AN OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE.

The problem of female marginalisation and deprivation has preoccupied social scientists for long resulting in a large body of literature on this subject. In this chapter, relevant literature on this theme is reviewed. The chapter is subdivided into three sections. Section II.1 reviews works seeking to locate the roots of female oppression. Section II.2 documents works locating female marginalisation from social and economic life within the negative effects of economic development. Section II.3 surveys works on gender disparities in key areas of social well being i.e., Work, Education and Health. The debate on the measurement of development from a gendered perspective and attempts at constructing gendered indices is captured in section II.4. In section II.5, the gaps in the existing research and the relevance of this study in this context is highlighted.

II.1 THE ROOTS OF FEMALE OPPRESSION.

Engels (1940)\textsuperscript{1} records the 'world historic defeat of the female sex' with the disintegration of primitive society based on communal ownership of resources, group marriage and strong matrilineal - matriarchal traditions. The oppression of women arises with the emergence of private property and the need to control reproduction in order to pass on the property to natural heirs (through patriarchy) within monogamian marriages. Murdock (1949)\textsuperscript{2} views woman's status as a derivative of participation in agriculture. Among people engaged in primitive agriculture most of the work is done by women. This coupled with matrilineal

\textsuperscript{1} Engels F (1940) 'The Origin of The Family, Private Property and State', Lawrence and Wishart, London.

\textsuperscript{2} Murdock G.P (1949) 'Social Structure', Macmillion, New York
descent, matrilocal residence, absence of movable property and low political integration usually contributes to higher female status. Similarly, D'Andrade (1966) links the participation in economic activities to power and control. He is of the view that the sex that performs the basic subsistence activities usually gains control over the means of subsistence, is dominant and enjoys a better status.

According to Simone de'Beauvoir (1968), the positions and roles that women occupy socially are determined by two related factors i.e. participation in economic activities and role in reproduction. Similarly, Cisler (1970), locates the roots of female oppression with being saddled with pregnancy and childbirth. This leads to impotence in the economic sphere and fostering dependence on males. Boserup (1970) is of the view that women's status and positions are derived form their roles in economic production. She distinguishes between primitive hoe agriculture with large inputs of female labour and dry, plough agriculture with primarily male labour. The former is the female farming system where women also control trade and have a higher status vis-a-vis the women in the male farming system where trade too is in male hands and women are generally secluded. Ember and Ember (1971) also emphasise the importance of female participation in subsistence agriculture which along with supporting social organisations such as matrilocal residence, leads to an enhanced social status for

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women. Sanday (1973)\textsuperscript{8} derives female status from participation in the three main tasks of social survival viz. reproduction, defence and subsistence. Since reproduction is always primarily the work of women, a constraint on their energy for participation in subsistence and defence activities, is imposed and since males carry out the bulk of work in these two activities, they have a higher status. Similarly, Meillassoux (1972)\textsuperscript{9} is of the view that women traditionally suffer a lower position because of their role in reproduction and subsistence. This is because in primitive societies control over means of reproduction which includes "women and subsistence" is important rather than control over production.

Firestone (1974)\textsuperscript{10} derives her views on the poorer position of women from the biology of reproduction. According to her women are oppressed as a section due to their physical vulnerability and weakness associated with pregnancy and childbirth which makes them dependent on men and enables men to dominate women. Huntington (1975)\textsuperscript{11} though subscribing to the view that women's status derives from participation in economic activities suggests alternatives to the Boserupian thesis by arguing that factors such as control over women's labour, extent of work and leisure, opportunities for education and employment and effect of women's labour on their own lives needs to be elaborated to understand the dynamics of women's status. Beechey (1979)\textsuperscript{12} and Hartmann (1979)\textsuperscript{13} are of the view that the lower

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\textsuperscript{8} Sanday P. R. (1973) 'Towards a Theory Of The Status Of Women', American Anthropologist, Vol. 75

\textsuperscript{9} Meillassoux C. (1972) 'From Reproduction to Production', Economy And Society, Vol. 1, No 1


\textsuperscript{13} Hartmann H. (1979) 'The Unhappy marriage of Marxism And Feminism', Capital And Class, No 8
status and oppression of women is caused by the intertwining of two autonomous systems, those of patriarchy and capitalism. Hartmann suggests that male control over female sexuality within monogamous marriage is the basis of controlling women's labour power and this is the base of patriarchy. Inter relations between this patriarchal base and capitalism exacerbates women's position.

