

How much Gender Equality has been achieved in India- up to now?

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Abstract: Women are the backbone of the Indian society. They have given enormous contribution in every sector such as political, educational, public or private sector etc. As per census 2011, the population of India is 1210.19 million comprising 586.47(48.5%) million females and 623.72(51.5%) million males. Females have a share of 48.1% in the urban population and 48.6% in the rural population. Women are the vital element of our society. Article 14 and 15 of Indian constitution has given the fundamental right to equality and non discrimination to every citizen, but still gender inequality is prevalent in our surrounding. The main aim of the paper is to study, how much we have achieved on the path of gender equality and how much is remaining to achieve this equality and what efforts we can do collaboratively to achieve it more successfully.

Key words: *India, Women, Gender Equality.*

I. INTRODUCTION

India is one of the fastest growing countries in the world and it can be maintained when all the section of the society, especially women become equal partners in this development process. In olden times, women were treated as a weaker section of the family, whose work is just doing the household chores or doing care of the family. But now the picture has been changed. Women are no more become the household showcase. At present scenario, women have achieved a lot and keep going to get more. Government has also launched a lot of schemes for the welfare or empowerment of the women. Due to the efforts of the UNO, the issue of empowerment of women became an international one. The UN declared the Year 1975 as the International Women's Year^[1]. The women of present era touch the new milestones which are out of her sphere. Now, they played active participation in political, social and economic zones. They have usually perceived the higher education compare to the women of their foregoing generation.

II. NEED OF THE STUDY

Over the years, no doubt Indian economy increased with a great pace but the position of the women is still not praise worthy. Crime against women has been increasing day by day and government laws for women safety has not much succeeded. Case of domestic's violence, female foeticide; more work and less pay etc. are some crucial issues which must requires solution on time otherwise it can hollow the roots of our society. In this paper we will try to solve the answer of all these issues which are creating hindrance on the success of the women.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ruchi (2013)^[2] done the research on "Women Education in India; With Special Reference to Jammu And Kashmir" and she explored that women education is still under worst shape and gender gap persists in almost all aspects of women education. Ravinder, V. & Shailaja, G. (n.d.)^[3] conducted the study on "Women Literacy in India after Independence." They found that after the period of Independence, growth of Indian states reciprocal on the level of its literacy level. The states lagging behind in regards of literacy showed a highest growth rate in the recent census period 2001-2011. Roy, S. (2014)^[1] explored in his research "Women Empowerment Towards Achieving Gender Equality" and explored that empowerment of the women is depends on only on their will power. Education is the weapon by which they can bring change in the society. So, for improving the ratio of gender equality awareness through education should be done. Although, a number of studies has done on women issues but very few explored the area of Gender equality. They are unable to correlate the relation of past, present and future of gender equality issue.

IV. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the present study were follows:

1. To study the gender equality from prehistoric to medieval period.
2. To study the government schemes related to women after the independence period.
3. To study the success of these schemes and there loophole for the empowerment of women in the Indian society.
4. To suggest the ways for improving the women position.

The status of women during Indian prehistoric period has been a very complicated one because of the inconsistent statements in diverse religious scriptures and sometimes in the same text at different places. Some have described their status as 'equals to men', while others have held not only in disrespect but even in positive hatred. The cultural history of India reveals that the place of women was equal to Goddess in Hindu methodology^[4]. During the Rigveda period women enjoyed the status equal to men. They have honourable place and independent participation in the society. Women helped the male's members in the economic pursuits of the family. But, at the time of Mughals period position of women became deteriorate. In this period, female infanticide, child marriage, sati and slavery were the main social evils affecting the position of women. After that British came to India and they made some efforts to improve the women status by enacted some laws such as, "Abolition of practice of Sati", Widow Remarriage Act 1856, etc. Some reformatory movements by Guru Nanak, Jainism, Rajaram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Rama Bai and others, did give some relief. The real position of the women has been uplifted after the Independence of India. Many legislations pertaining towards women were enacted after independence. In brief the steps taken for the welfare of the feminist society after independence are as follow:-

