

Status of Women in the Past and at Present in the Indian Society

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You can tell the condition of a
Nation by looking
at the status of its women

SCHEME OF THE PRESENTATION

Status of women in general

In ancient India

In medieval India

In modern India

Ancient Indian Context

- Social
- Religious
- Political

Medieval

- Social
- Religious
- Political

Modern

- Social
- Religious
- Political
- Legislature
- Judicial
- empowerment

Constitutional provisions

Preamble

Fundamental rights

Directive principles of State Policy

Gender Sensitisation

- What is Gender Sensitisation?
- What is the need of it?

Gender inequality

- Gender inequality is a form of inequality which is distinct from other forms of economic and social inequalities and stems from pre-existing gendered social norms and social perceptions.
- Gender inequity has adverse impact on development goals as it reduces economic growth.
- It hampers the overall wellbeing because blocking women from participation in social, political and economic activities can adversely affect the whole society.
- Many developing countries including India have displayed gender inequality in education, employment and health

Status of women in Ancient India

Status In History...

- Scholars believe that in ancient India, the women enjoyed equal status with men in all fields of life.
- Works by ancient Indian grammarians such as Patanjali and Katyayana suggest that women were educated in the early Vedic period.
- Rigvedic verses suggest that the women married at a mature age and were probably free to select their husband.
- However, in about 500 B.C., the status of women began to decline with the Smritis and with the Islamic invasion of Babur and the Mughal empire and later Christianity curtailing women's freedom and rights.

- The position of women in ancient India was vital. They used to take important decisions and were also allowed to choose their own husbands through the ancient system of "Swayamvara".
- A woman in the ancient society in India was respected and was given due importance in the society. The Vedas find importance of the women philosophers and intellectuals of the Vedic Period. In the Vedic period, Women Education in Ancient India was prevalent.
- Indian Women during the ancient times was said to be superior to men. The women in ancient India were given significance and they held a prominent position in the Indian society during that time

Access to education was easy for the women in ancient times. Through the massive Women Education in Ancient India several women seers and thinkers originated in ancient times such as Gargi and Maitreyi. Women enjoyed the tremendous right to education and teaching. The women intellectuals in ancient India gathered eminence by participating in educational debates and discussions in the assemblies of erudite persons Gargi was a prominent participant in the ancient society beside men such as Uddalaka Arni

In Vedic period, educational system was very developed and the main subject taught was the Veda. The Veda or the six Vedangas were taught including the performance of sacrifice, correct pronunciation, knowledge of prosody, etymology, grammar, and jyotisha or the science of calendar. Women Education in Ancient India produced women with significant authority. Ancient Indian texts describe the influence of the women in the society.

- Mahabharata by Veda Vyasa sketch the persuasion of Draupadi on the husbands to overthrow the Kauravas
- Valmiki`s Ramayana also depict the influence of Sita that resulted in the wiping away of Ravana.

Medieval period

Historical Social Practices Harassing Women...

- Sati
- Jauhar
- Purdah
- Devadasis



medieval period

- The Indian women's position in the society deteriorated during the medieval period when Sati among some communities, Child Marriages and a ban on widow remarriages became part of social life among some communities in India.
- The Muslim conquest in the Indian sub-continent brought the Purdah practice in the Indian society. Among the Rajputs of Rajasthan, the Jauhar was practised.
- In some parts of India, the Devadasis or the temple women were sexually exploited. Polygamy was widely practised especially among Hindu Kshatriya rulers. In many Muslim families, women were restricted to Zenana areas.

In spite of these conditions, some women excelled in the fields of politics, literature, education and religion. Razia Sultana became the only woman monarch to have ever ruled Delhi.

- The Bhakti movements tried to restore women's status and questioned some of the forms of oppression. Mirabai, a female saint-poet, was one of the most important Bhakti movement figures. Bhakti sects within Hinduism such as the Mahanubhav, Varkari and many others were principle movements within the Hindu fold to openly advocate social justice and equality between men and women.

