



ROLE OF WOMEN IN INDIA'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Economic growth and women's empowerment go hand in hand; on the one hand, growth by itself can significantly reduce gender disparity; on the other, growth may be aided by the empowerment of women. Women are typically not seen as being essential to the process of economic growth in development strategies and initiatives. This is demonstrated by the larger investments made, mostly in population programmes, on women's reproductive duties as opposed to their productive ones. Yet In the underdeveloped world, women work and are paid for their economic productivity. Their main industries of employment include agriculture, the informal economy, and increasingly, formal wage jobs. However, their incomes are typically meagre. Since the 1950s, development organisations have reacted to the need for disadvantaged women to have a source of income by investing only modest sums of money in initiatives that generate revenue. Such initiatives frequently fall short because they are driven by welfare concerns rather than development issues and provide women with temporary and part-time work in traditionally feminine professions like knitting and sewing, which have small markets. In contrast, some nongovernmental organisations have been successful in improving women's economic status over the past 20 years because they began with the premise that women are essential to the process of economic development. One such organisation is the Self-Employed Women's Association in India.

Key Words: Population Programs, informal sector, development

INTRODUCTION:

The problem of "missing women" is a jarring reminder of the fact that gender inequality still exists in our society. According to the World Bank (2011), it is estimated that 6 million women vanish from the face of the earth each year. Twenty-three percent of them do not live to see their first birthday, ten percent vanish during their formative years, twenty-one percent vanish during their reproductive years, and thirty-eight percent are above the age of sixty. There are far more women than men who are deprived of the opportunities for education, work, or political power that they would have had if they had been born a man for every single woman who is no longer alive. It is clear, in a number of different realms, that women are still subject to a greater degree of deprivation than they were twenty years ago, despite the fact that there has been some progress in this direction. In 2010, the enrolment rate for girls in secondary schools in low- and middle-income countries was 34 percent, while the enrolment rate for boys was 41 percent. This disparity is due to the fact that more boys enrol in secondary schools than girls.

In the meanwhile, enrollment in elementary schools has practically reached a universal level for both males and females. Women have fewer employment possibilities than males; when they do find work, they make less money than men do for equivalent positions; and even when they do find job, they have a greater chance of living in poverty. When compared to males, women put in over twice the amount of time required to complete housekeeping, almost five times the amount of time required to care for children, and around half the amount of time required to do market employment. In terms of political representation, there were just 19.4 percent female members of both the lower and upper chambers of parliament in July 2011. In terms of their autonomous legal rights, women in many nations do not yet have the ability to independently own land, manage property, run businesses, or even travel without the approval of their husbands. There is a relationship that goes in both directions between economic development and women's empowerment. Women's empowerment can be defined as an improvement in women's ability to access the components of development, particularly health care, education, opportunities for earning money, rights, and the ability to participate in political processes. On the one hand, development alone has the potential to play a significant part in bringing about a reduction in the imbalance that exists between men and women; on the other hand, ongoing discrimination against women can, as Sen. strongly emphasised, slow down progress. To put it another way, empowerment can hasten the process of growth. The data supporting both sides of the empowerment–development link is analysed throughout this work. It first demonstrates that poverty and a lack of opportunity are the root causes of inequality between men and women. This means that when economic development reduces poverty, the condition of women improves on two counts: first, when poverty is reduced, the condition of everyone, including women, improves; and second, gender inequality declines as poverty declines, so the condition of women improves more than that of men with development; however, this is not sufficient to bring about complete equality between men and women.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To study the relation between women empowerment and the economic development.
2. To examine the relation between the women empowerment and education.

