

# Women's situation in India before independence and after independence

**Dr.S.VASUKI**

Assistant Professor  
Department of Population Studies  
Annamalai University  
Annamalai Nagar

## Abstract

Period which was before independence of India was known generally period of struggling to freedom for shine ,improve, develop ,strengthen and invent new research in social, economical and political fields with an interest to protect people's needs and necessities in India. During those time leaders ,patriot and nationalist are dreamed and aimed at getting freedom from British government with full sovereignty for enlighten India's fate and destiny according to people's needs and necessities ,in this time women's status and profile in social ,economical and political were unknown and infamous owing to social, economical and political unawareness and also not sound in educational aspects .In pre-independence era women were found in family and stood behind the male's presence due to then prevailed social and economical situation. As long as India was under the rule of British government improvement and development in all fields were nominal without freedom and enjoyment ,people were crushed and suppressed by Births rulers not leaving freely and enjoy their freedom thereby people are not able to grow and develop their career and life in the field of political, social and economical .In entire India leaders and p people were felt that development and success will come after getting complete freedom and independence from British government .With an advent of Mahatma Gandhi from south Africa the sprite of freedom struggle, slavery situation of India and people's pathetic situations were seen completely by him and stared various stools and method in non violence ways to get Independence from British government. Up' to now women's social, economical and political rights were unknown and hidden places ,after India got Independence in 1947 development ,success ,inventions, discoveries ,research and progress in plethora fields are happened as a hall mark of people's hard work and thirsty to success i independent India. In this phase government of India has bee initiated and enacted various pro women polices with an interest to develop them as equal to men in all walk of life .Their food print and success are laying down in all domains such as politics ,social

achievement and economical development, through education their life has been strengthened and modernised according to fast global development ,their hard work in all types of works equal to men in India social system has led them to be at peak of success .Wonders, success ,growth, achievement, bravery ,courage and marvellous life styles are taken place in their life after India get Independence ,which led to encourage women people to satisfy their needs ,achieve their needs and distribute their revenue to be poor people without any distinction and partiality .One of the saddest things are happening in India to women ,which is rape, harassmt and other kinds of inhuman unsympathic activities are happening in all social and political institutions ,these are happening to them according to their growth in all fields of social, economical ,political and educational .Problems ,hardship , embarrassment, harassmt ,indecent speech and undignified treatment over women have been continuous one without stop despite India has been established various protective measures and polices with strong law .So, women have been at epicentre all types and kinds of social, economical and political responsibility in India's social system their rights need to be protected and preserved by all in all family and social and political institutions without sarcastic look and mal treatment.

**Keywords:** Women in India, Before Independece, After Independence, Social, economical and political achievements

## Profile

India is a country where women\_are given the status of a goddess. However, the problems they have to face just show the opposite of this concept. On hand they worship them as goddesses and on the other; they abuse them endlessly and consider them inferior. India women always had some problem or the other to face in society. People evolved and so did the problems; they did not go away but changed from one to another. We need to realize these problems and act on them fast to help our country thrive.

In the Post-Independence Era the Indian women are free to choose any form of education and professional training to enable them for a career. They can aspire to the highest office of the state on the basis of equal opportunity for all appointments, provided by the Indian Constitution. Adult franchise for both the sexes has been ensured in the Indian Constitution. After India gained Independence, the Constitution, makers and the national leaders not only recognized the unequal social position of women but saw to it that women would get equal rights with men. The concept of equality has been enshrined in the Constitution and has been the greatest source of honour to the women who once constituted the most neglected and subjugated section of the society. The principles of Hindu social organisation were formulated by males, who debarred the women from enjoying equal rights in the social life. With the spread of women's education in India and due to the impact of the West, the Indian women rose against the cruelties of the male. They opposed polygamy, sought right to divorce, claimed equality in marital right and demanded restriction on dowry. On account of these demands, several social legislations were enacted to improve the condition of the Indian women.

The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 classified Hindu Marriages, determined the age for marriage, provided for monogamy and guardianship of the mother and permitted the dissolution of marriage under specific circumstances. The Hindu Succession Act of 1956 made provision for equal rights of the daughter in the property of the father. The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act 1956 allowed Hindu women to adopt a son or a daughter and to claim maintenance from the husband under certain circumstances. The Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956 provided for the guardianship of the mother over the daughter throughout her life and in the case of a son, for the first-five years. The position of the Hindu widow has improved considerably and she now enjoys a respectable position in the household. Although the widow marriage has been legalized since long, the Hindu Marriage Act also provides for her right to remarry. A widow may now adopt either a son or a daughter under the Hindu Adoption and Guardianship Act, 1956.

