INTRODUCTION

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.

Women hold up half the sky according to a Chinese proverb, yet in contemporary times they have been the victims of a wide range of social prejudices, and find themselves discriminated against and marginalised in almost all spheres of life. While this is the plight of many oppressed groups, the plight of women is the worst because within each oppressed group they are doubly oppressed. It has been rightly stated that of everything economics measures, women get less. Female marginalisation and subordination is reflected in wide male-female disparities in the levels of social well being at every scale from the local to the national. Thus women in every social group are disadvantaged in comparison to their menfolk.

Ironically, India's cognisance of the equality of sexes and the need to abolish discrimination against women preceded the United Nations' General Assembly's declaration to the same effect by more than a quarter of a century. However, in the mid seventies government investigations revealed that "the de-jure equality granted by the constitution had not been translated into reality and large masses of women in the country had remained unaffected by the rights guaranteed to them". The Committee for the status of women in India found insurmountable evidences that post independence plan processes had failed to effectively check the increasing marginalisation of women from the economy, society and population.

Explanations for such marginalisation must be sought in an understanding of the gender disparities in the levels of social well being. The state of social well being connotes a state of happiness or well being that is the result of the fulfilment of basic and/or higher order needs leading to the ultimate goal of self actualisation. It has been defined best by Smith (1975) as

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3 Committee for the Status of Women in India (1975) *Towards Equality*, Govt of India.
"who gets what, where and how." Where basic human needs are fulfilled, such well being is influenced by the gratification of higher order needs. However, in a situation where even the basic needs like nutrition and healthcare are often unmet, the gender disparities in basic areas of social well being assume added importance in understanding the problem of female marginalisation.

Further, an enquiry into the question of female marginalisation, while rooted in the framework of gender disparities in social well being, must address the problem at the level of the household. The household is the primary unit where the gender disparities in the basic aspects of well being are produced, reproduced and reinforced.

The social and economic values ascribed to male and female work, health, nutrition and education are some of the basic aspects of social well being that are worth investigating at the household level. Disparities in these spheres underlie the gender disparities in every other sphere of life at every other scale of investigation from the local to the national and international.

Investigation of gender disparities within a framework of "who gets what, where, and how" demands consideration of the following points. Firstly, on the question of who, the population under investigation is not homogeneous and certain diverse elements are inherent within the social fibre. The first order difference occurs along gender lines, dividing the population into the male and female components. This lends itself to further subdivisions on the basis of age, caste or class. Thus gender itself is not a homogeneous category, and intra-gender disparities in the levels of social well-being may well exist within the broad category of gender itself.

Nutrition and health, work, and education are the basic areas of social well-being in which massive gender disparities exist. Such disparities are both the cause as well as the effect of the marginalisation of women from all spheres of life. Any serious study of the marginalisation
of women within the framework of inter gender disparities in the levels of social well being ought to consider these aspects in response to the 'what' of the 'who gets what, where and how' model rather than being confined to just a single aspect. This assumes added importance as each of these aspects may influence the others.

Examining the question of 'where' within the Smithian model makes it obvious that levels of social well being (and the disparities therein) vary markedly not only among different categories of the population but across regions as well, depending upon the regional culture and ethos. Regional cultures are formed through a long and complex process of interaction between people and the environment over which the human saga unfolds. The roles, status and positions accorded to women differ across regions and are greatly influenced by the mode of economy, and culture suggested by the environment. Therefore, it is obvious that diverse physical environments would display unique patterns of marginalisation of the women-folk vis-a-vis the men. This fact alone emphasises the importance of incorporating gender as a separate category for investigation within the method of Geography.

Linking gender disparities in well being to differential social values which are a product of culture and environment, addresses the how in the 'who gets what where and how' framework within which the question of female marginalisation is being analysed. This study therefore analyses the problem of female marginalisation in terms of the gender disparities in the levels of social well-being among different social groups, within rural households across two contrasting environmental regions.

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1.2 RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY.

