

International Journal of Innovative Research in Science, Engineering and Technology

(An ISO 3297: 2007 Certified Organization)

Visit: www.ijirset.com

Vol. 5, Issue 9, September 2016

Status of Women Rights in India

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ABSTRACT: The form and extent of work, political participation, levels of education, state of health, representation in decision making bodies, access to property etc. are some relevant indicators of status of the individual members in a society. However, not all members of a society, especially women, have equal access to the factors which constitute these indicators of status. Patriarchal norms restrict Indian women's education and employment choices, from the choice to acquire education to the entry into the workforce and to the nature of work. The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution. The Constitution not only guarantees equality to women, but also provides the State with the power to take measures of positive discrimination in favor of women in order to mitigate their cumulative socio-economic and political disadvantages. Women have fundamental rights to not be discriminated on the grounds of sex (Article 15) and get equal protection under the law. (Article 14). It also imposes a fundamental duty on every citizen to renounce the practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

KEYWORDS: status, women rights, India, political, gender, fundamental, dignity, constitution

I.INTRODUCTION

For years, women have suffered the injustice and prejudice of society. But today, with the changing times, they have made a name for themselves. They have broken the shackles of gender stereotypes and stood to achieve their dreams and goals. Gap in Male Female Literacy Rate: Despite the government's effort to ensure equality of opportunity for education for both men and women in our society, the literacy rate of women in India, especially in rural areas,[1,2] still remains very poor. Schools in rural India are at considerable distances and in absence of strong local law and order, women find it unsafe to travel long distances for schooling. Traditional practices like female infanticide, dowry, and early marriage have also contributed to the problem as many families find it economically unviable to educate the girl child. Role Stereotyping: Still a large section of our Indian Society considered the roles of men as taking all the financial responsibilities and work outside. Gender role stereotyping attributed to women have generally led to prejudice and discrimination against women. For example, women may be considered to be less reliable as workers because of their child-rearing functions.[3,4]

Differentiation in the Socialisation Process: In many parts of India, especially in rural regions, there are still different socialisation norms for men and women. Women are expected to be soft-spoken, calm, and quiet. They should walk, talk, sit and behave in a certain manner. Whereas men ought to be confident, loud, and could display any behaviour as per their wish. Representation of Women in Legislature:[5,6] The representation of women in different legislative bodies remains low across India. According to the report of Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UN Women, India ranks 148 out of 193 countries in the number of elected female representatives in parliament. Safety Concern: In India, despite of continuous efforts in the field of Safety, women are threatened by various acts via feticides, domestic violence, rape, trafficking, forced prostitution, honour killings, sexual harassment at workplace etc. Period Poverty: a lack of access to sanitary products, menstrual education and hygiene and sanitation facilities necessary to properly manage menstruation. According to a United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) study conducted in 2011 only 13% of girls in

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India are aware of menstruation before menarche. Glass Ceiling: Women not only in India but across the globe face a social barrier preventing women from being promoted to top jobs in management.[7,8]

II. DISCUSSION

Better Education Opportunities: Giving education to women means giving education to the whole family. Education plays an important role in building self-confidence among women. It also enables people to change she/her status in society. Education enables and builds confidence to make decisions in a better way. The Education policy needs to be more inclusive to ensure girls right to education and their right to be free from discrimination within educational institutions. Also, education policy should target young men and boys to positively change their attitudes towards girls and women. **Skilling and Micro Financing:** Skilling and micro financing can get women financially stable and therefore she is no longer dependent upon others in the society.[9,10] **Training women in non-traditional skills with market demand,** creating more public and private sector jobs for women is important for financial empowerment. **Women's Safety:** A multi-sectoral strategy to raise awareness among women about the current government initiatives and mechanisms should be devised to ensure the safety of women throughout the country. **Panic Button, Nirbhaya Police Squad** are some good steps in the direction of women's safety. **The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013** was enacted to ensure safe working spaces for women and to build an enabling environment that respects women's right of equality of status and opportunity.[11,12]

Specified Actions at the Lowest Level of Governance: There is a need to devise, support and promote projects at the lowest level of governance, to bring more inclusivity in governance and improve the status of women in India. For instance: **Swagatam Nandini (Katni, Madhya Pradesh):** This initiative was launched with an objective of celebrating the birth of girls. With a small procession to celebrate the arrival of the daughter, parents of new-born baby girls are felicitated with baby kits under the **Ladli Lakshmi Scheme**. **Nanhe Chinh (Panchkula, Haryana):** Encouraged by **Anganwadi Workers (AWWs)**, baby girls are brought to local AWCs by their families. Their footprints are outlined on a chart paper and are put up on the wall of the AWC with the mother's and baby girls' names. **Incentives in Education:** In order to curb higher dropout rate among girls, there is a need for providing relatively higher financial incentives for higher education. **Reward** should be given to villages/districts that are able to attain equal child sex ratio through education, information and communication campaigns. Additional emphasis should be laid on e-governance so that there is a timely check on the expenditure released by the centre and various state governments for scholarships for girl students.[13,14]

Improvement in Basic Amenities at Rural Level: Improvement in basic infrastructure can reduce domestic work burdens. For instance, domestic work for rural women often includes arduous tasks such as fetching water and fuelwood. Piped drinking water and clean natural gas (already improving) will reduce this load. **From Women Development to Women Led Development:** Women should be reimagined as architects of India's progress and development, rather than being passive recipients of the fruits of development. The ripple effects of Women Led Development are undeniable as an educated and empowered woman will ensure education and empowerment for future generations. The status of women in India has been subject to many changes over the span of recorded Indian history. Their position in society deteriorated early in India's ancient period, especially in the Indo-Aryan speaking regions, and their subordination continued to be reified well into India's early modern period.

