Socio-economic Conditions of Rural Women – A Case Study

Y. Yasaswini*, U. Bhanu Bhava Tharaka*, DVS Bhagavanan**

* 3rd Year B.Tech CSE
** Professor of Civil Engineering
Sree Vidyanikethan Engineering College, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh, India

Abstract: Gender discrimination in India is the main reason that affected the socio-economic development of women. It is known that women in rural areas are not having proper facilities and education for their development. Most of the rural women have less access to health care. Women in villages are mostly housewives who work and work in farm field for their livelihood. A case study has been done to observe the socio-economic development of women in Andhra Rangampet, Chinthiraj Mandal, Chittoor District, Andhra Pradesh. It is observed from the studies that most of the women are earning from working in agricultural fields, tailoring, selling vegetables, fruits and working in Sulabh international, as sweepers. Some of the women are working in educational institutions as sweepers. Hence, it is understood that most of the women are not educated and it is necessary to address socio-economic development of women in this village.

I. INTRODUCTION

Women form about half of the population of the country, but their situation is in a poor state. For centuries, they have been deliberately denied opportunities of growth in the name of religion and socio-cultural practices. Before independence, women were prey to many abhorrent customs, traditional rigidities and vices due to which their status in society touched its nadir and their situation was all round bleak. They were victims of widespread illiteracy, segregation in the dark and dingy rooms in the name of purdah, forced child marriage, indeterminable widowhood, rigidity of fidelity and opposition to remarriage of widows turning many of them into prostitutes, polygamy, female infanticide, violence and force to follow Sati, and the complete denial of individuality (Zameer Ahmad Bhat, 2014).

A woman in Indian society has been victim of humiliation, torture and exploitation. There are many episodes like rape, murder, dowry deaths, burning, wife beating and discrimination in the socio-economic and educational fields. In rural areas, girls are required to help in household work. Since most of the families are poor and hence they cannot afford to provide education to all their children and hence they are forced to keep girl child for the house hold works. If resources are available, it is the boy who is sent to school first. Parents also do not see the value of educating especially a daughter who would get married and remain a housewife. Since they cannot see any direct relationship between education and economic betterment, they have very little motivation to send their children to school. It is observed that among the age group of seven year and above, the male literacy rate was registered at 83 percent and the female literacy rate of 67 percent. Similarly, it was found in the rural areas, nearly 4.5 per cent of males and 2.2 percent of females completed their education to the level of graduation and above, while in urban areas 17 per cent of males and 13 percent of females completed to this level of education.

II. SOCIETAL PERSPECTIVE ON WOMEN

In the lower socio-economic level of society, women do more hazardous manual labour than men. Women do more than half the agricultural works in India (Vijaya Raj, 2016). Still men are considered to be the “bread winners”. This sense of women being inferior is passed on from one generation through psychological conditionings.

Another result of the social conditioning is that man either as father; brother or husband considers women as socio-economic gift of his household. A woman’s value judged, not so much in terms of her worth as a person with rights and dignity as in terms of her utility to man.

III. SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF WOMEN IN RURAL AREAS IN INDIA

The condition of women is more miserable in the rural India with respect to various socio-economic aspects.

a) Poverty: Rural poverty is one of the important characteristics of India and nearly 45 percent of rural people are below poverty line. Most of them are just surviving with day to day earnings. Under such circumstances, within the family, the worst sufferers are needless to say women and girlchildren.

b) Violence: Indian society has been bound by culture and tradition since ancient times. The patriarchal system and the gender stereotypes in the family and society have always showed a preference for the male child.

c) Economic Exploitation: On the world level, women and girls together carry two-thirds 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 labour force. Though women constitute half of the world’s population yet they own less than one percentage of the world’s property. 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. Women in India earn 25% less than men, proving that gender continues to be a significant parameter in determining salaries in India, according to the Monster Salary Index (MSI) on gender for 2016. While men earned a median gross hourly salary of Rs. 345.8, women earned Rs. 259.8 in 2016. Educational Deprivation: In India the literacy rate of women is much lower than men because boys receive more schooling than girls. T.P. Sechan says that there are parts of India where the literacy rate of women today is as low as 3 percent (Nalini Chagte and Anuradha Dubey, 2014).