Beneria and Sen (1981)\textsuperscript{14} feel that women's position in society accrues from her roles in domestic work of production and reproduction. By shouldering the bulk of domestic for which they are unpaid, women have a unique responsibility worldwide. However this makes them weak in the labour market and dependant on male wages. Altogether their position must be understood in terms of interaction between the productive and reproductive spheres where reproduction is the root of their subordination. Mies, Thomsen and Vonverlhof (1988)\textsuperscript{15} are of the view that women's subordinate position arises from the fact that they have been viewed as natural resources or colonies and exploited in the same manner. An unequal division of labour based on sex and a disregard of woman's all important work in reproduction has relegated women to the status of housewives and led to deterioration in their position.

\textbf{II.2- NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ON FEMALES.}

Boserup (1970)\textsuperscript{16} from her study of the effect of social and economic development on women in the Third World, concludes that through a disintegration of the traditional division of labour in rural areas women are deprived of their productive roles. In urban areas, women employed

\textsuperscript{14} Beneria L. and Gita Sen (1981) 'Accumulation, Reproduction And Woman's Role in Economic Development.' \textit{Signs:} Vol. 7 No. 2

\textsuperscript{15} Mies M, V. Benholdt Thomsen and C. Vonverlhof (1988) 'Women The Last Colony'; Kali for Women; New Delhi

in home based production face competition from factories which fail to absorb female labour from home industries. Thus women are marginalised through the process of economic development and are left behind in traditional activities. Palmer (1977)\textsuperscript{17} argues that economic development has on the whole increased women's work burden, reduced their rights of appropriation over their returns to family as well as their own labour and made them prone to falling into a proletarian class vis a vis their menfolk. Dixon (1978)\textsuperscript{18} is of the view that rural women are by passed from the social and economic advantages accruing from economic development mainly due to male dominance in decision making, invisibility of women in productive activities, primitive technologies used by women and the powerlessness of women themselves.

Jain's (1980)\textsuperscript{19} study of milk co-operatives in Kaira bears out in full Palmers ideas that economic development and modernisation invariably lead to deterioration of women's positions by enhancing their work load and reducing their rights of appropriation over their own labour. The study has shown that women's daily work burden has increased by several hours, but the efforts to empower them have failed as women hardly have any control over their own incomes. Shah (1985)\textsuperscript{20} also records almost identical findings on the negative impact of modernisation of dairy activities on women's participation and status. Karlekar (1982)\textsuperscript{21} also subscribes to the view that by and large it is women who are negatively effected by

\textsuperscript{17} Palmer I. (1977) 'Rural Women And Basic Needs Approach to Devpt', \textit{International. Labour Review}, Vol. 115 (1)


development, either by being by passed or by being used to bring about the modern economy.

Row (1985)\textsuperscript{22} argues that the process of modernisation which includes introduction of new farm technologies together with industrialisation, which are part and parcel of the process of economic development have adversely affected women's employment and lowered their economic status. Krishna Raj (1988)\textsuperscript{23} is of the opinion that women are displaced by the process of capital accumulation and technology inherent in the process of economic development. All in all the process of economic development taking place within a patriarchal structure has led to a loss of traditional skills of women and made them prone to be drawn into the unorganised sector in view of their lower status and special social responsibilities.

Mies, Benholdt Thomsen and Vonverlhof (1985)\textsuperscript{24} argue that women have been seen only as natural resources and have been exploited in the same manner. They have been marginalised through and from the development process. Agarwal (1988)\textsuperscript{25} shows how privatisation and marketisation (inherent within the process of economic development) have curtailed women's customary access to land in rural areas, lowering their status and having an overall negative impact on their lives. Brydon and Chant (1989)\textsuperscript{26} talk of the largely negative effects of economic development on the lives of women. Whenever development schemes are not


\textsuperscript{24} Mies M; V. Benholdt Thomsen and C Vonvelhof (1985) 'Women The Last Colony', Kali For Women, New Delhi.


gender blind, women's participation in and benefits from these schemes are severely curtailed due to cultural constraints and prevalent patriarchal attitudes. In other cases, gender blind schemes of development do more harm than good. Nuna (1990)\textsuperscript{27} illustrates in his atlas how despite over four decades of planning, the fruits of development have yet to be equitably distributed among men and women. Rural women continue to be among the poorest, most backward and deprived sections of Indian Society. Momsen (1991)\textsuperscript{28} again subscribes to the view that by restructuring the traditional economies, advent of the modern sector and the introduction of unsympathetic technologies and policies, the position of women in Third World countries has generally worsened in the process of economic development.

