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GENDER RELATED ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS IN POST CONFLICT AFGHANISTAN

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In this report, the post-conflict scenario in Afghanistan would be discussed. The war between the Afghan Taliban and Afghan National Army has ended. President Ghani has left Kabul and Taliban have captured the capital city. Every individual has been affected by the two decades long war. Among the effected people, the most suffered segment of society is the women of Afghanistan. The women in the conflict ridden country have been affected in so many ways. They have been removed from jobs and left unemployed. Jobs and other economic activities have been banned including ban on women entrepreneurship. Similarly, a central consultative body and interim cabinet have been formed by the new rulers: Taliban. They have not included even a single woman from the whole country in the cabinet. Moreover, even after the capture of Kabul, women have been subjected to physical violence and sexual abuses. They have been physically tortured and assaulted. Even today, women are compelled to live a miserable life in refugee camps. They have also been deprived of the most fundamental rights like non availability of health facilities and educational facilities. They are also denied freedom of movement which is a fundamental right according to the Human Rights Charter of 1948. To bring ease to the lives of people and to make lives of people especially women better, reforms are needed. To make the economy of the country healthier, women must be allowed to participate in economic activities. They should be allowed to do jobs and run their own businesses. Similarly, they should be given political rights including special quota seats in the Central Shura or Consultative Body. They should

be included in political negotiations as according to international relations theories, women are more peaceful than men. Moreover, their fundamental rights should be protected through constitution. Basic fundamental rights should be provided, for instance, health and education infrastructure should be established. Women should be allowed to go to schools, colleges and universities. Women's dignity must be protected and they should be protected from being sexually abused. This report would discuss the above mentioned dimensions of human rights and women rights in detail supported by facts and figures.

INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan has been passed through devastating conflicts in the past few decades. In 1979, USSR invaded Afghanistan and the invasion was followed by a civil war which lasted till 1996. In 2001, USA invaded Afghanistan and this war lasted for 20 long years. On 15th August 2021, the last American soldier left Afghanistan. Afterwards, in a dramatic move, President Ashraf Ghani left the Presidential Palace and went abroad. Taliban captured Kabul. In all this episode, every person lived in the country experienced violence in one way or another. Similarly, every segment of society affected because of this conflict. However, the most affected segment of society were women. In post conflict Afghanistan, women are still deprived of so many fundamental rights and they are treated as lesser humans. In the post conflict era in Afghanistan, women are facing multiple issues. They are excluded from economic activity, jobs have been banned for them and they are not allowed to run their own businesses. Similarly, the cabinet has not included a single woman from the whole country and women are excluded from political process. Moreover, women in Afghanistan are facing multiple social issues for instance, they are not allowed to travel alone, they are subjected to violence, forcibly married, miserable life in refugee camps along with physical violence and sexual abuses. There is need of reforms and certain measures to stop these atrocities and make the lives of women better in Afghanistan. Firstly, women should be allowed to perform economic activity so that they can share the burden of men and play role in the development and prosperity of the war-torn country. Similarly, they should be made part of the political process so that they can legislate and bring reforms for the betterment of the society. In the same way, the social problems of women should be addressed. For this purpose, NGOs, international donors and other human rights agencies should play their role. This report would discuss the condition of women in post conflict Afghanistan and would suggest few measures to make the lives of women better in the war-torn country.

Women facing issues in the post-conflict era in Afghanistan

Women are facing multiple challenges in the post-conflict era in Afghanistan because the conflict has just ended and the women are facing different economic, political, and social problems. The problems faced by the women in the post-conflict era in Afghanistan are discussed below:

Economic Issues

In the weak economic condition of Afghanistan women-who play a crucial role in the good economic condition of Afghanistan- were also facing

economic issues in the post-conflict era of Afghanistan. Some of the major issues are discussed below:

