

An Overview of Women's Role in Contemporary Society

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Abstract

Women are the embodiment of bravery, love, strength, and sacrifice. In the modern society, women now play a much different and better role. Women nowadays are financially independent, self-sufficient, and conscious. They have achieved great success in all spheres of life, including politics, athletics, and academia. Co-education has made it possible for women to march with men in all spheres of society. The twenty-first century has given women newfound optimism and positive empowerment. They were formerly dependent on their fathers or husbands, but now that they have formed their own identities, they are self-sufficient. One essential component of success is education. If women were educated and well-informed, the issue of women's empowerment would become more pressing. To be on equal footing with males, a woman must be aware of her rights. Every woman in India and throughout the world looks up to Mother Teresa, Indra Nooyi, Pratibha Patil, Kalpana Chawla, and many more notable figures who have made a huge impact in their own fields. Women's roles have evolved significantly, and they are now able to make a good impact on society. The shift from housewives to CEOs is happening more quickly now. Opportunities and hope have expanded for them with modernization and the introduction of cutting-edge technology. They have made a name for themselves in practically every sphere—social, political, and economic. The military and other defence forces no longer view women as weak or unsuitable. Recently, Avani Chaturvedi became the first female fighter pilot in India, setting an incredible example and making history.

Keywords: Woman, Education, Society, Strength, sports, Politics, Academics.

I. Introduction

In the past, society took advantage of women in every way imaginable. They were constantly criticised, had no freedom, and had no place among men. They were even denied the

fundamental rights that come with being human. To leave a lasting legacy of "women power" and carve out a prominent position in society, they had to exert a great deal of guts and hard work. Women were motivated by the words of poets like Charlotte Bronte, who once said, "I am no bird and no net ensnares me, I am a free human being with an independent will." She was trying to say that women should not be treated like birds in cages any more, but rather that they should have the same freedoms and possibilities as men. The advancements that have enhanced women's standing in today's society were made possible by such supporting segments of society. A fundamental human right is the full and equal involvement of women in all elements of society. Nonetheless, women and girls are disproportionately underrepresented globally in all fields, including politics, entertainment, and the workforce. The next visualisations examine this gender-distributed image in more detail across time, highlighting how slowly things are changing. The effects, which have their roots in patriarchal customs and norms, are widespread and have a negative impact on women and girls' present and future economic, personal, and family well-being as well as the community at large [1,2].

The standing of women has changed dramatically throughout time, from what was formerly thought to be their solely domestic duties at the foundation of civilization to their current role as some of the world's most powerful and important figures. Not to mention the world our grandparents lived in, the one we live in today differs greatly from the one our parents experienced. I bring up the generations of our parents and grandparents to emphasize that although it doesn't seem like a long time ago that they were growing up, society has undergone significant transformation on a global scale. The primary social groupings of prehistoric humans and early civilizations favored a matriarchal social structure. According to many viewpoints and points of view, women were essentially in the lead; they were at the heart of society and played a prominent role [3, 4]. Women were respected icons, warriors, statesmen, spiritual and religious leaders, and symbols of wealth and fertility in antiquity. Men "took the front row seat" and became leaders, kings, as the female-dominated early social group culture changed from a matriarchal to a patriarchal one at some point. Culturally and historically, men have ruled our civilization for thousands of years. According to the majority of anthropologists, there aren't any clearly matriarchal societies in existence. It is a well-known reality that women have never been treated with the same respect as



men over the ages, always fulfilling "minor" positions that require subservience instead of being on the same level as men. More people than ever before are able to converse with ease, overcoming obstacles like language and culture. More opportunities are being presented by the internet than by any other form of communication in the past. Not only can individuals use it to interact with one another, but it also serves as a platform for discussion, idea and cultural dissemination, job, and yes, even entertainment. This has created new avenues for the stimulation of proactive social engagement and has assisted in dismantling long-standing, imperceptible social barriers such as the parda (veil) system and domestic abuse, among others. First and foremost, careful consideration must be given to any discussion of worldwide equality between the sexes. The degree of this equality varies greatly depending on the part of the world under consideration, as well as on culture, religion, and a host of other sociological elements that impact the gender roles that are unequal in today's society [5, 6]. The status of women had changed once more following Raja Ram Mohan Roy's campaign against women's enslavement to males and British impact on Indian culture and civilization. But females didn't reaffirm their equality with men until Mahatma Gandhi, who led them with wisdom. They threw off their veils at Gandhi's command and emerged from behind their four walls to fight with their brothers in the liberation struggle. As a result, women now have the same standing as males under the Indian Constitution. Discrimination against men and women does not exist. Both of them are eligible for all professions, with merit serving as the only selection criterion [7,8].

