



## WOMEN ISSUES IN INDIA

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### ABSTRACT:

Women's are the wealth of India and they have contributed in almost every field and made country feel proud at every occasion. They are in front, leading the country, making mile stones and source of inspiration for many. In politics, President Pratibha Patil, Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar, UPA Chairperson Sonia Gandhi, Chief Minister of UP Mayawati and Delhi Sheila Dixit, bureaucracy, Nirupama Roy, in socio-cultural field, Medha Patekar, Arundhati Roy, Shobna Narayanan, Lata Mangeskar, Anjolie Ela Menon, Rekha, Meera Nayar and many others, in sports, Sania Mirja, Saina Nehwal

are some of the names at the top.

Women's are also playing important role in national growth and economic development through corporate houses. They are not only working at grass root level but participating in decision making. Jyoti Naik, President of Lijjat Papad, Kiran Mazumdar, Chairman and Managing Director of Biocon, Naina Lal Kidwai, Deputy CEO of HSBC, Ranjana Kumar, Chairman of NABARD, Ritu Kumar, CEO of Escolife, Priya Paul, Chairman of Apeejay Park Hotels, Indira Nooyi, Chairperson & CEO of Pepsico, Roshani Nadar, CEO of HCL are some of the pioneers in their respective field. At present women's are contributing and participating in every sphere, politics, business, education, science and technology, media, sports, art and culture etc.

**KEYWORDS:** *economic development, section of population, Women's equality, socio-cultural.*

### INTRODUCTION:-

However this is the one face of coin and on the other side of coin is the hard truth of the Indian society. There is systematic discrimination and neglect from early childhood of women's in India, which could be in terms of inadequate nutrition, denial or limited access to education, health and property rights, child

labour and domestic violence. The fear of sexual violence has been a powerful factor in restricting women's behavior and sense of freedom. The struggle against violence is actually the struggle against the unequal distribution of power both physical and economic between the sexes. It is important to address the root cause for the subordinate status of women in the Indian society. Hillary Clinton, US secretary of State, addressing the Delhi University students on 20 July 2009 said that "women's roles and rights are as important as any issue we can list. Women are the key of economic growth.

It's been established through research". Men should perceive women not as subservient being but as empowered individuals who are equal partners. The issues need to be seen in the context of a patriarchal social framework and a value system based on 'son preference', such as the son being responsible for the carrying forward of the family name, support in old age and for performing the last rites. Further, the practice of dowry and the tag of 'Parayadhan' translate into daughters being considered an economic liability. Women's are not only entitled for survival but

also to a life with dignity, grace and equal opportunities so that they can grow to their full potential. There is an urgent need to pay attention to the issues that concern this section of population. The focus should be on poverty reduction, gender justice, health, nutrition, sustained awareness of rights and redressed, eradication of social evils etc.

### **POLITICAL ISSUES**

Women's equality in power sharing and active participation in decision making, including decision making in political process at all levels will ensure the achievement of the goal of women empowerment. Government of India through 73 rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts reserved the one-third of seats in all local elected bodies for women as a sign of political empowerment. Over a million women have actively entered political life in India through the Panchayat Raj institutions. There are many elected women representatives at the village council level. The percentage of women in various levels of political activities in India have risen considerably, however women are still under-represented in governance and decision-making process. Their power is restricted, as it the men who wield all the authority. Their decisions are often over-ruled by the government machinery. It is crucial to train and give real power to these women leaders so that they can catalyst change in their villages regarding women. In recent years there have been explicit moves to increase women's political participation at top level. However, the Women's reservation bill is a sad story as it is repeatedly being scuttled in the parliament. All this shows that the process of gender equality and women's empowerment still has a long way to go.

### **ECONOMIC ISSUES**

Women professionals in India are facing a range of problems. Women have extensive workload with dual responsibility of profession and household and they have to balance household demands with those of their profession. Development policies and programs of the country tend not to view women as integral to the economic development process. This is reflected in the higher investments in women's reproductive rather than their productive roles, mainly in population programs.

Women are engage in economically productive work and earn incomes though their earnings are generally low. Most of the women work in agricultural sector either as workers, in household farms or as wagedworkers. It is precisely livelihood in agriculture that has tended to become more volatile and insecure in recent years and women cultivators have therefore been negatively affected. The government's policies for alleviating poverty have failed to produce any desirable results, as women do not receive appropriate wages for their labour. There is also significant amount of unpaid or non-marketed labour within the household. The increase in gender disparity in wages in the urban areas is also quite marked as it results from the employment of women in different and lower paying activities. They are exploited at various levels. They should be provided with proper wages and work at par with men so that their status can be elevated in society. There is urgent need to improve women's economic status because they are fundamental to the process of economic development of the country.