The study draws its relevance from the fact that the problem of female marginalisation is analysed in the context of gender disparities in the levels of social well being. This provides for a systematic framework for analysis. Secondly, the study addresses the key areas of social well being and is not confined to a single aspect. This ensures that a more complete picture of reality is obtained. Further, the study addresses itself to the root of the problem of female marginalisation by making the rural household the unit of analysis. By comparing gender disparities across environmental regions, the regional dimension is brought out fully and the analysis is not limited to macro or meso level comparisons across administrative regions. Finally, gender is not studied in isolation as a homogeneous category. The gender disparities are analysed for different population categories in order to bring out the intra-gender dimension as well. On all these counts this study makes its due contribution to the existing body of knowledge on the Geography of Gender in India.

1.3 OBJECTIVES.

This study addresses the problem of female marginalisation from the perspective of gender disparities in the levels of social well being. The main objectives of the study are:-

1. To **measure** the gender disparities in the following aspects of social well being:
   i. Realm of Nutrition and Health
   ii. Realm of Knowledge
   iii. Realm of Work.

2. To **compare** the gender disparities in the above aspects of social well being over space.
3. To **compare** the gender disparities in the following aspects of social well being across various socio economic groups.

4. To attempt a **theorisation** of the problem of female marginalisation within the framework of gender disparities in key aspects of social well being.

5. To suggest appropriate **intervention strategies** to ameliorate the situation.

1.4 **THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES.**

This study rests on the three important theoretical perspectives born of the intertwining of history and geography.

Firstly, the perennially nuclear regions along the Ganga plain with their suitability to plough agriculture have strong patriarchal traditions reflected in poorer position of women especially among the higher castes. In contrast, the surrounding hills and forests have somewhat weaker traditions of male dominance due to the greater participation of women in the economic activities of the community. This may be deduced by applying the core-periphery or distance decay model to the social sphere. History shows that the incursions into the Indian subcontinent occurred from the north west and each successive wave of people moved eastwards along the perennially nuclear regions of the Ganga plain. The spillover from each

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7 Perennially nuclear regions is a term used by Subbarao to describe the flat fertile river plains which are imminently suited to human habitation. Due to this, historically, these areas were more favoured in the peopling process of the subcontinent. In contrast, the hilly and forested tracts surrounding these fertile plains have been termed areas of relative isolation. These areas were not as favourable to human habitation and were peopled by the backwash created with each wave of incursions into the subcontinent.

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new wave of peopling was absorbed by the hilly and forested regions - areas of relative isolation, bordering the Gangetic plains9.

The population displaced from the plains to the hilly and forested regions were agriculturists worshipping the mother Goddess. This was probably the remnant of the established fact that "mother - children groups were the first social units. They were not only units of consumption but also units of production. Mothers and children worked together as gatherers in early hoe cultivation.... and adult men were only temporarily and peripherally integrated into these early matricentric or matristic units10. Those displaced into the hills are likely to have retained the vestiges of their matricentric beliefs in the Mother Goddess. This coupled with the fact that in these areas of relative isolation, male selective outmigration demands greater participation from females in productive work accords a higher social and economic value to females.

Meanwhile, along the plain region, the fresh migrants were pastoralists. Preoccupation with gathering, cattle wealth and inter tribal skirmishes pushed women into the background of their social and economic lives. Later on, the heavy plough agriculture where the main crops were wheat and millets, offered minimal roles to women rendering their economic values low. In this strongly patriarchal set up the mores of male dominance were strengthened and females pushed further into the periphery of social and economic life.

At a later stage in history when new equations of power were being balanced along the plains, population from this region once more moved into the nearby hills in order to escape Mughal dominance. Though the harsher terrain of the new environment demanded a greater

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9 See footnote 7 on page 6.

participation from the women, yet culturally ingrained ideologies of male dominance accruing to the social psyche of the plains people remained to a degree and the dominance of women by the men continued even in the mountains, though to a lesser degree than in the plains.

The position of lower castes is somewhat different. In the plain area, it is a commonly held view [Thapar (1984)\textsuperscript{11}, Childe (1963)\textsuperscript{12}] that during the peopling of the sub continent, the pastoralists displaced the earlier inhabitants along the plains. The section of the population which did not move on the hills was accorded extremely low ritual status in the new social formations - that of untouchable castes. These people retained their earlier culture of veneration of the mother Goddess (as is evident from very strong mother Goddess cults like the *Sanjha* cult among the lower castes in the Ganga plain). This dilutes the tradition of male dominance to an extent. Further, in the Indian scenario, especially for the lower castes, castes becomes synonymous with class. Poverty demands a greater participation of women in paid work. So though the well being of both males and females among the lower castes are low, the gender disparities in key areas would also be lower (than that for the higher castes).