Shortly after the Bhakti movement, Guru Nanak, the first Guru of Sikhs also preached the message of equality between men and women.

Condition Of Women During British Raj...

- Peary Charan Sarkar, a former student of Hindu College, Calcutta and a member of "Young Bengal" set up the first free school for girls in India in 1847 in Barasat, a suburb of Calcutta.
- Raja Rammohan Roy's efforts led to the abolition of the Sati practice under Governor-General William Cavendish-Bentinck in 1829.
- In 1917, the first women's delegation met the Secretary of State to demand women's political rights, supported by the Indian National Congress.

While this list might suggest that there was no positive British contribution during the Raj era, that is not entirely so, since missionaries wives like Martha Mault née Mead and her daughter Eliza Caldwell née Mault are rightly remembered for pioneering the education and training of girls in south India - a practise that initially met with local resistance, as it flew in the face of tradition

- Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagars crusade for the improvement in condition of widows led to the Widow Re-marriage Act of 1856.
- Rani Lakshmi Bai the Queen of Jhansi, led the Indian Rebellion of 1857 against the British. She is now widely considered as a nationalist hero.
- In 1917, the first womens delegation met the Secretary of State to demand womens political rights, supported by the Indian National Congress. The All India Womens Education Conference was held in Pune in 1927

- In 1929, the Child Marriage Restraint Act was passed, stipulating fourteen as the minimum age of marriage for a girl through the efforts of Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

Though Mahatma Gandhi himself married at the age of thirteen, he later urged people to boycott child marriages and called upon the young men to marry the child widows.

- Women played an important part in India's independence struggle. Some of the famous freedom fighters include Bhikaji Cama, Dr. Annie Besant, Pritilata Waddadar, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Aruna Asaf Ali, Sucheta Kriplani and Kasturba Gandhi
- Sarojini Naidu, was the first Indian woman to become the President of the Indian National Congress and the first woman to become the governor of a state in India.

International instruments

- [Universal Declaration of Human Rights,](#)
- [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#)

UDHR

it is beyond any doubt that UDHR nevertheless has had a profound impact in the working of the Constitution if not in making of the same. Post UDHR instruments of UNO on human rights have always been influential in the interpretation and application of fundamental rights guaranteed by our Constitution. and completed drafting the Constitution of India by November 1949. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was drafted from early 1947 to late 1948 by Drafting Committee the first United Nations Commission on Human Rights The Indian

- The Indian Supreme Court in the case of Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India has held that "Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948 while debates in the Indian Constitution were going on. Hence, it must be assumed that the makers of the Indian Constitution, in framing Part III of the Constitution on the Fundamental Rights were influenced by the provisions of the Universal Declaration. It is therefore legitimate for the Court to refer to eth comparable provisions of the Universal Declaration in construing the intent and scope of the relevant text of Part III of the Constitution."-See, AIR 1978 SC, p637

- The Indian Judiciary has been consistently referring to the Universal Declaration for extending the scope of Fundamental Rights. The primary reason; enforcement of certain Directive Principles, having read them into the Fundamental Rights, for example the proviso of 'Equal Pay for Equal work', 'Free Compulsory Education up to 14 years of age', etc., by the Legislature and Judiciary is because of the two International Covenants, namely the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966

Beijing Declaration

Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision making process and access to power are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace.

CEDAW requires two types action by the states
(need based result oriented)

- Actions to achieve equality of opportunity between men and women
- Actions to correct inequalities of power between men and women. The Convention gives positive affirmation to the principle of equality by requiring

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

- **Article 12:**
- States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, access to health care services, including those related to family planning.
- Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 1 of this article, States Parties shall ensure to women appropriate services in connection with pregnancy, confinement and the post-natal period, granting free services where necessary, as well as adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation.

Constitutional Rights to Women:

- **PREAMBLE**
- **FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS**
- **DIRECTIVE PRINCIPLES OF STATE POLICY**
- **FUNDAMENTAL DUTIES**
- **RESPONSIBILITIES OF INSTITUTIONS OF LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT**

PREAMBLE

- **JUSTICE**, Social, Economic and Political
- **LIBERTY** of Thought, Expression, Belief, faith and worship
- **EQUALITY** of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all.
- **FRATERNITY** assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the nation.

constitutionally guaranteed equality for gender justice.

