



ISSUES AND PROBLEMS OF SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

Social issues are fundamental issues related to society and its problems. After over 75 years of independence and being biggest democracy in the world, India still faces several significant socio-economic problems like corruption, illiteracy, poverty, women`s safety, unemployment etc. threatening the progress of the nation.

Key Words: Society, Issues, Problems, Economy, religion, Labour etc.

A **social cause** is a problem that influences a considerable number of individuals within a society. It is often the consequence of factors extending beyond an individual's control, and is the source of a conflicting opinion on the grounds of what is perceived as a morally just personal life or societal order Social issues are distinguished from economic issues; however, some issues (such as immigration) have both social and economic aspects. There are also issues that don't fall into either category, such as warfare. Some of the Social issues which India is facing are as follows:--

1. Corruption : The most widely spread endemic in India is corruption, which must be handled quickly and wisely. There is hardly any office, in both private and public sector that is untouched from this disease. There is no telling how much loss has the economy suffered because of this. Though most of us are concerned, when the time comes to act, we, the people of India, are found lacking.

Corruption is ruining the spine of the nation, and has adversely affected the economy of India. India has been marred by a list of scams and scandals, which have crippled the nation from inside out. From the Coalgate scam, to the 2G scam, to the CWG scandal and the Bofors scam, all brought forward the weaknesses of a government and a nation as a whole. As the government at the centre changes every time, the blame game changes and political parties start blaming the other, but corruption is not really being fought at the ground level. From babus to ministers at the top, all have been found involved in some of the world's biggest scandals.

What has created a hole in the pockets of the Indian economy, it has become essential for the government to tackle it at different levels. From strict rules at all levels of government undertakings, to an awareness among the people against the spread of corruption, needs to be maintained by the government. Anna Hazare's fight against corruption should actually be taken up by the leaders of the nation and must imply the Anti-Corruption bill in the government completely.

While pointing a finger on others is the easiest way out, people need to realise the need to get rid of the 'under-the-table' bribing habit and strengthen our system by neither giving bribe, nor taking bribe. The government needs to take strong action against a bribe-giver and a bribe-taker equally.

2. Poverty: Poverty is a condition in which a household is not able to fulfill its basic needs for survival i.e. food, clothing and shelter. Poverty is a widespread condition in India. Since Independence, poverty is a prevalent concern. It is the twenty-first century and poverty still is a persistent menace in the country. India happens to be country wherein the disparities between the haves and the have-nots are extremely wide. It needs to be taken into account that although the economy has shown some visible signs of progress in the last two decades, this progress been uneven across various sectors or areas. The growth rates are higher in Gujarat and Delhi as compared to Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Nearly half of the population doesn't have proper shelter, access to a decent sanitation system, villages do not have a nearby water source, and villages also do not have a secondary school and lack of proper roads. Some sections of the society like the Dalits are not even included in the poverty list maintained by the concerned authorities assigned by the government. They're groups that are marginalized in the society.

Poverty is one of the biggest evils faced by India in the present scenario. With an increasing population of people in the Below the Poverty Line (BPL) across the nation, it seems like a never-ending issue. Rising inflation has added further to the existing problem. India has an unbelievable number of people suffering due to this evil. According to the Indian Planning Commission's 2013 estimate, around 269 million people (approximately 22% of the total population) live under the poverty line. And, when we start looking around for what has actually been done about it, we wouldn't really find much.

The government needs to take a strong action against the biggest social evil of all. Ministers need to work towards creating employment, and providing enough for the large population which does not even receive the basic amenities. New policies are the need of the hour, not only for employment creation but also to create a young educated population. Education must be promoted at all levels of the society to create awareness especially among the poor.

The World Bank, in 2011 based on 2005's PPPs International Comparison Program, estimated 23.6% of Indian population, or about 276 million people, lived below \$1.25 per day on purchasing power parity. According to United Nation's Millennium Development Goal (MDG) programme 270 million or 21.9% people out of 1.2 billion of Indians lived below poverty line of \$1.25 in 2011-2012 as compared to 41.6% in 2004-05.

3. Terrorism : Terrorism has affected India since the day India was partitioned. The dispute over Kashmir between India and Pakistan has been a long-standing unresolved issue. Using this, the neighboring country has often used terror against India in the worst manners possible. Uncountable incidents of terror attacks in Kashmir, and its nearby regions such as Srinagar, along with the major cities of the country, have been a source of disturbance very often. One such incident which shook the nation was the 26X11 Mumbai terror attack, among the uncountable similar attacks. India has been disturbed by external terrorism as well as internal terrorism through Maoist attacks in the western parts of the country. Terrorism mainly causes loss of lives, but also affects the country economically. Tourism in Jammu & Kashmir has suffered for years on end due to the threat to tourists due to sudden terror attacks. Alongside, the clean-up after every such attack involve long governmental processes. How is the government tackling the issue, only remains a question.

