

# WOMEN RIGHTS

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*"Feminism isn't about making women strong. Women are already strong. It's about changing the way the world perceives that strength."*

G. D. Anderson

It is a harsh reality that women have been treated ill in very society for ages. As India is no exception. The irony lies in the fact that our country where women are worshiped as shakti, the atrocities are committed against her in all sections of life.

Women are considered in most vulnerable marginalized groups in almost every society. Under different economic conditions, religious factors, marginalization is one of the mainstreams of gender equality. Women are excluded from certain opportunities and jobs. In general they are always marginalized relative to men, in every country and culture. Women belong to lower castes, lower classes; illiterate and the poorest region have different levels of marginalization than their better off counterparts.

## WOMEN STATUS IN ANCIENT INDIA

It is said during the ancient India, women enjoyed equivalent status and rights like their males counterparts. Earlier women were properly educated in the early Vedic period. Women also had freedom to select their life partners. This system was known as 'SWAYAMVAR'. In fact during this time, women had superior position than the males.

## WOMEN STATUS IN MEDIVAL INDIA

The status of women in India deteriorated during the medieval period with the entrance of Muslims. Several evil practices like 'SATI PRATHA' and 'CHILD MARRIAGE' were practiced during this period. 'PURDA' was introduced in the society. Women were forced to practice 'ZENANA'. Polygamy was also common during this period.

## WOMEN STATUS IN MODERN INDIA

During this time there was a little development in the status of women. There were many women reformers in India who worked for the uplift and betterment of their female counterparts. The begun of Bhopal discarded the 'PURDAH' and fought in the revolt of 1857. Their education was elevated and English was introduced during this period. Various female writers also emerged.

Indian society has been exposed to the broad process of social transformation, economic development, and urbanization. However, these processes have generated regional imbalances and augmented the gender disparity. Hence, women have become critical symbol of these growing imbalances.

Most families in India irrespective of their caste, religion are patrilineal. Patrilineality implies descent and inheritance through the male line. Men appear to exercise far greater influence in decision making. Women do most of the tasks within the home.

In western countries, women's groups, politicians and other concerned individuals have been arguing for payment for housework and children. In India the question of payment for household jobs has not really been an important issue or demand, The fact that women are expected to perform all these tasks as a part of their conventional roles and no special merit is awarded to them for these tiring and tiresome jobs.

Women's work participation and their status as workers have been affected by various factors

i.e. –

- Dominant nature of men
- Women's self perception
- Employers attitude to women employees
- Traditional positions of authority in the rural and urban areas,
- And traditional role expectations.

## SOCIAL PROBLEMS FACED BY WOMEN

- Dowry
- Child marriage
- Neglect during early childhood

- Female infanticide and fetal killing
- Death during childbirth
- Domestic violence, Early marriage
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The study shows comparative rate of violence against women in Indian states and union territories in 2012, based on crime reported to police. Crime rate date per 100,000 women in the study is the broadest definition of crimes against women under Indian law. It includes rape, sexual assault, kidnapping, abduction and all other crimes listed in Indian panel code.

*"You can tell the condition of a Nation by looking at the status of its Women."* - Jawaharlal Nehru

It is rightly said by the legend sir Jawaharlal Nehru that the condition of the nation will be known by looking the status of women in the society. If the women is ill treated and not encouraged to get education then how will the nation develop. It will always lack in the main and the deepest aspect of society i.e. the right to live a prestigious life. Where women always lack and face discrimination because of the dominant status and position of men given by our ancestors in my opinion.

To render a prestigious life for women in our society our legal system have come up with certain legislation i.e.

- The child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929
- Hindu Marriage Disabilities Removal Act, 1946
- Hindu Marriage Act, 1955
- Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
- Hindu Widow Remarriage Act, 1856

**SOME OF THE PROGRAMMES WHICH ARE INTRODUCED BY THE NGO'S FOR WOMEN RIGHTS –**

- Rural women's development and employment program
- Indira Mahila Yojna
- Balika Samridhhi Yojna
- National commission for women
- National women fund
- Mahila Samridhhi Yojna
- Development of women and children in rural area (DWCRA)

**SOME OF THE STEPS TAKEN BY OUR GOVERNMENT FOR THE UPLIFMENT OF WOMEN –**

- Developed hostels for working women
- Short stay homes for women and girls
- Support to training and employment program for women (STEP)
- Employment and income generation-cum production units (NORAD)
- Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK)

## DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN: AFTER MARRIAGE

There is mainly a bias towards men and their superiority in marital relationships: while women ought to be respected, protected and kept happy by their husbands – their happiness being vital for the prosperity, peace and happiness of the whole family – they should also be kept under constant vigilance, since they cannot be completely trusted or left to themselves. Whereas as a child a girl is supposed to remain in the custody and care of her parents, after marriage she becomes the property and responsibility of her husband, who is supposed to take care of her and keep her in his custody.

Under the existing cultural and social ethos of India a married girl / woman is no longer considered to be part of the family of her birth, instead she has become part of the family of the groom. Hence, after marriage the woman leaves her parental home and lives with her husband's family, where she is required to assume all household labour and domestic responsibilities.

In certain parts of Indian society, women are conditioned from birth to be subservient not only to their future husbands, but also to the females in their husband's family especially, their mother-in-law. Accordingly, the surrounding society mandates a woman's obedience to her husband and her in-laws. Any disobedience would bring disgrace to both, the wife herself and her originating family, and might lead to the woman being ostracized and neglected by her very own family and in her own home.

**COMMON HINDU PHASE: “*The younger the groom, the cheaper the Dowry*”**

In addition marrying off girls at an early age, ensures, that they marry as virgins, thus protecting the girl's and their family's honour.

- **HISTORICAL ORIGIN**

Child marriages started during the invasions of Northern India around 1,000 years ago, when unmarried girls were raped by

invaders. To protect their women from abuse, family members began marrying their daughters at young ages.

and societal development, the full potential of a society of India's society will be unfolded.

- **RELIGIOUS ORIGIN**

Copying the myth that the goddess Parvati had decided to marry god Shiva when she was only eight, girls were married off as young as eight or nine years old.

## THE CONSEQUENCES

Girls between 15 and 19 are twice as likely to die of pregnancy-related reasons as girls between 20 and 24. Girls married off as children sometimes stay in their parents' house until puberty, but it is just as common, that they move in with their husband and in-laws right after marriage. In that case, many child wives are inclined to experience domestic violence, marital rape, deprivation of food, and lack of access to information, healthcare, and education. Thus, the vicious cycle of illiteracy and abuse is likely to be continued and passed on to their own daughters.

### *Why does it happen?*

#### Financial Benefit

As outlined above, due to the dowry tradition women are prone to be a (financial) burden for their families, thus seen as a liability.

If the match is made at an early age, the dowry is usually much lower, as the dowry is calculated on the future husband's societal status and education, which – obviously – would be much lower at an early age.

## CONCLUSION

Having looked at the status of women in India, we come back to the previously quoted statement from Jawaharlal Nehru "You can tell the condition of a Nation by looking at the status of its Women." The concluding questions are: which nation can claim to be a free and prosperous society, where half of its population is being oppressed? And which striving nation can afford to oppress half of its population? Obviously, the answer to that question is: none! Sustainable and long-term development is not possible without the participation and empowerment of women, only if they participate in the economic