

## Women: Problems And Perspectives In Changing Women's Status In India

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### Abstract:

Traditionally, women were considered the caretakers of home. They had to look after the running of the family smoothly, they have to manage the expense in the economical way possible, they had to look after aged in-laws, nature the child, et They were expected to obey orders of their husband, the elders of the family, but kept in isolation when it came to major decision related to the family. The women were not too educated in the past eras They would be named off one day to their laws place and hence would not need too much knowledge was the previous thinking. There were women in older days too, who were well educated and led paths of success in many sphere of life, because of support from their families. It is these women who lead paths of change and brought about a transformation in the way people viewed women in the society

**Keywords:** *Society, Harassment, Empowerment, Women, Tradition.*

### Introduction:

The scenario of women is slowly changing in recent years. We can see a slow and steady rise of women in all fields of importance Women of today are not just restricted to cooking and taking care of their households, they have to step out their comfort zones to create their own images in the outside world as well. This is in short can be termed as women empowerment.

Society has now changed its stand and the way it looks at women, due to the progress achieved by women in all spheres of life. Men today are more understanding towards the women in their lives, yet we here many cases of harassment against women.

The women have completely transformed in the modern day, the urban women specially has changed from being a mere homemaker to the modern day multitasking women, handling responsibility without fear. She had taken on the world with confidence. Women of today handle their duties and chores at home, manage a career outside their home, nurture their children and balance their family lives with their professions. This is the scene in most of the urban households today. Modern day women are independent, takes right decisions boldly, and stands up for their rights.

Now a days, women are educated about the social benefits including awareness about the existing social problems in the society, good recognition and image in the family community, plan and promote better education for their children, taking care of health of aged and children. At present, most of the women are given a chance of finishing their education to the degree level. They are discouraged from getting married and raising a family when they are young. There are numbers of women education grants from the government, that offer help to the women from poor background in order to give them a chance to be educated.

### Review of Literature

**Chetan Singh and Raj Kumari (2017)** conducted study financially win today's women. They collected data thig secondary sour and location, social and cultural factors, financial and physical factors the barriers for financially that programmers for men in rural and hack ward are boded he acted.

**Javed Iqbal Bhabha and Shadiullah Khan (2014)** in their study on Impact on Financial literacy on saving Investment Behavior of working in the developing countries affects the savings and investment behavior of female workforce in developing countries like Pakistan. They found that people of Pakistan are financially illiterate. Only 1/3ed people possess

knowledge about financial services and products. Due to low literacy rate most people sides in rural areas and they lack basic education.

**Rashmi Ranjan Panigrahi and Susanta Kumar Satapathy (2014)** showed that women's of poor families took loans form microfinance and used it to meet their daily living expenses or their domestic needs. But after gaining education and awareness programmers they started small business with the help of non government organizations (NGO's). They were given training on how to start small medium size enterprise. Still due to poverty and illiteracy women don't utilize the opportunity provided to them. They lack education, skill, capacity to save and credit worthiness.

**Objective of study:**

1. To identify about the problems and challenges of Indian women.
2. To study socio-economic and political status of Indian women.
3. To find out possible solution that could help them to overcome the problems of Indian women

**Methodology:**

Secondary data sources like catalogue of the company, product range book of the company, various internet sites and Literature Reviews have been used

**The socio-economic and political status of women in India:**

**Ancient Indian Women:**

Scholars believe that in ancient India, the women enjoyed equal status with man in all fields of life. However, some others hold contrasting views. 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. Scriptures such as Rig Veda and Upanishads mention several women sages and seers, notably Gargi and Maitreyi. Some kingdoms in the ancient India had traditions

such as nagarvadhu (bride of the city") Women competed to win the coveted title of the nigarvadhu.

According to studies, women enjoyed equal status and rights during the early Vedic period. However, later (approximately 500 BC), the status of women begin to decline with the Smites (esp. Manusmritiy and with the Islamic invasion of Babur and the Mughal empire and later Christianity curtailing women's freedom and rights.

