

## **Social Status of Women in India - An Overview**

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### **Abstract**

Change is the only constant word in the society. The aim of the article is the overall study of the position of women in the society of India. Women occupy an important place in society. They are the symbol of all strength and courage. In this beautiful world women are the most beautiful creation of God. Women are the only source who can understand and run the society in a constructive way. In mythology they are worshipped as goddess, the source of all energy. But this powerful source is not realised in true sense from ancient days to till date in the society. Men and women are the two wheels of our society, without one there is no existence of society. The constitution of India has equal status to both men and women in political, economical and social sphere. Men and women are equally responsible for building society. From the beginning women are oppressed in various customs. Since women have strong willpower to pick up their position. Many women are accepting the changes and gain courage to fight for their rights.

**Keywords:** Literacy, employment, social relation, empowerment.

### **1. Introduction**

There are literary evidences that women had the power to topple kingdoms and powerful monarchs. Women took part in religious events and assemblies in Vedic society. They are not isolated in domestic or social matters throughout the Vedic period, but they remained affectionately dependent on their male relatives throughout their lives. Matreyi, Gargi, Lopamudra, Ghosha, and other women were among them. Women had greater freedom back

then than they have now. Through a sort of marriage known as Swayamvara, women had the option of choosing their husband. Many such incidents can be found in the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. This was still the case among royal families later on.

Women's positions in all aspects of life changed dramatically as time went on. Women lost their political privileges to attend assemblies in the later Vedic period. Child marriages become a reality. The importance of women in Indian soil is used to be precarious and miserable since the medieval ages. The position of the women was relegated to the back until the emergence of 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first sign of liberation of Indian woman was thought of during the time of Lord William Bentinck. Swami Dayanand Saraswati and Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the reformers of Indian society, initiated a better place for the women as a whole. Arya Samaj was formed in 1875 with an objective of providing women empowerment and ensuring woman emancipation by abolishing child marriages, *Sati Pratha* and widow remarriages. The social stigma associated with the lesser privileged was not only traumatic but also heart rendering. Ever since, there has been a constant metamorphosis in the status of India women as a whole with women excelling in every sector like; education, science & technology, trade and commerce, cinema and politics. Gone are those days, when woman in India were confined just to the four walls of the house remaining quite oblivious and ignorant of what's happening around them. In spite of this long crusade to uplift and elevate the status of women, still in different parts of the country, they are languishing with abject neglect and humiliation.

It is widely believed that women have been subjected to various forms of discernment and deficiency since the commencement of time, and even women are denied to have their basic rights such as right to get knowledge and property. This universal apprehension has continuously developed over the last years, leading to initiatives to integrate women into society, primarily through socioeconomic accomplishment expected at endowing them and therefore renovating gender equality. Women's true empowerment, on the other hand, comes from assisting them in developing their spiritual side, strengthening their personality, and manifesting their pureness and guardianship. These characteristics are associated to define the ideal Indian woman. Earning power and public position are always considered as secondary in their life.

### ***1.1 Lack of Women Status:***

The progression of the society is directly related to enhancement of position of women. Unfortunately, the bare truth of Indian society is that there is incessant disrespect and prejudice for women. This could be in terms of lack of nutrition, unemployment, limited exposure to education, rising child labour and abusive behaviour at home (Habiba, 2019).

Today we have noticed different Acts and Schemes of the central Government as well as state Government to empower the women of India. But in India women are discriminated and marginalized at every level of the society whether it is social participation, political participation, economic participation, access to education, and also reproductive healthcare. Women are found to be economically very poor all over the India. A few women are engaged in services and other activities to become economically independent. Other hand, it has been observed that women are found to be less literate than men. According to 2001 census, rate of literacy among men in India is found to be 76% whereas it is only 54% among women. Thus, increasing education among women is of very important in empowering them. It has also noticed that some of women are too weak to work. They consume less food but work more. Therefore, from the health point of view, women folk who are to be weaker are to be made stronger. Another problem is that workplace harassment of women. There are so many cases of rape, kidnapping of girl, dowry harassment, and so on. For these reasons, they require empowerment of all kinds in order to protect themselves and to secure their purity and dignity. To sum up, women empowerment cannot be possible unless women come with and help to self-empower themselves. There is a need to formulate reducing feminized poverty, promoting education of women, and prevention and elimination of violence against women.