On the basis of these theoretical perspectives, the problem of female marginalisations in key areas of social well being may be located within the dynamics of the three exploitative systems - Patriarchy, Caste, and Feudalism. The level of social well being is influenced by the social value accruing to an individual within each of these systems as well as that accruing from social value within the household. The latter, though influenced by an individual's social value at the societal level, is also function of the nature of work undertaken her/him. These ideas are the basis on which the gender disparities in social well being are being analysed in this study.

\textsuperscript{11} Thapar R.; (1984); 'From Lineage To State - Social Formations in the Mid First Millennium B.C. in the Ganga Valley'; Oxford University Press.

\textsuperscript{12} Childe V.G.; (1963); 'Social Evolution'; C.A. Watts and Co; London.
1.5  RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the theoretical perspectives outlined above, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. Gender disparities in the key aspects of social well being are higher in the plains (i.e. the Awadh region) than in the hilly region (i.e. the Uttarakhand region).

2. In both regions the gender disparities in the key aspects of social well being are higher among the higher castes and tend to be positively related to caste hierarchy.

3. In both regions the gender disparities in the key aspects of social well being are higher among households owning larger land holdings and are positively related to size of the family holdings.

4. In both regions the gender disparities in the key aspects of social well being are higher among households with higher incomes and tend to be positively related to level of household income.

5. Location in better developed areas minimises gender disparities in social well being.

1.6  DATA BASE AND METHODOLOGY.

Data for this study was drawn from both primary as well as secondary sources.

I.  Primary sources:
   i. Through questionnaires canvassed at household level in the sample villages.
   ii. Through non participant observation.

II. Secondary sources:
   i. Census data.: To construct a simple composite index in order to identify the levels of development at the tehsil level\(^{13}\).
   ii. Contemporary literature on related themes.

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\(^{13}\) See Table 1.2
1.6.1 Methodology

1.6.1.1 Identification of the Problem

The problem of female marginalisation was identified as one rooted in the gender disparities in the basic areas of social well being. Placing the female question in the Smithian framework of "who gets what, where and how", immediately brought it into the ambit of the Geographical method. This also called for a thorough analysis of the problem within different social groups (who) and regions (what), in each key area, before attempting theorisation (how).

1.6.1.2 Delimitation of the Study region and Selection of Study Villages:

Analysing the question of female marginalisation within the Smithian framework called for an investigation of the problem in different regional and cultural settings. Thus, two culturally diverse environmental regions were selected for the study. These are the Awadh plains and the Uttarakhand region. Within these regions again, the study villages were selected on the basis of location at different levels of development. Section I.4.2 provides more details on this subject.

1.6.1.3 Preparation and Testing of Sample Questionnaire.

Keeping in mind the nature of data required, a sample questionnaire was prepared and finalised after field testing.

1.6.1.4 Collection, Tabulation and Analysis of Primary Data.

Data collected through field survey was tabulated according to three parameters, i.e., caste, land ownership and household income. Simple percentages and wherever required, the Sopher's disparity index\(^{14}\) was used to bring out the gender disparity in the problem under study.

\(\text{Sopher's Disparity Index is a tool devised to measure the degree of disparity in the possession of any attribute by a section of persons belonging to different categories of the population. The original index has been modified to greater sensitivity by Kundu. The index is worked out in the following manner: } D_I = \frac{\log X_2/X_1}{\log (200-X_1)/(200-X_2)} \\text{. Values of } X_2 \text{ are always greater than or equal to } X_1 \text{ and are therefore closer to the ideal situation than } X_1. \text{ In the current scenario, male values are taken as } X_2.\)
1.6.2 Sample Design

Two culturally diverse environmental regions have been selected as the backdrop against which to compare the inter regional gender disparity in the key aspects of social well being. These are:

I. The Awadh Plains
II. The Uttarakhand Region

Apart from being culturally and environmentally diverse, both regions also assume contemporary socio political relevance in the present day scenario of sectarian politics and heightening regional aspirations.

