Marginalization and Gender Disparity in India: A Comprehensive Analysis

Dr. Prerna Ramteke

Assistant Professor, (Dept of Sociology) Maniben Nanavati Women's College Vile Parle (w), Mumbai-56

Abstract:

The multifaceted nature of marginalization and gender disparity in India has been an issue of concern since many decades. The present study explores the historical, cultural, and socio-economic factors contributing to the unequal treatment of marginalized groups, particularly women, within Indian society. By analyzing various dimensions of marginalization, including access to education, healthcare, employment, and political representation, this paper aims to shed light on the pervasive challenges faced by marginalized communities in India. Through empirical data and case studies, it underscores the urgent need for inclusive policies and interventions to address these disparities and promote social justice and equality. Drawing upon both qualitative and quantitative data, this paper provides insights into the root causes, manifestations, and consequences of marginalization and gender inequality in India. Moreover, it explores potential strategies and interventions to address these pressing issues and promote inclusive development.

Keywords: Marginalized, Disparity, Elderly, Women, Discrimination…etc.

Introduction:

Marginalization and gender disparity are pressing issues that continue to undermine the socio-economic development and human rights of millions of individuals in India. Despite significant progress in various domains, including economic growth and technological advancements, deep-rooted inequalities persist, particularly affecting marginalized groups such as women, dalits, adivasis, religious minorities, and others (LGBTQIA individuals).

Marginalization and gender disparity remain critical issues in India, affecting millions of lives and impeding socio-economic progress. Despite constitutional guarantees of equality, deep-rooted cultural norms and structural inequalities continue to perpetuate discrimination against women and marginalized groups. Women, children and elderly have always been victims of violence, inequality, bias, discrimination, suppression, and many others making them vulnerable, weak, victims, who have been subjected to all the above since many decades and still undergoing the pain, trauma, and the injustice towards them.

The laws and the legislations have been their savior in many instances but the socio-economic, cultural, political and familial systems have been unfair and very little change has been seen in rural and

Page | 96

patriarchal set ups, leading to fear, insecurity and instability in the minds of many. The children, women, elderly and others have been assigned their roles as per community, socio-economic status, familial setups, etc. and have been living their lives as per the assigned norms and culture. The traditional Indian society has been culturally very rich with equal importance given to women and elderly. The women in earlier times were revered as goddesses like laxmi, durga etc. and somewhere down the decades the position of women deteriorated due to many factors like male domination, violence, suppression etc. leading to lower status of women in society.

Objectives of the Study:

The study focuses on the lives of children, women, elderly and others, undergoing cruelty, trauma, violence etc. at the hands of people in authority, power etc. The objective of the present study is to highlight the current scenario and statistics showing the discrimination, inequalities, cruelty and bias across the various marginalized groups like children, elderly, women, dalit's, tribes and the transgender across India.

Literature Review

Historically, gender roles in India have been heavily influenced by cultural, religious, and social norms that prioritize male dominance and female subordination.

The patriarchal framework has led to systematic discrimination against women, affecting their access to education, employment, and healthcare.

Previous Studies:

Previous studies have highlighted several dimensions of gender disparity in India. According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2022 by the World Economic Forum, India ranked 135th out of 156 countries in terms of gender disparity. Key areas of concern identified in earlier research include the gender pay gap, low female labor force participation, high rates of female illiteracy, and gender-based violence. Existing research highlights the multifaceted nature of gender disparity in India. Several studies and research data highlight that women face significant barriers in accessing education and healthcare, leading to poor outcomes in these areas compared to men. Additionally, labor market discrimination results in lower wages and limited career advancement opportunities for women. The intersection of gender with other axes of marginalization, such as caste and religion, further exacerbates these inequalities. This literature review will examine key theories and findings from recent studies, identifying gaps that this research aims to address.