The government needs to take a strong stand against the neighboring countries terror activities and needs to take action and not only hold peace talks. It's the need of the hour that the citizens of the country are provided with security as well as an assurance of safety as well. A sensitive approach towards terrorists may be attempted to make them surrender.

The regions with long term terrorist activities today are Jammu and Kashmir, Central India (Naxalism) and Seven Sister States (independence and autonomy movements). In the past, the Punjab insurgency led to militant activities in the Indian state of Punjab as well as the national capital Delhi (Delhi serial blasts, anti-Sikh riots). As of 2006, at least 232 of the country's 608 districts were afflicted, at differing intensities, by various insurgent and terrorist movements.

4. Illiteracy : Illiteracy is a condition which becomes a blot on the development of nation. India possesses the largest illiterate population. Illiteracy in India is a problem which has complex dimensions attached to it. Illiteracy in India is more or less concerned with different forms of disparities that exist in the country. There are gender imbalances, income imbalances, state imbalances, caste imbalances, technological barriers which shape the literacy rates that exist in the country. The Indian government though has launched several schemes to combat the menace of illiteracy but due to the poor conditions of sanitation and expensive private education and defective mid-day meal schemes, illiteracy still prevails. Not only the government, but every literate person needs to accept the eradication of illiteracy as a personal goal. Each and every contribution by a literate person can make a contribution to eradicate the menace.

5. Overpopulation : Pollution and environmental issues are the other challenges that India is facing at present. Though India is working hard, there is a long way to go. Degradation of land, depleting natural resources, and loss of biodiversity are the main issues of concern due to pollution. Untreated sewerage is the major cause of water pollution. The Yamuna river is today one of the most polluted rivers in India. Same is the condition of other rivers that pass through populated cities.

6. Child Marriage : According to the United Nations report, India has the second highest number of child marriages. Marriage is considered to be a sacred union between two mature and consenting individuals who are ready to accept each other and share responsibilities for a lifetime. With respect to this context, child marriages happen to be an unsound institution. Child marriage mars the innocence of childhood. The Indian Constitution provides for prohibitions against child marriage through various laws and enactments. The first law that was designed was the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 which extended to the whole of India except Jammu and Kashmir. This act defines the ages of an adult male and female. Also, sex with minors is a criminal offence under Section 376 of the Indian Penal Code. Proper media sensitization is required for a major change to take place. While on one hand, it is stated that child marriage will still take nearly fifty years to be eradicated, genuine efforts, strict enforcements of the legal provisions and change the scenarios to a great extent.

7. Starvation : Starvation is a condition characterized by the deficiency in calorie energy intake and is a serious form of malnutrition which ultimately leads to death if not taken care about. Historically, starvation has been constant across various human cultures apart from India. Starvation can take place in a country due to many reasons like war, famine, the disparities between the rich and the poor and so on. Malnutrition conditions like kwashiorkor and marasmus can also develop into serious causes of starvation. Generally, the conditions of kwashiorkor and marasmus arise when people are taking diets which are not rich in nutrients (proteins, vitamins, minerals, carbohydrates, fats and fiber). In the context of India, it becomes needless to say that the food distribution system is flawed. The Supreme Court has issued orders over the past decades directing the government to take measures like mid-day meal schemes and the provision of health care schemes for pregnant and lactating women. The National Food Security Bill which has become a landmark act does seem to show promises with respect to its measures of the identification of the poor and the needy, redressal mechanisms for grievances and children's entitlements. But, this bill also is not without its cons. Clear mechanisms with respect to the identification of beneficiaries have not been defined. The indicators of the poor need to be made specific. They are vague in description.

8. Child Labour : Child labour typically means the employment of children in any work with or without payment. Child labour is not only limited to India, it happens to be a global phenomenon. As far as India is concerned, the issue is a vicious one as children in India have historically been helping parents at their farms and other primitive activities. Over population, illiteracy, poverty, debt trap are some of the common causes which are instrumental in this issue. Overburdened, debt-trapped parents fail to understand the importance of a normal childhood under the pressures of their own troubles and thus it leads to the poor emotional and mental balance of a child's brain which is not prepared to undertake rigorous field or domestic tasks. Multinational companies also recruit children in garment industries for more work and less pay which is absolutely unethical. Child labour as a global concern has been raised on international platforms as well. Abolition of child trafficking, elimination of poverty, free and compulsory education, and basic standards of living can reduce the problem to a great extent. The World Bank, International Monetary Fund can help in eradicating poverty by

providing loan to the developing countries. Strict implementation of labour laws is also essential in order to prevent exploitation by parties or multinational companies.