### **CULTURAL ISSUES**

The socio-cultural attributes in society have left a deep mark on women empowerment in India. Parents depend on sons for support in old age and looked to them as potential builders of family prestige and prosperity whereas daughters are considered to destine for others. Women's in India need and expect equal access to education, health, nutrition, employment and productive resources. In fact they are fighting for their rights to decide their own path for development.

### **EDUCATION**

The female literacy rate in India is though gradually rising, it's lower than the male. According to the National Survey data (1997), only the states of Kerala and Mizoram have approached universal female literacy rates. The gender gap in education is far greater in northern states of India. Although in states where enrollment rates for girls are higher, many girls drop out of school after a few years of

education. Factors such as inhibition on education being imparted by male teachers to girls once they reach puberty, is responsible for drop out. Consequences are that early marriage and child birth pronounced in families of lower socio-economic status.

### **HEALTH AND NUTRITION**

The socio-cultural practice of women eating last in the family has eminent effect on her health especially if it is a household in low economic status. Most direct effects of poor health and nutrition among women in Indian society are high mortality rates among young children and women of child bearing age. A women health and nutrition status influence her newborn's birth weight and chance of survival. Post neo-natal death is generally caused by infectious diseases. The incidence and severity of most of this disease are affected by controllable factors such as immunization, health care and nutrition. Due to gender biased, these factors are not controlled equally for male and female children. Maternal mortality in India estimated at 437 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, result primarily from infection hemorrhage, obstructed labour, abortion and anemia.

### **CRIMES AND VIOLENCE**

Crimes against women are of various natures. It include crimes involving sexual exploitation for economic gains like prostitution & trafficking, adultery, abduction, rape, wrongful confinement, and murder etc on the one hand and crimes related to women's property like dishonest misappropriation, criminal breach of trust, domestic violence, dowry extortion and outraging the modesty of women etc on the other. These crimes are not only injurious and immoral for the women but for the society as a whole.

### **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

In Indian society, it is widely accepted that within the family the man is the master and women is the inferior and subordinate partner and societal pressure force women to maintain this status quo. Wife beating is the most prevalent form of violence against women in the Indian society and it is viewed as a general problem of domestic discord. According to National Crime Report Bureau, 1.5 lakh crimes against women are registered annually out of which nearly 50,000 are related to domestic violence in their homes.

### **FEMALE INFANTICIDE AND FETICIDE**

This is playing a significant role in lop sided sex ratio in India. Poor families in certain regions of the country sometimes resort to killing baby girls at birth, to avoid an unwanted burden on family resources. Sex selective abortion has also been common in the country. It's dangerous to abort the fetus after 18 weeks of pregnancy and quiet harmful for mother too at such a late stage. Various techniques of sex determination and sex pre-selection have been discovered during the last fifteen years, such as sonography, fetoscopy, needling, chorion biopsy and the most popular amniocentesis have increasingly become household names in India. Amniocentesis technique is used in the small town and also in some cities of states like Gujrat, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Tamilnadu, Rajasthan etc. Mumbai and Delhi are also the major center for sex determination and sex pre-selection tests

### **DOWRY**

Dowry remains the major reason for discrimination and injustice towards women in India. When dowry demands are not met, it precipitates into serious consequence for the young bride. The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 marks the first attempt by the Government of India to recognize dowry as a social evil and to curb its practice. The act was modified with the Dowry Prohibition Amendment Act of 1984, which has again been modified with Dowry Prohibition Bill 1986. Women's organization have played key role in this process of change. The 1961 Act define dowry and makes the practice of dowry- giving and taking, a punishable offence. However, i t is ridiculous to see that even among highly

educated sections, the articles of dowry are proudly exhibited in the marriage as a status symbol. The dowry abuse is increasing in India. The most severe is 'bride burning', the burning of women whose dowries were not considered sufficient by their husband or in-laws. Most of these incidents are reported as accidental burns in the kitchen or are disguised as suicide. Dowry is one of those social evils that no educated woman will own up with pride; still many are adhering to it. Practices of dowry tend to subordinate women in the society. Women should be more economically empowered and should be educated properly regarding the various legal provisions such as Section 498A Cr.P.C., protection from domestic violence etc., only then this evil menace could possibly be eradicated from Indian social system.

