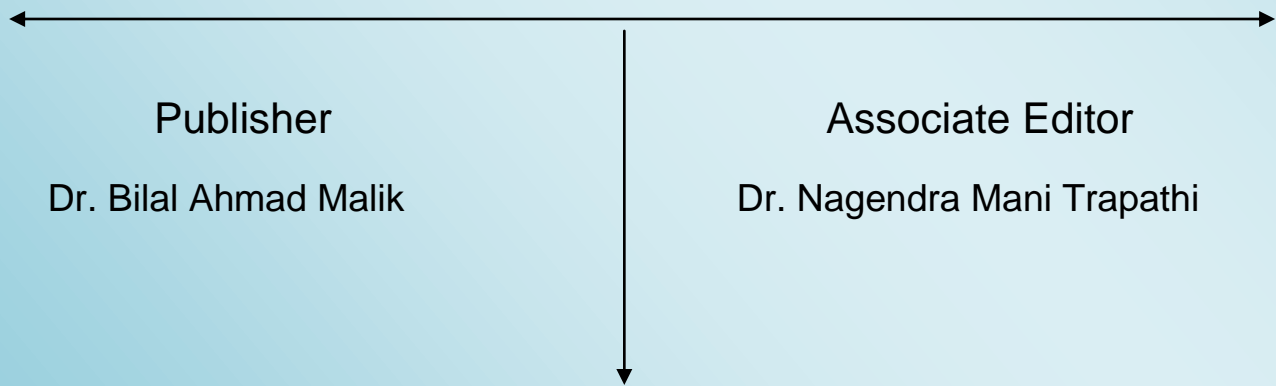


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SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF WOMEN IN INDIA

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INTRODUCTION:

Throughout history and in many societies including India, gender inequality was a part and parcel of an accepted male-dominated culture. Atrocities and discrimination are the two major problems, which the Indian women face in the present day society. The traditional mentalities of India assume that the place of women is mainly concentrated to the household activities like kitchen work and upbringing of the children with restricted mobility and in seclusion.

Despite major changes that have occurred in the status of women in some parts of the world in recent decades, norms that restrict women to the home are still powerful in India, defining activities that are deemed appropriate for women. They are, by and large, excluded from political life, which by its very nature takes place in a public forum. In spite of India's reputation for respecting women, including treating her as a Goddess, history tells us that women were also ill-treated. There was no equality between men and women. This is true of ancient, medieval and early modern times barring some revolutionary movements such as that of Basaweshwara, the 12th century philosopher in Karnataka, who advocated equality, casteless society, status for women, and betterment of the downtrodden. Reform movements in the 19th and 20th centuries led by great social reformers provided boost to women's legal status in India.

The Indian Government has passed various legislations to safeguard Constitutional rights to women. These legislative measures include, the Hindu Marriage Act (1955), The Hindu Succession Act (1956), Dowry Prohibition Act (1961), Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act (1971), Equal Remuneration Act (1976), Child Marriage Restraint Act (1976) etc. Apart from these, various welfare measures have been taken up by the Government from time to time to empower the women. The Government of India 1953 established a Central Social Welfare Board with a nation-wide program for grants-in-aid for women, children and under-privileged group. A separate department of women and children development was set up at the Centre in 1985 to give a distinct identity and provide a nodal point on matters relating to women's development. National Commission on

women was created by an Act of Parliament in 1992. Besides these, India has also ratified various international conventions and human rights instruments committing to secure equal rights of women. Key among them is the ratification of the convention of Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1993.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The present study has following specific research objectives:

1. To study the gender inequality of women in India
2. To analyze the findings of Census 2011 data to understand current status of women India
3. To study the various social and economic issues which the women are facing in India
4. To suggest the guidelines for the eradication of gender bias in India

METHODOLOGY:

The study is mainly based upon the collection of secondary data. The secondary data was collected from various sources of publications such as Magazines, journals, Research articles, Internet and published records.

Gender Imbalance in India:

Sociologically the word gender refers to the socio-cultural definition of man and woman, the way societies distinguish men and women and assign them social roles. The distinction between sex and gender was introduced to deal with the general tendency to attribute women's subordination to their anatomy. For ages it was believed that the different characteristics, roles and status accorded to women and men in the society are determined by sex, that they are natural and therefore not changeable.