9. Gender Inequality : Gender inequality in India refers to health, education, economic and political inequalities between men and women in India. Research shows gender discrimination mostly in favour of men in many realms including the workplace. Discrimination affects many aspects in the lives of women from career development and progress to mental health disorders. While Indian laws on rape, dowry and adultery have women's safety at heart, these highly discriminatory practices are still taking place at an alarming rate, affecting the lives of many today. Different states and union territories of India, in cooperation with the central government, have initiated a number of region-specific programs targeted at women to help reduce gender inequality over the 1989-2013 period. Some of these programs include Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana, Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojana, Awareness Generation Projects for Rural and Poor women, Condensed Course of Education for Adult Women, Kishori Shakti Yojana, Swayamsidha Mahila Mandal Programme, Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women, Swawalamban Programme, Swashakti Project, Swayamsidha Scheme, Mahila Samakhya Programme, Integrated Child Development Services, Balika Samridhi Yojana, National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (to encourage rural girls to attend primary school daily), National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Ladli Laxmi Yojana, Delhi Ladli Scheme and others. Bombay High Court, recently in March 2016 has ruled out a judgement that "Married daughters are also obligated to take care of their parents". This is a very bold step towards breaking the traditional norms of the defined roles in the society. Also this shall also motivate women to be more independent not only for themselves but also for their parents.

10. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: Women in India live under a constant fear all the time. A fear of going out alone, disturbs every female mind living in India. The rising cases of sexual abuse and rape across the country have left a black mark on the reputation of India. Foreign tourists have been known to have been given special warnings while travelling to India, in fact some countries even labelled our nation as an unsafe country for women, after the deadly Delhi Rape case. Is this the reputation we wish to maintain across the world? Definitely not! But, what are we really doing about it. The recent rape cases in Badaun, UP moved the entire nation, though no concrete action was taken for a long time. Rapes continue to take place, and no action is taken against the culprits. In most cases, victims die, and if they survive they live a worse life than ever. Before the government does anything about the security, the people themselves need to take a stand against crime against women. We as a society need to fight this social evil from within. The youth needs to be sensitized about the safety of women, and the respect to be given to women.

Strong police action needs to be taken against the culprits, and cases need to be handled with more sensitivity and through a quick process. We need to see justice happen, and now. The country as a whole needs to be ready to tackle such social evils, along with the government.

Other social issues are Casteism, Untouchability, Dowry, Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace, Child Sexual Abuse, Communalism, Religious Violence, Marital Rape, Child Trafficking and Bonded Labour which must be addressed.

Reasons of Social Problems:

In fact every society of the world has their social issues unique to their society. So does Indian society. Indian society is very rooted in religious beliefs; there are people of different religious beliefs such as Hindus, Muslims, Jains, Sikhs, Parsis etc. These all adds to the socio-cultural varieties of the country. India's social problems are also rooted in the religious practices and beliefs of it people. Almost all forms of social issues and problems find their origin in the religious and cultural practices of the people of India. These social problems are developed in a long period of times and are still continuing in one form or other. Furthermore, India has witnessed several wars of large proportions; several foreign invaders attacked India in its long history among whom few made this country as their own and tried to force their socio-religious practices which also deteriorated social conditions; the long period of British rule crippled the country and had thrown it into

backwardness. Thus, many such reasons may be cited for India's social problems but the fact remains that we have these issues and only we can solve them.

We try to present our country as a modern, forward looking nation of the world and it's true that India is making strides in the world as a nation with encouraging developments in scientific, economic and technological fields, but as far as social developments are concerned it is still one of the lowest ranked countries of the world. India's Human Development Index (HDI) rank for 2018 is 130 out of 189 countries of the world which are listed in the report. This shows the sorry state of affairs as far as India's situation on social indicators is concerned. This also shows that we as a society are still people of orthodox beliefs in a negative sense who do not want to believe in the concept of equality and brotherhood of all. Though several Governmental and non-governmental (NGOs) bodies are working towards improving the existing situation in the social fields but results are not very encouraging. Perhaps the problem lies in the very deep rooted beliefs in the minds of people of the country which is not letting the situation to change. For instance, the issue of Female Feticides is one of the shameful practices in our country. Though there are various prohibitory measures the Government and NGOs have taken but the practice is continuing. The real reason for this is the Patriarchy system of society of our country which considers male as the superior authority and women as subordinate to them. Therefore, very strong desire of having a male child in comparison to female child led to the shameful practice of female feticides. Thus, it is belief system or the cultural conditioning of the people which is not letting the society to change at a fast pace. Though there have been several positive changes in the society such as now girls are also going to school in vast majority and their employment ratio is also increasing; illiteracy as whole is decreasing; conditions of SC/STs are also improving etc but situation is far from satisfactory. We witness inequality against women in our own homes, sexual violence against women can be heard on daily basis, female feticide is continuing, religious-communal violence is on the rise, untouchability is still a reality, child labor is widely practiced etc. Therefore, there is a lot needs to be done for the situation to improve. And without changing the mind set and beliefs of the people it is a very difficult task. For this purpose educating people about various social problems and sensitizing them towards changing their way of thinking is the best way forward. Because without people trying to change themselves, any governmental or non-governmental efforts will prove as a half-measure. If we want to make India as a true world leader and a modern 21st country of the world, it is imperative that that we make an improvement on our social front.

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