

Indian Women Rights in Current Scenario

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ABSTRACT

Indian women's rights in the current scenario reflect a complex interplay of progress and challenges. While significant legal reforms and initiatives have been put in place to protect and empower women, gaps persist in their implementation and impact. Gender-based violence remains a pervasive issue, and economic disparities, political underrepresentation, and educational barriers continue to hinder women's full participation in society. This research article delves into the current state of Indian women's rights, examining key areas such as gender-based violence, economic empowerment, political representation, education, and cultural challenges. It also sheds light on the significant milestones achieved and the ongoing struggles women face as they strive for equality and justice in contemporary India.

Keywords: Women, Women-rights, Empowerment

The status and rights of women in India have been the subject of considerable discussion and debate, both within the country and on the international stage. India, a diverse and culturally rich nation, has a complex history of women's rights, with progress made in some areas and challenges persisting in others. In the current scenario, Indian women continue to navigate a dynamic landscape where traditional norms intersect with modern aspirations, and legal reforms intersect with deeply rooted societal attitudes.

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Gender-Based Violence

One of the most pressing issues facing Indian women today is gender-based violence. While the country has implemented legal measures to combat violence against women, such as the Domestic Violence Act and amendments to the Criminal Law, the reality on the ground often falls short of these legal protections. Instances of rape, domestic violence, dowry-related violence, and acid attacks continue to be reported with alarming frequency.

The #MeToo movement in India, inspired by its global counterpart, shed light on the pervasive issue of sexual harassment and assault in workplaces and society at large. Women across industries bravely shared their stories, leading to increased awareness and calls for greater

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Received: March 10, 2023; Revision Received: April 08, 2023; Accepted: June 21, 2023

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accountability. However, challenges persist in ensuring that perpetrators are brought to justice, and cultural barriers can make reporting such incidents difficult.

Economic Empowerment

Economic empowerment has been a significant area of progress for Indian women in recent years. Women are increasingly joining the workforce, including in traditionally male-dominated fields. Legal reforms, such as the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, have provided greater job security for women during and after pregnancy. Moreover, initiatives like Stand-Up India aim to facilitate entrepreneurship among women. However, gender pay gaps persist, and women are often concentrated in low-paying and informal sector jobs. Moreover, the burden of unpaid domestic labor continues to fall disproportionately on women, limiting their full participation in the workforce. Achieving true economic empowerment for Indian women requires addressing these structural issues.

Political Representation

Political representation remains another area of concern. While there have been notable female leaders at the national level, the overall representation of women in politics is still far from proportional. The Women's Reservation Bill, which seeks to reserve one-third of seats for women in the Indian Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies, has been in limbo for years, despite its potential to bring about transformative change. At the local level, women's participation in Panchayati Raj institutions has seen some success due to reservation quotas, leading to tangible improvements in areas such as sanitation, education, and healthcare. However, these gains are often met with resistance and challenges, highlighting the need for continued advocacy for women's political participation.

Education

Access to education has improved significantly for Indian girls and women in recent decades, with government initiatives like "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" (Save the Girl Child, Educate the Girl Child) promoting female literacy. As a result, there has been a rise in the number of women pursuing higher education and professional courses. Nevertheless, challenges persist, particularly in rural and marginalized communities. Dropout rates among girls remain high due to factors such as early marriage, lack of sanitation facilities in schools, and societal norms that prioritize boys' education. Gender-based discrimination in educational institutions and curricula also hinders girls' academic progress.

Cultural Challenges

Deep-seated cultural norms and traditions continue to pose challenges to women's rights in India. The practice of dowry, despite being illegal, persists in many parts of the country and can lead to harassment and violence against brides. Caste-based discrimination and the intersection of gender and caste further complicate the struggle for equality.

Additionally, patriarchal attitudes and traditional gender roles often limit women's choices and autonomy. The pressure to conform to societal expectations can curtail women's freedom to make decisions about education, career, marriage, and family planning.

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Positive Developments and Milestones

While challenges remain, it is essential to acknowledge the positive developments and milestones achieved in advancing women's rights in India. Legal reforms have been instrumental in providing greater protection and recourse for women facing violence and discrimination. Initiatives like the "Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana" encourage financial planning for the girl child. Women are breaking barriers and excelling in various fields, from sports to science, and are increasingly occupying leadership roles in the corporate sector. The rise of grassroots women-led movements and organizations advocating for gender equality is indicative of a growing consciousness and determination to effect change.