Now the Indian women are free to choose any form of education and professional training to enable them for a career. They can aspire to the highest office of the state on the basis of equal opportunity for all appointments, provided by the Indian

Constitution. Adult franchise for both the sexes has been ensured in the Indian Constitution.

Women in independent India have had to struggle with low socio-economic status as well as other issues that mostly affect this segment of Indian society. In this lesson, we will take a closer look at women, their status in India, and some of the specific issues that challenge women. Updated: 01/07/2021

## **Independent India**

India gained its independence from Great Britain in 1947; however, not all of the population gained equality. Women in a newly independent India continued to be relegated to subservient and domestic roles, and this social role continues into the 21st century. Let us take a closer look at the status of women and the issues they must confront in an independent India.

### **Status of Women in Independent India**

Women, through much of India's history, have been treated as a necessary burden. Although women have the right to free speech and expression and to get an education, they face gender-specific violence on a daily basis, and women in rural areas are more likely to suffer than those in urban areas.

Women face many issues in independent India, and a disproportionate number of these issues have to do with some form of violence. To be female and live in India is a dangerous prospect, even in these modern times. Women in Indian society continue to be perceived and treated as unequal to their male counterparts and as a burden to society if not part of a family unit. Let us go into more detail about the challenges women face in Indian society.

### **Issues Women Face in Independent India**

Female infanticide is the murder of female infants. Girls are viewed as economic burdens and are often killed just after birth. However, foeticide is also practiced. Foeticide is the killing of an infant while in the womb. Female fetuses' are usually the victim of this type of violence. Girls who survive infancy are oftentimes the victims of abuse and neglect.

**Sati** is an outlawed Hindu ritual that continues to be practiced in some of the more rural parts of India. Historically, *sati* was a way in which a widow showed her loyalty to her dead husband by voluntarily placing herself on the funeral pyre with her husband and dying in the flames. Later, *sati* became less voluntary and more coercive as widowed women had no value to Indian society and were seen, as we have discussed before, as burdens and of no worth.

Sati has been banned several times throughout history, beginning with the rule of the Mughal Empire. When India became part of the British Empire, Queen Victoria insisted that the practice be stopped throughout India. After independence, India passed the **Prevention of Sati Act** in 1987.

Rape is a serious threat to women in India. In 2019, approximately 87 women in India were raped daily. Criminal Amendment Act #45 was passed in 2013 and added to the country's anti-rape laws. According to the act, most rapes are committed by males, and individual perpetrators of rape could be incarcerated from 7-10 years, and those who participate in gang rape can get 20 years to life. The crime of sexual harassment, voyeurism, and stalking was added as offenses. The Criminal Amendment Act #45 also laid out the consequences for perpetrators.

When in the early days, there were severe issues like the Sati system, no widow remarriage, devadasi system and more. While most of them are not prevalent now, there are new issues that women face. They may be not the same but they are still as severe as the early ones. They hinder the growth of a country and make the women feel inferior.

Firstly, violence against women is a very grave issue faced by women in India. It is happening almost every day in various forms. People turn a blind eye to it instead of doing something. Domestic violence happens more often than you think. Further, there is also dowry-related harassment, marital rape, genital mutilation and more.

Next up, we also have the issues of gender discrimination. Women are not considered equal to men. They face discrimination in almost every place, whether at the workplace or at home. Even the little girls become a victim of this discrimination. The patriarchy dictates a woman's life unjustly.

Moreover, there is also a lack of female education and the gender pay gap. Women in rural areas are still denied education for being a female. Similarly, women do not get equal pay as men for doing the same work. On top of that, they also face workplace harassment and exploitation.

Additionally, the Criminal Amendment Act #45 made it clear that rape investigations should be taken seriously by investigators and healthcare workers and that failure to do so could result in imprisonment and fines.

Women traditionally did not have the right to inherit property and goods from their fathers, thus keeping them in a perilous socioeconomic status. However, this changed when in 1956 the **Hindu Succession Act** gave daughters equal rights to inheritance as sons.

