field Survey, 2016-17

As depicted in Table 3, the average number of children per woman provides information about the mother as well as child care in the family. The data says that more than 60% of households have 3-4 children per woman. Though it is not satisfactory according to the population policy of India. In the outer region approx 30% of households record more than 4 children per woman followed by the middle zone(16.4%). The second indicator is the place of delivery. The figure state that more than 50 % of households in sample slums go to the hospital for child delivery. This is due to government programs that provide financial support to the poor for child delivery in the hospital. But we cannot ignore that in 38% of households child delivery is just housework without any medical assistance. The middle zone records the highest percentage of households (48.4%) where child delivery takes place in the home followed by the outer zone (43.8%). It was also found that Muslim migrant families who lived in the middle zone are very conservative and do not believe in family planning and do not even care about their mother’s health.

Slum-dwellers of Varanasi differentiated madness from tension equated it with mental illness and described it as a serious psychological state that results from experiencing too much tension or from internalizing tension. Madness was associated with danger, difference, and more negative social consequences. The majority of female dwellers accepted that they are under stress due to marital problems or economic crunch.

Women are more likely to be victims of violence in their homes; emotional, physical, and/or sexual abuse is estimated to be nearly 40% among married women in India (Malhotra & Shah, 2015). Women who experience such violence are far more likely to suffer from depression and alcohol use and to attempt suicide (Nayak, Patel, Bond, & Greenfield, 2010). Cultural norms surrounding marriage and male child preference also precipitate distress among women. Studies on low-income mothers show that they are at greater risk for developing postnatal depression if they fail to give birth to sons (Pereira, Andrew, Pednekar, Pai, Pelto, & Patel, 2007). Even more, one in seven women suffered (Intimate Partner Violence)IPV during or shortly after pregnancy (Das et al., 2013). CARE (2017)also found that a majority of women are affected by violence – at the household level, in their colonies and public places–both physical and verbal. The situation of slum dwellers of Varanasi is not different and they are also facing the same problem. More than 80% of women respondents in the slums of Varanasi accepted that they have experienced physical or sexual violence at home or workplace. It is also important to note that female slum dwellers are the victim of torture and violence despite they are working. The main reason behind this was the patriarchal mentality which seems to treat women inferior to men. It is also significant that women dwellers residing in middle zone was more prone to violence as they are not working, illiterate and living in rigid Muslim orthodox families.

Women Empowerment

In the era, which marks the prevalence of equality, there is still an urge to look deeper into the actual scenario. Women work at par with

men in several domains yet a huge portion of this so-called 'second sex' is still fighting their war. When we talk about empowerment, we refer to economic empowerment while there is very little talk about psychological empowerment in the literature. Needless to say that despite women in slums being bread earners for their families, they are still lagging. The story of women in urban slums is very different from other women as they have to live a very challenging life.

According to the organization Habitat for Humanity, 'Urbanisation brings both hope and despair to the lower class, unskilled Indian woman. The desire to move to an urban area is so great that in rural areas it is considered a matter of pride to be married off to someone who works in the informal sector of any of the big cities or to send a daughter off to work as domestic help in one of the middle-class households. An organization named CARE in their report entitled, 'Poor Women in Urban India: Issues and Strategies' has provided a profile of Women in Slums of India. The key findings reveal that Women slum dwellers are often first-generation migrants who moved to the city with their husbands, driven by financial needs and aspirations, no or low level of educational background and rare vocational skills and hence working as Casual Labour and Domestic Workers. They consider their earnings as essential, even though supplementary to their spouses'; however, in the same vein, they confess that their current work is giving them neither sufficient returns nor work satisfaction. In certain communities (esp. Muslims), women are prevented from working and their earnings are considered haraam (or forbidden)(CARE, 2017).

Women Empowerment in slums of Varanasi: Four major Women Empowerment indicators displayed in Table 4 were discussed in reference to the various geographical zones of Varanasi. These four indicators broadly evaluate the environment of households in terms of women's empowerment.

Table 4: Condition of Women Empowerment in slums of Varanasi

Geographical Zone	Women empowerment indicators			
	allowed to have a property in their name	allowed to avail education	allowed to work outside their home	participate in decision making
Core	45.3%	61.7%	67.2%	84.4%
Middle	15.6%	38.3%	74.2%	93.0%
Outer	63.3%	75.0%	95.3%	92.2%
Total	41.4%	58.3%	78.9%	89.8%

Source: Personal Field Survey, 2016-17

Property ownership is one of the most important indicators and it can be seen that more than 50% of households don't allow their female members to own property. This is lowest in the middle zone (15.6%) followed by core (45.3%). Female education is considered very important but 40% of households do not allow women to get educated either due to their orthodox perception or shortage of resources. The remaining two indicators show a better picture as 79% of households allow women to work outside their home and women in 90% of households participate in decision making. Women living in slums are forced to do work and earn money to manage household expenses due to inflation and increasing needs due to globalization. Therefore, it can be stated that women in slums work due to compulsion but it also empowers them to make their voices loud in the family. Though the percentage of households is high where women participate in decision making, even then it is not presenting a complete and clear picture.

