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## INIQUITOUS SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND CULTURAL PRACTICES

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**Abstract :** Women in Contradictory India This paper is an attempt to bring the contradictions that Indian Women face in today's India. It deals and highlights on contemporary issues and explains the status of Women in areas such as Politics, economics, Health, Education and General social coordinates. The paper tries to establish its stand by citing various studies presented as either facts or figures. It also points to the various social evils existing in India, and tries to make certain suggestions and recommendations. It highlights the nation's exceptional woman and goes on to conclude that exceptions cannot be entire representations.

**Keywords:** Contradictions, Women, discrimination, equality, Exception.

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India is a country with a humanistic philosophic tradition and an iniquitous social structure and cultural practices, it's a land of mind boggling contradictions. Caste persuaded social life, family and family governed relationships determine an individual's social space opportunities and life style, and especially the Indian Women, she is all that what her family and society wants her to be rather than what she really is.

Women have always been at the heart of Indian society (Indians refer to their country as Bharath Matha), Mother India yet many Indian men view women as little more than chattel. Violence against women in India is exuberantly frequent and its hideous growth, points to its roots in the male dominated socio-cultural, economical, legal and political order in India. In some parts of India, women are considered as a "private property" to be looked after by a certain family, community or caste. Bride burning is a form of domestic abuse often disguised as an accident or suicide. Women are burned to death over wealth (or rather...lack of wealth). Since the dowry system is well in place in India, male counterparts who consider dowry little, kill their wives. Female feticide is the selective abortion/elimination of the girl child in the womb itself, performed in consent, by the mother, after the early detection of the fetus's gender through illegal medical scans. This is usually done under pressure from the husband or the in-laws or even the woman's parents.

A set hierarchical system prevails in all tiers of the social order and the insane obsession over the male sex, though, is one of a kind is a well known fact. Right from the ancient scriptures, one finds instances where men are praised as the successful hallways to continue the family lineage. A girl is forced to undergo a series of multiple pregnancies preceded by abortions, until she fulfills her lifelong goal of being a breeding and feeding machine that produces male offspring as per the needs and desires of the family.<sup>5</sup> India used to boast as being the best social indicators among the six South Asian nations, now stands

second last, leading Pakistan. Indian economists argue that now Bangladesh scores above India on several parameters because its women are more involved with the economy than are their Indian counterparts. This shows how Indian women are being discouraged and set down.<sup>6</sup> Despite all these challenges the Indian women is expected to be quiet, with full of patience, obedient, hard working, beautiful, intelligent, tolerant and Forgiving, bold, valiant in times of struggle, shrewd and loud with strangers, strict with people younger to her, attractive to her husband and dynamic in her approach with others. Though Modernization and westernization began since 1950 and introduced a structure and a system of governance in India how far it has been fulfilling and favoring women is still a dream and a Question alarming in the minds of Millions of Indian Women.

Who is a Woman? A woman according to the Oxford dictionary is a adult human female. The word woman has been originally coined from the old English, the spelling of woman is wifmo or wifman, a combination of wife (which they simply meant woman) and man (which meant person) so a woman was a female person. Later with the controversy created by the feminist in 1970 and 80's, they tried to change it as womyn or wimmin, but it was not largely accepted and hence the word Woman and its existence.<sup>7</sup>

**Woman and Politics:** According to the Indian Constitution that guarantees political equality. Article 15 prohibits discrimination on the ground of sex. Political parties do not support Women's Participation; almost all the major political parties opposed the proposed women's representation bill in 1996 that would reserve one third of seats in all the elected legislative for women. This is a Classical live example of Women in Contradicting India.

**Woman and Education:** The constitution guarantees equal opportunity to all citizens irrespective of their religion, caste or creed. The ninth five year plan endorsed on education for women's equality. It is a well known fact that India is far from

achieving its goal. In 1991 the female literacy rate was 25%, in 2011 it has become 65.46% for women.

It is not a matter of making policies; the government's role stays in taking a firm step in implementing the policies that it has laid. Even after so much of development, there is gender inequality. To go by the Indian census record of 2011, still remains questionable.

**Woman and Culture** :India, a land of ancient culture is also known for its strong beliefs and traditions. The myth of the patriarchal system is still seen in India. I call it a myth because any social structure is made to believe that its existence cannot be without a man, which is not true in many cases. India ranks the fourteenth place in corruption, with an average corruption percentage of 54%. A Stunning report shows that India holds the third position in Hiv/Aids with a population of about 2,400,000. (2 billion and 40 lakhs).