1. The constitution of India laid down the stress of 'equality to women' in Article 14. Article 15 laid down the pressure of 'no discrimination by the state', Articles 15 (A) (e) to renounce the practices derogatory to the dignity of women^[5], Article 16 for 'equality of opportunity at the time of employment' etc.
2. National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001 was an important step taken by the government to bring advancement, development and empowerment through positive economic and social policies for women. The policy assured women equal access to health care, quality education, participation and decision making in social, political and economical life of the nation, strengthening legal system for eliminating discrimination against women. States have also taken various measures for empowerment of women^[6].
3. Government implemented various schemes for women economic empowerment such as Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, 1993 to credit the poor women for income generation and household activities, Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY), support to training & employment programme for women (STEP) etc.^[7].
4. Ministry of Women & Child Development implements the Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (SABLA) for the all round development of adolescent girls of age 11-18 years.
5. The new Panchayat Raj is a part of the effort to empower the women at least at the village level. One-third Reservation of Seats for Women - The 73rd Constitution Amendment Act has made an effort to give some special powers to women in all the three tiers of Panchayat Raj. As per this Act, one-third of the seats are reserved for women in addition to the reservation for SCs and STs. It was, indeed, a very bold step towards the empowerment of women. The document recommends that 33 per cent of the seats should be reserved for women in order to get the effective participation of women in politics. It was also recommended that some power positions should be reserved for women at the block and village level bureaucracy.
6. Several feminist based frameworks were launched to improve the position of women and various NGO's gave their service in the same field for removing some obstacle like early child marriage, Girls education, Dowry system, female foeticide etc.
7. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013 has been enacted, which covers all women, irrespective of their age or employment status and protect them against sexual harassment at all workplaces both in public and private sector, whether organised or unorganised.
8. Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY) Scheme is being implemented as Conditional Maternity Benefit for pregnant and lactating women to improve health and nutrition status by providing cash incentives to pregnant and nursing mothers to partly compensate wage loss both prior to and after delivery .
9. On the path of making women socially empower government has taken some initiatives towards reducing the illiteracy. It was hoped that with the help of literacy, women would be able to lead a life of self-reliance. Major schemes are - Kanya Saaksharta Protshan Yogna, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Yojna, Mahila Sangha, National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level, Dhanlakshmi Scheme, and Right to Education etc.

10. On 22 January, 2015 Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi launched the programme ‘Beti Bachao Beti Padhao’ scheme for improving the Child Sex Ratio and literacy ratio of girls^[8].

V. WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED

1. Union Cabinet Minister for Women and Child Development Maneka Gandhi unveiled a draft of national policy for women, 2016 which replace the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001. It’s draft proposed equal rights and opportunity for women, review the criminalisation of marital rape keeping women’s rights in mind, improve the access to pre-primary education, enrolment and retention, skill development & equal employment opportunities, to improve child sex ratio etc.^[9]
2. On the path of against women violence ‘One Stop Centres for Women’ affected by violence are being set up in each state of the country. Ten such centres have already become functional and receive up to 200 women complaints in a week. Scheme for Universalisation of Women Helpline intended to provide 24 hours immediate and emergency response to women affected by violence^[10].
3. Women represents the 48.2% of the population, are getting access to education and employment. The number has been increased from 5.4 million girls enrolled at the primary level in 1950-51 to 61.1 million girls in 2004-05. At the upper primary level, the enrolment increased from 0.5 million girls to 22.7 million girls^[11].
4. In the political field, India has one of the highest numbers of female politicians in the world. Women have held high offices in India including that of the President, the Prime Minister, the Lok Sabha Speaker and the Leader of the Opposition. As of 2016, 12 out of 29 states and the union territory of Delhi have had at least one female chief minister. Currently, Kodassery Panchayat in Kerala has 100% women elected members and three are chief minister of the Indian state; Vasundhara Raje, Mamata Banerjee and Mehbooba Mufti^[12].
5. Census of 2011 revealed that there were 940 females to that of 1000 males as compared to 2001 census in which 933 females to that of 1000 males were recorded^[13].