### Medieval Indian Women:

Medieval India was not women's age it is supposed to be the Dark Age for them. Medieval India saw many foreign conquests, which resulted in the decline in women's status when foreign conquerors like Muslims invaded India they brought with them their own culture. For them women was the sole property of her father, brother or husband and she does not have any will of her own. This type of thinking also crept into the minds of Indian people and they also began to treat their own women like this one more reason for the decline in women's status and freedom was that original Indians wanted to shield their women folk from the barbarous Muslim invaders. As polygamy was a norm for these invaders they picked up any women they wanted and kept her in their "harems". In order to protect them Indian women started using Pardah, (a veil), which covers body. Due to this reason their freedom also became affected. They were not allowed to move freely and this lead to the further deterioration of their status. These problems related with women resulted in changed mindset of people. Now they began to consider a girl as misery and a burden, which has to be shielded from the eyes of intruders and needs extra care. Whereas a boy child will not need such extra care and instead will be helpful as an earning hand Thus a vicious circle started in which women was at the receiving end. All this gave rise to some new evils such as Child Marriage. Sati. Jauhar and restriction on girleducation

**Sati:** The ritual of dying at the funeral pyre of the husband is known as "Sati" or "Sahagaman" According to some of the Hindu scriptures women dying at the funeral pyre of her husband go

straight to heaven so it's good to practice this ritual. Initially it was not obligatory for the women but if she practiced such a custom she was highly respected by the society.

**Girl Education:** The girls of medieval India and especially Indian society were not given formal education. They were given education related to household chores. But a famous Indian philosopher Vatsyayana wrote that women were supposed to be perfect in sixty four arts which included cooking, spinning, grinding, knowledge of medicine, recitation and many more though these evils were present in medieval Indian society but they were mainly confined to Hindu society. As compared to Hindu society other societies such as Buddhism, Jainism and Christians were a bit lenient Women in those societies enjoyed far more freedom. They had easy access to education and were more liberal in their approach. According to these religions gender was not the issue in attaining salvation any person whether a man or a woman is entitled to get the grace of god during the time of king Ashoka women took part in religious preaching. According to Hiuen Tsang, the famous traveler of that time, Rajyashri, the sister of Harshavardhana was a distinguished scholar of her time. Another such example is the daughter of king Ashoka, Sanghmitra She along with her brother Mahendra went to Sri Lanka to preach Buddhism

**Jauhar** is also more or less similar to Sati but it is a mass suicide. Jauhar was prevalent in the Rajput societies. In this custom wives immolated themselves while their husband were still alive. When people of Rajput clan became sure that they were going to die at the hands of their enemy then all the women arrange a large pyre and set themselves afire, while their husband used to fight the last decisive battle known as "Shaka", with the enemy. Thus protecting the sanctity of the women and the whole clan

**Child Marriage:** It was a norm in medieval India. Girls were married off at the age of 8-10. They were not allowed access to education and were treated as the material being. The plight of women can be imagined by one of the shloka of Tulsidas where he writes [r] "Dhol, gawar, shudra, pashu, nari, ye sab tadan ke adhikari". Meaning that animals, illiterates, lower castes and women should be subjected to beating. Thus women were compared with animals and were

married off at an early age. The child marriage along with it brought some more problems such as increased birth rate, poor health of women due to repeated child bearing and high mortality rate of women and children

**Restriction on Widow Remarriage:** The condition of widows in medieval India was very bad. They were not treated as human beings and were subjected to a lot of restrictions. They were supposed to live pious life after their husband died and were not allowed entry any celebration. Their presence in any good work was considered to be a bad women Sometimes heads of widows were also shaved down. They were not allowed to remarry any woman remarrying was looked down by the society. This cruelty on widows was one of the main reasons for the large number of women committing Sati. In medieval India living as a Hindu widow was a sort of a curse Purdah System: The veil or the Purdah' system was widely prevalent in medieval

### **Modern Indian Women**

The status of women in modern India is a sort of a paradox. If on one hand she is at the peak of ladder of success, on the other hand she is mutely suffering the violence afflicted on her by her own family members. As compared with past women in modern times have achieved a lot but in reality they have to still travel a long way. Their path is full of roadblocks. The women have left the secured domain of their home and are now in the battlefield of life, fully armored with their talent. They had proven themselves. But in India they are yet to get their dues. The sex ratio of India shows that the Indian society is still prejudiced against female. There are 933 femalesPerthousand males in India according to the census of 2001, which is much below the world average of 900 females. There me my problems which worm in India have to go through daily. These problems have become due and part of life of beingwomen and some of them have accepted them as their fate.

