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## Status of Women in India after Independence

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### **Abstract:**

*Status of women in India has remained worst since independence. Our constitution has provided several safeguards for the protection of women. But lack of proper initiatives these legal and constitutional provisions has no means. In domestic arena women are facing discriminations by our male dominant patriarchy system. The male members are always trying to keep them out from the political system also. To change this condition constitutional and legal provisions are not adequate, women also must come forward.*

### **1. Introduction**

The Indian social structure outlined a subordinate status for women. With Independence India moved on the path of rapid socio-economic development with democratic political framework. The new constitution, among other things provide for a secular democratic polity, independence of judiciary, rule of law as well as fundamental rights of equality and freedom to all citizens without any discrimination on any ground. Within the framework of a democratic polity, our laws, development policies, plans and programmes have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres. For taken this initiatives Indian women recognised equal as men. They enjoy equal legal and constitutional rights. Their right to vote and elect, right to education, right to practice any profession or to carry on any occupation, trade or business have recognised by the state.

### **2. Constitutional and Legal Safeguards**

Different provisions of our constitution guaranteed security for the protection of rights of women and advancement of their development. Article 14, 15, 16, 39(d), 42, 44, 51(A)(e), 243 guaranteed different rights for women. In tune with the constitutional mandate and other legal provisions the central and provincial governments have launched various policies and programmes and put in place many administrative mechanisms, which not only ensure the enjoyment of equal rights by women but also provide for the betterment of women as a marginalised community. In 1976 National Plan of Action was taken for the women, which was became a directive measure for the development of the women. National Perspective Plan for Women (1988-2000) was taken for the sustainable development of the women. National nutrition policy, National Educational Policy and National population Policy has become the instrument of the women empowerment. National Commission for Women a statutory body established in January 1992 to represent the rights of women in India as guaranteed under different legal and constitutional provisions. Dowry deaths, rape, equal representation for women in jobs, exploitation of women for labour are some of the issues raised by NCW over the years. The National plan of Action for the Girl child is a special initiative by the Government of India to save the girl child. It seeks to prevent female feticide and infanticide, eliminate female bias and to protect girls from all forms of exploitation and abuse. The plan aims to achieve its aforesaid goal by providing education facilities in un-served areas, facilitating child care services by community mobilization and involvement, stepping up immunization where coverage is low, etc. National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001 aims at the advancement, development and empowerment of women. The objectives include equal privilege for women in decision making in all spheres, quality education for women at all levels, social security, strengthening legal systems to eliminate all forms of discrimination, changing societal attitudes and community practices with active participation of men and women, among others. The United Nations Organization announced the year 2001 as the year of women empowerment. With the tune of this programme several initiatives has taken also in India.

### **3. Social and Economic Status**

But the real picture of the status of women in India is so pathetic. According to 'Global gender Gap report 2014' of the World Economic Forum India ranked at 114<sup>th</sup> position with a score of 0.65. This report covers the relative gaps between women and men across four key areas health, education, economy and politics. Till now the women of India is the victim of continuous discrimination, violence, unnecessary harassment, insult and exploitation. Patriarchy forced them to work as the instrument of child production and fulfil material happiness of the male members of their respective families. They termed as domestic, internal, traditional and restricted

in home. In India women are the traditional commodity of the men. It is our mind set hired from our ancestors and surroundings which makes us against women. Education and development has nothing to do with it. There is no importance of women productive or labour power which they use in household work. The male members of a family control over the women's reproduction and sexuality. Moreover, maximum family of our country give importance on boy child. Women's dress, behaviour, attitude, freedom of movement has always controlled by the family, social and cultural restrictions. Our society transformed the women into non-living beings with the help of the dual ideology as feminine and motherhood, also purity. Their demands, feelings, happiness never received any importance. They are the victim of continuous domestic violence. After the formation of nuclear family this situation has not changed. According to the report of the women commission of the UNO (2005) over two-third women in India (around 90%) are the victim of domestic violence. Women education is also poorest in our country. According to the census report 2001, total 64.84% of people are literate in India. Among them male literacy is 75.26% and female literacy rate is only 53.67%. According to the 2011 census total literacy rate is 74.04%. Among them male literacy rate is 82.14% and female literacy rate is 65.46%. This type of discrimination must have a matter of criticism. Our parents are also responsible for this discrimination. Besides make their daughter educated and self-sufficient they saved money to pay as dowry for their daughter's marriage. As a result the women never freed from the bondage of the male. Their workspace is becoming narrower. In 1980's workspace for women in public sector was opened in some extent (around 8%), but in 1990's it was came down under 2%, and in the first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the era of globalization its go down under minus. Employed women are also facing different problems in order to fulfil their dual role. They are facing unnecessary harassment, exploitation, gender discrimination in their workplace.