Indian women have made a name for themselves as legislators, speakers, attorneys, physicians, administrators, and diplomats as a result of their recent liberation. Not only are they given important tasks to do, but they also carry out their responsibilities with integrity and sincerity. Nearly every aspect of life has witnessed the participation and value of Indian women. Women use their right to vote, run for office in the legislature and assembly, apply for public office, and compete against males in other areas of life. This demonstrates that Indian women now have greater freedom and equality than they had in the past. They now have greater freedom to take part in national issues. They now have the same opportunities as men to shape their future and share accountability for their own well-being, that of their families, and that of their nation [9, 10].

It is a known truth that women are bright, diligent, and productive employees. They give

everything they have to whatever they do. They are currently effectively competing with males as clerks and typists. A large number of women are employed at the Central Secretariat. They are working really hard to complete the administrative tasks with the utmost efficiency and accuracy. They most likely have more moral integrity than males. In general, it has been discovered that women are less vulnerable to favouritism and bribing corruption. In addition to having a sweet tongue, they are also trustworthy, productive, and reliable in their roles as air hostesses, booking clerks at train reservation counters, and receptionists. In actuality, they are progressively taking over the roles of flight hostesses and receptionists [11, 12].

India has seen excellent service from women in the medical and nursing fields. It has been discovered that lady doctors' delicate and precise fingertips allow them to execute surgery with efficiency. As nurses in hospitals and nursing homes, they enjoy a monopoly. Because women naturally tend to serve and clean, very few males have been able to compete with them in this field. Florence Nightingale was inspired by the innate propensity of women to promote nursing among the upper-class ladies of England and Europe. In the midst of pain and suffering, she demonstrated to women how noble it is to serve mankind [13, 14].

Women have made substantial contributions to social services and politics as well. We must not omit to include Indira Gandhi, who blazed so brightly and radiantly in the political sky of India. She oversaw this nation for more than ten years and led India to victory in the Pakistan War, which led to the significant founding of Bangladesh. Indian women have also performed admirably in the social service sector. In addition to alleviating humanity's suffering, they have won the greatest honours for the nation. One must speak of Mother Teresa by name. By her selfless efforts to the impoverished, destitute, and suffering people of our nation in particular, as well as the needy and disabled people of the globe in general, she brought India the Nobel Prize. We now want the services of educated ladies who can travel the nation alleviating human misery. The government is concerned about the population expansion that is occurring so quickly, especially in rural regions. Promoting family planning's benefits to rural women can be taken on more easily by female volunteers. They can propagate propaganda about the dangers of the unsanitary circumstances that the villagers live under more readily than males can. They can effectively take up the duty of visiting and instructing the defenceless widows and orphans in



orphanages and widow care facilities when they live in metropolitan regions. They can instruct them in feminine-inclined skills like nursing, knitting, quilting, and embroidery. Additionally, they can teach kids dance and music [15, 16].

Unquestionably, women in India have come a long way over the past fifty years, but they still face several obstacles and societal injustices in a country where males still hold the majority of the power. Both the son and the daughter now have an equal portion of the property according to the Hindu Code Bill. The Marriage Act no longer considers a woman to be a man's property. Nowadays, it's thought of as a personal matter, and any spouse can file for divorce if they're unhappy. However, enacting legislation is one thing, and assimilating it into society's collective consciousness is quite another. They must break free from the bonds of slavery and superstition if they are to demonstrate that they are worthy of the dignity and position that the Indian Constitution grants them. They ought to assist the state and community in eliminating the ills of dowries, ignorance, and illiteracy among the eves. In this country, the issue around dowries has taken a perilous turn. The bridegrooms' avaricious fathers and moms want thousands of dollars from the parents of the girls. The vicious and avaricious members of the bridegroom's family resort to torturing the married women if the brides' parents fail to provide the things that were promised. In such instances, some women are murdered. The dowry killings are very horrible and savage crimes carried out by people who are cruel and brutal. It would be brave of the young ladies to refuse to marry males who ask for dowries from their parents. If the guys' parents insist on a dowry, they should also decline to get married. Unfortunately, there aren't many guys who are as brave and responsible as these. Not even medical professionals, engineers, educators, or administrative staff would think twice about selling themselves to affluent dads of timid and bashful girls. These individuals have indeed caused shame to both society at large and their cadres specifically. The government ought to pass strict legislation to punish dowry seekers, killers of women, and rapists severely [17, 18].