Prominent Themes: Poor Women's Socio-economic Development in India

The character of India's socioeconomic growth may be seen from a variety of perspectives, as shown by the findings of an investigation into recurring topics within the body of published work. There were four prevalent ideas that came to light: patriarchy, labour, educational endeavours, and government programmes. This does not indicate that other themes do not exist; rather, it only suggests that these four themes were the predominant topics of conversation about the socioeconomic progress of underprivileged women in India. People are responsible for building societies, and then societies are responsible for building people. This suggests that an unequal society may be transformed into a more equitable one via the application of deliberate effort. At the very least, it may be changed to ensure that all women in India have equal access to opportunities. As a lens through which to examine the economic progress of women in India, this research takes into account males as equal partners. Patriarchy One of the most widely held beliefs concerning Indian women is that their standing has, historically speaking, lagged behind that of women in more developed nations. The historical past of India is strongly reflected in contemporary Indian culture, which in turn reflects this close link. The history of India can shed light on the position that women occupy in contemporary Indian society (Masani, 1973). Written

proof of the position of Indian women may be found in an ancient document called the Rigveda, which dates back to between about 1,500 and 1,000 B.C.

In addition, the character of Indian women's existence in ancient India was exposed via archaeological, sculptural, and artistic discoveries (Seth, 2001). According to the beliefs of the Vedic culture, both men and women were created with equal potential. The term "Indus Valley" originated in India, which is where the word "Hindu" originated. The term "Hindu" literally translates to "people of the Indus," which suggests that Hinduism is more than just a religion; it is also a way of life. It is generally agreed that the birth of Hinduism occurred somewhere between the fifth and sixth century B.C. Despite the fact that Hindus worship more than one god, their religion is based on two primary tenets: karma and dharma, both of which have an impact on the position of many women in Indian society. Karma is the concept that a person's deeds in a previous life have the potential to influence their present and future lives, whereas dharma refers to the process of practising laws (Jayawardena). The combination of the two ideas suggests that one's karma will improve in the life to come if they engage in good dharmic behaviour in this world. It's possible that this is the reason why disadvantaged women are more likely to accept their position in life rather than fight for what's right. Both men and women were seen in the Vedic tradition as having equal value. Women were encouraged to pursue education in a variety of fields, including the Vedas, astrology, geography, veterinary science, and martial arts. Women intellectuals like Ramsha created seven mantras (hymns), and they disputed the idea of elevating women's buddhi (intelligence) (Seth, 2001). They exercised their freedom to select their own husbands and religions, to remarry after losing a spouse, to fight in wars, to migrate freely, and to choose whether or not to do so. Women like Mudgalani, who participated in military conflicts, are evidence that educated women have assets, independence, and skill (Seth, 2001).

The Veda mentions at least twenty women who were successful in their fields. There is no indication in any of the Vedic literature that a preference be shown for boy offspring, nor is there any mention of any sexual disparities in the ceremonies (Seth, 2001). On the other hand, societal and religious taboos have a greater impact on women in India than they do on males. Because Hinduism is followed by the majority of the people in India (82 percent), it has an impact on other religions, which results in the adoption of rituals and practises that are otherwise uncommon. announced that "India is a traditional country that segregates the sexes and follows deeply ingrained norms and behaviours that are sanctioned by practically all faiths" (p. 31). A key turning point altered the trajectory of history in India, leading to the subjugation of women. An further sacred text referred to as the "Manusmriti" (Laws of Manu) and composed in Sanskrit between the years 1500 B.C. and 200 A.D. emerged as a significant precedent.

Manu was both the author and the lawgiver of the holy rules that govern society. The Brahmin priests, who belonged to the highest caste in ancient India, maintained a high esteem for the Manusmriti and disseminated its twelve chapters and 2,684 verses to the entire people. blatantly violates the rights of women in a number of different ways. It was the responsibility of the husband to "carefully protect his wife in order to preserve his progeny pure," according to the regulations that applied to both the husband and the wife separately. An intriguing change that occurred during the period of the Vedas was the need that "a devoted woman must continually adore her husband as a deity." It was no longer fashionable to advocate for women's rights or equality. The patriarchal system grew so dominant that it restricted the psychological and physical liberties of women. Every facet of a woman's life was subject to control, monitoring, and direction at all times. She was

