

Problems of Women in Modern Indian Society: Overview

K.Emmanuel (PhD Research Scholar,
Dept.of. Sociology and Social Work,
Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar.
Chidambaram
121muthu@gmail.com

&

Dr.B.Manickavasagam
Associate Professor, Dept.of. Sociology and Social Work
Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar
Chidambaram

Abstract:

The status of women in India has been subject to many changes over the span of recorded Indian history. After accomplishing independence India, the Indian government planned to give equal rights to women. But Indian women's are still ill-treated the society, Their position in society deteriorated early in India's ancient period, especially in the Indo-Aryan speaking regions, and their subordination continued to be reified well into India's early modern period. Evil Practices such as female infanticide, dowry, child marriage, Domestic and Social Violence against women have had a long duration in India, and have proved difficult to root out, especially in caste Hindu society in northern India Both the structural and cultural changes provided equality of opportunities to women in education, employment and political participation. With the help of these changes, exploitation of women, to a great extent was reduced. More freedom and better orientation were provided to the women's organization to pursue their interest. This paper to analyze the issues and challenges of women in modern India. This paper is based purely on secondary data. This analyses shows that problems faced by modern women and how to solve it. Equal footing with men is still an illusion for women because male dominance still prevails in the society.

Keywords: Women, female infanticide, dowry, child marriage, Domestic and Social Violence

Introduction:

In India status of women has been subject to many changes over the span of recorded Indian history. Women position in society deteriorated early in India's ancient period, especially in the Indo-Aryan speaking regions, and their subordination continued to be reified well into India's early modern period. During the British East India Company rule (1757–1857), and the British Raj (1858–1947), many changes were brought like Bengal Sati Regulation, 1829, Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act, 1856, Female Infanticide Prevention Act, 1870, and Age of Consent Act, 1891. Women's rights under the Constitution of India mainly include equality, dignity, and freedom from discrimination; additionally, India has various statutes governing the rights of women.

As of 2018, in Indian government some women have served in various official positions, including that of the President, the Prime Minister, the Lok Sabha speaker. However, many women in India continue to face significant difficulties. The rates of malnutrition are exceptionally high among adolescent girls and pregnant and lactating women in India, with repercussions for children's health. Violence against women, especially sexual violence, has been on the rise in India.

Status of Women in India:

(I) Status of women in Pre- independent India:

After the fall of the Mughal Empire at the decisive Battle of Plassey (1775 A.D) the British people established their complete political supremacy over the Indian people. During the British rule, so many changes were made in the economic and social structures of our society. Though the quality of life of women during this period remained more or less the same, some substantial progress was achieved in eliminating inequalities between men and women in education, employment, social right and so on. Some social evils practice such as child marriage, sati system, devadasi system, purdah system, prohibition of widow remarriage etc., which were a great hurdle in the path of women's progress were either controlled or removed by suitable legislations.

(II) Status of women in post independent India:

The status of Indian women has radically changed since independence. Both the structural and cultural changes provided equality of opportunities to women in education, employment and political participation. With the help of these changes, exploitation of women, to a great extent was reduced. More freedom and better orientation were provided to the women's organisation to pursue their interest. In modern Indian women want equality, education and recognition. The advancement of women is the most significant fact of modern India. Gandhiji once said "woman is the noblest of God's creation, supreme in her own sphere of activity." These words are blossoming now.

Problems of Women in India:

Rate of violence against women in Indian states and union territories in 2012. Crime rate data per 100,000 women in this map is the broadest definition of crime against women under Indian law. It includes rape, sexual assault, insult to modesty, kidnapping, and abduction, cruelty by intimate partner or relatives, trafficking, persecution for dowry, dowry deaths, indecency, and all other crimes listed in Indian Penal Code.

Crime against women such as rape, acid throwing, dowry killings, honour killings, and the forced prostitution of young girls has been reported in India. Police records in India show a high

incidence of crimes against women. The National Crime Records Bureau reported in 1998 that by 2010 growth in the rate of crimes against women would exceed the population growth rate.

Acid throwing

Acid throwing is one of the major issue in India. Many girls were affected by the issue. A Thomas Reuters Foundation in London survey says that India is the fourth most dangerous place in the world for women to live in. Women belonging to any class, caste, creed or religion can be victims of this cruel form of violence and disfigurement, a premeditated crime intended to kill or maim permanently and act as a lesson to put a woman in her place. In India, acid attacks on women who dared to refuse a man's proposal of marriage or asked for a divorce are form of revenge. Acid is cheap, easily available, and the quickest way to destroy a woman's life.

Child marriage

Child marriage has been traditionally prevalent in India but is not so continued in Modern India to this day. Historically, child brides would live with their parents until they reached puberty. The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 is the relevant legislation in the country. According to UNICEF's "State of the World's Children-2009" report, 47% of India's women aged 20–24 were married before the legal age of 18, rising to 56% in rural areas. The report also showed that 40% of the world's child marriages occur in India.

Domestic violence

According to former Union minister for Women and Child Development Renuka Chowdhury says Around 70% of women in India are victims of domestic violence, Domestic violence was legally addressed in the 1980s when the 1983 Criminal Law Act introduced section 498A "Husband or relative of husband of a woman subjecting her to cruelty".

The National Crime Records Bureau reveal that a crime against a woman is committed every three minutes, a woman is raped every 29 minutes, a dowry death occurs every 77 minutes, and one case of cruelty committed by either the husband or relative of the husband occurs every nine minutes.