II. REASONS FOR WOMEN'S STATUS TO BE IMPROVED IN MODERN SOCIETY

The significant changes that have occurred in areas like laws, education, the economic and employment sector, political engagement, and women's understanding of their rights may be

used to analyse how the position of women in society has improved.

Women in Education

One important field of study in international development is the impact of women's education on development. In areas with high levels of development, there is typically a positive correlation between the number of women educated. Economic development is connected to some of the repercussions. Women who have more education earn more money, which boosts GDP growth. Additional consequences have to do with social development. Girls' education has several positive societal effects, many of which are associated with the empowerment of women. Women's education and worldwide development are strongly correlated, according to recent studies on human development. Researchers specifically look for explanations for variations in development rates. One of the main factors explaining the rates of social and economic growth is the education of women. "Investment in the education of girls may well be the highest-return investment available in the developing world," according to renowned economist Lawrence Summers [19].

Women in the Work and Economic Domains

There has been a notable surge in the number of women leaving the four walls of the home to work in both cities and countryside. They are fiercely competing with males in the "employment market." There is a steady increase in the number of women employed in some areas. Women who work as bank workers, teachers, physicians, nurses, advocates, clerks, typists, phone operators, receptionists, personal assistants, and so on are a few examples. Since 1991, women have also been recruited into the air force, navy, and armed forces, but in fewer numbers. The government has implemented a number of socioeconomic laws aimed at protecting women's economic interests and rights. These laws address issues including the ability to inherit or own property, equal pay for equal labour, safe working conditions, maternity benefits, and job security [20].

Women in Politics

Women must be given the opportunity to compete if every nation is to have the finest leader possible. Madeleine K. Albright, Chairman of NDI, states that the countries are truly depriving themselves of a great lot of potential if they are never let to participate in the election process. It is widely held that democracy cannot be established or maintained unless women are fairly represented in politics and the administration. Despite making up more than half of the global population, women are still disproportionately under-represented in elected office, the political leadership, and the voting booth. If half of the population is still under-represented in politics, democracy cannot really serve all of its inhabitants. Any nation's overall governance is significantly impacted by the inclusion of women in mainstream politics. A collection of laws, organisations, and principles that are utilised in the administration of the state and society are referred to as governance. Political parties, legislatures, the government, and their relationships with the public are examples of governance institutions and procedures. While "governance" is a general term that can refer to good management or governance, other definitions include governance values, political processes, political parties and organisations, which/whose interests are represented and protected, and the degree to which the general public has the ability to criticise the government or propose alternative forms of governance, among other things [16].

Equal Rights for Women

Adopted in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights tackled concerns of fairness as well as equality, enshrining "the equal rights of men and women". To put the Declaration on the Elimination of Sex-Based Discrimination into effect legally, the United Nations General Assembly established the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1979. It was dubbed a worldwide women's charter of rights and went into effect on September 3, 1981. "Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field," is how the Convention defines discrimination against women. States that ratify the Convention are also required to incorporate gender equality into their domestic legislation,

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remove any discriminatory provisions from their laws, and enact new provisions to prevent discrimination against women as part of an agenda of action to end sex-based discrimination. In order to provide women with adequate protection against discrimination, they must also set up courts and governmental institutions. They must also take action to end all types of discrimination against women that are carried out by people, groups, and businesses [12].

Women working in the sciences and arts

The Nobel Prize is given out every year to honour intellectual excellence as well as advancements in academia, culture, and science. Throughout its existence, from 1901 to 2019, more than 900 people have received the prize. There have only been 53 female winners, with 19 of them coming from the physics, chemistry, and physiology or medical categories. When Marie Curie and her husband shared the 1903 Nobel Prize in Physics, they became the first female laureates. She became the only woman in history to receive the Nobel Prize twice when she was given the Chemistry Prize eight years later. Despite the fact that women have contributed to many scientific breakthroughs throughout the years, only 30% of researchers globally and 35% of students enrolled in STEM-related fields of study are female [10].