Ban on women's entrepreneurship

After the conflict ended in Afghanistan the women were facing the issue of a ban on women entrepreneurship. In 2021 America intervened Afghanistan and was excluded from Afghanistan in 2021. In twenty years in Afghanistan, they had increased women's empowerment in Afghanistan. They had introduced many platforms for women's empowerment in Afghanistan. According to the Afghan Women's Chamber of Commerce and Investment (AWCCI), in the last two decades, registered 2000 women had started their own businesses and now all of them are at stake because Taliban have imposed ban on women's entrepreneurship¹. Through entrepreneurship, they make women independent. They did a lot of facilitation for the empowerment of women in Afghanistan because women of Afghanistan have a lot of skills that can be sold at a high price in the outer world. the women started businesses from the domestic level to the commercial level. they were making handmade domestic materials that were unique. they were making cultural materials that have high demand in the market. The women started a business of making handmade carpets, shoes, and clothes and sold them to the market at high prices which make them economically independent. According to a report, a woman named Saadat launched Golnigar Handicrafts, it provided job to more than 70 women. According to her the business was developing before the fall of Kabul, earning between 30,000 and 90,000 Afghanis per month.² Now the figure has dropped to zero and all her employees are unemployed now. the business, they also open schools and colleges in Afghanistan. They were educating women for the bright future of Afghanistan. They were also very active in the trade of Afghanistan. America has provided jobs in the industries as well. The women were providing their services in the entrepreneurship trade and industries of Afghanistan.

In contrast, when the Taliban regime started they put restrictions on the economic activities of women. They confine women to homes only that is the reason women can not sell their homemade products in the market. They put sanctions on the business of women that women are not allowed to do their business. According to a UN report, women makes 20 percent of workforce in Afghanistan and excluding them from economic activity may cost billion of dollars annually.³ if they stop making handmade materials the money can't be circulated if they do no business in the market. Moreover, international community has stopped the aid. The total freezing of aid from the international community, which accounted for some 43% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) according to World Bank figures³. The Taliban restrict them not to running any school or college which causes loss to the economic condition of women in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the women's role becomes passive in the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Because they were not allowed by the government to do any kind of small or big business in Afghanistan. Hence, in the twenty years duration of America, the women were highly empowered in Afghanistan through self-business but the Taliban regime banned the women's entrepreneurship in Afghanistan.

Ban on Jobs

The Taliban government in Afghanistan banned women's jobs in the country. Throughout the country, they announced that women will not do any kind of job. Before the Taliban regime, America gave full freedom to women for any kind of job or activity either in the public sector jobs or the private sector. The women were allowed to do the job in schools, colleges, and universities and perform their best services. They can get the education of medical and serve the nation in hospitals as doctors or a nurse. During the period of the American invasion of Afghanistan, the social status of women was appreciated. The women were allowed to be appointed to the police service or the army. The women were also on jobs in the media sector, they were performing as an actor, an anchor, newscasters, singers, directors, producers, dancers, editors, writers, etc. The women of Afghanistan were in every field and they were performing their best but when the Taliban regime started in 2021 and the conflict ended all the situation reversed. The women were confined to homes. The Taliban banned women's jobs in Afghanistan. According to a report More a quarter of the 400,000 civil servants in Afghanistan are women and they have been stopped from doing jobs. It would cost \$ 1 billion annually.⁴ It causes economical loss to the women and the women's empowerment decreased. The women became jobless and dependent on their male partners. The women contributed their best during the period of the American invasion but all of a sudden the Taliban established their government and they implemented their strict laws all over the country. In a nutshell, the ban on women's jobs in Afghanistan causes economical loss to Afghanistan.

Political Issues

Besides economic issues, the women of Afghanistan also faced some political issues in post-conflict the era of Afghanistan. Some of the main issues are discussed as follows;