### ***1.2 Role of Women:***

India remains a predominantly male-dominated society. At every stage of life, a woman must rely on a man for safety and assistance. She needs protection from her father as a daughter, she needs to rely on her husband as a married lady, and she needs to rely on her husband or son as she gets older. Men continue to be considered as superior to women. In a household, the birth of a son is always celebrated, whereas the birth of a girl-child is rarely celebrated. Daughters are viewed as a liability and a curse. The parents here are always concerned about having a daughter since they will have to plan for her dowry and other expenses. Women in Vedic India had a high social and family position. As Mother, Devi, and Shakti, they were revered and respected. The

gods, it was claimed, abide where women are adored and respected. Nonetheless, as a weaker sex, women were exploited and mistreated.

## **2. Status of Women in Different Sectors**

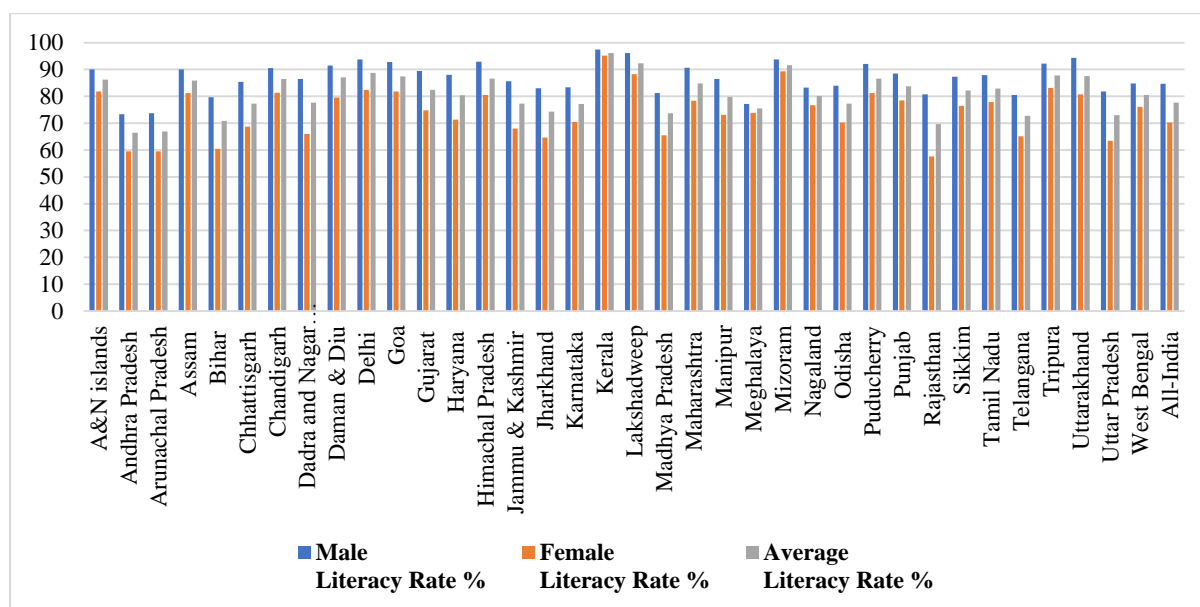
### ***2.1 Women Social Relation***

Because women's status reflects a society's character, and women empowerment is a critical aspect in determining women's status, it is critical to understand the relevance of women empowerment in India (Habiba, 2019). The eminence of women can be realised in virtue of many developments that have occurred in various areas of society. Our social structure, cultural norms, value system, and societal expectations, among other things, heavily influence the role and behaviour of women in society. Our society's norms and standards do not evolve at the same rate as advances in technology, urbanisation, cost and standard of living, population increase, industrialization, and globalisation. Social and educational policies are unable to respond to planned developments in a variety of domains. Women's social status in India, in particular, is a good example of the disparity between the Constitution's place and role for them and the constraints put on them by traditional customs. What is realistic and achievable for women, as well as valuable to them, is out of reach. They must operate within the confines of social conventions and standards, which wreak untold suffering (Mohapatra, 2015).