## RAPE

Rape is the fastest growing crime in India compared to murder, robbery and kidnapping. According to the report of National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), every 60 minutes, two women are raped in this country. A total of 20,737 cases of rape were reported in the year 2007, registering a 7.2 percent increase over the previous year. According to NCRB, 19,348 rape cases were reported in the year 2006. The biggest number of such crimes was reported from Madhya Pradesh. One-quarter of the victims were minors, 75 percent of culprits were known to victims and 10 percent were relatives. These figures are underestimations as many incidents go unreported due to fear of stigma and non awareness of rights. There are also the countless cases of eve teasing, indecent gazes, pinching, brushes and comments that infringe upon the rights of women, especially in overcrowded spaces and public transport buses and trains. Major cities in the country have become the hub of misdemeanor because of technological reach. Mobile, cyber café, car, beach, mall, restaurant, hotel have become popular apparatus for the criminals. What precipitates the problem is that the incidents of rape, sexual molestation and harassment have been followed by dubious attempts by perpetrators and law enforcers to arm-twist the course of justice. There is a need for a drastic change in attitudes and mindsets towards such incidents. Poor investigations, harsh cross examination of victims, senseless adjournment of cases and faulty assessment of evidence and furnishing of evidence by victims in presence of culprits are areas that need reforms.

In the year 2007 for which the latest data is available from the National Crime Records Bureau, seven of the ten fastest rising crimes in India were those against women. While the incidence of all cognizable crimes under the Indian Penal code rose by under 5 percent over the previous year, dowry deaths registered an increase of 15 percent, cruelty by husband and relatives 14 percent, kidnapping and abduction of females 13 percent, importation of girls 12 percent and sexual harassment by 11 percent. Rape and molestation cases grew by a more modest 6-7 percent, but even that was higher than the average rate. Despite the increasing cases of crime against women, they would appear to be not in priority list of the investigating agencies. The NCRB data shows that investigation starts within the same year in only one out of 10 sexual harassment cases and only two out of ten cases of molestation or cruelty by husband and relatives.

Similarly, only three out of ten rapes and dowry deaths are investigated within the same year. A comparative study of the data available about these crimes suggest that there were rise in the crimes against women in 2008 compared to the previous year. While a total of 1,012 cases were registered for kidnap of women in 2007, the number went up to 1,494 in 2008. Similarly, the number of incidents related to dowry death rose from 1,226 in 2007 to 1,233 in 2008. Similarly, cases of atrocities perpetrated for dowry rose to 2,230 in 2008 from 1,493 in 2007. Cases related to eve-teasing and molestation shot up to 188 during 2008, 20 more than those recorded in the previous year. Also incidents related to kidnapping of women increased from 1,012 in 2007 to 1,494 in 2008. The fact remains that there is sufficient information about crime against women that calls for appropriate remedial actions.

The chapter social profile of women in media profession indicates that the women in media profession are young, married and professionally well qualified, come from the good educated and income generating families, They come from nuclear families. The women in media of this part of the

country are young and coming from lower caste background. They are highly educated. Most of them come from journalism and literature degrees. It clearly indicates that the women in media of this part of the country are professionally well qualified.

Coming to career pattern the women in the media profession initially join as a write. The women of this region joined media profession recently. Their span of career is low. As the respondents are professionally qualified they are working in the reputed channels. They are mobile in nature. They move from one channel to another to get the promotion or advancement. At the same time women journalists wants to continue with this profession. The women journalists studied are satisfied with their profession. They are highly committed towards the profession.

Coming to family life and profession, the study finds out that the women in the media profession are facing certain problems. Particularly the married women are facing the role conflict. It becomes difficult for them to manage both family and the profession. The women in the media profession always reach home late. Even than they keep their office happy. They never go late to the office or not even claimed any concession in the office work. It is significant to note that the women in the media profession are facing competition in their profession. At the same time they are facing threat some times. The women in the media are treated in respectful manner by the society

The study further finds out that women in media profession being in media profession is both advantage and disadvantage for them. Women in the media profession consider the media profession as a different profession compared to other profession. At the same time women media professionals considered that they justify the profession with their professional skilled efforts. Further the study finds out that the women find it difficult to participate in some difficult sting operations.

Further it is significant to conclude that the women educate themselves in the media profession and they themselves develop the professional dignity.