Non-participation in the political process

Women's nonparticipation in the political process of Afghanistan in the post-conflict era is one of the major political issues faced in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is a diverse country, there are different ethnicities like Uzbek, Tajiks, Rushton, and Persians. The current government of the Taliban is purely a one-party government which is a nonparticipatory form of government. The Taliban's government is an inclusive form of government that has no representation of every sector tribe from all over Afghanistan. This government has no minority or ethnicities but only one party or ideology people and that is the Taliban. Similarly, as it does not give representation to minorities and ethnicities, it also has excluded the women's gender from politics. Brookings has reported that Taliban's negotiating team contains no women at all. The West and the Afghans have noted this gesture and the absence of women's representation in the Taliban's governing structures, political offices, and the negotiating team.⁵ It is depicted from the consultative

body of the Taliban (Majlis e Shora), that no women are positioned there. The interim government of the Taliban has excluded women from politics. Furthermore, it is a major political issue for women in Afghanistan because if they have representation in the politics of Afghanistan they will raise their voices for the rights of women. But they are excluded which results in the suppression of women in Afghanistan after the conflict ended. Hence, the nonparticipation of women in the political process of Afghanistan is the major issue faced by women in the post-conflict era of Afghanistan.

No quota of seats in the Central Shura (consultative team)

Another political issue faced by the women in the post-conflict era of Afghanistan is the no quota of seats in the central Shura(consultative body). CNN has reported that Women occupied almost 6.5% of ministerial positions in Afghanistan before the Taliban took over the country and now this representation has dropped to zero.⁶ Women are very important in the central political system of any country or state. Different countries have different quota seats for the representation of women. Some have fifty percent of the seats and some have according to the equity of a nation's population. But there must be a separate quota system in every sector of a country either jobs or politics. Women's participation in the political system of a country or state is necessary because women are an equal proportion of the population of men. So they will improve and develop their lifestyle without participating in politics. The whole country is controlled by politicians who announce different developmental programs for the nation. they listen to the nation's problems and issues in the central political system i.e senate and then prescribe the best possible solution for it. Similarly, if the women do not have representation how their issues will be raised in the central political system. who will raise their voice for their basics rights? How will be facilitated in a state like Afghanistan which does not have a separate quota for them? Likely, such decisions or an imbalanced political system lead to instability and inequality in the country. The one class i.e male will be improving their lifestyle and the other i.e females will remains underdeveloped and suppress the class of the state. in conclusion, the lack of quota seats in the central Shura of Afghanistan is the prime matter in question facing the women after the conflict ended in Afghanistan.

Social Issues

the women in Afghanistan are facing sundry issues after the dispute ended in Afghanistan in 2021. Various social obstacles are analyzed in the succeeding paragraphs.

Sexual abuses

The first social problem that women are facing in Afghanistan is the sexual abuse. In post-conflict Afghanistan where several complications created, sexual abuse is the foremost dilemma that has disturbed the social status of women. The women are sexually abused, raped and rape is used as a war weapon. Early age marriages are happening by force in the post-conflict era of

Afghanistan in 2021. According to a report, 4154 cases of violence against women have been reported this year and it includes sexual violence too.⁷ It is witnessed that the seven or eight years girl gets married to an old man by force. The aggressive group in Afghanistan kidnaps women and then sexually abuses them in form of gang rapes. All of these complications are because of the male dominant society. In a patriarchal society like Afghanistan, the male is fully independent while the women are treated as a second-class citizens or subordinate to the men. The women are suppressed and the men are free. There are religious restrictions on men but due to noncounter checks, they do whatever they want. To cut a long short story, in the patriarchal society of Afghanistan women's sexual abuse is the paramount issue facing women in the post-conflict era of Afghanistan.

Physically assaulted

Another chief social mess fronting by the women after the conflict ended in Afghanistan is the physical assault on women. A report has shown that 20,827 currently married women aged 15–49 have reported violence. Fifty-two per cent of women reported experiencing some form of violence by their husband⁸. Women are physically subjected to violence. they are tortured, for example, the Taliban in Afghanistan entered a home and compel the male of the house to resign from his government job. If he resists they will fight with him and the women will come in front for the protection of their man, the Taliban ill also physically tortured the women⁹. hence the physical assault on women is also the cardinal problem faced by the women of Afghanistan in the post-era conflict in Afghanistan.