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE PRESENT STUDY

- To study the sources of income of women
- To analyze the income and expenditure pattern of women
- To analyze the problems of women
- To provide necessary information about the government schemes for their development.

V. CASE STUDY AT AREPALLI RANGAMPET

Statistics and information collected from the village:
• Sources of income for the ladies in this village is agriculture, tailoring, rearing animals like cows, goats, sheep.
• Selling like vegetables, fruits.
• Working in provisional stores and cloth stores.
• Working in Educational institutions and in Sulabh as sweepers.

Population: (as per 2014 census)

<table>
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<th>Category</th>
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<th>ST</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>147</td>
<td>970</td>
<td>1518</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>1182</td>
<td>1765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>802</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>2152</td>
<td>3283</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Health scheme is setup by the government for the regular checkups for pregnant ladies and children.
- They are providing free iron tablets for the children to reduce the problem of Anaemia.
- Pregnant ladies are registered in the second month of their pregnancy and regular checkups are conducted for them. The minimum target for this health scheme per year is to register 96 pregnant ladies.
- PMSMA is the checkup for pregnant women on 9th of every month.
- They also take the pregnant ladies for delivery to the nearby government hospital.
- They give vaccination to the children on time like TT.

- Health awareness among the women is estimated to be 70%. Awareness regarding health is less among ST’s due to lack of interest in them. Some people refuse to take regular checkups and vaccination to their children in spite of the frequent instructions from the health agency workers. Aasha workers are the people who collect the information and consult rural women to inspect their health conditions.
- 4 anganwadi schools (for children below 5 years), a government school and a private school (managed by women) are there for the people of this village.

VI. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES

- Main schemes for the welfare of women which they are aware of were Streenidhi/Bank scheme for loans and Dwakra (providing money for investment and getting it repaid in intervals of time). Most of the women formed as groups for saving money every month and lending it to those who are needy for some interest.
- A private school headed by a lady Principal, 14 female teachers, 2 women care takers managing the entire school with 350 students in which 114 students are girls.
- Literacy rate among the women of this village is estimated to be 86% (approx) as per 2014 survey.

From the above statistics, it is observed that the women in the villages are empowered and they are participating in the nation development. The authors explained the women about the schemes available for the rural women.

VII. GOVERNMENT SCHEMES

- Financial Assistance to run hostels for girls from rural areas
- Financial assistance to Women Law Graduates
- Scheme of assistance to women for taking up job oriented courses
- Swadhar - A scheme for women in difficult circumstances
- Swayam Siddha - An integrated project for development and empowerment of rural women
- Stree Shakti - To strengthen the process of economic development of rural women and create a conducive environment for social change.

A National Commission on Women was setup to act as a watchdog on the matters concerning women in 1992. Many programmes in the areas of education, health and employment have been initiated for development of women, rural as well as urban. Universalisation of education, elimination of drop-out from schools, promotion of Balwadi’s and Creches, Girls Hostels, Technical Institutions for women and distinct emphasis on health, nutrition and family welfare programmes etc. are some such initiatives.

VI. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The review of the status of women in India tells the story of a fall in the status of women to an abysmally low position from a relatively high status and nobility of the Vedic times. The fall in status has led to a socio-economic and religio-cultural deprivation of women. From the case study undertaken, it is observed that the present women in rural areas understand the current situation and they are becoming support to the family. But by providing necessary skills, alternative employment opportunities are challenges of women in the rural sector. Also low pay, absence of job security, long working hours are the main reasons for their slow growth in social status. The initiatives by the government will make all the women to stay ahead in all the activities. However, there are miles to go in order to reach the goal of gender equality. The women in A. Rangamet are now becoming self motivated and moving towards their self development. It is observed from the present studies that around 68% of the women can read and write at basic level. They are having sufficient freedom to save their earnings and improving their socio-economic status.

REFERENCES