Let's check the different areas showing disparity;

Education

Recent data from the Ministry of Education (2023) shows that while there have been improvements in female literacy rates, significant gaps remain. The female literacy rate in India is 70.3%, compared to 84.7% for males. The gender gap is particularly pronounced in rural areas, where cultural norms and economic constraints often limit girls' access to education and society security.

Employment

According to the National Sample Survey (2023), the female labour force participation rate in India is only 22.3%, compared to 75.8% for men. Women are disproportionately represented in informal and low-paying jobs, with limited access to social security and employment benefits. The gender pay gap remains significant, with women earning on average 19% less than their male counterparts for similar work in major sectors.

Health

The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5, 2023) reveals disparities in health outcomes between men and women. Maternal mortality rates, though improved, are still high at 113 deaths per 100,000 live births. Women's access to healthcare services is often hindered by socio-economic factors, including poverty, lack of education, and inadequate healthcare infrastructure in rural areas.

Human Rights

The marginalized have always suffered as they are small in number, lack solidarity, education and are always sidelined by the stronger groups. This has led to stigmatization, oppression, casteism, and categorization of them leaving them weaker and vulnerable.

Therefore, gender disparity and marginalization are critical issues that have long plagued Indian society. Despite numerous legal and social initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality, substantial gaps remain between men and women in terms of opportunities and outcomes.

The following table shows the details of India's minority population.

Sr. No.	Particulars	Population	Percentage to total Population
1	Total Population	19,95,81,477	
2	Total Minority Population	3,21,39,937	16.10
a.	Muslims	3,07,40,158	15.40
b.	Sikhs	6,78,059	0.34
c.	Buddhists	3,02,031	0.15
d.	Christians	2,12,578	0.11
e.	Jains	2,07,111	0.10

(Table shows representation of Indian minorities)

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis of secondary data with qualitative insights from interviews and focus groups available. Data sources include national surveys, government reports, and academic publications. Quantitative data will be analyzed to identify patterns and trends, while qualitative data will provide context and depth to the findings. This methodology allows for a comprehensive examination of gender disparity and marginalization in India.

Data Analysis and Results

Let's see current updated data from various secondary sources sector wise;

Figure 1: Gender Disparity in Education

Gender	Literacy Rate (%)
Male	84.7
Female	70.3

[Figure 1: Gender Disparity in Education]

This figure shows the literacy rates among men and women across different states in India, highlighting significant regional variations.

Figure 2: Employment Statistics by Gender

Sr. No.	Sector	Men (%)	Women (%)
1.	Agriculture	40	60
2.	Industry	30	15
3.	Services	30	25

[Figure 2: Gender Disparity in sector wise employment]

This table presents the distribution of employment across sectors, revealing a higher concentration of women in low-paying agricultural jobs.

Figure 3: Representation of Women in Politics

Year of Election	Number of Women Representatives	Percentage of Women Representatives (%)
1951	22	5
1957	22	5
1962	31	6
1967	29	6
1971	28	5
1977	19	4
1980	28	5
1984	43	8
1989	29	6
1991	39	7
1996	40	7
1998	43	8
1999	49	9
2004	45	8
2009	59	11
2014	66	12
2019	78	14

[Figure 2: Women representation in Politics]

This table presents the number and percentage of women's representation in politics.

Discussion

All the 3 figures highlight the discrepancy and accessibility of women in education, access to employment and in equal participation in politics highlighting that women have always been neglected, treated unequally and given lower status by society due to Patriarchy and times have not changed much and we see very slight changes happening over the decades. The analysis reveals persistent gender disparities in education, employment, and political participation. Cultural norms and systemic discrimination are key factors driving these inequalities. For example, traditional gender roles often limit women's access to education and formal employment. Moreover, intersecting factors such as caste and religion compound the disadvantages faced by marginalized women. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach, including legal reforms, public awareness campaigns, and targeted support programs.

Social Status and Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence remains a critical issue in India. The National Crime

Records Bureau (NCRB) 2023 data indicates a worrying increase in reported cases of domestic violence, sexual assault, and harassment. Social norms that perpetuate gender inequality and discrimination continue to hinder women's empowerment and participation in public life.