Participation of slum women in Decision Making:

Decision-making is a marker of the status of women in their families as well as in society. It is not only an important indicator of empowerment but also cognitive enrichment and enhancement. In a male-dominated society like India, it represents her importance and position. Thanks to women empowerment since the situation is changing and women are found taking part in every sphere be it the

workplace, family, or society. Women have come forward to participate in decision-making at par with their male counterparts. Women's role as decision-makers in various areas is possible because of the nuclear family system in India (Jha, Harshwardhan & Tripathi, 2016). For a few years, the condition of women in the country is moving towards being more conducive as many government schemes like Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), Pradhan Mantri Jivan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY), and Atal Pension Yojana (APY) are helping women cope up and empower themselves financially.

Economic empowerment is one of the most important dimensions of overall empowerment. When it comes to decisions related to household expenses, a majority of women in slums are bread earners for their families but very few are actively involved in the major decision-making process. Small decisions about day-to-day activities are observed to be taken by the women but a major component of decision making is still in the hands of their partners. Even before marriage, they are dependent upon their guardians for matters related to marriage. Education opportunities are negligible and often women are found struggling between work and family with minimum say over various matters. After she gets married she is given a secondary position even on matters related to childbirth, education of her children, and even their marriage.

Although participation in decision-making is a very significant aspect of women's empowerment, their participation in different dimensions of decision-making gives a more accurate picture of women's empowerment. For this purpose, it is important to look into different decision-making types concerning women's participation in the different geographical zones of Varanasi (Table 5).

Table 5: Participation of Slum Women in Different type of Decision-making

Geographic Decision-making Type						
	Household expense	Marriage	Marriage of her child	Education of her child	Her fertility	Economic affairs
Core	89.1%	36.7%	37.5%	38.3%	27.3%	24.2%
Middle	90.6%	19.5%	50.8%	12.5%	12.5%	28.9%
Outer	89.8%	20.3%	62.5%	53.1%	14.8%	56.3%
Total	89.8%	25.5%	50.3%	34.6%	18.2%	36.5%

Source: Personal Field Survey, 2016-17

Table 5 reveals that women participate in making decisions regarding household expenses in 89.8% of households but it is decreasing when we observe other types of decision making. There are no significant differences across zones. One important trend which is notable is that women slum dwellers of the middle zone are more deprived. Only 19.5% of households existed in the middle zone where women have the right to decide about their marriage, only 12.5% make decisions regarding the education of their children, and only 12.5% of households consider their right to decide their fertility because slums of middle zone are Muslim-dominated slums. Women are more deprived in these slums and every important decision has been taken by their male counterparts. Participation in decisions regarding her fertility has been lowest among all types of decision-making. Only 18.2% of households give this right to their female members. The condition is worst in the middle zone (12.5%) due to religious dogmatism and illiteracy followed by the Outer zone (14.8%). The condition of the Core zone is better than others where 24.2% of households give this right to female members. The main reason is that women in the core zone are normally working women and the location of this zone is more appropriate for the induction of new thoughts. It is also notable that women's voice is not considered important in decisions regarding her marriage and women of 75% of households are deprived in this regard. But one interesting fact is that in more than 50% of households, women take part in decisions regarding their

children's marriage. This trend exists due to the Indian family system where the voice of elderly people is considered more important. The participation in decision-making regarding the education of her children is 34.6% for the city and it increases from middle to core followed by outer zone where it records to be the highest. Again, decision regarding economic affairs found only 36.5 % for the city and it is increasing from core to outer zone.

Conclusion:

The economic and social geography of cities are uneven and this poses serious challenges to marginalised groups living in deprived settlements of the city. The study analysed the dimensions and status of women empowerment across different geographical zones in the city and reveals that most women living in slums are experiencing an unsatisfactory and low levels of basic services and resources which are necessarily required for their empowerment. The study also found that low socio-economic conditions, low level of literacy, patriarchal mindset and religious dogmatism are affecting the conditions of women and are responsible for the lower level of women empowerment in slums of the city. The three chosen dimensions and their indicators present disappointing condition in all sample slums but spatial variation can be identified across all slums and also across all indicators. Women slum dwellers of middle zone (which are Muslim-dominated) are more deprived in terms of education and health and even in decision making as every important decision has been taken by their male counterparts. Participation in decisions regarding their fertility has been lowest among all types of decision-making due to illiteracy, socio-religious dogmatism and patriarchal mindset which leads to poor physical and mental health of female dwellers. Women slum dwellers of the city generally aspired for good education and career of their children, the well-being of their family, a good quality of life and economic independence with a strong role in the decision-making process. It is important to address the question of women empowerment in general and empowerment of slum women in particular to make an inclusive and sustainable society and cities.

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