

SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN INDIA

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Abstract:

India is one of the developing nations of the modern world. It has become an independent country, a republic, more than a half century ago. During this period the country has been engaged in efforts to attain development and growth in various areas such as building infrastructure, production of food grains, science and technology and spread of education. The life expectancy has increased and many diseases have been controlled. However, there are many areas in which Indian society is experiencing a variety of problems. Some of these problems have their roots in our colonial past while others are related to demo-graphic changes, socio-political conditions and cultural processes. This lesson tries to acquaint you with some of the problems and the psychological factors involved in them. You will learn about some of the possible ways in which psychological interventions can help in dealing with the problems

KEYWORDS:

psychological , socio-political , demo-graphic , phenomenon Social .

INTRODUCTION

Poverty

A large section of the Indian society is suffering from poverty. Poverty is a phenomenon Social Problem :: 201 which is objective as well a subjective. Objectively poverty implies a dehumanizing g conditioning which people are unable to look after the basic needs. Subjectively poverty stands for perceived deprivation. As such it is relative and any body can feel poor by comparing himself as herself with a rich person. Poor people lack the necessary resources and capacity to satisfy basic needs like food, shelter, health and education. They live under difficult conditions which are not conducive for development of their human potential. As you have learned earlier in the lesson 10 and 11 that for healthy human development a child needs environmental support for survival and development. Poverty interferes with development in many ways. For instance lack of or inadequate nutrition arrests mental development during early childhood.

The unavailability of stimulating environment and absence of effective role models decreases the motivation level. A large section of poor children do not go to school. Even if they go they become drop outs and fail to complete education. In this context it may be pointed out that poverty is also related to the social structure. A number of low caste, scheduled tribe and backward communities have been put to discrimination for many centuries. They are socially disadvantaged and are deprived from the experiences necessary for development on account of their membership of specific groups. In this sense they are doubly deprived. Studies have shown that the children from the background of poverty and social disadvantage lag behind their counterparts from the enriched background. Their cognitive development and performance is found to be at a lower level. Studies of perception ,memory an intelligence have demonstrated it several times. The studies have also shown that the performance between the advantaged and disadvantaged

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children increases with advancing age. It has also been found that the poverty condition is demotivating and makes a person more vulnerable. Low level of achievement motivation and greater need for dependence in these people make them less effective in coping with the problems of everyday life. As a result the poor become marginalized and can not contribute to the mainstream of the society. The question why some people are poor has been answered in many ways. The search for causes of poverty has led to many answers. It has been located in the individual, in the social structure, or the culture of the people. For instance many people blame the victim and consider the poor as responsible for the characteristics or dispositions of the people. A detailed analysis of the problem of poverty shows that poverty is caused by multiple factors. The social and economic structure in India promotes inequality, and social disadvantages. The life in the poverty condition reinforces certain behavior pattern, values and coping styles which, reduce the chances of upward social mobility.

Social Tensions

The Indian society consists of people from different religious, linguistic and ethnic backgrounds. Since long there has been cultural give and take between the people from India and other countries. Since 1947 when India gained political independence the country has been engaged in the gigantic task of nation building. Efforts have been made to put nation on the path of socio-economic development. The transformation of nation as a self sufficient and cohesive political entity has proved to be a difficult challenge. The colonial past, socio-economic disparities in the society and raised aspirations have culminated in a complex situation. Traditionally the Indian society was hierarchically arranged and the different communities and caste groups showed a pattern of social distance in which low caste, tribal and minority groups were discriminated against and looked down upon. Many of the communities were considered as untouchables. The Indian constitution prohibits against such discrimination and has abolished untouchability. However, it is still practiced in certain ways. All these conditions have created a situation in which various kinds of social tensions have become very frequent events are as follows :

1. If we look at the historical trends we notice that the partition of India led to considerable degree of violence and the harmonious relations between Hindus and Muslims were disturbed. As a result suspicion and mistrust has developed between Muslims and Hindus. This has led to a number of clashes and conflicts which have been violent and have generated hatred.
2. Various parts of the country are experiencing separatist movements. You must have read about political movements in North East part of India (Assam, Nagaland, Tripura) where demands for separate political identities have been raised from time to time. The Kashmir region is experiencing the negative impact of cross-border terrorism and people are suffering. The Naxalite movement in certain parts (Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh) is also creating political instability and problems of governance
3. Caste-related prejudice and discrimination has also been on rise in certain parts of the country. In the course of socialization people acquire negative attitudes and stereotypes. Many times these are not founded in our real life experiences. Instead, they are based on false information, personal impressions and hearsay. However, they are very powerful and shape our behavior in important ways. Thus if we have prejudice against some one it may lead to aggression, hostility and harm doing towards the target groups. In recent years inter group conflicts related to caste have moved from the social to the political arena of life. In fact caste based alliances, groups and organizations are growing fast. They utilize caste-related identity for political gains. Today caste-affiliations are not so important in social or religious matters as they are in political matters. In this context the rise of low caste groups who often call themselves Dalits is becoming a prominent feature of modern India. The presence of this group has changed the complexion of Indian political scene.