not allowed to have any assets of her own, she was not allowed to displease her husband, she was expected to be responsible for the housework and the children, she was expected to perform religious duties, she was expected to prepare all of the food, she was expected to provide male children, she was expected to subdue her needs, thoughts, and actions, she was expected to be loyal and obedient, and she was not allowed to remarry if she became a widow (Manu). Many low-income women have their lives controlled and supervised from the moment they are born until the moment they pass away. There was a decrease in the age at which women may be married, remarriage was outlawed, and harsh restrictions were placed on women's freedoms. Masani (1973), one of the critics of this hegemonic view, asserted that men and women "are products of culturised attitudes, legends, beliefs and values that are socially induced" and that the status of women in Hindu society can be linked to caste and religion. Masani's argument was that men and women are "products of culturised attitudes, legends, beliefs and values that are socially induced."

In the 21st century, this patriarchal perspective of women continues to dominate and affect Indian culture. [Citation needed] [Citation needed] Because the vast majority of women in India reside in rural regions (74.2% according to the Census of India in 1991), they are subject to a wide variety of social and cultural discriminations (Vecchio and Roy, 1998). Rural areas have a stronger commitment to upholding their traditions. The research conducted by Vecchio and Roy investigated the social and cultural norms that women might violate in the absence of "ridicule or isolation" from their communities (p. 91). The women who answered stated that they would disrupt early marriage customs, eliminate the constraints of producing males, demand equal labour and equal pay, demand access to non-traditional medicine, refuse to ignore girls, and refuse to tolerate inequity within the family. Even though women are aware of the persecution they face, their voices are rarely heard because they are afraid of the reaction of their communities. The lives of poor women are likewise confined within the context of their families. found that dwellings in both rural and urban areas tend to follow similar fundamental designs in order to fit different social contexts. The Indian society is a collectivist one, which means that the demands of the individual are subordinated to those of the collective. In many cases, joint families consisting of many generations will continue to occupy the same house until it is no longer practicable to do so. The placement of each home within the community is determined, in part, by social caste and class. The Manusmriti was a significant factor in the establishment of patriarchy in India. It offers a pragmatic and philosophical perspective on life in India that is skewed toward women and plays a significant role in determining the lives of many Indian women. One of the effects of this is that the proportion of women to men in India has been falling. The lowest rate ever recorded was 927 females for every 1000 males in the census taken in 1991. The proportion of women to men is significantly greater in "disadvantaged castes" and in lower castes overall. In India, female children have a mortality rate that is 25 percent higher than the global average before the age of fifteen. At the very least, one-sixth of these people pass away as a direct result of gender bias.

The high rates of "missing women" in India can be attributed to a number of factors, the most prominent of which are a lack of financial resources, inadequate nutrition, gender bias, and tests that result in the abortion of female foetuses. These factors contribute to the high death rate of girls in India (p. 18). In the 21st century, there are now more gender prejudices than ever before. Not only do recent horrors like foetal testing, abortions, and dowry murders reduce women's chances of surviving, but they also undermine their rights to even give birth. In order to restore the basic egalitarian principles of Indian society, it is necessary for it to look to its Vedic heritage. Education The population of the country rose by 23.85 percent during the years of the 1981

and 1991 censuses. The ever-increasing population rates, in conjunction with the high percentage of people who live in rural regions, make it impossible to provide everyone with an education. When there is a greater demand than there is available supply of a scarce good like education, that good will have a higher value. The recommendations vary from teaching functional literacy at its most fundamental level to teaching higher levels of cultural and legal literacy. There is clear evidence of gender bias when looking at literacy rates. Literacy is at 52.2% of the population in India (44.7 percent in rural areas and 73.1 percent in urban areas).