In Hindu tradition, customs such as giving daughters away in marriage and sending them to their in-laws' residence after marriage, as well as the priority placed on sons for maintaining line continuation, have bolstered the male-dominated social system. During menstruation, women are forbidden from participating in religious events, and childbirth places women in a lower social rank than men (Mohapatra, 2015). In India, a woman's status was traditionally divided into four categories: daughter, wife, homemaker, and mother. Women's standing and role in society have always been defined and consistent, although this is changing dramatically. Presently women's changing status can be assessed by the individual roles they performed in social, political, and economic spheres of life (Sultanpur and Khan 2021)

### ***2.2 Educational Status of Women***

In Indian society, women play a vital role. The country has the highest number of professionally skilled women. These remarkable Indian women have reached the peak of achievement and dedicated their lives to uplifting the spirits of Indians around the world. Politics, dancing, music, literature, science, religion, industry, and cinema have all benefited greatly from their contributions. A growth in women's education in a region is usually related with high levels of growth (Goswami, 2013). Some of the effects are linked to the state of the economy. Women's education raises their earnings and contributes to GDP growth. Other side effects are linked to societal progress. Girls' education has a variety of societal benefits, many of which are tied to women's empowerment.



**Fig. 1 State wise Literacy rate in India**

The gender literacy disparity is 14.4% in India, with male literacy at 84.7% and female literacy at 70.3% as shown in Fig. 1. Kerala has the narrowest literacy disparity, with only 2.2% between male and female literacy while there is a large difference seen in Rajasthan as 23.2% (as per National Statistical Office (NSO) data, 2022).

A well-built relationship between education and development of women has been discovered in recent studies (Singh 2014). Researchers are particularly interested in determining what factors account for disparities in development rates. One of the primary explanatory variables behind the rates of social and economic development is women's education. "Investment in the education of

girls may well be the highest-return investment available in the developing world" according to noted economist Lawrence Summers (Sharma, 2007).

### ***2.3 Employment Status of Women***

There has been a significant increase in the employment level of women leaving in both rural and towns. They are putting men in a difficult position in the "job market." The number of women employed in several sectors is continuously increasing. Women who work as teachers, doctors, nurses, advocates, bank employees, clerks, typists, telephone operators, receptionists, personal assistants, and other occupations, for example. Women have been recruited into the defence sector since 1991, though the number is few. With the intention of preserve women's economic welfares and privileges, the government has passed several socio-economic laws that address issues for instance right to property or inheritance, equal pay, working conditions, maternity benefits, and job security.

### ***2.4 Digital Status of Women***

Women are becoming more empowered as a result of information technology. The advancement of technology has allowed women to engage in many aspects of life. It has aided women's empowerment by improving their skills, knowledge, and income. Flexibility in working hours and the ability to work from home via the internet has enabled more women to enter the workforce, with the use of information technology (Kakade and Tattimani, 2021).

### ***2.5 Status of Women In Politics***

Every country deserves the greatest leaders, which means women must be offered the opportunity to compete. "The countries are robbing themselves of a tremendous deal of potential if they are never permitted to compete in the political process," says Madeleine K. Albright, Chairman of NDI. Women's equal engagement in politics and government is thought to be critical to the development and maintenance of democracy. Women remain to be underrepresented as electorates, political leaders, and nominated politicians regardless of more than half of the world's population. If half of the population is underrepresented in politics, democracy cannot actually provide for all of its citizens. The participation of women in typical political events has

far-reaching repercussions for an overall administration of a country. A system of guidelines, institutes, and standards that are intricate in the supervision of the state and society are referred to as governance. Political parties, assemblies, administrations, and their collaborations with civilization are examples of supremacy institutions and processes. Although governance is a broad term that can refer to anything from good government to good management, it also refers to control values, types of government, the nature of administrative developments, political gatherings and organisations, which/whose welfares are embodied and safe, and the degree of authority that the crowds have to defy the state or suggest alternative governance methods, among other things.

### **3. Conclusion**

Women are divine because they are part of the similar immeasurable divine power. To preserve our cultural traditions and spiritual values, we have to appreciate the significance and necessity of women's empowerment. Time has ripened to increase the low status of women. Effort should be taken to empowering women to move out from a weak position and to exercise their power like men. They should be given free and compulsory education so that they can claim their rights. They should be independent enough to exercise the opinion in terms of marriage, family size, work situation, community activities and national and international debates and discussions.

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