The women media personnel exhibit that the advertising market is degrading the women cult. At the same time the study finds out that the government and the society are silent about this matter. It is the responsibility of the government and the society to control and if required to ban such degraded advertisements. Here corporate people should also make equal responsible for this.

As concluding statement it may be stated that the present study in Women Studies in general and women in media profession in particular has sought to empirically identify the profile, family life, career pattern, advantage and disadvantages of women in the media profession. Many of the findings presented in the body of the thesis were well founded speculations or hypothesis that only needed empirical proof. Likewise some of the fringe areas of the women in media profession that are sparingly touched upon needed to be taken up for further serious research.

However, the limitation of time and resources so characteristic of social science research such as this could be taken as constraining factors the researcher has to work under the bear with. In the face of constrains like this, the researcher feels gratified for having reached certain conclusions and made a few suggestions that are valid and verifiable at least in the specific context in which the enquiry was conducted. To this extent, the researcher inclined to express a feeling of accomplishment which accompanies every successful scientific endeavor though the pursuit of social reality is never ending process.

### **MEDIA COVERAGE OF WOMEN ISSUES**

Media implicitly rank the importance of the public issues according to the amount of press coverage devoted to an issue. Lack of appropriate media coverage of an issue leads to the implication that the topic is not important. Public awareness is significantly lessened if a story is not reported. Violence against women is a global pandemic and the consequences of media ignorance and bias are horrific. In India, the amount of coverage in mainstream media is inversely proportional to the actual prevalence of the kinds of violence and gives a false impression. Most disturbing is the disproportionate coverage of sensationalized violence. Invariably, rape stories get far more coverage than domestic violence stories. In all likelihood, this is because rape stories usually focus on one individual woman. If

she is attractive, she is a very marketable victim. It is no accident that rape is a frequent theme in pornography.

The sexual brutalization of women is a highly marketable business and a profitable story for the news media. For example the Indian media, be it press or the broadcasters, choose to highlight the rape and murder of a 14-year-old girl rather than to report about the success of women in recent panchayat elections in the country. The media have no time to show the actual problems of real India at the grass root level, its culture, traditions, faiths and beliefs and so on. They usually show only those handpicked stories which sells and increase their TRPs.

Even the amount of media coverage women get overall is much less than men do. Men are provided with a larger number of opportunities to present their viewpoints and shown in diverse roles in all areas like administration, law, business, science and technology. While representation of women varies from negligible to total exclusions and are interviewed and talked about only in certain accepted professions such as educationists or doctors. If they are interviewed for achieving success in a 'male' profession, then it often goes to great pains to point out her 'feminist'.

Indian media needs to be sensitized to gender issues. It should play proactive role in inculcating gender sensitivity in the country and should ensure that women are not depicted in poor light. It should devote special slots for crimes against women in India and discuss all proactive aspects. The challenge before media is to move beyond clubbing what happens to women with routine crime briefs, on the one hand, and sensational stories, on the other. Media should take a proactive role in creating public awareness on the rights and privileges of women. Constitutional and legal rights should also be advertised and discussed regularly.

The latest rulings and judgments are discussed so that the public are made aware of these rulings. Press Council should be given more teeth so that they could intervene effectively to counteract objectionable publications. There must be mechanisms to sensitize Censor Boards and bring about a working dialogue between members of the Censor Board and citizen's groups. This is the time to rethink and revisit the country's mass media policy. There are many issues which should be discussed threadbare to have an unbiased and healthy media policy in the country. But before that materializes, the stalwarts of Indian mass media should exercise prudence and restraint, show the truth, unadulterated, untutored and unbiased news and views, unbiased analysis and non-denationalization of events or incidences whether big or small.

### **GOVERNMENT MEDIA POLICY**

The government in India is striving for removing demeaning, degrading and negative conventional stereotypical images of women and violence against women in media. The government attempt is to involve private sector partners and media networks at all levels to ensure equal access for women in the area of information and communication. The government of India policy is to encourage media to develop codes of conduct, professional guidelines and other self-regulatory mechanisms to remove gender stereotypes and promote balanced portrayals of women and men.

### **CONCLUSION**

Women professionals in India are facing a range of problems. Women have extensive workload with dual responsibility of profession and household and they have to balance household demands with those of their profession.

It include crimes involving sexual exploitation for economic gains like prostitution & trafficking, adultery, abduction, rape, wrongful confinement, and murder etc on the one hand and crimes related to women's property like dishonest misappropriation, criminal breach of trust, domestic violence, dowry extortion and outraging the modesty of women etc on the other.

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