Technocratic development, capital intensive and labour saving technologies, globalisation of the market, penetration of capitalism, destruction of subsistence economies of the poor especially those of the women are responsible according to Dietrich (1992)\textsuperscript{29} for the perpetuation of poverty and marginalisation of women in the process of economic development.

\section*{II.III GENDER DISPARITIES IN BASIC AREAS OF SOCIAL WELL BEING}

\subsection*{II.III.1 WORK}

D'Souza (1975)\textsuperscript{30} is of the opinion that the main reasons for women taking up paid work outside the home is to supplement the low incomes of their menfolk. The author reports an

\textsuperscript{27} Nuna S.C. (1990) 'Women And Development', NIEPA, New Delhi.


inverse relation between female employment and education in the lower educational categories of the population and a positive relationship of the same among better educated people. At lower prestige levels of male occupation, female employment decreases with increase in prestige of male occupation while the opposite is true for higher prestige levels of male occupation. Occupational prestige of women is lower than men and is greatly influenced by consistency in family status. Palmer (1977)\(^3\) points out that women work harder than men in agricultural activities though their economic value may be less.

Kishwar and Vanita (1984)\(^2\) chronicle the double burden women bear by shouldering responsibility of household work as well as paid work outside the home. Women also have poorer work environments, work longer hours and are paid less. They also face more insecurity in employment as compared to men. A larger share of female earnings goes to the upkeep of the household.

Sharma (1986)\(^3\) explores the nature of household work done by women and shows how it contributes to maintenance and mobility of the household. Such work, apart from domestic chores also includes the task of building social networks. Often class positions of rural or migrant households are maintained by such household service work done by women. Trenchard (1987)\(^4\) and Spiro (1987)\(^5\) clearly bring out the greater responsibility of household

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work as well as agricultural work on women. This view is also supported by Townsend and Henshall Momsen (1987)\(^{36}\). Mies (1988)\(^{37}\) suggests that as a consequence of the capitalist mode of production, the emergent sexual division of labour does not recognise women's labour in reproducing human capital. Woman's work is seen as an extension of the biological activity whereas men's work is seen as conscious human effort. Similarly, Thomsen (1988)\(^{38}\) argues that the type of labour relations that women occupy in contemporary times are forced on them. Unemployment effects women the most and their consequent subordinate roles as housewives adds to their exploitation. Kapadia's (1992)\(^{39}\) study of Pallar women in production and reproduction in south India substantiates this finding. Apart from noting the double burden on women she also finds that the burden of family survival falls more heavily on women and notes the importance of female wages in keeping the family from destitution. Sharma (1991)\(^{40}\) in his study of work activity pattern of women in rural Bihar finds that female participation is significant in subsistence and other economic activities. Though women from all classes suffered from the double burden of domestic work and paid work outside home, the heaviest load was that of poorer women from lower castes. Sharma rejects the idea that women are only supplementary earners. Henshall Momsen (1991)\(^{41}\) in her study of women and development in the third world finds identical results.

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\(^{36}\) Henshall Momsen & Townsend, *ibid op cit*


Bannerjee (1992) is of the view that women are seen as a family resource at the disposal of men and are used to ensure that the needs of all household members are met at minimal levels. This is the main reason why women's labour supply is more closely linked to family income levels rather than wage rates. Despite the fact that women's work is crucial for survival of households it still remains peripheral in urban economies. Deshpande (1992) points out that female employment in urban areas tends to be casual, contractual and low paid and that women are victims of wage, occupational as well pre-entry human capital discrimination.

An emerging trend in writings on work is the debate on value of women's work. The Population Concil (1980), Boulding (1983), and more recently, Jain (1996) and Mukherjee (1996) all address the issue of the valuation of women's work and the inability of money and market based indicators to capture it. The use of more gender sensitive indicators based on time allocation is suggested.