Life in refugee camps

Similarly, another problem faced by Afghani women is miserable life in the refugees camps. A famous quote, 'The cost of war is always paid by the women'. In Afghanistan Food insecurity affected 69.6% of reproductive-aged women¹⁰. Also, we know that the society in Afghanistan is patriarchal where the women are dependent on the men. The man fights in the war and the woman is taking care of his children and home in his absence. If a man dies, he is a husband of a woman, a father of children, a brother, and a son. Looking at the status of a man in a society like Afghanistan he is responsible for all the blood relatives to him. they all are dependent on him and if he does survive, his family will be sent to refugee camps where they will suffer rest of their life. It is reported that Between 2009 and 2018, a total number of 292,605 UASC sought asylum in the EU, of which 34,205 were girls, 4335 of them from Afghanistan¹¹ According to Amnesty international report, there are more than 2.6 million registered afghan refugees and most of them are women and children¹². hence the male suffers physically in the war but the women face its consequences throughout her life physically as well as mentally.

Lack of health facilities

Moreover, women in Afghanistan are facing health issues. After the twenty years of war in Afghanistan, the health infrastructure is dismissed. There are

no hospitals, dispensaries, nurses, basic health units, or doctors. According to a report, more than 90 percent of health clinics are run by western governments and now they are reluctant to send funds to the Taliban led government thus women would suffer because of the non availability of health infrastructure¹³. For example, if a woman is pregnant all her treatment till delivery is done by a male doctor. Similarly, in Afghanistan Demographic and Health Survey (AfDHS) revealed that around 53% of women were not in need of contraception and around 24% had an unmet need for contraception which is considered very high¹⁴. All the private health issues of a woman are checked up by a male and some women feel hesitation in sharing their health issues with a male doctor, which results in noncurable diseases. In Afghanistan 38.6% reported heightened suicide ideation/behavior¹⁵. Briefly saying, the women are facing a lack of health facilities in the post-conflict era of Afghanistan.

Ban on female education

Ban on female education is a paramount issue fronting by the women in the post-conflict era of Afghanistan. According to reports, Taliban banned women education in December, 2021, acting Deputy Education Minister Abdul Hakim Hemat said in a BBC interview that girls would not be allowed to attend secondary school until a new education policy was approved.¹⁶ As the conflict has just ended and it has rack and ruined all the infrastructure in Afghanistan. First of all, there are no buildings for getting an education and secondly, there is no staff to educate the women. All the well-educated people have migrated from Afghanistan by end of the conflict and the remaining are suffering now have no way to combat the situation. Every success in the current world is linked to education. And in Afghanistan, there is a bane on women's education which will be left the women of Afghanistan back from the rest of the world. The Norwegian ministers have voiced for the Afghan girls, they said, As women and as foreign ministers, we are deeply disappointed and concerned that girls in Afghanistan are being denied access to secondary schools this spring¹⁷. In conclusion, due to lack of education, the age of women in Afghanistan is wasting as compared to the women in the rest of the world.

Source: The Guardian

Ban on freedom of movement

Another issue that women in Afghanistan are facing is the ban on freedom of movement. It is the foremost right of every human being according to the human rights charter of 1948. In Afghanistan the women are not allowed to move freely, i.e drive, visit a place without a male, get an education, do a job, to visit public places. According to reports, according to the new announcement, women cannot travel more than 72 kilometer alone¹⁸. there is a ban on women's freedom of movement. hence the ban on women's freedom of movement is the pivotal issue facing buy the women in the post-conflict era of Afghanistan.

Gender-based reforms are needed to solve the issues of Post Conflict in Afghanistan

we have discussed in detail the issues and problems that are facing women in the post-conflict era of Afghanistan. Now some gender-based reforms in the succeeding paragraphs are needed to solve the issues of post-conflict in Afghanistan.