Art 14 of Indian Constitution

- Equality' is an uncontested fundamental precept of our law land having been emplaced in the very Preamble of our Indian Cons a living document .Equality ideology of the Indian Constitution having the need for gender justice laid constitutional track for the s proclaiming equality irrespective of sex.
- Preamble proclaims WE..... and to secure all its citizens:
- JUSTICE, social, economic and political; LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;
- EQUALITY of status and of opportunity; FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and i of the Nation

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

- The state shall not discriminate against any citizen of India on the ground of sex [**Article 15(1)**].
- The state is empowered to make any special provision for women. In other words, this provision enables the state to make affirmative discrimination in favour of women [**Article 15(3)**].
- No citizen shall be discriminated against or be ineligible for any employment or office under the state on the ground of sex [**Article 16(2)**].
- Traffic in human beings and forced labour are prohibited [**Article 23(1)**].

DIRECTIVE PRINCIPLES OF STATE POLICY

- The state to secure for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood [**Article 39(a)**].
- The state to secure equal pay for equal work for both Indian men and women [**Article 39(d)**].
- The state is required to ensure that the health and strength of women workers are not abused and that they are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their strength [**Article 39(e)**].
- The state shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief [**Article 42**].

FUNDAMENTAL DUTIES

- It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women [**Article 51-A(e)**].

RESPONSIBILITIES OF INSTITUTIONS OF LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT

- One-third of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat shall be reserved for women [**Article 243-D(3)**].
- One-third of the total number of offices of chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level shall be reserved for women [**Article 243-D(4)**].
- One-third of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality shall be reserved for women [**Article 243-T(3)**].
- The offices of chairpersons in the Municipalities shall be reserved for women in such manner as the State Legislature may provide [**Article 243-T(4)**].

CONSTITUTIONAL DYNAMICS

- ARTICLE 21
- Right to health
- Right to privacy
- Right to speedy trial
- Right to shelter
- Right to environment

Gender justice- judicial process

Gender sensitivity shown by the indian judiciary

- Mother as natural guardian
- Remarriage of a muslim mother perse is not a bar to child custody
- Divorced muslim women get financial support even beyond iddat
- Christian women not to have dual grounds of divorce
- Visakha vs Rajasthan

- Women in India now participate in all activities such as education, sports, politics, media, art and culture, service sectors, science and technology, etc.
- Indira Gandhi, who served as Prime Minister of India for an aggregate period of fifteen years is the worlds longest serving woman Prime Minister.

- The Constitution of India guarantees -to all Indian women equality (Article 14), -no discrimination by the State (Article 15(1)), -equality of opportunity (Article 16), -equal pay for equal work (Article 39(d)).• In addition, it allows special provisions to be made by the State in favour of women and children (Article 15(3)), renounces practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51(A) (e)), and also allows for provisions to be made by the State for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief. (Article 42).

Child Marriage

Child Marriage has been traditionally prevalent in India and continues to this day. Although Child Marriage was outlawed in 1860, it is still a common practice. According to UN Agencies, more than 40% of the world's child marriages happen in India. In eight states of the country, more than half of young girls are married before the age of 18.

Dowry

Dowry, traditionally an upper caste Hindu practice of the bride's family offering wedding gifts to the bride-groom's family, is now widely practiced by all religious communities across the country, despite the law that prohibited dowry way back in 1967. The Dowry Prohibition Rules, 1985:

sexual harassment

Half of the total number of crimes against women reported related to molestation and harassment at the workplace. Eve-teasing is a euphemism used for sexual harassment or molestation of women by men. Many activists blame the rising incidents of sexual harassment against women on the influence of —Western Culture||

.On September 2012, Indian Parliament passed legislation protecting women from sexual harassment at work. specifically includes protection for female domestic staff.