The analysis of 2023 data underscores the persistent and multifaceted nature of gender disparity in India. Despite progress in some areas, such as increased female literacy rates and reduced maternal mortality, significant challenges remain. The low female labor force participation and substantial gender pay gap indicate systemic barriers that prevent women from fully participating in the economy. Moreover, the high incidence of gender-based violence and the cultural stigma attached to reporting such crimes highlight the need for more robust legal and social measures to protect and empower women. Also, during the Covid-19 period alarming number of cases were seen and majority went unreported. Women, transgender, children, elderly have gone through some kind of abuse or discrimination during the challenging period of lockdown.

Although; National Policy for Children, 2013 recognizes a child as any person below the age of eighteen years; childhood is an integral part of life with a value of its own; children are not a homogenous group and their different needs, need different responses, especially the multi-dimensional vulnerabilities experienced by children in different circumstances; a long term, sustainable, multi-sectoral, integrated and inclusive approach is necessary for the overall and harmonious development and protection of children. In 2022, India witnessed a staggering 8.7% increase in child abuse cases, reaching a total of 162,000 incidents, as reported by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB).

The NCRB report's revelations underscore the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to address the alarming increase in Crimes against women demographics across the nation. NCRB data reveals a staggering 4,45,256 cases of crime against women in 2022, translating to approximately 51 FIRs every hour as 87 women alone, are sexually assaulted every day. Data of individual states; for instance Uttar Pradesh tops the list of crimes against women recording 65,743 cases in 2022, followed by Maharashtra (45,331) and Rajasthan (45,058). Under the category of 'Murder with rape/gang rape', Uttar Pradesh topped the list again with 62 such registered cases. Uttar Pradesh registered the highest number of 65,743 cases of crimes against women under IPC and Special and Local Laws (SLL) at the same time for the fourth

consecutive year, the Conviction rate in Uttar Pradesh is 180 times higher than the national average and Uttar Pradesh topped in speedy trial in Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) cases.

The UN Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021-2030) is a global collaboration bringing together governments, civil society, international agencies, professionals, academia, the media and the private sector for 10 years of concerted, catalytic and collaborative action to foster longer and healthier lives

One in every six senior citizens faces abuse globally. According to some studies, the prevalence of elder abuse in India ranges between 9.6 to 61.7% across different states, although the actual figures may be much higher than reported. It is understood that only one in every twenty-four cases of elder abuse is reported in the country.

A survey conducted across 22 cities in 2022 found that 35% of elders in India suffered abuse by their own sons, 21% by daughters-in-law and only 2% of them were abused by their house help, who was not a family member. The reported abuse ranged from 'disrespect' and 'verbal abuse' to 'neglect' and 'physical violence'.

The National Crime Records Bureau's (NCRB) 'Crime in India' report for the year 2022 shows Dalit's in India continue to be vulnerable to caste-based atrocities. A total of 57,582 cases were registered for committing crime against Scheduled Castes (SCs), an increase of 13.1% over 2021 (50,900 cases). The crime rate registered an increase from 25.3 in 2021 to 28.6 in 2022.

A total of 10,064 cases were registered for committing crime against Scheduled Tribes (STs), an increase of 14.3% over 2021 (8,802 cases). The crime rate increased from 8.4 in 2021 to 9.6 in 2022. The report reveals that 1,347 cases of rape and 1022 cases of assault on tribal women were reported in 2022. The National Human Rights Commission Survey in 2018, finds that a staggering 96 percent of transgender individuals face employment discrimination; they are often relegated to low-paying or exploitative occupations, such as sex work and panhandling, where 92 percent are denied employment opportunities.

The transgender community in India has historically been marginalized and discriminated against, socially, economically and politically. Tran's individuals are viewed by many as abnormal or deviant, and face physical and emotional violence and abuse, including sexual assault. Many incidents go unreported due to fear of retribution or lack of legal recognition. "Around 80% of

transgender people in India are either engaged in sex work or begging, and a large number of them face gender-based abuse and violence," said Mumbai activist Abhina Aher.