Economic Reforms

The first reform that is needed for the women of Afghanistan is the economic reform. The woman is the 50 % segment of society who can not be neglected in the economic development of a state. women had played an important role in the period of America and president Ashraf Ghani. They can provide their best services for the country if the Taliban provided them opportunities.. Afghan women can participate too if they are allowed to take part in economic activity. Here are some of the reforms in the succeeding paragraphs:

Women should be allowed for jobs in the government and private sector

The women of Afghanistan should be allowed in the government and private sector jobs for the prosperous and healthy economic condition of the country. There is a need for some reforms in a country like Afghanistan to develop and establish a balanced government. a country without the participation of women can not develop. for the development and combating the economic crises of Afghanistan, it is necessary to provide job opportunities to the 50% population of the state. According to a report, the increased female participation can add to the US GDP growth and can take it to \$ 5.87 trillion in the next 10 years¹⁹ it is necessary to provide privacy as well as government jobs for women. There must be women quota seats in every field and they should be encouraged and facilitated to take part in the development of a state. similarly, as a result, the economy will grow, and poverty will be abolished. The women will be empowered and balanced society will run the country to a bright future. A well-aware and conscious woman will lead the future generation on the right track. In a nutshell, the healthy economic conditions of Afghanistan are not possible without the participation of women in the public and private sectors.

Women should be allowed to run their home-based and commercial businesses

For a prosperous nation, women should be allowed jobs in the government and private sectors of the country. As in the two decades of Hamid Karzai and the American period the women in Afghanistan do different kinds of jobs, the same they can perform now in the Taliban regimes if they were given permission. women should be allowed to do jobs like sewing clothes at home, embroidery on clothes, carpet making, and earning from pets animals. They can also perform the commercial-based job of various kinds of products at the shop. According to reports, The small businesses are contributing 45% of the total exports in India²⁰. On a larger scale, women can perform best in the

trade, import, and export of the country. In a nutshell, the bright future of Afghanistan is possible by providing job opportunities for the women of Afghanistan.

Political Reforms

The prosperous future of Afghanistan can be possible through women's participation in the political system of Afghanistan. The political reforms are discussed below:

Political participation at every level should be ensured(for instance, local government)

The political participation of women after the conflict has ended should be ensured at every level from local government to parliament. There are many tiers of the political process. In the political process, the participation of women is very important from grass root level to the parliament. It is reported that In 2018 women were leading, or co-leading, half of the political parties represented in the UK Parliament.²¹ It includes local government, council level, district level, provincial level, or country level. need of the hour is that first, the women should have the permission to cast vote. Second, their participation should be ensured. Furthermore, when the women stand as political leaders they will raise their voices for the rest of the women. They will make law and order for themselves and by this, their lives will improve. Hence, a happy women's life will lead to a prosperous Afghanistan.

Special quota in Central Shura and other governmental bodies

There is no special quota in the government of the Taliban, the Central Shura and other governmental bodies have no seats for women. Women should have a special quota in the central government like any other democratic country in the world. the wester, as well as Islamic countries, have a special quota system for the representation of women in the political system of a state. It is suggested that quota system should ensure that women should constitute a large minority of 20, 30 or 40%, or even to ensure true gender balance of 50-50²². Afghanistan should adopt the same ways for women's empowerment. similarly, all the governmental bodies like the election commission, senate, supreme court, or high court should have special seats for women so that women's prosperity prevails in the region of Afghanistan.

Social Reforms

In Afghanistan, social reforms are very important. Here are some major aspects of the social reforms that can pave way for a balanced and developed Afghanistan.

Their fundamental rights should be protected through the constitution

The fundamental right of every individual should be protected through the constitution of Afghanistan. The fundamental rights include the right to life,

right to freedom, right to earning, right to property, freedom of movement, freedom of speech, and so on. In Afghanistan, women are deprived of their basic rights. according to Articles 9, 10 and 14 of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Afghanistan's international legal obligations include the right of all humans to a just trial and equal treatment under the law²³. They do not have the authority to live the life of their will. They are not allowed to do jobs and freely move in public places. In the patriarchal society, they remain suppressed and unable to express their thoughts and speak for their rights. In USA, all the fundamental rights are protected through The Constitution of the United States of America (1787) and Bill of Rights (1791)²⁴. Through social reform, in Afghanistan, all basic rights should be given to women for the prosperous future of Afghanistan and these rights should be protected by the constitution. There should be laws against those who violate the basic rights of women. As a result, women's abuse, women physical assault will be abolished and they will feel in every corner of the state. hence, the protection of women's rights through the constitution will lead to a healthy social environment.

