

Plight of Women in India and its development

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ABSTRACT

In India, gender inequality is the key factor that has hampered women's socioeconomic advancement. It is well known that women in India, especially those living in rural areas, lack access to adequate facilities and educational opportunities. The majority of rural women have little access to medical care. Village women typically stay at home and labour in the fields to support their families. This essay aims to highlight everything that has occurred and been accomplished since the beginning of time. Studies have shown that the majority of women who make money through various jobs don't receive their fair share of compensation. As a result, it is both understandable and vital to address the socioeconomic growth of women in India, especially in rural areas.

Swami Vivekananda, a spiritual guru, said that, *"There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved, and it is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing."*

Without a doubt, the history of women is currently undergoing a major change. The proof is all around us, and women's voices are being heard more and more in the legislature, courts, and streets. The Indian Constitution provided women equal rights with males from the start, whereas women in the West had to fight for more than a century to obtain some of their fundamental rights, such as the ability to vote. Unfortunately, due to illiteracy and the restrictive culture, most women in this country are uninformed of their rights.

Keywords: *gender inequality, Socioeconomic, Indian constitution.*

Article Publication

Published Online: 14-Feb-2021

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Research Review Journals

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India's inequality

Women had equal status and rights during the early Vedic era, according to studies. But subsequently (about 500 B.C.), with the Smriti (especially Manusmriti), the Islamic invasion of Babur and the Mughal empire, and eventually Christianity restricting women's freedom and rights, the status of women started to deteriorate.

In India, gender inequality is the key factor that has hampered women's socioeconomic advancement. It is well recognised that rural women lack the facilities and education necessary for their development. The majority of rural women have little access to medical care. Village women typically stay at home and labour in the fields to support their families. Numerous studies have shown that the majority of women make their living as sweepers at Sulabh International, at tailoring shops, selling produce, and labouring in agricultural fields. Some of the women are sweeping floors in educational facilities. It is clear that most women are uneducated, and the socioeconomic growth of women in rural regions needs to be addressed.

India's customs and traditions

Prior to independence, women's place in society reached a low point and their situation was generally hopeless as a result of several repugnant customs, conventional rigidities, and vices. They were victims of widespread illiteracy, separation in the name of purdah, forced child marriage, inescapable widowhood, rigid fidelity and opposition to widows remarrying, which led to many of

them becoming prostitutes, polygamy, female infanticide, violence and being forced to follow Sati, as well as the complete denial of individuality.

Indian social positioning

In Indian society, a woman has experienced exploitation, abuse, and humiliation. In the socioeconomic and educational spheres, there have been numerous incidents of rape, murder, dowry deaths, burning, wife abuse, and discrimination. Girls must assist with home chores in rural areas. Since most families cannot afford to send all of their children to school, they are compelled to retain girls in the home to help with household chores. If there are resources, the boy is taken to school initially. Additionally, parents do not value education, particularly for daughters who will marry and stay at home. They have very little incentive to send their kids to school since they cannot see any connection between education and economic advancement. Among people aged seven and older, the literacy rates for men were 83 percent and for women were 67 percent. Similarly, it was discovered that in urban regions, 17% of males and 13% of girls had completed their education to the level of graduation or higher, compared to almost 4.5% of males and 2.2% of females in rural areas.

Viewpoint on Women in society can be observed performing more dangerous manual labour than men at the lower socioeconomic levels of society. In India, women perform more than half of the agricultural labour. Men are still seen as the "bread winners" in society. Through psychological indoctrination, this perception of women as inferior is passed from generation to generation. Another outcome of social conditioning is that males view women as the socioeconomic gift of their household, whether they are fathers, brothers, or husbands. Women are valued more for their usefulness to men than for their worth as people with rights and dignity.

More concerning is the socioeconomic status of women in rural areas.