Women in Athletics

The twentieth century saw a sharp increase in the number of female athletes, particularly in the last quarter, which was indicative of shifts in contemporary society towards gender equality. Women's sports are widely accepted globally, while participation and performance levels still differ significantly between nations and sports. In many cases, like figure skating, women's sports even surpass or match those of men. The principal aim of women's involvement was to promote gender parity in educational establishments. Athletic participation among women is higher now than it has ever been. In collegiate athletics, women made up 41 percent of participants as of the 2007–2008 academic year. There has been a 940% growth in the number of female participants in high school athletics from 294,015 in 1971–1972 to over three million in 2007–2008. 29,972 girls participated in collegiate athletics in 1971–1972; by 2007–2008, that number had increased to 166,728 female participants, representing a 456% increase. There is a clear correlation between increased sports engagement and other aspects of women's life. Later in life, these impacts are evident in women's employment and education. According to a recent



research, women's engagement in the workforce caused changes that accounted for almost 40% of the growth in employment for 25–34-year-old women and nearly 20% of the increase in women's education. This is not to argue that all successful women in the future practiced sports; rather, it is to suggest that women who did engage in athletics benefited from advantages in terms of education and career opportunities [6].

Women in Journalism

In terms of gender equality in the news industry, advancements have all but stopped. Out of 114 nations and 20 years of research on women's involvement, representation, and characterisation in the news media, just 24% of the people heard, read, or seen in radio, television, and print news are women. There is a glass ceiling for female news reporters in newspaper bylines and television reports as well; as of 2015, only 37% of stories covered by women have changed over a ten-year period. Even while digital media has great potential for democratisation, women's under-representation in traditional news media is evident in digital news as well, with women comprising a mere 26% of the population in both Internet news articles and media news tweets. The percentage of conventional and digital news pieces that explicitly question gender norms is only 4%. Harmful attitudes of contempt and aggression towards women are shaped, among other things, by stereotypes and the notable under-representation of women in the media [19].

Women in the Entertainment Industry

Similar to other media, movies and television have a significant role in changing the narrative around the agenda for gender equality and have a strong impact on cultural attitudes and views regarding gender. However, a study of popular films from 11 different nations discovered, for instance, that only 23% of the films had a female protagonist and that 31% of all speaking characters were female—a figure that roughly matched the 21% of female directors [19].

Critically regarded film awards are another clear indicator of the severe under-representation of women in the film industry: Only five women have ever been nominated for the Best Director Oscar in the 92-year history of the Oscars, and only one woman, Kathryn Bigelow, has ever won. Furthermore, in the 72-year history of the Cannes Film Festival, Jane Campion is still the only female filmmaker to have taken home the Palme d'Or, the festival's highest honour. The

film's male director, Abdellatif Kechiche, and actors Adele Exarchopoulos and Lea Seydoux were the only other women to share the prize. If a picture is worth a thousand words, then this message is worth a million: more women in films, both on and off screen, are necessary to change gender stereotypes and represent the realities of women [18].

Women in the Culinary Arts Field

Even though conventional responsibilities are assigned to women in the kitchen at home, female chefs have not had much success in the highest echelons of the restaurant sector. Women frequently have to overcome overt prejudice and traverse a society that both implicitly accepts harassment and exalts masculinity, as seen in the documentary *A Fine Line*. When it comes to working long, unpredictable, and rigid hours, unwelcoming rules around childcare and families, and lesser pay, women in the restaurant industry confront several obstacles. The figures tell the same story: now, women make up less than 4% of cooks who have three Michelin stars, the highest rating possible, from the renowned restaurant guide [17].

III. CONCLUSION

Most people agree that women have been subjected to prejudice and other forms of deprivation throughout history, and that they have always been denied access to even fundamental rights like property and literacy. The last several decades have seen a steady increase in this worldwide issue, which has led to attempts to reintegrate women into society through socioeconomic initiatives that prioritise their empowerment and the restoration of gender equality. Women's freedom has gone through several turning points, and society has advanced significantly. Despite facing several challenges in the past few decades, they have managed to effectively forge their own identity. The patience and endurance that today's women possess has enabled them to reach the highest levels of accomplishment. In the past, women were only viewed as housewives, with the responsibility of caring for their families, cooking, and cleaning. These days, in addition to managing challenging clients at work, they can multitask well at home. When it comes to making the best decisions, even at the highest levels of leadership, women are more focused, possess a certain kind of authority, and are occasionally in a better position than males. Women's

empowerment can contribute to society's faster growth and development. Without a doubt, we are rebuilding the globe.

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