NGOs should play a role by empowering them economically

The role of NGOs is very important and vital in empowering everyone, especially women. NGOs are non-governmental organizations that bring developmental projects from council to council and village to village. They visit home to home introducing different developmental projects like educating women, empowering women through entrepreneurship, and awaring them about health issues. NGOs provide services in multiple fields, ranging from finance, livelihood interventions and health and education services etc²⁵. Some NGOs provide sewing machines to women, they provide them the equipment as well as skill and facilitate women to do their business. They open vocational centers and literate people -without any age boundary- about the basics of a computer system. Furthermore, the NGOs should come to Afghanistan and they should facilitate the women in improving their lifestyle. They should establish such NGOs in Afghanistan that work for the social welfare and economic development of the deprived women of Afghanistan. In conclusion, the development of women in Afghanistan is not possible without the economic support of NGOs.

Health facilities should be provided by building health infrastructure

Health facilities in Afghanistan should be provided by building infrastructure, health staff, doctors, nurses, dispensaries, equipment, and all. As it is discussed earlier, after the conflict in Afghanistan the women are deprived of health facilities. The government of Afghanistan should provide all the health facilities to the women of Afghanistan, to make their lives better. Multiple factors can strengthen health facilities in Afghanistan. Line in USA, The vast majority of the population, about 74 percent, is covered by private health insurance²⁶. Same can be done in Afghanistan too. Health can be improved by building infrastructure, proving medical staff, health units, paramedics, and educating females as doctors are very important. Keeping in view the social, cultural, and religious mindset of afghan women it would be more feasible if

the female doctors are provided to them. To whom they can discuss their issues without any hesitation. The Taliban government should bring all the modern equipment to the hospitals where the best treatment of women can be done. Hence for the develop Afghanistan women should be provided with health facilities so that healthy generations can be produced.

Provision of education for women by establishing funding educational projects

The Afghan government should establish educational funds for the education of women. It is a known fact that no nation can develop with education. Afghanistan adopted a 9-year compulsory education program from grade 1–9 with the official school-age starting from 7 years old, up to 13 years old²⁷. Education is the key to developing and successful nation. all the western states who are developed nations are highly educated. According to reports, In the UK the literacy rate is 99%, which means one in every hundred struggle to read and write²⁸. So it would be a blunder for the Afghan government if they foresee development in women's education. Women are the half population of current society and their participation in every sphere of the country is very important. An educated woman can provide desirable output to society and perform the best services for the country. To cut a long short story, the government should establish a fund for educational projects so that the women will get their education without economic barriers.

Should be protected from being used as sexual slaves by warlords

Women should be protected from being used as sexual slaves by the warlords in Afghanistan. Honour and dignity is the fundamental right of everyone. In Afghanistan, the honor and dignity of women are violated and violated. constitutional reforms should be needed to combat the sexual abuse of women. The warlord in Afghanistan makes women slaves in their specific region and then sexually abuses them. Hence, such incidents can be avoided by constitutional reforms in Afghanistan by the Taliban's government.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, it is concluded that this report shed light on the brief background of the conflict in Afghanistan; how the conflict started and how it affected the lives of the masses. Afterwards, this report discussed the problems of women in the post conflict era in Afghanistan. Women plunged into poverty because every door of economic activity is closed for women. Similarly, they are excluded from political process at every level thus they cannot bring reforms to make their lives better. Moreover, they face social problems like ban on movement, lack of health and educational facilities and miserable life in refugee camps. All the factors have impacted the lives of women throughout the conflict and now even after the conflict, they still experience the same worse conditions. This report also discussed few measures and gave few recommendations that how the lives of women can be made better in Afghanistan. Firstly, women should be allowed to participate in economic activities and contribute to the economy of the country. Similarly, they should be allowed to be the part of cabinet and take part in legislation and reforms

process. Moreover, their social conditions need special attention of the international donors and the charity organizations. In short, in the post conflict era in Afghanistan, women are still living miserable life which needs to be made better.

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