The sample design of the study called for a selection of two villages from each region. In each region, the two villages were selected, drawn from the best and least developed districts of the region in order to represent these levels of development.

The best and least developed districts of each region were identified using the C.M.I.E.'s (Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy) Relative Development Index (RDI.) for districts 1993. Using these R.D. I scores, the districts of both regions were ranked separately in descending order. A numerically higher score on the RDI is indicative of a higher level of development while the converse is true for lower RDI scores. On the basis of these ranks, the most and least developed districts of the two regions were identified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region-I: The Awadh Plains</th>
<th>Region-II: The Uttarakhand Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S.No Districts. RDI</td>
<td>S.No Districts. RDI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Barabanki. 53</td>
<td>1. Almora. 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Hardoi. 50</td>
<td>2. Chamoli. 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Kheri. 76</td>
<td>3. Dehradun. 142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Lucknow. 152</td>
<td>4. Garhwal. 51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Rae Bareilly. 47</td>
<td>5. Nainital. 132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Unnao. 47</td>
<td>7. Tehri Garhwal. 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Uttarkashi. 47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy (1993); Profiles of Districts: Economic Intelligence Bureau; Bombay.

The RDI was developed to fill in the lack of comparable district level information. It is a proxy indicator arrived at by assigning weightages to different sectors of the economy. The weighting pattern adopted in its construction reflects by and large the importance of the different sectors of the economy. The agricultural sector has a total weight of 35% in the index. Mining and manufacturing is assigned 25% weightage and the service sector has a weightage of 40%.
Lucknow emerged as the most developed district of region I (i.e. The Awadh Plains). Unnao and Rae Bareilly both shared the lowest RDI scores and were the least developed districts of this region. However, Unnao was chosen to represent the least developed district. Similarly, in region II (i.e. The Uttarakhand region) Dehradun emerged as the most developed district, while Chamoli was identified as the least developed district. From each district selected for study, a simple composite index showing the level of development of the tehsils was prepared. This index was based on tehsil level data on the availability of basic amenities in the villages of each tehsil.

The results of this exercise are reproduced in Table 1.2. The best developed tehsil (with the lowest composite score) from the best developed districts and the least developed tehsils (with the highest composite score) from the least developed districts were selected for the study.

From each of the tehsils, a village was selected for conducting the field study. Care was taken to ensure that the villages were representative of the region as well as level of development. Thus villages from the better developed districts and tehsils were closer to an urban centre while those located at a greater distance from an urban centre were chosen to represent the less developed areas.

Table 1.2 Simple Composite Index to Identify Best and Least Developed Tehsil in Study Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Tehsil</th>
<th>Education Rank</th>
<th>Medical Rank</th>
<th>Post and Telegraph Rank</th>
<th>Approach By Pucca Road Rank</th>
<th>Power Supply Rank</th>
<th>Composite Rank</th>
<th>Composite Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LUCKNOW</td>
<td>Malihabad</td>
<td>70.2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lucknow</td>
<td>77.7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>81.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mohanlalganj</td>
<td>75.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>32.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNNAO</td>
<td>Safipur</td>
<td>66.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>43.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hasanganj</td>
<td>56.4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unnao</td>
<td>73.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Purwa</td>
<td>58.7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEHRADUN</td>
<td>Chakrata</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dehradun</td>
<td>62.2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>69.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAMOLI</td>
<td>Joshimath</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Karanprayag</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chamoli</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ukhimath</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Approximately twenty percent of the total number of households or not less than one hundred households were selected from each village. Selection of the households was done through house listing based on the notional caste composition of the village. Pruning of the original list was done on the basis of household land ownership to ensure adequate and typical representation of land ownership patterns in the sample. Table I.3. shows the villages selected for study along with the number of households surveyed in each village.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table I.3</th>
<th>Villages Selected In Study Area.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Awadh Plains (Region I)</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Uttarakhand Region (Region II)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Developed District</td>
<td>Least Developed District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucknow</td>
<td>Unnao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Developed Tehsil</td>
<td>Least Developed Tehsil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucknow</td>
<td>Hasanguanj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villages Selected</td>
<td>Villages Selected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amethia Salempur</td>
<td>Sohra Mau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number Of Households</td>
<td>Number Of Households</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>517</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage Of Households Surveyed</td>
<td>Percentage Of Households Surveyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>85.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notional. At the time the field study was conducted, 1991 census data was unavailable. Census data was not available for comparisions even at the time of printing.*

I.6.3. Limitations of the Data.