- a) **Poverty:** One of India's key characteristics is its rural poverty, which affects about 45 percent of the country's population. The majority of them barely make ends meet on a daily basis. Without a doubt, women and female children suffer the most in such situations within the family.
- b) **Violence:** Since ancient times, Indian civilization has been constrained by culture and tradition. The male child has always been preferred by the patriarchal system and gender stereotypes in the home and society.
- c) **Economic exploitation:** Women and girls worldwide collectively bear two-thirds of the burden of labour while only receiving a tenth of the global income. Of the paid labour force, they make up 40%.

Despite making about half of the world's population, women possess less than 1% of its total property. Every aspect of social life is more terrible for women in India. For the same task, they receive half to three quarters of what their male counterparts do. In India, a nation with a large agricultural sector, women perform more than half of all agricultural labour. But nobody appreciates what they do. A woman typically works 15 to 16 hours per day, both outside the home and for little pay. According to the Monster Salary Index (MSI) on gender for 2016, women in India earn 25% less than males, demonstrating that gender is still a key factor in deciding earnings in India. In 2016, men made a median gross hourly wage of Rs. 345.8, while women made Rs. 259.8.

Education is lacking

Because boys attend more schools than girls in India, women's literacy rates are substantially lower than men's. According to T.P. Sechan, women's literacy rates are as low as 3% in some areas of India today.

In 1992, a National Commission on Women was established to serve as a watchdog on issues affecting women. Numerous initiatives have been started for the development of women, both in rural and urban regions, in the fields of education, health, and employment. Among these initiatives are the universalization of education, the abolition of school dropouts, a strong emphasis on health, nutrition, and family welfare programmes, as well as the promotion of Balwadi's and Crèches, Girls Hostels, Technical Institutions for Women, and other related initiatives.

Some academic theories held that women and men in ancient India were treated equally in all spheres of life. Others, though, have opposing opinions. Women may have received an education during the early Vedic era, according to the writings of ancient Indian grammarians like Patanjali and Katyayana. The Rigvedic poems imply that the ladies were free to choose their husbands and

that they married at a mature age. Many female sages and seers, most notably Gargi and Maitreyi, are mentioned in texts like the Rig Veda and Upanishads.

India's social ills

Despite reformative groups like Jainism allowing women to join the religious order, most Indian women still had to live under confinement and restrictions. It is thought that child marriages first became common about the sixth century.

In mediaeval India, women's ageing was considered to be a "dark age" for them. The position of women declined as a result of the numerous foreign conquests that occurred in mediaeval India. Muslims and other invaders brought their own culture to India when they came. They believed that women were only the property of their fathers, brothers, or husbands and were incapable of making their own wills. The Indian population likewise started to think in this way and treat their own ladies in this manner. The indigenous Indians' desire to protect their female population from the barbaric Muslim invaders was another factor in the decrease of women's status and independence. For these conquerors, polygamy was the norm, so they could take whatever woman they chose and keep her in their "harems." Indian women began wearing "Purdah" (a body-covering veil) to protect them. This had an impact on their independence as well. They were unable to move about freely, which caused their situation to worsen even more. People's mindsets altered as a result of these issues with women. They started to view girls as suffering and a burden that needed to be hidden from prying eyes and given special attention. A boy child, however, won't require as much extra attention and instead will be useful as a helping hand. As a result, a vicious spiral developed, with women being the victims. All of this led to the development of new ills like child marriage, sati, jauhar, restrictions on girls' education, widow remarriage, etc.

Despite the fact that the majority of women in India work and make economic contributions in some capacity, a large portion of their labour is not recorded or taken into account in official statistics. Women worked in domestic industries such as weaving and handcraft production, farms where they ploughed the fields and harvested the crops, and the informal economy where they sold food and gathered wood. In addition, women traditionally handle the daily chores around the house (e.g., cooking, fetching water, and looking after children). The informal sector is especially crucial for women in India because of cultural barriers that prevent them from obtaining employment in businesses, industries, and the public sector. According to estimates, the informal sector employs more than 90% of working women.