India is the place where sexual assault is rapidly increasing, rape cases in India is the most common crimes against women. The national crime record bureau reports an incidence of 24,923 rape cases reported in 2012. Out of the 24,923 rapes reported, 24,470 were committed by parents/family and relatives and men known to the victim constitute to about 98 percent. It is to be noted that these number of cases were reported but the total incidence cannot be determined. The latest estimate suggests that a new case of rape is reported every 22 minutes in India. In a land where so much is spoken about culture such incidence makes us think that we need a serious introspection, looking into one's own culture.

**Woman and Health:**India is called a *matrisakthi* which means Women power. Health care is important to a woman as the woman's body changes throughout her life time, through childhood to puberty, to pregnancy, to menopause and post menopause. Almost two third of all illiterate woman receive no care with 15% of literate woman. Child birth and closely spaced child birth have high chances of mortality in a women says a popular research. Women have made contributions in various fields and have overcome the traditional mind set but the realities of a women's life remain invisible and it persists at all levels beginning with the family to the Nation. Although efforts have been taken to improve the status of women, the constitutions dream of gender equality is miles away. Instead of Worshipping women goddess, the attentions needs to be focused on the lakshmi's and the Durga's of one's own home, and to maintain the dignity and respect for Women's health in our country.

**Social Coordinates:**Gender apartheid was noted in the UNDP report in 1995. An estimated 50,000 cases of feticide occur annually after sex determination tests. The problem thrives even after the legal

prohibition since 1994. Child marriage restraint act does not seem to have any use, there are ample examples and incidences of children below 18 getting married every day, we either see it or read it. Women's destitution is rising persistently with about 0.1 million every year. Most of the destitute women are widows or deserted.

It's a customary in the Indian Household to welcome a COW and its CALF during a home inaugurating ceremony called the *graha pooja*, considering the Cow to be a Lakshmi a form of a woman deity that brings so many positive qualities into the home. The whole contradiction lies when the same people who welcome the cow are unable to see the Lakshmi's in their own household as auspicious, the unborn fetus as auspicious and sacred. When sacredness can be attributed to animals, why not to a living Women. Why does she become less sacred on the death of her husband? When she is down with illness or with her menstrual cycle, when she is unable to Conceive, when she is deserted by her own, when she is being raped, or when she is being exploited. Why does she suffer when she is not in control of what is happening with her?

India that is known to appreciate the value of motherhood, and that attributes femininity to her States, Union territories, Profound natural resources, Flora and Fauna seems to be far from able to preserve and respect Woman of her own Country.

Suggestions. Prevention of education of violence against Women should start early in life of a boy or a girl, by educating and working with them and promoting respectful relationships and gender equality. Working with young people is a "best deal" for, sustained progress and rapid on preventing and eradicating gender-based violence. High fines and judicial action against 'parents' who knowingly try to kill their unborn fetus. Cancellation/permanent termination of the doctor's license who partakes in fulfilling a client's demand to do away with her girl child. Nationwide campaigns and seminars for young adults and potential parents to enlighten them about the ill effects of female feticide. Ignorance of the importance of a girl child and loop holes in the law is one of the major causes for the increase in the selective sex abortion cases. Creating awareness about hazards of abortions and fetus killing can save our future girlfriends wives. Sisters and mothers. Prevention of violence entails supporting the implementation of the agreed conclusions of the 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) that placed a strong focus on prevention of Violence through the promotion of gender equality in both urban and rural areas, and emphasis on women's empowerment and absolute enjoyment of human rights. It enthrones in making the home as well as the public arena safer for women and girls,

ensuring women's economic security , autonomy, well being , and increasing the participation of women and decision-making powers—in their home , with their relationships, as well as in public life and politics. We have seen exceptional Women like M.S. Subbulakshmi, vocalists, Social Activists like Medha patkar , Kamala Bhasin , Teesta Satilvad, Irom Sharmila , sports personalities like P. T. Usha (athletics) Sania Mirza (tennis) boxer Mary Kom (bronze, 2012)., literature personalities like Shobha de, Anitha Desai, Kamala Surayya,, Arundhati Roy, and Government Servants Like Preethi Kumari, Surekha Yadav, C.V Thilagavathi, Samata Kumari, have created their bench mark . However they are

exceptions. The standard Limitation of most research will be that Generalizations cannot be made. Similarly Exceptions cannot be entire representations. I agree that all these Women are from India and they have made it through yet they don't constitute or make up for the entire India. India women cannot afford to be like the planets , they need to like the stars found almost anywhere and everywhere with all her vibrancy. Every WOMAN should be EXCEPTIONAL. Time and again, India needs to be reminded that she has a long way to go and lots to achieve and accomplish and Pay true tribute to Mother India.

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