Literacy rates for males and females reveal that men have more access to education than women do; the male literacy rate is 64.1%, while the female literacy rate is just 39.3%. Only 30.6% of women living in rural areas are literate, which is much lower than the average of 64.16% for women living in urban areas. Literacy rates for men are at 73.1 percent in Gujarat, but literacy rates for women sit at 48.6 percent. With the exception of Kerala, the remaining 23 states all have very low rates of unemployment. The literacy rate of Kerala is the highest in the world at 89.8 percent for the overall population, with men having a rate of 93.6 percent and females having a rate of 86.2 percent (Census of India, 1991). According to Vecchio and Roy (1998), there is a gender and social class divide in India's educational system. According to Medhi (2000), even when education is accessible, the patriarchal belief system prevents women's position from improving as a result of receiving an education. Even though they had careers outside the home, nearly all of the women who had earned post-graduate degrees continued to fulfil the conventional responsibilities of wives and mothers (Medhi). When Medhi claimed that the empowerment of women will "take an unlimited length of time," her gloomy pronouncement was rather depressing (p. 38). Because girls are expected to be married, their families put more emphasis on the education of their sons (Vecchio & Roy, 1998).

It is a widely held misconception that once females marry, they become the responsibility of their husband's family, making the return on investment in their education insufficient. Girls in households with poor incomes and restricted budgets are unable to receive an education because it is costly. Because Vecchio and Roy (1998) believe that education for economic profit is not readily available, the sort of education that a female obtains is frequently not worthwhile. [Citation needed] Women from lower social groups frequently do not have access to education because patriarchal values are prevalent in the homes in which they live. It is not considered vital for a woman to have an education since the purdah concept dictates that she should remain veiled and hidden (Vecchio & Roy, 1998). Because of gender prejudice, impoverished women are denied access to any resource that requires funding, such as health care, nutritious food, and educational opportunities (Vecchio & Roy). If a woman does not have appropriate knowledge and has few resources, she will suffer significantly if her spouse passes away or deserts her (United Nations, 2000). She does not have the skills necessary to earn a sufficient living for herself. As a result of the increased value of a girl's work within the house, most moms opt to keep their daughters at home. The majority of housework falls mostly on the shoulders of women (Vecchio & Roy, 1998). This implies that they get up early, eat last, and go to bed late after they have finished all of their responsibilities. There is hardly any time or energy left over for furthering one's education. As a result, women's worth has decreased in India throughout time. Vecchio and Roy (1998) acknowledged that this issue can be resolved with the assistance of development programmes that are tailored to meet the requirements of women. Masani, on the other hand, was of the opinion that changes in cultural attitudes are difficult to achieve and may even result in the perpetuation of existing inequalities. The tension between traditionalists and reformers might impede the progress of socioeconomic development. According to Masani (1973), given that India is still in its early stages of democratic development, "the constitution is destined to be quite gradual" (p.

331). To Masani's credit, she penned the comment in 1973, which was fewer than thirty years after India gained its freedom. Despite this, one may say that fifty years after India's independence, there hasn't been much change made for the lives of poor Indian women. It is imperative that women have equal access to educational opportunities in order to raise their level of legal literacy and improve their career prospects (United Nations, 2000).

"Functional literacy and access to training" is something that can be gained via education (p. 104). Literacy has the potential to improve a woman's sense of self-worth and confidence, as well as empower her to advocate for her own rights without having to rely on third parties. Women who are confronted with paperwork have additional challenges when they are illiterate (United Nations). Because they are illiterate, low-income women are at the whim of corrupt officials and employers who try to rob them of their legal protections. People who are educated, healthy, and secure are necessary for economic progress (Parikh & Radhakrishna, 2002, p. 15). As long as women have to work hard just to get by and education is considered a luxury they cannot afford, there will be a cycle of poverty that cannot be broken. Their income will continue to be inadequate so long as they do not have an appropriate education. Increasing women's access to education on par with males can improve their career prospects and potential earnings. Providing stable work opportunities for women in India will not only contribute to the country's socioeconomic progress but also move the country closer to an equal society. Women make up the majority of the "invisible labour" in India (United Nations, 1997, p. 8). If women are prevented from participating in higher-paying labour because they are denied equal access to the job market, their economic standing will continue to stagnate. India has neglected a resource for human capital that has not been fully developed while having significant potential. The Ministry of Social Welfare in India published a study in 1987 that proved the exploitation of women in the workplace. The research highlighted the low pay earned by women, gender prejudice in the workplace, prolonged hours, and bad working conditions. The manual labour that would ordinarily be handled by untrained women is being taken over by machines thanks to competition from technology (Devi, 1999; Dhagamwar, 1995).