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Sopher (1980) was perhaps the first to make an in-depth analysis of gender disparities in literacy in the Indian scenario. His findings corroborate the fact that women on the whole are a "depressed class" in terms of literacy. Sopher also reports wide regional variations in the extent of gender disparity in literacy.

Chanana Ahmed (1985) discusses extensively the problem of women's education during the period 1921-1981 focusing on certain key issues like regional variations, wastage in women's education, co-education and curriculum. Ahmed shows how the regional imbalances in women's education has persisted even after independence. Kulshreshtha (1988) presents an overview of women's education and training in India, reporting that though primary education has progressed well, however the enrolment & retention rates are both lower for girls. In secondary education girl's entry is restricted due to socio-cultural handicaps. Raju (1988) examining the question of female literacy in urban India notes that despite a lag, the patterns in levels of female literacy are closely linked to male literacy.

Stromquist (1989) discusses factors that effect women's participation and achievement in education and contribute to gender inequalities. Cultural norms and the division of labour within the home are two factors which effect women's participation in education negatively.

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and reinforce rather than challenge the sexual division of labour. Nuna (1990)\(^{53}\) analyses district level data and shows clearly that females lag behind males in literacy in all major states, both among the scheduled caste, non scheduled caste and scheduled tribe population. Sarma (1991)\(^{54}\) is of the opinion that women's status is significantly related to opportunities for their education and employment. She reports a persisting gender gap in education with factors such as higher drop out rates for females.

A country study carried out by the World Bank (1991)\(^{55}\) reveals that 60% of the illiterate population in India are females. Wide regional disparities exist in terms of female education, the most backward states being Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

Pandey and Talwar (1980)\(^{56}\) in their study of ten villages in Sultanpur district of Uttar Pradesh, report improved literacy among the lower castes. However, Unni's (1996)\(^{57}\) village level study in Gujarat shows a decline in literacy with decline in caste hierarchy. A higher male attendance in private indicative of the gender bias favouring males in the quality of education is reported by Sharief's (1994) study of rural households across eight states\(^{58}\) and also by Dreze and


\(^{56}\) Pandey G.D and P.P.Talwar (1980) "Some Correlates of Literacy and Educational Attainment among Children in Rural Areas of Uttar Pradesh", Demography India, No 1 and 2.


Higher drop outs / early withdrawals among females has also been discussed by Bhattv (1998) in her survey of field studies pertaining to educational deprivation. Similarly, distance (to school) as a factor affecting female enrolments and withdrawals has been discussed by Duraiswamy's (1992) study of education in Tamil Nadu. Again, lack of interest among males and economic and home based reasons among females are cited as important reasons for dropping out of school by Jabbi and Rajyalakshmi (1996) in their village level study of Bhojpur and Santal Pargana in Bihar. Majumdar's study of three villages in the Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu also yields similar results.

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Studies pertaining to women’s health and the gender disparities in health status have broadly revolved around a few basic questions, namely maternal health, the gender bias in health (as an outcome of son preference, discrimination and allocation of food favouring males) and the impact of improved economic status on the gender disparities in health and nutritional behaviour.

Western authors like Oakely (1984), Roberts (1981) document the lack of power women have over their own fertility and are critical of the gradual "medicalization of motherhood". They argue that ante natal care is used as a tool to facilitate wider social control over women. However, in the Indian scenario a number of authors have documented the poor nutritional status and inadequate medical care available to women during pregnancy and childbirth. Thus Katona-Apte (1975) records discrimination against women in food allocation and reveals that the food allocated to women at all stages of their lives but especially during pregnancy and lactation are low status vis-à-vis the food allocated to males, and has a lower nutritive value. Similarly, Batliwala (1982) discussing the nutritional deprivation of women particularly those of the pregnant and lactating mothers report that these vulnerable groups get no additional nutrients. In rural areas women expend thrice the energy that men do in domestic and agricultural activities, yet they have access to lesser amount of nutrients. Major nutrition intervention programmes have failed to correct this under nourishment due to male