**Dowry deaths** are deaths by suicide or homicide that occur when a married woman's dowry is not enough or not fulfilled after marriage. This results in the groom and the groom's family harassing her and sometimes killing her. Women will also kill themselves in response to this treatment.

The **Dowry Prohibition Act**, which was passed in 1961, forbade the practice of exchanging goods or money when a woman is married later. In 1983 and 1984, the act was amended so that wedding presents could be given, but they had to be listed and valued. Penalties for dowry exchanges and for violence against women in association with a dowry were also detailed. Sadly, this has not stopped this practice. To give you an idea of how serious this issue is, in 2016 alone over 7,000 women died from dowry deaths in India.

Honor killings occur when a woman is killed by relatives for engaging in an unapproved love match or relationship. The **Special Marriage Act** of 1954 legalized a woman's right to a love match and to marry someone from a different caste, but this has not stopped people, especially in rural areas, from continuing the practice.

India has the highest portion of child marriages worldwide. Girls, especially those from poor households, are married as children more often than males because they are

perceived to be an economic burden to their families and inferior to males. It is estimated that 27% of girls are married before their 18th birthday.

### Ways to Tackle These Issues

We must all come together as one to fight these issues faced by women in India. Every citizen and government must try to make it a safe place for women to be in. They must make more stringent laws against people who commit crimes against women. They must also be implemented properly to ensure everyone takes them seriously.

Furthermore, opportunities must be provided equally for men and women. In every field, we must encourage women to give their best. It does not matter whether it is the medical field or sports field, opportunities must be equal.

Moreover, education must be stressed upon gravely. It must be made a compulsion to educate every girl and woman for a better future. We must join hands to protect and safeguard our women in India. It will help us thrive as a country and make the world a better place.

Therefore, each one of us must be ready to treat women as equal counterparts. We must help them at every stage and more than that empower them to make their own decisions. After that, these issues can be eliminated so women need not face discrimination in the name of gender.

### Conclusion

In all places women's rights must be protected and preserved by Indian Citizen irrespective of gender bias and profile differences, if so constitution enacted law and polices would be effective in future .They need sympathy, mercy, protection and surety from male people to run good life in India's civil society .Some time women also have to learn this subject because women are getting more problem from same women community so, security and safety are needed from both genders. We must come together to empower women. They must be given equal educational opportunities. Furthermore, they must be paid equally. Moreover, laws must be made more stringent for crimes against women.

## Bibliography

Kabeer, N. (1999) Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment. *Development and Change*, Volume30, Number 3, July 1999. Blackwell Publishing.

Batliwala, S. (1994) The Meaning of Women's Empowerment: New Concepts from Action. In G. Sen, A. Germain and L. C. Chen (eds.), *Population Policies Reconsidered: Health, Empowerment and Rights*, pp. 127-38. Boston: Harvard University Press.

Oxaal, Z. and Baden, S. (1997) *Gender and Empowerment: Definitions, Approaches and Implications for Policy*, BRIDGE Report No.40.

Sen, G. and Grown, C. (1985) *Development, Crisis, and Alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspectives*, DAWN.

Martinez, E. and Glenzer, K, 2005, 'Proposed Global Research Framework for CARE's Strategic Impact Inquiry on Women's Empowerment', CARE USA, Atlanta.

Correa, S. (2002) *Sexual Rights: Much has been said, much remains to be resolved*, lecture presented at the Sexuality, Health and Gender Seminar, Department of Social Sciences, Public Health School, Columbia University, USA.

Deshmukh-Ranadive, J. (2003) *Placing Gender Equity in the Family Centre Stage: Use of 'Kala Jatha' Theatre*, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 26 April 2003.

Grown, C., Rao Gupta, G. and Kes, A. (2005) *Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women*, UN Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality, Earth scan, London.

Karaka, I. and Seral, G., (2000) *Sexual Pleasure as a Women's Human Right: Experiences from a Grassroots Training Program in Turkey*, in Ilkcaracan, I. (ed.) *Women and Sexuality in Muslim Societies*, pp. 187-196. Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR): New Ways.

Klugman, B. (2000) *Empowering Women through the Policy Process: The Making of Health Policy in South Africa*, in Presser, H. and Sen, G (eds.), *Women's Empowerment and Demographic Processes: Moving Beyond Cairo*, pp. 95-118. Oxford: Oxford University Press