As soon as a child is born families and society begin the process of gendering. The birth of a son is celebrated, the birth of a daughter is filled with pain; sons are showered with love, respect, better food and proper health care. Boys are encouraged to be tough and outgoing; and girls to be homebound and shy. All these differences are gender differences and they are created by the society. Gender inequality is therefore a form of inequality which is distinct from other forms of economic and social inequalities and stems from pre-existing gendered social norms and social perceptions. Gender inequity has adverse impact on development goals as reduces economic growth. It hampers the overall wellbeing because blocking women from participation in social, political and economic activities can adversely affect the whole society.

2011 Census Data:

The 15th Census figure indicates a continued trend of preference for male children over females. India is country where female infanticide is still common and the government has banned doctors from revealing the sex of the unborn child. The gender imbalance is there despite a ban on sex determination tests based on ultrasound scans and sex selection abortion. Despite the laws to prevent female foeticide and schemes to encourage families to have girl child, the child sex ratio has fallen sharply in the latest census period. The male population has grown by 17.19 percent to reach 623.7 million (62 crore) while the female population has risen by 18.12 percent to reach 586.5 million (58 crore). The total number of children in the age-group 0-6 is 158.8 million (-5 million since 2001). Population (0-6 years) 2001-2011 registered minus (-) 3.08 percent growth with minus (-) 2.42 for males and -3.80 for females. The proportion of child population in the age group of 0-6 years to total population is 13.1 percent while the corresponding figure in 2001 was 15.9 percent. The decline has been to the extent of 2.8 points.

Socio-Economic Issues of Women in India:

Without socio-economic equality for women in poor sectors of India, the impacts of efforts at development cannot become fully realized. India must value women as human resource assets and not liabilities. Socio-economic development can both empower women and raise the status of the Indian economy. Women need employment justice. Education, vocational training, and skill improvements would increase the capacity for gainful economic participation of women in India. The needs of women in poor sectors of India should be included in a national approach to workforce development.

Poverty and Hunger:

One of the 8 Millennium Development Goals is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by 2015. According to a report of the Committee constituted by the government of India to statement. Poverty affects the woman most in as much as the female members in the family are denied education, healthcare, nutritious food, and good sanitation because of poverty. Poverty directly affects the future of women. Girl children are discriminated in the matter of feeding compared to boys. Studies have shown that girls in rural areas take a mean of 1355K.Cals/day in the 13-15 years age group and 1291 K.Cals/day in the 16-18 years age group, which is much below the recommended levels. Then disproportionate impact of poverty on girls is not an accident but the result of systematic discrimination.

Educational Problems:

Indian women constitute a large body of under - privileged citizens. Nevertheless, they face distinctive problems that call for special attention. The Backward Classes Commission set up by the Government of India in 1953 classified women of India as a backward group requiring special attention. A changing society and a developing economy cannot make any headway if education, which is one of the important agents affecting the norms of morality and culture, remains in the hands of traditionalists who subscribe to a fragmented view of the country's and the world's heritage. The differences between the positions of men and women in the society will not lessen; leave alone disappear, as long as there are differences between the education levels of men and women. Inadequate education or no education is the most important factor contributing to the backwardness of our masses, especially women. The low literacy among women brings down the national literacy.

Domestic Violence:

Globally, one out of every three women faces violence at the hands of their husbands, fathers, or brothers and uncles in their homes. Domestic violence can be described as when one adult in a relationship misuses power to control another through violence and other forms of abuse. The abuser tortures and controls the victim by calculated threats, intimidation and physical violence. Such violence may also include rape and sexual abuse. Psychological violence includes verbal abuse, harassment, confinement and deprivation of physical, financial and personal resources. For some women emotional abuse may be more painful than physical attacks because they effectively undermine women's security and self-confidence.

Official statistics show a steady rise in crimes related to dowry. More than 9, 5000 women are killed every year in India over dowry. While Bihar and Uttar Pradesh still record the maximum number of dowry crimes, Bangalore, India's fastest growing city also shows an alarming rise of dowry harassment and domestic violence. Cases of torture of women over dowry are the highest, accounting for 32.4% of all crimes against women in the country.

Crimes against Women:

Crimes against women occur every minute; every day and throughout the year, though several such crimes go unreported. According to National Crimes Records Bureau, Government of India, there were over 32,000 murders, 19,000 rapes, 7,500 dowry deaths and 36,500 molestation cases are the violent crimes against women

during 2006. While Madhya Pradesh is worst off among the states, the national capital New Delhi continues to remain the most unsafe city in India.

It is a sad reflection on the country's law and order situation when its capital is a cauldron of crime. Delhi seems to be going down the slide year after year. For instance while the national crime rate declined by a negligible 0.02 % in 2006 Delhi's rate grew to 357.2 more than double the national average of 167.7.