WOMEN'S POSITION IN THE IN DIFFERENT ERA:

Vedic Era

In the Vedic era, women held a high position, receiving complete education and the right to compose Vedas and perform rituals. Women enjoyed various rights, such as higher education, warfare training, among others.

Post the Vedic era

“Post the Vedic era, when individuality in the political structure began to gain prominence, Manu’s social system degraded women’s status. They were restricted from receiving education and were considered inferior. Women were only considered homemakers and restricted to domestic duties.

With British rule in the 19th century

“With British rule in the 19th century, women received legal recognition, but gradually, English customs, traditions, and conventions suppressed them. The rights of women were acknowledged in India’s Constitution, granting them equal rights to men from 26th January 1950. Through legal reforms, women’s rights against crimes like rape were addressed. The protection of women’s economic security was assured by granting them the right to ancestral property in the Hindu Inheritance Act of 1956. The law also protected them from gender-based violence and ensured equal wages for female domestic workers.

United Nations’ Role in Human Rights:

The UN’s global declaration on human rights explicitly mentions women’s human rights. It advocates equality without any discrimination, protection against gender-based violence, and consent during marriage. Various international treaties have been established under the UN's auspices to protect human rights globally. The UN’s involvement has been crucial in promoting awareness and implementation of human rights. It has played a significant role in protecting human rights during conflicts between nations, with the help of peacekeepers.

In India, every woman is entitled to equal human rights, but women still face challenges in fully exercising their rights. Although human rights have been granted here, some women are unable to enjoy them fully, resulting in ongoing violations of human rights. Overall, while women in India have made significant progress in terms of legal rights, a lot more work demand to be done to achieve full gender equality and protection from prejudice and abuse.

CONCLUSION

Indian women's rights in the current scenario reflect a complex interplay of progress and challenges. While significant legal reforms and initiatives have been put in place to protect and empower women, gaps persist in their implementation and impact. Gender-based violence

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remains a pervasive issue, and economic disparities, political underrepresentation, and educational barriers continue to hinder women's full participation in society. The silent revolution of Indian women, driven by their determination, resilience, and collective action, is reshaping the landscape of women's rights in the country. Movements like #MeToo, advocacy for political representation, and efforts to challenge cultural norms are indicative of a society that is increasingly aware of the importance of gender equality.

Moving forward, it is crucial to build on these positive developments, address the persisting challenges, and ensure that the rights and aspirations of Indian women are fully realized. This includes continued efforts to combat gender-based violence, create more inclusive and equitable economic opportunities, increase political representation, improve educational access and quality, and challenge deep-rooted cultural norms that perpetuate gender inequality. The journey towards achieving full gender equality in India is ongoing, but with the collective efforts of women, men, civil society, and policymakers, it is a journey that holds the promise of a more just and equitable future for all.

REFERENCE

- For the text of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, see UN Doc. A/CONF. 157/23 (1993), reprinted in 32 ILM 1661 (1993) [hereinafter UN Doc. A/CONF. 157/23].
- Resolution AFRM/13 was 1 of 14 resolutions adopted by the Regional Meeting for Africa. Report of the Regional Meeting for Africa of the World Conference on Human Rights, UN Doc. A/CONF.157/AFRM/14-A/CONF.157/PC/57, at 18–19 (1992). Although the final declaration adopted in Tunis does not mention women's human rights, it contains only general references to any specific human rights issues. *Id.* at 2–3.
- Id.* at 18–19. It also urged governments to integrate women fully into the formulation and implementation of development policies and to facilitate their access to decision-making posts at the national and international levels. *Id.* at 18.
- Adoption of the Final Documents and/or Declaration of the Regional Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean, UN Doc. A/CONF.157/LACRM/12/Add.1, at 5 (1993).
- See Report of the Regional Meeting for Asia of the World Conference on Human Rights, UN Doc. A/CONF.157/ASRM/8-A/CONF.157/PC/59, at 5 (1993) [hereinafter Bangkok Declaration]. The declaration also challenges the principle that human rights violations are a legitimate concern of the international community by emphasizing the principles of national sovereignty and noninterference in the internal affairs of states, and “nonselectivity” in implementing human rights. *Id.* at 4.
- The preamble to the Bangkok Declaration does encourage ratification of international human rights instruments, particularly the International Covenants on Human Rights. *Id.* at 3.

Acknowledgments

The authors profoundly appreciate all the people who have successfully contributed to ensuring this paper in place. Their contributions are acknowledged however their names cannot be mentioned.

Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Patel. D (2023). Indian Women Rights in Current Scenario. *International Journal of Social Impact*, 8(2), 97-100. DIP: 18.02.10/20230802, DOI: 10.25215/2455/080210