#### 4. Political Role

After independence participation of women in politics has continuously reduced. In the first General Elections only 14 members were elected in the Lok Sabha. From 1952-2014 Lok Sabha Elections women MPs in lok sabaha was 8.8% and in Rajya Sabha was 10.3%. Overall average is around 9%. Till 1991 participation of women in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha was 7.7%. As ministers and governors women participation in India is average 10%. These data are natural according to the patriarchy system. Because in the male dominant system of US Congress women participation is 6.4%, in British parliament is 6.3%, and in French parliament is 5.6%. Overall women participation in the world's largest democracy India always remains around 10%, or under it. These data are ridiculous because women's are half of the population of our country. Practically the male members are unwilling to share powers in the political organizations. As example in congress working committee participation of women members is average 2%, and so called progressive, democratic, scientific socialist C.P.I. (M) has only woman member (Brinda Karat, elected in 18<sup>th</sup> party congress, 2005). Along with this male dominance the constitution of independent India has not provided substantial rights to the women.

According to the proposal of the UNO to find out the status of women in India 'The committee on the Status of Women' was formed under the chairmanship of former union women development minister Phulreenu Guha. This committee noted in their report "Towards Equality" that in Indian political system influence of women has continuously reducing, they slowly acquiring the features of a minority group in India, because of rapidly growing inequalities and restrictions of status and political power. If this process will continue for longer, women may opt out from our political system and became either passive participants or rebels. To ensure women participation this committee was recommend some proposals-----

- 1) Political parties should set a quota for women candidates;
- 2) The establishment of women panchayats as a transitional measure;
- 3) Allotting a block of seats to women in municipal councils.

But it had rejected the proposal for reservation of seats for women on the ground that it would precipitate constitutional amendments enacted by parliament in 1992 provided one-third representation of women in the systems of rural local government (village, block and district levels). This has opened a vast avenue for an estimated one million women in the representative bodies of the three tire of local government. It has brought about the involvement of even rural women in politics. The Constitution 81<sup>st</sup> Amendment Bill was introduced in the Lok sabha in 1996 but came to be trapped on grounds on social justice. It was reintroduced several times since then with women's groups supporting, but due to negligence of the male dominant political parties, future of the bill completely in dark.

Communal violence and riots also kept the women far from the political and other social activities. From Noakhali riot (1946) to Godhara riot (2002), in each cases women were the victim of brutal violence. This political violence is the outcome the state's partial attitude to our society, which created apathy among the women towards the society and politics. Moreover uses of widespread violence, muscle power and gundaraj in electoral process, which is an important part of our democratic system made women hopeless. It is natural that criminalisation of Indian politics reduced the participation of physically weak women in political activities. Patriarchy or the male dominance working very effectively till now.. To develop the status of the women in India Pandit Nehru and his government passed the Hindu Code Bill and Hindu Marriage Act (1955), but afterwards his party India National Congress could not able to take any effective initiative in this regard. On the other hand Sangha parivar and its organisations defined the status of women from the angle of traditional male dominant Hindu culture. They worship the mother goddess, presented strong Hindu women as mother but give importance on patriarchy and conservation of traditional Hindu culture. For this reason the extremist Hindus campaign the sati incident of Roop Kanwar with pride. Beside this the so called scientific socialist including CPI and CPI (M) could make any example in this respect.

#### 5. Conclusion

According to Human index Development India ranked 135 among 177 countries, where the status of women are remain worst, that is expected. But in recent years some important indicative changes are visible in this respect. But we have to go a long way for

development of the Indian women. The reality is that, Indian women have lagged far behind from their empowerment. Because till now educated women of India not fully aware of their social, political, economic and legal rights. Only few legal provisions and procedures are not adequate for the development of the status of women. All legal provisions and procedures should be enforced strictly, sincerely and honestly. Adequate Opportunities for women education, proper training for work employment should be created. With this provisions and procedures we must have to learn to respect women and take a lesson from countries like Finland, Norway etc. Most important is that the women group themselves must come forward bravely to enhanced their rights and demands. If they are able to fulfil their goals then our women will enjoy their rightful status in the society both in theoretically and practically.

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