Problems of Working Women:

Working women i.e., those who are in paid employment, face problems at the workplace just by virtue of their being women. Social attitude to the role of women lags much behind the law. The attitude which considers women fit for certain jobs and not others, causes prejudice in those who recruit employees. Thus women find employment easily as nurses, doctors, teachers, secretaries or on the assembly line. Working women are often subject to sexual harassment even while going to work in the over-crowded public transport system. At the workplace, a working woman experiences sexual harassment from colleagues and her higher officers. The latter may often prove difficult to shake off, when the job is very important for the woman.

Trafficking of Women and Children:

Trafficking in women and children is the most an abominable violation of human rights. It is an obscene affront to their dignity and rights, including the very right to life, liberty, human dignity and security of person. Trafficking in its widest sense include the exploitation girls by pushing them into prostitution, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery and the trade in human organs. In the case of children who have been trafficked or have become victims of child marriages, it violates their right to education, employment and self-determination. In the existing social scenario in India, vulnerability is a product of inequality, low status and discrimination, and of the patriarchal authority unleashed on children, especially the girl child. This is further compounded by the apathetic attitude of the society fuelled by a mind-set which views women as mere chattels with no freedom of choices and options to lead a life with dignity. Women and children are trafficked and exploited, and force to lead a life of indignity, social stigma, debt bondage and a host of ailments including HIV/AIDS.

CONCLUSION:

Historically, women have been playing a paramount role in the socio-economic development of any country across the world. The high status that women enjoyed during the Vedic period gradually started deteriorating in the late Vedic period. The daughter was not greeted as was the son. The birth of a girl child, even today, is considered as an ill omen. While referring to the status of women, former prime minister Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru said, “You can tell the state of a nation by looking at the condition of the women there”. The irony is that today, everybody talks about women empowerment but the naked truth is that nobody is willing to take initiative. In spite of outstanding examples of individual achievements, and a definite improvement in their general condition over the years, it remains true that Indian women still constitute a large body of under-privileged citizens. Even the global picture about the status of women seems no different from that of India. Whether the issue is improving education in developing world, or fighting global climate, or addressing nearly any other challenge we face, empowering women is a critical part of the equation. And we require serious, positive, down to earth policy on empowerment of women.

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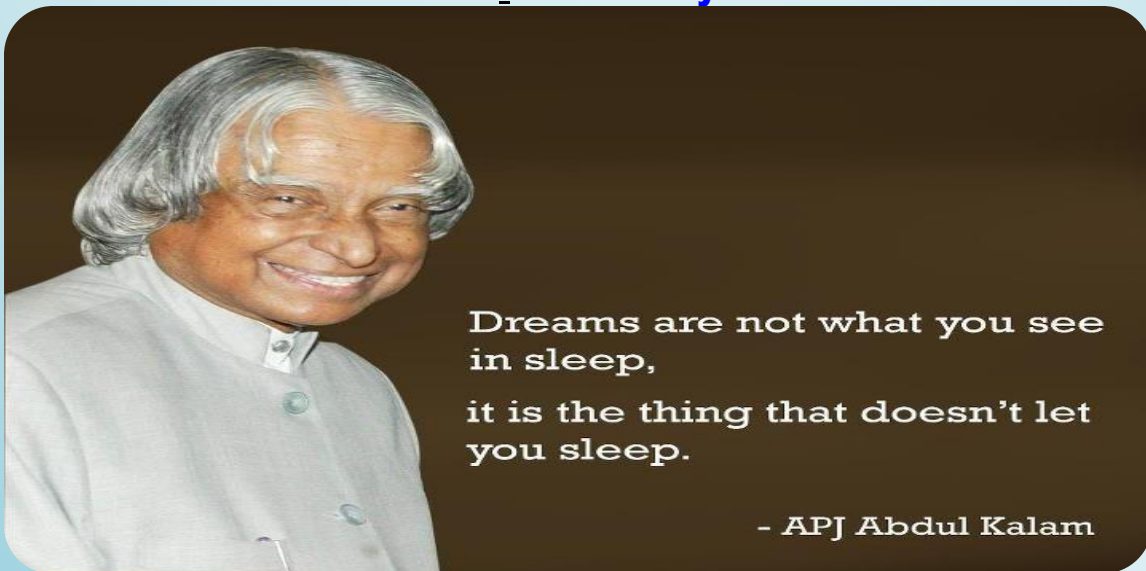
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Dreams are not what you see
in sleep,
it is the thing that doesn't let
you sleep.

- APJ Abdul Kalam