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67 Katana Apte J (1975) in Rapheal D (ed) Being Female, Reproduction, Power and Change, Mauton pub, Paris

bias in food distribution within families. Horowitz and Kishwar's (1984) study of Jat landowners and agricultural labourers in Punjab also reveals that despite heavy expenditure of energy, the women's average consumption of calories was only two thirds the total calories consumed by the men. Women weighed less than men and ate last and least with no extra nutrients during pregnancy and lactation. In this context, Chaudhuri (1985) is of the opinion that malnutrition is primarily a characteristic of poverty, however pregnant and lactating women suffer malnutrition even in families where expenditure levels are adequate for nutrition. Similarly, Gopalan (1989) highlights the problems of poor maternal nutrition, higher levels of undernourishment and altogether poorer health suffered by rural women but contends that sex discrimination as a factor responsible for poor health and nutrition of women is less important than poverty. Disparities between poor and well to do women are greater than those between men and women in any group. Srikantia (1989) reasserts that nutritional status of women from low income groups is unsatisfactory and severe malnutrition is more common in girls than in boys. Chattterjee (1989) is of the same view and adds that gender differences in adult nutritional status is exacerbated by poverty.


73 Chattterjee M. (1989) 'Socio economic and Socio Cultural Influences on Women's Nutritional Status in Gopalan & Kaur, op cit
In terms of gender disparity in health and nutritional status, the report of the committee for status of women (1975)\textsuperscript{74} in India revealed way back that Indian women suffer an extremely poor health status. Karkal (1982)\textsuperscript{75} reviewing the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's report on Health for All by 2000 A D as well as the ICMR's alternative strategy for the same, reasserts that in terms of poor health and high mortality the most vulnerable sections are women, children and the rural poor Mathai (1989)\textsuperscript{76} reports a low level of utilisation of health care facilities by women. Not only does malnourishment plague them but access to health services is also far from desirable

Chen, Huq and D'Souza (1981)\textsuperscript{77} feel that higher female mortality during childhood and adolescence reflect sex biased nutrition behaviour favouring male children. The authors report a higher degree of female malnourishment for all ages vis a vis male and argue that son preference in parental care, intra family food allocation and utilisation of health facilities contribute to higher female mortality. This is again validated by Chen (1982)\textsuperscript{78} who reports higher male intake of calories and proteins than females at all ages and reasserts that the disparity in nutritional status between sexes may be explained by differences in intra family food allocation. Similarly, Sen and Sengupta (1983)\textsuperscript{79} report that in West Bengal a systematic

\textsuperscript{74} Towards Equality, Rep of the C S W I Govt. of India (1975).


\textsuperscript{76} Mathai S.M (1989) 'Women and The Health System', in Gopalan & Kaur, op cit


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sex bias is reflected in higher deprivation of girls vis a vis boys in children under five. This deprivation is manifested in lower growth dynamics and greater degree of malnutrition among girls. The authors suggest that improved economic conditions may actually accentuate the sex bias. In the same vein, Graham (1984) is of the opinion that food is an indicator of social worth. The best food is reserved for the most privileged members of the family while those who serve make do on less or worse. However, Basu, Roy et al (1986) investigate the inequality of food distribution at the household level by sex and find that traditional Hindu system of male dominance and male bias in food distribution does not exist among tribal groups. In the non-tribal households where such discrimination does exist, enhanced economic status may actually accentuate the bias. Similarly, Levine (1987) in her study of three Tibetan communities in Nepal, reports preferential health care and nutrition towards more desirable children, i.e., sons, but also documents discrimination against any less desirable child determined by sibling order and other factors. In the same vein, Hariss and Watson (1987) explain the pattern of masculine sex ratios and higher female mortality in India by suggesting a systematic pattern of discrimination against females in terms of allocation of food and access to health facilities. Pryer (1987), studying the characteristics and process at the household level which result in severe undernourishment, finds that in her study area, most household


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members are acutely and chronically undernourished, but women and young girls are particularly so. Brydon and Chant (1987)\textsuperscript{85} are also in agreement with the fact that women face problems of undernutrition and poor health due to a male bias in food allocation and insufficient health facilities especially for maternal health. Dasgupta (1990)\textsuperscript{86} in her study of death clustering in selected villages of Punjab finds evidence of higher mortality among female children possibly as a result of son preference and discrimination. Kynch & Sen (1983)\textsuperscript{87} indicate that urbanisation has failed to check excess female mortality, rather, that health care in urban areas is more accessible to and used by males. While for both sexes health conditions tend to improve with income, the sex bias against the females continues to apply in each age group and may get accentuated by urbanisation.