During the British East India Company rule (1757–1857), and the British Raj (1858–1947), measures aiming at amelioration were enacted, including **Bengal Sati Regulation, 1829**, **Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act, 1856**, **Female Infanticide Prevention Act, 1870**, and **Age of Consent Act, 1891**. The Indian constitution prohibits discrimination based on sex and empowers the government to undertake special measures for them.[8] **Women's rights under the Constitution**

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of India mainly include equality, dignity, and freedom from discrimination; additionally, India has various statutes governing the rights of women.[15,16]

Several women have served in various senior official positions in the Indian government, including that of the President of India, the Prime Minister of India, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha. However, many women in India continue to face significant difficulties. The rates of malnutrition are exceptionally high among adolescent girls and pregnant and lactating women in India, with repercussions for children's health. Violence against women, especially sexual violence, is a serious concern in India.

III.RESULTS

Though it is sharply increasing, the female literacy rate in India is less than the male literacy rate. Far fewer girls than boys are enrolled in school, and many girls drop out. In urban India, girls are nearly on a par with boys in terms of education. However, in rural India, girls continue to be less educated than boys. According to the National Sample Survey Data of 1997, only the states of Kerala and Mizoram have approached universal female literacy. According to scholars, the major factor behind improvements in the social and economic status of women in Kerala is literacy. Under the Non-Formal Education programme (NFE), about 40% of the NFE centres in states and 10% of the centres in UTs are exclusively reserved for women. As of 2000, about 300,000 NFE centres were catering to about 7.42 million children. About 120,000 NFE centres were exclusively for girls.[17,18]

According to a 1998 report by the U.S. Department of Commerce, the chief barriers to female education in India are inadequate school facilities (such as sanitary facilities), shortage of female teachers and gender bias in the curriculum (female characters being depicted as weak and helpless).

The literacy rate is lower for women compared to men: the literacy rate is 60.6% for women, while for men it is 81.3%. [29] The 2011 census, however, indicated a 2001–2011 decadal literacy growth of 9.2%, which is slower than the growth seen during the previous decade. There is a wide gender disparity in the literacy rate in India: effective literacy rates (age 7 and above) in 2011 were 82.14% for men and 65.46% for women. (population aged 15 or older). Contrary to common perception, a large percentage of women in India are actively engaged in traditional and non-traditional work. National data collection agencies accept that statistics seriously understate women's contribution as workers. However, there are far fewer women than men in the paid workforce. In urban India, women participate in the workforce in impressive numbers. For example, in the software industry 30% of the workforce is female. In rural India in the agriculture and allied industrial sectors, women account for as much as 89.5% of the labour force. In overall farm production, women's average contribution is estimated at 55% to 66% of the total labour. According to a 1991 World Bank report, women accounted for 94% of total employment in dairy production in India.[19,20]

Women constitute 51% of the total employed in forest-based small-scale enterprises. India is ahead of the world average on women in senior management.

In rural areas, schools have been reported to have gained the improved sanitation facility. Given the existing socio-cultural norms and situation of sanitation in schools, girl students are forced not to relieve themselves in the open unlike boys. Lack of facilities in home forces women to wait for the night to relieve themselves and avoid being seen by others. Access to sanitation in Bihar has been discussed.[27,28] According to an estimate from 2013, about 85% of the rural households in Bihar have no access to a toilet; and this creates a dangerous situation for women and girls who are followed, attacked and raped in the fields. In 2011 a "Right to Pee" (as called by the media) campaign began in Mumbai, India's largest city. Women, but not men, have to pay to urinate in Mumbai, despite regulations against this practice. Women have also been sexually assaulted while urinating in fields. Thus, activists have collected more than 50,000

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signatures supporting their demands that the local government stop charging women to urinate, build more toilets, keep them clean, provide sanitary napkins and a trash can, and hire female attendants. In response, city officials have agreed to build hundreds of public toilets for women in Mumbai, and some local legislators are now promising to build toilets for women in every one of their districts.[21,22]

IV.CONCLUSIONS

In 1961, the Government of India passed the Dowry Prohibition Act, making dowry demands in wedding arrangements illegal. However, many cases of dowry-related domestic violence, suicides and murders have been reported. In the 1980s, numerous such cases were reported. In 1985, the Dowry Prohibition (maintenance of lists of presents to the bride and bridegroom) Rules were framed. According to these rules, a signed list should be maintained of presents given at the time of the marriage to the bride and the bridegroom. The list should contain a brief description of each present, its approximate value, the name of who has given the present, and relationship to the recipient. However, such rules are rarely enforced. A 1997 report claimed that each year at least 5,000 women in India die dowry-related deaths, and at least a dozen die each day in 'kitchen fires' thought to be intentional. The term for this is "bride burning" and is criticised within India itself. In 2011, the National Crime Records Bureau reported 8,618 dowry deaths. Unofficial estimates claim the figures are at least three times as high.[23,24]

Crime against women such as rape, acid attacks, dowry killings, honour killings, and the forced prostitution of young girls has been reported in India. TrustLaw, a London based news service owned by the Thomson Reuters Foundation, ranked India as the fourth most dangerous place in the world for women to live based on a poll of 213 gender experts. Police records in India show a high incidence of crimes against women. The National Crime Records Bureau reported in 1998 that by 2010 growth in the rate of crimes against women would exceed the population growth rate.[25,26] Earlier, many crimes against women were not reported to police due to the social stigma attached to rape and molestation. Official statistics show a dramatic increase in the number of reported crimes against women.[30]

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