The limitations of the primary data used in this study are of the following nature:

i. **Reliability of Information:**

The nature of data collected was such that it was dependant on the information given by the respondents. Such information may not have always been totally accurate. However, to ensure a higher level of reliability and accuracy, information collected was cross checked wherever possible.

ii. **The Social Desirability Factor:**

The information given by the respondents may have been guided by their perception of social desirability and therefore not be totally accurate. Cross checking of responses and non participant observation were used to ensure the minimisation of this factor in the data.
iii. **Gaps in the Data.**

Data regarding school attendance and immunisations could not be cross checked completely. Often children enrolled in school yet did not actually attend. Data on immunisations may have included cases of incomplete immunisations despite persistent questioning. Similarly, data on most preferred eating order could not succeed in ascertaining whether a gender disparity existed in the order in which children are fed. The respondents maintained that in cases where children were fed first, no gender disparity existed.

iv. **Nature of Anthropometric Data.**

The body mass index used in the assessment of health and nutritional status is an outcome of height and weight measurements and the variance of these values from normal. However, what is normal for one community may not be strictly so for another. Similarly, adaptation of the human body to smaller size in a community may mean that smaller size is not indicative of malnourishment. To minimise these discrepancies, the body mass index (which is the ratio of a person's height to weight) has been used in preference over other anthropometrical measures of health and nutrition. Being only a ratio of height and weight, the BMI, is free from the second limitation. Since cross community comparisons have not been attempted in this study, the limitations posed by the definition of normal across the two communities is minimised.

1.7 **ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY.**

The study is organised into seven chapters. Chapter I introduces the problem and the framework within which it is studied. The objectives, theoretical perspectives and research questions that underlie the study are detailed clearly. The sources of data, sample design and methodology adopted are clearly mentioned.

Chapter II is an overview of literature on related themes. Such literature has been grouped into three sections. The first deals with works on the traditional roles, status and position accorded to women as a derivative of patriarchy, participation in economic activities, capitalism etc. Section II examines works on the negative effects of economic development on women. Section III details works on different aspects of women's wellbeing and the gender disparities in the same.
Chapter III describes the study area and survey villages. Beginning with a description of the study area and the contemporary socio-political relevance of both regions, the chapter details the selection of the study villages and provides a brief socio-economic profile of each of the four villages selected for the study. A comparison of the village-wise socio-economic attributes of the two regions forms the concluding section of this chapter.

A reclassification of work in a more gender-sensitive manner and an analysis of male and female participation in paid and unpaid work are the main issues discussed in chapter IV. Male and female work participation as well as labour force participation rates, share of labour force in paid and unpaid work, domestic work and labour force participation rates in subsidiary occupations are the indicators used to ascertain the nature of male and female work. Each indicator is examined with reference to caste, land ownership and household income for both regions.

Chapter V explores gender disparities in educational deprivation within the school age and the adult population. The literacy rates, non-enrolment within the school age population, attendance in private and government schools, dropout rates and level of drop outs and reasons for dropping out of school are examined with reference to the school age population. The share of illiterates and modal levels of completed education among the adult population are the indicators used to assess the gender disparity in the realm of education among the adult population. Again, each indicator is examined with reference to caste, land ownership and household income.

Chapter VI identifies the nutritional status and the management of morbidity as the main determinants of health. The body mass index, most preferred eating order and receipt of special diet in pregnancy and lactation are used to analyse the gender disparities in household nutrition. The immunisation status among children below fifteen, incidence of morbidity, nature of and stage at which medical care is received in illness are the indicators taken to measure the gender disparity in the management of morbidity within the household.

Chapter VII is a summary of findings and an attempt at theorisation. The problem of female marginalisation is located in the context of the three exploitative systems of Patriarchy, Feudalism and Caste. The social value ascribed to an individual within each of these systems, in tandem with that ascribed at the household level, influences the level of social well-being.
The mechanics of this system are explained more fully and the evidences gained from this study presented systematically towards a validation of this theory. An index of gender disparities in social well being is presented. The role of intervention strategies is also discussed.