Dowry

In 2011, the national Crime Records Bureau reported 8,618 dowry deaths; unofficial estimates claim the figures are at least three times as high.

In 1961, the Government of India passed the Dowry Prohibition Act, making dowry demands in wedding arrangements illegal. However, many cases of dowry-related domestic violence, suicides and murders have been reported. In the 1980s, numerous such cases were reported.

Honor killings

Honor killings have been reported in northern regions of India, mainly in the Indian states of Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, as a result of the girl marrying without the family's acceptance, and sometimes for marrying outside her caste or religion. Haryana is notorious for incidents of honor killings, which have been described as "chillingly common in villages of Haryana".

Rape

Rape in India is most common crimes against women in India Described by Radha Kumar. It's a major problem in India. Since the 1980s, women's rights groups lobbied for marital rape to be declared unlawful, but the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013 still maintains the marital exemption by stating in its exception clause under Section 375, that: "Sexual intercourse or sexual acts by a man with his own wife, the wife not being under fifteen years of age, is not rape".

New Delhi has one of the highest rates of rape-reports among Indian cities. Sources show that rape cases in India have doubled between 1990 and 2008.

Sexual harassment

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, and paintings or in any other manner. A study by Action Aid UK found that 80% of women in India had experienced sexual harassment ranging from unwanted comments, being groped or assaulted. Many incidents go unreported as the victims fear being shunned by their families.

Trafficking

The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act was passed in 1956. However many cases of trafficking of young girls and women have been reported.

Social legislations safeguarding women in India:

The Government of Independent India undertook a number of legislative measures to safeguard the interests of women.

(i) The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955:

It prohibits polygyny, polyandry and child marriage and concedes equal rights to women to divorce and to remarry.

(ii) The Hindu succession Act, 1956:

It provides the right to parental property for women.

(iii) The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956:

The act gives a childless woman the right to adopt a child and to claim maintenance from the husband if she is divorced by him.

(iv) The special Marriage Act, 1954:

It provides rights to women on par with men for inter-caste marriage, love marriage and registered marriage. The Act has also fixed the minimum age of marriage at 21 for males and 18 for females.

(v) The dowry prohibition Act, 1961:

It declares the taking of dowry an unlawful activity and thereby prevents the exploitation of women.

(vi) The Medical Termination of Pregnancy: Act 1971:

It legalizes abortion conceding the right of a woman to go for abortion on ground of physical and mental health.

(vii) The criminal Law Amendment Act 1983:

It seeks to stop various types of crimes against women.

(viii) The Family Court Act 1984:

It seeks to provide justice to women who get involved in family disputes.

(ix) The Maternity Benefit Act 1961:

It gives maternity benefits such as 3 months leaves with salary to the married women workers during pregnancy stage.

(x) The Equal Remuneration Act 1976:

It removes wage discrimination between male and female workers.

Constitutional provisions

The Constitution of India guarantees the right to equality to women. It embodies the general principles of equality before law and prohibits unreasonable discrimination between persons. Article 14 embodies the idea of equality expressed in preamble. Thus, in *Air India v. Nargesh Meerza* the Supreme Court struck down the offending regulations of Air India and Indian Airlines that provided that an airhostess would retire on attaining the age of 35 years, or on the first pregnancy, whichever was earlier. While article 15(1) prohibits the state from discriminating on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth, art 15(3) allows the state to make special provisions for women and children. Art 15 merely elaborates that same concept and acknowledges that women need special treatment for their upliftment. Art 39 (a) urges the state to provide equal right to adequate means of livelihood to men and women. Art 39 (d) Equal pay for equal work for both men and women.

Suggestions:

- Educate the next generation

Listen actively and seek understanding. Share experience and knowledge to grow wisdom.

- Awareness regarding women rights.

Human rights are women's rights, and women's rights are human rights. At their most basic, human rights concern reciprocity in human relationships that extend to all humanity and beyond.

- Join the online conversation

Human beings express their identities and their aspirations through what they say. Join the IWD Conversation #TimeIsNow and #IWD2018. Social media amplifies women's voices and emboldens their collective agency.

- Give to the cause

It takes time and effort for the gender equality conversation to reach everyone. Consider giving to the cause by donating money or time.

- Awareness programmes need to be organized for creating awareness especially to weaker section.
- Women should be allowed to work and should be provided enough safety and support.
- Implementation of programmes and acts should be there to curb the mal – practices prevalent in the society.
- Women should be aware about their rights first.
- Education of women has to be paid special attention.

Women helpline numbers in India

- Helpline (All India) 1091 / 1090
- National Commission for Women (NCW) 0111-23219750
- Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) 011 23378044/ 23378317/ 23370597
- Outer Delhi Helpline 011-27034873, 27034874
- Women in Distress 1091
- Police Control Room 100
- Anti Stalking/Obscene calls 1096

Conclusion

Modern women's are facing so many problems but still they are achieving in society. Indian women have had an extremely difficult time developing under the oppression of a male-dominated society, class and religion .But now it's the time to break silence. Women are entitled to respect. If every parent taught his or her son to respect women and treat them with dignity, a day would have come when they would not fear for the safety of their daughter. That would be a real education. Of course, there is a need to change our mindset and the patriarchal views that have engulfed Indian mindsets since ages. Society must take initiative to create a climate in which there is no gender discrimination and women have full opportunities to self-decision making and participating in political, economic and social with sense of equality.

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