FEMALE FOETICIDE

- Studies show a sharp drop in the sex ratio after the introduction of ultrasound machines, used for determining the sex of fetuses, resulting in selective abortion of female fetuses.
- Estimates for the total number of —missing girls|| since 1980 range between 10 million to 44 million, depending on assumptions.
- The results of the 1991 Census came as the first major shock, with the child sex ratio crashing from 962 girls per 1000 boys to 945 in just 10 years.
- The Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques Act came into effect in 1996 and it outlawed the disclosure of the sex of the fetus. The act has not been able to arrest the continuous decline of India's child sex ratio.
- • In 2001, it fell further to 927 girls per 1000 boys, and • In 2011, it crashed to 914. In just thirty years, there are now 48 fewer girls per 1000 boys.

Trafficking

- Women and children are trafficked and exploited, and forced to lead a life of indignity, social stigma, debt bondage and a host of ailments including HIV/AIDS.
- • Acute poverty and lack of employment opportunities has been abetting an increased voluntary entry of women into sex work. Trafficking is a complex challenge as it is an organized criminal activity.

Health

- REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH STATUS OF WOMEN
- An estimated 1, 36,000 women die in India every year due to pregnancy related setbacks. However the measures taken by the government have not proved effective despite the fact that high fatalities occur among women every year due to poor reproductive health practices.
- One of the reasons why women succumb to reproduction related complications is the absence of timely transportation to the nearest hospital.
- Experts estimate that 70% of the maternal-related deaths are preventable. Good sanitation and nutrition and avoiding overwork and stress will improve the health of Indian women.
- The need is to shift focus from the medical to the social, beginning with healthy antenatal care. But cultural, social and economic barriers delay or prevent women from seeking reproductive health care at any state-antenatal, delivery or post nature.

EDUCATION

- The female literacy rate in India is lower than the male literacy rate. Compared to boys, far fewer girls are enrolled in the schools and many of them drop out. Under Non-Formal Education Programme (NFE), about 40% of the centres in States and 10% of centres in Uts are exclusively reserved for females. In urban India, girls are at par with the boys in terms of education. However, in rural India girls continue to be less educated than boys. According to the report by U.S. Department of Commerce, the chief barrier to female education in India are inadequate school facilities (such as sanitary facilities), shortage of female teachers and gender bias in curriculum (majority of female characters being depicted as weak and helpless)

- Social attitude to the role of women lags much behind the law. The attitude which considers women fit for certain jobs and not others, causes prejudice in those who recruit employees. Thus women find employment easily as nurses, doctors, teachers, secretaries or on the assembly line.
- Even when well qualified women are available, preference is given to a male candidate of equal qualifications. A gender bias creates an obstacle at the recruitment stage itself. When it comes to remuneration, though the law proclaims equality, it is not always practiced.

- The inbuilt conviction that women are incapable of handling arduous jobs and are less efficient than men influences the payment of unequal salaries and wages for the same job.
- A woman could still bear with these problems if she has control over the money she earns. But in most families her salary is handed over to the father, husband or in-laws.

How Can We End Violence Against Women?•

- Education of the girl child is the first step towards a better society with fewer incidents of violence.
- Campaigns aimed at men and boys to increase awareness and change attitudes about gender inequality are also effective tools.
- As individuals and responsible citizens, we need to spread awareness and report any act of violence against women around us.

How can women empowerment be possible

- Entitlement
- Enforcement
- Empowerment
- Enjoyment

FROM ENDOWMENT TO EMPOWERMENT THROUGH SENSITIZATION

- Ensure young girls to realise their potential for bright future by guiding them
- Assure our mothers, sisters and daughters a life of dignity and personal security
- Let them aware about inspirational personalities

Inclusive Growth

- Women potentiality shall be included in nations growth(integral part of every economy)

- Let us have adream of India in which every women can feel safe, secured and empowered

Elimination of gender disparities

Protect the human rights of women

Fight against violence against women

Create new youth

give better parenting

THANK YOU