VI. HOW MUCH REMAINING

TABLE 1 Selected Indicators on Status of Women

Indicators	Male	Female
Literacy Rate (%) Census 2011	82.14	65.46
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births) SRS 2009-10	NA	212
Sex Ratio Census 2011	1000	940
Child Sex Ratio (0-6 years) Census 2011	1000	914
Worker Population ratios (Per 1000)	819	336
MPs in Lok Sabha (%)	89.18	10.82

Table 1^[14] revealed the exact picture of the position of the women in the Indian society. Still they are lag behind in many areas. The detail is discussed as:

1. According to Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), India ranks 38th among the 51st developing countries. The proportion of women who have completed five years of primary schooling in India and were literate was 48%, much less than 92% in Nepal, 74% in Pakistan and 54% in Bangladesh^[15]. Still the literacy rate of women is lower in India as compared to men literacy rate. It was 60.6% according to 2011 census, while the male literacy rate was 81.3%^[12].
2. The child sex ratio in 2011 plummeted 914 from 927 in 2001 which is the lowest ever since independence, which showed that from 927 previous 2001 census^[16].
3. Violence against women is still a crucial issue. As per record, kidnapping and abduction of women increased in 2015 to 59277 cases from 57311 in 2014. Delhi has the highest rate of crimes against women overall^[17].
4. Available data with the International Labour Organisation reveals that from 2004 to 2011, when the Indian economy grew at a healthy average of about 7%, there was a decline in female participation in the country’s labour force from over 35% to 25%^[6].

5. On the health part of the women, fertility rates have come down and have reached replacement levels in a number of states. Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) is improving, from 301 per 100,000 live births in 2003 it has come down to 212 in 2009; Infant Mortality Rate, though still high, has reduced to 50 per 1000 in 2009. Further, institutional deliveries have risen from 39 percent in 2006 to 78 percent in 2009, 9 and availability of HIV/AIDS treatment has been enhanced^[14].
6. Despite of reservation of women in Panchayats and urban local bodies, they are still facing social, economic and other forms of institutional barriers to entering PRIs and similar limitations while performing as elected representatives.

VII. STEPS WHICH NEED TO BE TAKEN

For improving the position of the women in present scenario the following steps should to be taken by the government and all of us.

1. Women education is the main concern area because with this they can serve her family and country in the better ways. So special programme for girl's education should be launched and evaluation of these programmes should be done time to time. So, there is special requirement for enrolment and retention programmes in primary, secondary and higher education.
2. Special efforts are required for reducing the occurrence of brutality against women and providing better care services to the victims.
3. Improvement in women health like maternal mortality, infant mortality, nutrition levels is requisite.
4. The main stress should be on equal work and elimination of discrimination in employment.
5. Resources should be arranged for better employment opportunity and improving work participation rates.
6. Strong legal based should be established to stop the gender based violence and discrimination against women.
7. Effort should be needed to build a linkage between women and NGOs or Self Help Groups functionaries, so that they can do their work with more energy and cooperation.
8. Some loopholes of the legal system should be filled like the two finger test for determining whether rape or sexual assault has taken place, which amplify the strain for sexual abuse victims.
9. Educate the public about women's issues to ensure that local women receive equal opportunities and compensation, while promoting gender sensitivity.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Empowerment of the women is not only the responsibility of the government; women should also themselves equally aware for their rights as it is essential for women to realize their full potential. Initiatives by the Government for imparting the awareness through media and curriculum are not sufficient. To meet this purpose, there is a need of develop a pool of volunteers or activists who are ready to give their service and have the knowledge of women rights. Laws can be effective only when the cooperation of the society with them. Women should themselves raise their voice for improving their status and position.

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