

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITION OF INDIAN WOMEN IN RURAL & URBAN AREAS

1. Smt. S. Radha Ramana
HOD Dept. of Telugu
K.G.R.L. College(A), Bhimavaram.
2. Smt. P. Lakshmi Chaya
HOD Dept. of Zoology
K.G.R.L. College(A), Bhimavaram.

There is no doubt that we are in the midst of a great revolution in the history of women. The evidence is everywhere; the voice of women is increasingly heard in Parliament, courts and in the streets. While women in the West had to fight for over a century to get some of their basic rights, like the right to vote, the Constitution of India gave women equal rights with men from the beginning. Unfortunately, women in this country are mostly unaware of their rights because of illiteracy and the oppressive tradition. Names like Kalpana Chawla: The Indian born, who fought her way up into NASA and was the first women in space, and Indira Gandhi: The Iron Woman of India was the Prime Minister of the Nation, Beauty Queens like Aishwarya Rai and Susmita Sen, and Mother Teresa are not representative of the condition of Indian women. **Ancient Indian Women.**

Sati: The ritual of dying at the funeral pyre of the husband is known as "Sati" or "Sahagaman". According to some of the Hindu scriptures women dying at the funeral pyre of her husband go straight to heaven so its good to practice this ritual. Initially it was not obligatory for the women but if she practiced such a custom she was highly respected by the society.

Child Marriage: It was a norm in medieval India. Girls were married off at the age of 8-10. They were not allowed access to education and were treated as the material being.

Restriction on Widow Remarriage: The condition of widows in medieval India was very bad. They were not treated as human beings and were subjected to a lot of restrictions. They were supposed to live pious life after their husband died and were not allowed entry in any celebration. Their presence in any good work was considered to be a bad omen. Sometimes heads of widows were also shaved down.

Malnutrition : Generally in India, women are the one who eat last and least in the whole family. So they Eat whatever is left after men folk are satiated. As a result most of the times their food intake does not contain the nutritional value required in maintaining the healthy body. In villages, sometimes women do not get to eat the whole meal due to poverty.

Poor Health : The malnutrition results in poor health of women. The women of India are prejudiced from the birth itself. They are not breastfed for long. In the want of a son the women wants to get pregnant as soon as possible which decreases the caring period to the girl child whereas the male members get adequate care and nutrition.

Maternal Mortality : As females are not given proper attention, which results in the malnutrition and then they are married at an early age which leads to pregnancies at younger age when the body is not ready to bear the burden of a child. All this results in complications, which may lead to gynecological problems, which may become serious with time and may ultimately, lead to death.

Lack of education : In India women education never got its due share of attention. From the medieval India women were debarred from the educational field.

Mistreatment : In India violence against women is a common evil. Not just in remote parts but in cities also women bear the brunt. They are subjected to physical and mental violence.

Overworked : Indian women work more than men of India but their work is hardly recognized as they mainly do unskilled work. Their household chores is never counted as a work, if a woman is working in a field to help her husband it will also be not counted as a work.

Lack of power : In India a large percentage of women do not have power. They cannot take decisions independently not even related to their own life.

Marriage : The family mainly fixes the marriages in India. The scenario in villages is very bad. The girl is not consulted but is told to marry a guy whom her family has chosen for him. They are taught to abide by the whims and fancies of their husbands. Going against the wishes of husband is considered to be a sin. In marriage husband always has the upper hand. The groom and his parents show as if they are obliging the girl by marrying her and in return they demand hefty dowry.

Now a day's women faced so many problems like:

Dowry

It's a serious issue. Courts are flooded with cases related to death due to dowry harassment by husband and in laws. In ancient times women were given 'Stridhan' when they departed from the house of their parents. This amount of money was given to her as a gift which she can use on her and her children but her in-laws did not have any right on that amount. This amount was supposed to help the girl in time of need. Slowly this tradition became obligatory and took the form of dowry. Nowadays parents have to give hefty amount in dowry, the in laws of their girl are not concerned whether they can afford it or not. If a girl brings large amount of dowry she is given respect and is treated well in her new home and if she does not bring dowry according to expectations of her in laws then she has to suffer harassment. Due to this evil practice many newly wed women of India have to lose their lives.

Female infanticide/foeticide

As women were supposed to be and in some areas of India are still considered to be curse by some strata of society their birth was taken as a burden. So in past times they were killed as soon as they were born. In some of the Rajput clans of Rajasthan newly born girl child was dropped in a large bowl of milk and was killed. Today with the help of technology the sex of the unborn baby is determined and if it is a girl child then it is aborted down. In all this procedure women do not have any say they have to do according to the wish of their husbands even if she does not want to abort she have any choice.

Divorce

The divorce rate in India is not so high compared to western countries but it does not mean that marriages are more successful here. The reason behind low level of divorce rate is that it is looked down by the society. It is regarded as the sign of failure of marriage, especially of women. She is treated as if she has committed some crime by divorcing her husband. In some communities like Muslims women did not have the right to divorce their husband they were divorced at just the pronouncement of " I divorce you" by their husband thrice and they could not do anything except to be the mute spectator. Recently Muslim Law Board has given right of divorce to women. After divorce women is entitled to get her "Meher" for herself and her children's sustenance. In Hindu society women get maintenance for themselves and their children after divorce.

Sexual harassment

Half of the total number of crimes against women reported in 1990 related to molestation and harassment at the workplace. Eve teasing is a euphemism used for sexual harassment or molestation of women by men. Many activists blame the rising incidents of sexual harassment against women on the influence of "Western culture". In 1987, The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act was passed to prohibit indecent representation of women through advertisements or in publications, writings, paintings, figures or in any other manner.

Conclusion

The informal sector includes jobs such as domestic servant, small trader, artisan, or field laborer on a family farm. Most of these jobs are unskilled and low paying and do not provide benefits to the worker. More importantly, however, cultural practices vary from region to region. Though it is a broad generalization, North India tends to be more patriarchal and feudal than South India. Women in northern India have more restrictions placed on their behavior, thereby restricting their access to work. Southern India tends to be more egalitarian, women have relatively more freedom, and women have a more prominent presence in society. Cultural restrictions however are changing, and women are freer to participate in the formal economy, though the shortage of jobs throughout the country contributes to low female employment. But in the recent years, conditions of working women in India have improved considerably. More and more women find themselves in positions of respect and prestige, more and more workplaces are now populated with women who work on equal terms as men. Working is no longer an adjustment, a mere necessity; but a means to self worth and growth.

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