On the whole the Indian society is currently experiencing social tensions of various kinds. They are related to the pattern of social change. In particular the rise of middle class migration of people from villages to cities, increase in the degree of economic inequality, spread of education and media are playing key role. The tensions in the lives of people at individual, family and community level is clearly visible. Most of the conflicts and tensions revolve around the issue of identity. Assertion of separate identity and promoting the same with different tactics is becoming a central problem. People use identities in an emotionally charged way to create a group structure for promoting certain goals. Thus associations, committees and organizations are created to serve these purposes. The creation of identity involves strategies which enhance similarity within the group and difference between the groups. In this way a diversion of "in group" or "own group" and "out group" or other group is created. This kind of differentiation is present in almost all societies. This also implies that the differences across groups cannot be totally eliminated. Some psychological intervention for enhancing group behavior Since groups are inevitable and

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constitute an important part of our social reality what we need is to recognize the essence and value of pluralism. All groups are important and play distinct role. We need to appreciate this diversity in our social life in a positive manner. The approach should be to evolve a strategy in which diverse groups and communities are able to live distinct patterns of life the way they want. The various groups or communities should compliment each other and help in achieving their goals. Super ordinate goals may be created that may be shared by all the groups. To this end the following steps may prove very helpful.

1. Increasing dialogue amongst the diverse groups existing in the society.
2. Building an atmosphere of mutual trust and harmony.
3. Equity and equality of opportunity for different groups needs to be ensured.
4. Greater opportunities for mutual care, respect and complementarily need to be created.

Gender Discrimination

Women and men are equally important for the growth and development of individual and social lives. The women play the important role as mother and the same makes it unique. However, careful analysis of Indian society indicates that the situation is not good for women folk. The sex ratio of male and female in the India population has been changing and becoming unfavorable towards women. In the Indian society women are considered major contributors to family and society. We have gods and goddesses both and one of the incarnation of lord Shiva is Ardhanareeshwar, which is made of half male and half female in its constitution. Unfortunately this equality and prominence tells an incomplete fact. The women are also subjected to discrimination in learning, dowry deaths and exploitations of various kinds which are very common. In fact the women are becoming targets of atrocities of many types. The same is manifested in discrimination against them from very early period. The incident of infanticide, early marriage, emphasis on domestic activities and lesser emphasis on education and career have made women's lives full of problems. They are discriminated against from early childhood. The Indian dependence on others (e.g. parents, husbands) becomes fate of the majority of the women folk. The pattern of discrimination against women varies across rural, urban and tribal areas. They are assigned diverse responsibilities and treated as relatively weaker and less competent. This image is still prevailing in various sections of the society. It is reflected in the discriminatory practices in the family such as distribution of work, food and social activities. The girl child is usually burdened with responsibilities that are beyond her capacity. Such exploitations function as obstacles in the process of development and growth of the girl child. When a girl child matures and becomes an adult she is often found to be physically weak and mentally constrained. They are neither able to realize their potentials nor able to contribute to the mainstream of society. Their contributions are often limited to family and that too are ignored. However, some Indian women have been able to overcome the barriers in their path and became successful in many walks of life. In this connection one can mention the names of Pandita Rama Bai, Sarojini Naidu, Indira Gandhi who emerged as leaders at national level. The provision for education, legal provisions about the age of marriage and reservation for women in various walks of life has contributed to change in their situation. Today the presence of women in various occupations and public offices is much more prominent than what it used to be during earlier periods. However, the Indian society has still to go a long way as for as gender equality is concerned

Some Other Social Problems : Corruption, Illiteracy and Urbanization. As a developing country India is facing a number of problems which need careful analysis Social Problem : 205 and demands steps for their solution. These problems are many in number. The salient ones include corruption, illiteracy and urbanization. Let us briefly discuss these problems.

Corruption :

Refers to those transactions which involve undue benefits to some people who don't deserve or are not entitled for them. Such transactions make some people recipients of financial benefits, physical and social resources that make these people capable of exhorting power over others and controlling the rewards and punishments for others. This is often reflected in the formation of a nexus between politicians and criminals. Use of money to bribe and drawing benefits that are not feasible under the law of the land. Misuse and misappropriation of resources for personal benefits is creating a gulf between "haves" and "have not". The use of black money and scams of various types that have been discovered in recent years clearly tell that corruption is adversely influencing the growth and development of Indian society.

Illiteracy :

Is another major problem before the society. It's a sad state of affairs that a country which had

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higher level of literacy (than British) at a time when British came two centuries ago is now facing the challenge of a huge number of people who are illiterate and cannot read or write. The lack of these skills renders them deprived of the opportunities for upward social mobility. Such people have to depend on others for various things and are exploited in various ways. For example the poor rural people are asked to put their thumb impression of various legal documents and are subjected to exploitations and legal hassles. Keeping these negative consequences in view the government is trying to universalize primary education. The lack of reading and writing skills makes a person incapable of availing the various opportunities to help themselves. Each and every educated person, therefore, is expected to contribute to the literacy mission and making it a success.

Urbanization is another problem that deserves serious attention. There is increasingly greater migration from villages to cities. This situation is generating pressures on cities which were meant for a definite size of population. The limited civic facilities, civilian organizations and structures are facing difficulties in meeting the demands of the people. The mega cities like Mumbai, Kolkata Chennai and Delhi have crossed the limits for which they are capable of. This situation creates a number of problems such as unauthorized and illegal activities, emergence of slums, problem of waste disposal creation of flocs, crime and health related problems. The social organization, economy and environmental planning in many cities are becoming unmanageable. Also, urbanization is linked with certain kinds of attitude like consumerism and individualism. Consumerism emphasizes on exploitation of resources for personal consumption without any concern for society and environment. This attitude is responsible for the ecological imbalance that is widely experienced in today's world. Similarly the individualistic attitude favors the view that the individual is the ultimate reality and all processes need to be explained at individual level. The individual is free and responsible to his or her self only.

CONCLUSION :

The social problems described above deal with different domains of life. You can see that the solutions for these problems require inputs from different disciplines. The role of psychology is prominent as it deals with behavior. Modification of attitudes, feelings and pattern of behavior are significant. Psychologists can contribute by providing strategies for achieving these goals

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