Miller (1985)\textsuperscript{88} argues that gender is the key factor differentiating the health status of the population and finds that potential risk factors affecting the survival of children varies according to the degree of "son preference" in a society and may also be effected by birth order of children. Increase in health care services will therefore be diverted to boys while girls would benefit only secondarily.

Chatterjee (1985)\textsuperscript{89} argues that health outcomes and household activities are linked. The paradox is that while women are the providers of health care in a household, they themselves


\textsuperscript{88} Miller B.D. (1985) 'Patriarchy, the Household and Public Health Programmes in India', Asian Regional Conference on Women, ISI New Delhi.

\textsuperscript{89} Chatterjee M (1985) 'Competence and Care: Policies to Develop Health and Nutrition for Women', Asian Regl Conf. ibid, op cit.
along with children suffer the worst health, especially in regions where they have low economic values and limited mobility. Rajeshwari (1996) on the basis of her study of rural Haryana, reports that availability of health services at the area of residence works toward reducing the gender bias in utilisation of health services. Goodburn et al (1996) are among those who report positive impact of female education on household health particularly child health. Similarly, Sood and Nagla (1996) in their study of rural mothers in the Bel Block of Rohtak district report a positive association between education and maternal and child health and family planning practices.

II.4 THE MEASUREMENT OF DEVELOPMENT FROM A GENDERED PERSPECTIVE.

The construction of gendered indices and the measurement of development from a gendered perspective is the current trend among scholars preoccupied with the women's question. Kulshreshtha (1993) attempts to measure the Gross Domestic Product by income within the system of national accounts. However this approach ignores unpaid work which is an important component of women's work. The 1995 United Nation's Human Development

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Report introduced the Gender Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) and envisaged the measurement of development from a gender sensitive perspective. The GDI was constructed on the basis of literacy, work participation, the GEM took into account political participation and empowerment indices. Indian feminist scholars were quick to reject the GDI and GEM on the grounds that these western centric indices would mislead policy makers and fail to capture indigenous reality. Thus Mahadevia and Hirway (1996), Prabhu, Sarkar and Radha (1996) are those who have forwarded alternatives to the UN's GDI. Prabhu, Sarkar and Radha prepare a Gender Development Index more or less on the same lines of the UN GDI using state level data on literacy, work participation etc. However Mahadevia and Hirway delve deeper into the problem and advance a Gender Development Measure (GDM) at the individual and societal level to measure the gendered effects of development. Both indices, while being valuable tools of measurement, tend to bypass the root of the problem of female marginalisation by failing to address the rural household as the unit of analysis.

II.5 GAPS IN EXISTING RESEARCH AND CONTRIBUTION OF THE PRESENT STUDY.

The ever increasing volume of research on gender issues is encouraging and augurs for a better understanding of (and therefore solutions to) the problem of female marginalisation. However, reviewing this large body of literature throws up certain lacunae which this study hopes to fill. Firstly, the problem of female marginalisation has not been theorised in the

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context of social well being. The dynamics of the social systems and subsystems have which lead to female marginalisation in the key areas of well being have not been addressed.

Secondly, where some aspect of well being has been addressed, the analysis is often uniaspectual and confined to either women's work, health or education. At best some may be biaspectual and consider causal links between health and education or work and education etc.

A comprehensive analysis of female marginalisation in key areas of well being has not yet emerged.

Further, a number of studies consider gender as a category in isolation to the social context. Finally, very few studies make the rural household the unit of analysis. Failure to do so ensures that the root of the problem is effectively bypassed.

This study draws relevance from the fact that it locates the problem of female marginalisation firmly within the context of social well being. By considering the gender disparities in well being, the female question is not analysed in isolation to societal context. Further, by attempting to evaluate the gender disparities in the realm of work, knowledge and health, a more complete picture of reality is captured. Finally, by locating the analysis at the level of the household and also within the framework of caste, land ownership and income, ensures that the dynamics of female oppression at the household and societal levels are clearly addressed.

A theory of female marginalisation and an index of gender disparity in well being presented in detail at the conclusion provides a clear insight into the problem of female marginalisation and offers concrete suggestions to break the vicious cycle and work towards a more egalitarian social fibre.