

Socio Economic Development and Gender Inequality in India.

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- **Abstract**

“Woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacity” - Mahatma Gandhi

Women have always contributed to achieve the economic prosperity of Indian society. Women in rural India also, despite suffering from the problems like health, malnutrition, repeated childbearing and lack of education, engage themselves in direct and allied agricultural activities, handcraft products, embroidery etc; to boost the economy of their family and society. But it is the gender bias that still exists at every social stratum, even in the most educated and developed society, is unable to digest this visible contribution of women in all walks of life. In some regions, patriarchal societies diminish the role of women in important matters. Unfortunately this misogynist thinking is still deep rooted in our contemporary society and there are no apparent signs of improving this perspective to the unprejudiced and unbiased one.

Society, politics and economics are inter-related. One influences the courses of others. So it is easily understood, if women have no right in social, political and economic platform, who will take the lead to claim the rights for them? The difference between man and woman is conceptualized in terms of ‘gender’ that broadly refers to the cultural construction of the sexual difference between male and female in human society and ‘empowerment’ is a means to improve the positions of women by providing them material, intellectual and socio-economic and socio-political rights equal with men in the society and state. The subordinate position of woman has been the impetus to develop the concept of empowerment, the process itself operates within the structure of male dominance.

- **Key words**

Gender, inequality, empowerment, Development, women, girl, economy.

- **Introduction**

The contribution of women to a society’s transition from pre-literate to literate likewise is undeniable. Basic education is key to nation’s ability to develop and achieve sustainability targets. Research has shown that education can improve agricultural productivity, enhance the status of girls and women, reduce population growth rates, enhance environmental protection and widely raise the standard of living. Among all factors of production human resources are the most valuable and potent. Basically it is the only resource having life and sense. This factor controls all other factors and contributes significantly for the prosperity of all sectors. To have more output, from this resource, the main key is to recognize the role of women.

“Women, who constitute half of the world’s population by virtue of an accident of birth, perform two thirds of the world’s work, receive one tenth of its income and own less than one-hundredth of its property. In India, while they produce 50 percent of the food consumed by the country, they earn only 10 percent of the income and own 10 percent of the property or wealth of the country. Merely providing certain rights and protection from social inequalities does not solve the issue of their socio-economic status. Measures to improve the status of women and quality of their life must be wedded to various economic development programmes. The Constitution guarantees formal equality and radical social reforms, forbidding child marriage, legalizing remarriage of widows and providing equal share to women in the joint family property under the Inheritance Act which introduced important innovations in the Indian social structure affecting women’s status and role. But the mere enactment of laws does not change attitudes and ironically, these advances in social legislation

have engendered in some measure an attitude of complacency whilst the views of society towards the position of women have not changed much over the years”.

- **The Economic Vulnerability of Women:** The condition of women is miserable in India with respect to various socio-economic aspects:

Poverty: “Poverty is humiliation, the sense of being dependent on them and of being forced to accept rudeness, insults and indifference when we seek help”. –Latvia 1998.

We can define poverty as the condition where the basic needs of a family like food, shelter, clothing and education are not fulfilled. It can lead to other problems like poor literacy, unemployment, malnutrition etc. A poor person is not able to get education due to lack of money and therefore remains unemployed. An unemployed person is not able to buy enough and nutritious food for his family and their health decline. A jobless person remains poor only. Thus we can see that poverty is the root cause of other problems. Gender inequality is one of the oldest and most pervasive forms of inequality in the world. It denies women their voices, devalues their work and make women’s position unequal to men’s, from the household to the national and global levels.

- **Economic Exploitation:** On the world level, women and girls together carry two-third of the burden of the world’s work yet receive only a tenth of the world’s income. They form 40 percent of the paid labor force. Though women constitute half of the world’s population yet they own less than one percentage of the world’s property (UNDP Human Development Report). The condition of women in India is more miserable in every field of social life. They are paid half of three-quarters of the money while their male counterparts earn for the same job. In India a predominantly agricultural country, women do more than half of the total agricultural work. But their work is not valued. On an average, a woman works 15 to 16 hours a day unpaid at home and underpaid outside. Besides, the work load either in the field or in the factories or offices, the women have to do the household such as cooking, washing, cleaning up the house etc. The younger women, besides all these, have to carry the load of early pregnancy, childbirth and breast-feeding. In terms of help offered to people for their various functions women seem to receive the least attention from the society.

- **Violence:** In recent years there has been an alarming increase in atrocities and violence against women in the country. It is estimated that the growth rate of crime against women would be higher than the population growth rate by 2025, which implies that progressively a greater number of women are becoming victims of violence. The United Nations Commission on the status of women defines violence against women to include “any act of gender based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women”. Broadly speaking violence lies in the power of dynamics of social situation. Violence is not simply aggression of or injury committed by one individual against another; it is more precisely the abuse of power. The behaviour, in which a more powerful person takes advantage of and abuses a less powerful one, is an act of violence. This relationship of power differential is obvious in sexual violence against women, which includes rape, kidnapping and abduction, molestation, eve teasing, sexual harassment at work place etc. The main causes of violence are unequal power-relations, gender discrimination, patriarchy and economic dependence of women, dowry, low moral values, negative portrayal of women’s image, no participation in decision-making, gender stereotypes and a negative mind-set.

- **Methodology**

Methodology of study is an important as study itself, The investigator should have a clear idea about the theme of the research topic. The present research study is depending upon primary and secondary data. The primary data collected through personal discussion. The secondary data is gathered through different types of books .The previous research article has also been used for collection of secondary data.

- **Conclusion**

It is true that all types of crime are on the increase in the country along with the increase in population and development of the country. The list of crimes that are committed against women seems to be endless extending from simple

harassment to even denying them the very right to exist. The gender bias prevailing in the society puts women in a disadvantageous position in different fields right from birth. Without socio-economic equality for women in poor sectors of India, the impacts of efforts at development cannot become fully realized. It is difficult for a single woman to raise her voice against injustice that is done to her whether within the family or outside. It is essential that more and more of women organizations are developed to take up the issues of women and create awareness among the women themselves. We as a society 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.

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