Women's ability to work is negatively impacted by problems related to employment, lack of skills and training, and low salaries (Devi, 1999, pp. 28-29). Poor women often look for additional ways to get money since they have a limited number of official employment options available to them. Because there aren't enough official jobs available, 90 percent of women in India have to find labour in the informal economy (Dhagamwar, 1995; United Nations, 1997). In its 1987 report on informal employment, the Ministry of Social Welfare identified three types of work: self-employment, contract/wage work, and housekeeping (pp. 74-75). This precarious source of income further hinders women's ability to achieve sustainable development. In a cycle of corruption that places impoverished women at the bottom of the income ladder (Dhagamwar, 1995), sub-contractors are responsible for the exploitation of women. It is difficult to achieve economic justice in this atmosphere. Dhagamwar was of the opinion that neither employers nor trade unions nor government policies had taken any action to protect the employment opportunities of women. The economic engagement of women at work is complicated by a variety of factors resulting from diverse cultural and regional influences (United Nations, 1997). Because different conceptual frameworks are used and there is a lack of actual data, opinions about the economic standing of women vary from person to person. When attempting to define work, numerous terminology such as "informal sector," "work," "casual," "main," "marginal," "non-workers," "unorganised," "unregulated," "residual," and "primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors" are used in various reports. This causes confusion (Census of India, 1991; Devi, 1999; Ministry of Social Welfare, 1987; United Nations, 1997).

The "informal sector" is home to employment for the vast majority of India's people (Devi, 1999, p. 21). It is generally accepted that the phrase "self-employed" has a more positive connotation (p. 31). There is a cloud of doubt around the true state of women's economic growth in India due to the fact that different definitions and reporting methodologies are used. According to the findings of Amartya Sen's (1999) research on economic changes in India, income makes it possible to develop other capacities. Although this may be true for middle-class or upper-class women who are looking for personal fulfilment, the major reason that low-income women work outside the home is to generate revenue in order to meet their most fundamental requirements for sustaining life.

PROBLEMS FACED BY THE WORKING WOMEN IN INDIA

1. **Malnutrition:** Despite the fact that India's GDP is growing at a pace of 9 percent and that women are able to reduce the cost of agricultural goods by Rs. 93000 crores annually, we find that 52 percent of women struggle with malnutrition. When everyone in the country has access to subsidised food, the farmers who really grow the grain don't get their fair share of the benefits.

2. **Discrimination at Workplace:** Despite this, Indian women are still subjected to overt forms of discrimination in the workplace. Sexual harassment in the workplace is a significant obstacle that many women in the workforce must overcome. In addition, female employees who work the night shift are at an increased risk for these kinds of events. For instance, nurses deal with this issue on a daily basis or pretty close to it. There is little that is done in hospitals to combat or alleviate the risk that patients are exposed to. One of the reasons why sexual harassment in the workplace is continuing to rise is because of the flagrant contempt for the rules that are now in effect in India. In addition, working women in India are frequently barred from advancement chances and promotions at their places of employment, although this is not always the case. The majority of working women continue to be denied their right to equal pay, which is guaranteed to them by the Equal Remuneration Act of 1976. As a result, their compensation is much lower than that of their male coworkers. The vast majority of factories and other labor-intensive sectors operate in this manner.

3. **Acceptance As Working Professionals:** The majority of Indian males have not yet accepted the idea that women are equally capable of working beside them, side by side, in any industry or professional sector. They continue to see women in the traditional role of persons who should be in charge of the kitchen and other household responsibilities. Either working is considered as a necessary but temporary evil for women whose husbands do not earn enough, or it is seen as the province of women who do not "know their place." As a direct consequence of this, working women in India do not receive the respect they deserve from the male coworkers they interact with on the job.