### **The main problems of Indian women include:**

#### **Malnutrition:**

Generally in India, women are the one who tend tear in the whole family, they eat whatever is left after men folk are satiated. As a result most of the times their food intake does not contain

the natural value required in maintaining the healthy body. In villages, sometimes women do not get to eat the whole meal due to poverty The UNICEF report of 1996 clearly sites that the men of South Asian are not given proper care, which results in higher level of malnutrition among the women of South Asia than anywhere else in the world. This nutritional deficiency has to consequences. For women first they become anemic and second they never achieve their full growth, which leads to an unending cycle of undergrowth as malnourished women cannot give birth to a healthy baby

#### **Poor Health:**

The malnutrition results in poor health of women. The women of Indian are prejudiced from the birth itself. They are not breastfed for long. In the want of a son the women wants to get pregnant as soon as possible which decreases the caring period to the girl child whereas the male members get adequate care and nutrition. Women are not given the right to free movement that means that they cannot go anywhere on their own if they want and they have to take the permission of male member of family or have to take them along. This results in decrease in women's visit to doctor and she could not pay attention to her health as a result.

#### **Maternal Mortality:**

The mortality rate in India is among highest in the world. As females are not give proper attention, which results in the malnutrition and then they are married at early age which leads to pregnancies at younger age when the body is not ready bear the harden of a shield. All this results in complications. Which may lead to gynecological problems, which may become serious with time and may ultimately.

#### **Lack of education:**

In India women education never got a due share of attention from the medieval India women were debarred from the educational field. According to medieval perception women need just behold education and this perception of medieval India will persists in villages of India even today Girls are supposed to fulfill domestic duties and education becomes secondary for them

whereas it is considered to be important for boys. Although scenario in urban areas has changed a lot and women are opting for higher education but majority of Indian population residing in villages still live in medieval times. The people of villages consider girls to be curse and they do not want to waste money and time on them as they think that women should be wedded off as soon as possible. The main reason for not sending girls to school is the poor economic condition. Another reason is far off location of schools. In Indian society virginity and purity is given utmost importance during marriage and people are afraid to send their girl child to far off schools where male teacher teach them along with boys. The lack of education is the root cause for many other problems. An uneducated mother cannot look after her children properly and she is not aware of the deadly diseases and their care, which leads to the poor health of the children. An uneducated person does not know about hygiene, this lack of knowledge of hygiene may lead to poor health of the whole family.

### **Mistreatment**

In India violence against women is a common evil. Not just in remote parts but in cities also women bear the brunt. They are subjected to physical and mental violence they are the one who work most but are not given their due. The women is not safe anywhere neither at home nor at workplace. Every hour a woman is raped in India and every 93 minutes a woman is burnt to death due to dowry problem. There are many laws such as The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, The Hindu Succession Act of 1956.

### **Overworked:**

Indian women work more than men of India but their work is hardly recognized as they mainly do unskilled work. Their household chores is never counted as a work, if a woman is working in a field to help her husband it will also be not counted as a work. A study conducted by Mies in 1986 states that in Andhra Pradesh a woman works around 15 hours a day during the agronomic season where a male on an average works for around 7-8 hours.



### **Lack of power:**

In India a large percentage of women do not have power. They cannot take decisions independently not even related to their own life. They have to take permission of male members for each and every issue. They don't have any say in important household matters and not in matter of their own marriage.

### **Marriage:**

The family mainly fixes the marriages in India. The scenario in villages is very bad. The girl is not consulted but is told to marry a guy whom her family has chosen for him. They are taught to abide by the whims and fancies of their husbands. Going against the wishes of husband is considered to be a sin. In marriage husband always has the upper hand. The groom and his parents show as if they are obliging the girl by marrying her and in return they demand hefty.

### **Dowry:**

It's a serious issue. Courts are flooded with cases related to death due to dowry harassment by husband and in laws. In ancient times women were given 'Stridhan' when they departed from the house of their parents. This amount of money was given to her as a gift which she can use on her and her children but her in-laws did not have any right on that amount. This amount was supposed to help the girl in time of need. Slowly this tradition became obligatory and took the form of dowry. Nowadays parents have to give hefty amount in dowry, the in laws of their girl are not concerned.