India's north and south

Work as a domestic helper, a small dealer, an artisan, or a field labourer on a family farm falls under the informal sector. The majority of these positions are low-skilled, low-paying, and don't offer benefits to the employee. But maybe more significantly, cultural customs differ from place to region. North India has a tendency to be more patriarchal and feudal than South India, notwithstanding the fact that this is a generalisation. More limitations are placed on women's behaviour in northern India, which limits their access to jobs. Women tend to have more independence and a stronger social presence in southern India, which has a tendency to be more equal. Despite the fact that there are still few jobs available nationwide, cultural barriers are fading and women are more liberated to participate in the formal sector.

Reformatory ideas and women's repositioning in India

Reformers throughout history, like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Jyotirao Phule, and Mahatma Gandhi, have fought very hard to improve the situation of women in particular. In particular, they changed people's mindsets, which led to a significant improvement in the working circumstances for women in India in recent years. More and more companies are now occupied with women who work on equal terms as men, and more and more women are finding themselves in positions of respect and prominence. Working now not only serves as a necessary adjustment but also as a tool for personal development.

Women increasingly participate in government in addition to finding their place in the workforce. There have been overt efforts in recent years to enhance women's political engagement. As a symbol of their political emancipation, women have been given representation in the Panchayat Raj system. At the village council level, there are a large number of elected female representatives. Women are also increasingly making a difference at the federal and state levels. Women served as chief ministers in numerous Indian states today. The women's reservation policy bill is intended to increase political engagement.

We can draw the following conclusion: Despite the slow pace of change, social reforms and the empowerment of women began in India in the latter half of the 20th century. As we begin the 21st, we can therefore look forward to a bright future for women in India, one in which they will be able to assert that they are truly equal to men in all spheres of life.

In general, women in India have never been given the opportunity to properly grow and play a fair role in socioeconomic development. Their potential has always been minimised, underappreciated, and ignored. In order to advance women, now is the time to tap into their "hidden entrepreneurial potential." Women who are financially stable will be nothing less than a fountain of resources for the country, increasing employment opportunities, GDP, and financial inclusion. Additionally, improving a woman's economic situation also raises her social status. Since most women's rights are not in vogue today due of the low awareness level, an empowered woman can raise awareness levels.

Following independence, the Indian constitution included numerous liberal provisions for the advancement of women in society, the economy, and politics. In practically every field now, including education, politics, sports, journalism, the arts and humanities, science, and technology, women can engage. However, some aspects of the patriarchal worldview still exist, such as victimisation, humiliation, torture, and exploitation. Seven decades after Independence, we still haven't seen a transformation so remarkable that we can be proud of it. There is no denying, however, that a time of numerous opportunities has begun, and any ambitious woman can seize it.

India must therefore develop its enormous female workforce into a useful human resource if it is to become a developed nation, and this can only be done by giving women more power in the social system's financial structure. In South Korea, encouraging women to hold higher positions has naturally boosted the standing of women at lower levels. Additionally, this nation offered incentives to businesses that value equality for women. India needs to study these lessons. Additionally, we need to dispel some clichés, such as the notion that if more women enter the workforce, they would fail on both the domestic and business fronts. This is a very overstated assumption that a woman who can manage her household well will inevitably have high management abilities and be able to manage an organisation as well.

Conclusion

Unfortunately, women in India have never been viewed as a gender that is most suited for contributing to the economy outside of the home. a result of the pervasive patriarchal ideology. This evil trend is still there and is evident in the start-up environment, where there are a pitifully small percentage of female entrepreneurs. To counteract this The only way to empower and emancipate women is through economic development; by actively participating in the labour force, they will then contribute to the nation's economic growth. Only economic gender equality may have a significant impact. Both inside and beyond the home, it can alter gender dynamics and aid people in overcoming their fears of helplessness and helplessnesslessness. As a result, it is past due for us to eliminate this gender disparity from our economic structure.

“Development will be endangered if it’s not engendered”

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