These instances highlight that although society and government have shown concern for the marginalized, very minute changes are seen from the data available indicating that they continue to suffer at the hands of the elderly, powerful, and people who have control over them. The current situation is very strategic indicating the need for change in our present socio-economic scenario, allowing women, children, elderly and trans people to live with dignity and better social standing. It will certainly help in the change in mind sets of new generation to look at all equally with respect, dignity and humanly, paving a new road to tolerance and equitable society.

Conclusion:

Marginalization and gender disparity remain significant barriers to India's socio-economic development. While progress has been made in some areas, the data from current sources reveals that much work remains to be done to achieve gender equality. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach, including policy interventions, legal reforms, and societal changes. By

committing to these efforts, India can move towards a more equitable and inclusive society where women have equal opportunities to thrive.

This study highlights the urgent need for comprehensive policies to address gender disparity and marginalization in India. Key recommendations include enhancing educational opportunities for girls, implementing workplace equality measures, and promoting women's political participation. Future research should focus on the intersectionality of gender with other forms of marginalization to develop more nuanced interventions. Achieving gender equality is not only a moral imperative but also essential for India's socio-economic development.

Policy Recommendations

1. **Enhancing Educational Opportunities**
   a. Implement targeted programs to increase girls' enrollment and retention in schools, especially in rural areas.
   b. Promote gender-sensitive curricula and training for teachers to address gender biases in education.
2. **Economic Empowerment**
   a. Encourage female entrepreneurship through financial incentives and support services.

b. Enforce equal pay legislation and ensure compliance through regular audits and penalties for non-compliance.

3. Healthcare Access

a. Improve healthcare infrastructure in rural areas to ensure women, children and elderly have access to essential services, along with tribal women and transgender.

b. Launch awareness campaigns to promote maternal and child health, emphasizing the importance of regular check-ups and vaccinations, also for elderly.

4. Legal and Social Reforms

a. Strengthen laws against gender-based violence and ensure timely and effective enforcement.

b. Promote social campaigns to change cultural attitudes towards gender roles and violence against children, women and elderly.

References:

1. Deshpande, A. (2006). "Caste at birth? Redefining disparity in India". Review of Development Economics, 10*(3), 466-481.

2. Kabeer, N. (2005). "Gender equality and women's empowerment: A critical analysis of the third Millennium Development Goal". Gender & Development, 13(1), 13-24.

3. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India. (2017). *National Family Health Survey-4: India Fact Sheet*. Retrieved from http://rchiips.org/NFHS/pdf/NFHS4/India.pdf

4. National Sample Survey Office, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India. (2019). *Employment and Unemployment Situation in India, 2017-18*. Retrieved from http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/KI_70_33_2017_18_Engl.pdf Gender wise literacy rate in India (2023)

5. Ministry of Education. (2023). Annual Report 2023. Government of India.

6. National Sample Survey Office (NSSO). (2023). Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2023. Government of India.

7. National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5). (2023). International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), Government of India.

8. National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). (2023). Crime in India 2023. Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

9. World Economic Forum. (2022). Global Gender Gap Report 2022. Geneva: World Economic Forum.

10. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2023). Human Development Report 2023. United Nations.

11. International Labour Organization (ILO). (2023). India: Women in the Workforce. International Labour Organization.

12. World Bank. (2023). World Development Indicators. The World Bank Group.

13. Census of India. (2021). Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India. Government of India.

14. OECD. (2023). Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in India. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

15. **(https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/ncrb-reports-crime-against-women-india-up-4-2023-etr-snigdhaa-ritesh-yjqjc)**

16. https://www.dignityfoundation.com/elder-abuse-in-india-the-hidden-truth/

17. https://www.deccanherald.com/opinion/rising-tide-of-atrocities-against-dalits-2850523

18. https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/india-transgender-discrimination-health-gender-affirmation-surgery/)