4. **Balancing Work-Family Life:** No matter how high their position or designation is in the office, women in India are still viewed as the family manager back home. They are expected to return home at a certain time, cook, clean and take care of family affairs. In fact, men who help out around their house are often the butt of jokes by their male friends. This makes life extremely stressful for women who have little help around the house and have to do it all.

5. **Low Dignity and No Ownership of Her Own Earning:** Mostly women are not seen as independent earners, who command respect and dignity. Instead, is seen as a small back-wheel of a heavy vehicle and thus, her role

and contribution are mostly over looked. In most of the families, especially middle class, upper middle class and lower middle class; it's seen that the income of the woman either goes in the hands of her father or husband, rather than in her hands.

DISCUSSION

Women now leave their homes for a variety of reasons, including to work and earn money, to make a statement about who they are, to establish their independence, to provide for their families, or to assist their husbands in providing for their families. Women in today's society are shattering the stereotype of the domesticated housewife by embracing new responsibilities and difficulties in the workplace. A woman has many different responsibilities, including those of daughter, sister, wife, daughter-in-law, and mother, and she has always been expected to be able to juggle a number of different tasks at the same time. She is the one who prepares meals, takes care of the housework, raises children, and looks out for everyone. She works around the clock, never grumbles, and expects nothing in return for her efforts. Her responsibilities and difficulties have grown and become much more difficult now that she is hyper multitasking, juggling between her job, travelling, the cooking, her kids, her spouse, the house, society, her own health, and the things she is passionate about and craves. As a result of juggling so many responsibilities and duties, a woman is confronted with a myriad of difficulties and issues each and every day, each and every time, and sometimes every second minute or second. Women in India are making substantial contributions to the economy, despite the fact that they face a variety of challenges, both in their home lives and in their professional lives. Women in India contribute significantly to the country's economy, and this aspect of their work deserves the highest level of acknowledgement and respect. In order to boost the amount of work that women produce, they need to be given more autonomy and given more opportunities. Women in the workforce confront a number of significant challenges and limitations linked to their jobs, including a lack of continuity, instability, wage discrimination, bad working relationships, and an absence of medical and accident care, amongst other issues. The exploitation of female farm workers in rural areas can take place on both a horizontal and a vertical scale. There is an urgent requirement to acknowledge the job that women do and to provide them with a secure working environment. The most essential component in deciding access and denial is illiteracy and lack of understanding, which leads to self-exclusion from possibilities available to the mainstream population. This is the primary cause of such factors.

CONCLUSION

As a result of the discussions that have taken place up until this point, it can be deduced that the empowerment of women plays a significant role in developing countries such as India. This is due to the fact that when women pursue education, they maintain their importance in each and every category, and because of this, they are ready to solve the organisational problems that exist, which leads to a reduction in the levels of poverty and an improvement in economic growth. The purpose of this study is to investigate the socioeconomic circumstances of low-income women in some parts of India. In Western mainstream HRD literature, the workforce demands and concerns of disadvantaged employees in India are rarely studied. In their study, Bierema and Cseh (2003) found that there was a dearth of research in AHRD publications and conference proceedings that focused on diversity and feminist perspectives. Post-Vedic patriarchal ideas, such as those found in the Manusmriti, may be traced back to the origins of gender discrimination in India (Laws of Manu). In a report published in 2000 by the United Nations on the economic and social situation of disadvantaged

women, the authors came to the conclusion that economic and social empowerment might lead to "political influence and leadership" (p. 35). Because its exclusive concentration is on the socioeconomic empowerment of low-income women in India, this study offers just a snippet of an overall picture of the field of women's development. A significant portion of development efforts are concentrated on developing proactive methods and responses to gender discrimination. The empowerment of others is a more proactive approach that also lends itself better to sustainability.

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