### **Women's Struggle and Reforms:**

Though women of India are not at par with her counterpart in Western world but she is struggling hard to make her mark in men's world. We can count on certain names from the British India where women put the example of extraordinary bravery which even men might not be able to show Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi was the one such woman. She was the one who put

even British rulers to shame with her extraordinary feats in battle. She fought for her kingdom, which Dalhousie, British Governor General, had unlawfully annexed. She was in a true sense the leader of uprising of 1857. There are certain men who took the cause of women in India. There have been social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Swami Vivekananda Swami Dayananda Saraswati who have helped women gain their previous status in society.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy Born on 22nd may 1772 he was the torchbearer of social reforms for the women. He strictly against the evils prevalent in society in his time. He is the one who has done women a great favor by abolishing Sati lawfully. It was due to his efforts that Lord William Bentinck banned the custom of Sati in 1829. Though this law was not a great deterrent but it changed mindset of people to some extent. Ram Mohan Roy also did great work in the field of women education. He was against child marriage and favored widow remarriage. He himself married a widow thus setting the example for the whole society. Along with 'Dwarkanath Tagore he founded "Brahma Samaj" for the reform of Indian society and emancipation of women.

**Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar** was popularly known as Vidyasager, which means sea of knowledge. Testifying to his name he was truly the sea of knowledge. He was a pillar of social reform movement of Bengal in 19th century. He widely read ancient Hindu scriptures and came to know that the gender divide which was prevalent in Bengal was not encoded in our ancient texts instead it is the politics to keep women subordinate to men. He strongly supported women education in Bengal and went door to door to persuade people to send their girl child to school. He also did a lot in the field of widow remarriage. He opened many schools for girls

**Mahatma Jyotirao Phule** Born on April 11, 1827, Pune, Jyotirao Govindrao Phule was a real philanthropist. He was the one to open first girl school in India. He is also credited with opening first home for widows of the upper caste and a home for newborn girl children so that they can be saved from female infanticide

**Swami Dayananda Saraswati** he was the founder of Arya Samaj and gave a cry, "back to Vedas". He translated Vedas from Sanskrit to Hindi so that a common man can read it and understand that the Vedic Hindu scriptures gave utmost importance to women. He emphasized for the equal rights for women in every field. He tried to change the mindset of people with his Vedic teachings.

**Mahatma Gandhi** the social reformers of 19th century laid down the stage for the emancipation of women but it was Mohan Das Karam Chand Gandhi under whose influence these reforms reached masses. He was the one who liberated Indian women from the clutches of purdah and other social evils. He brought them from their confinement and asked them to participate in the struggle for independence. According to him women should be liberated from the slavery of kitchen only then their true potential could be realized. He said that responsibility of household is important for women but should not be the only one. In fact she should come forward to share the responsibilities of nation

When Gandhiji came to the stage of Indian struggle for independence then the average life span of Indian women was 27 years and only 2 women were educated this shows what a Herculean task it was to bring the women of India who was not getting her basic rights to fight for the cause of the nation. But it was due to his efforts that so many women like Sarojini Naidu, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Aru Asaf Ali, Sucheta Kriplani and Rajkumari Amrit Kaur came forward. He spread the message of equality of the gender to the masses and criticized the desire of Indian people to have male child instead of a female Gandhi was strictly against the child marriage and favored widow remarriage. He urged the youth to come forward and accept young widows as their life partner. He said that the girls are also capable of everything boys can do but the need of the time is to give them opportunities so that they can prove themselves. It was mainly due to his efforts that when India got independence right to vote came naturally to Indian women whereas in other developed nations like England and America women got this right very late and that too after a lot of protest.

### Conclusion:

In a patriarchal society like India a particular boundary exists only for women and if they try to cross that boundary then people start maligning them. The perception is that if some women are doing things differently, beyond people's limited imagination, and out of sync with traditional thinking, like going o wearing different type of fashionable clothes, talking freely with male members et immediately they are branded as loose women. India probably has still a long way to go to make our workplaces free from any prejudices, abuses and harassments. Even then we can still try at solving some of the related issues and problems with some possible solutions that have been mentioned above so that women become stronger and are able to handle any adverse situations

Empowerment can give power to women to have control over the circumstances of their lives. It includes both control over resources and ideology, greater self-confidence and an inner transformation of one's consciousness that enables one to overcome external affairs. Empowerment of women is critical not only for their own welfare but also for the development of the country. Women must be empowered b enhancing their awareness, knowledge, skills and technology use efficiency, thereby facilitating overall development of the society. The analysis regarding demographic show that women of all age group i.e., from 18 years to 50 years and above are getting proper opportunities to work and their marital status also does not effect in getting jobs. When more and more women are empowered then the country automatically develop economically.

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