

# **Women Rights : Development And Contemporary Status**

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## **Introduction:**

Women's rights are the rights and entitlements claimed for women and girls worldwide, and which formed the basis for the women's rights movement in the 19th century and feminist movement during the 20th century. In some countries, these rights are institutionalized or supported by law, local custom, and behavior, whereas in others they are ignored and suppressed. Issues commonly associated with notions of women's rights include the right to bodily integrity and autonomy; to be free from sexual violence; to vote; to hold public office; to enter into legal contracts; to have equal rights in family law; to work; to fair wages or equal pay; to have reproductive rights; to own property; to education.

Women's rights movements focus on ending discrimination of women.

## **United Nations convention on human rights**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, enshrines "the equal rights of men and women", and addressed both the equality and equity issues. In 1979, the United Nations General Assembly

adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) for legal implementation of the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Described as an international bill of rights for women, it came into force on 3 September 1981.

The Convention defines discrimination against women in the following terms:

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.

It also establishes an agenda of action for putting an end to sex-based discrimination for which states ratifying the Convention are required to enshrine gender equality into their domestic legislation, repeal all discriminatory provisions in their laws, and enact new provisions to guard against discrimination against women. They must also establish tribunals and public institutions to guarantee women effective protection against discrimination, and take steps to eliminate all forms of discrimination practiced against women by individuals, organizations, and enterprises.

We want every woman and girl to realize the rights that are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The UN Millennium Development Goals set specific targets to reduce poverty, including targets for increased gender equality in education, work, and representation.

Women's rights are the fundamental human rights that were enshrined by the United Nations for every human being on the planet nearly 70 years ago. These rights include the right to live free from violence, slavery, and discrimination; to be educated; to own property; to vote; and to earn a fair and equal wage.

Only when women have taken leadership and peacemaking roles and have an equal political voice will economies and countries be transformed. And only then will all women and girls have the self-determination they are entitled to.

Despite great strides made by the international women's rights movement over many years, women and girls around the world are still married as children or trafficked into forced labor and sex slavery. They are refused access to education and political participation, and some are trapped in conflicts where rape is perpetrated as a weapon of war.

### **In Indian perspective**

The status of Indian women has radically changed since independence. Both the structural and cultural changes provided equality of opportunities to women in education, employment and political participation.

Within the Indian subcontinent, there have been infinite variations of the status of women, differing according to the cultural milieu, family structures, caste, class, property right etc. we have to specify as to whether we are talking about rural women or urban women, about middle class or lower class women, about Brahmin or scheduled caste woman, about women in the Hindu society or in the Muslim community.

Now, she has the right to receive education, inherit & own property, participate in public life & political life of the nation. She has become economically independent. She can seek employment anywhere and remains not a domestic slave. A woman is considered to be the inspiring force of a home. In both villages and cities there has been a remarkable increase in the number of women going out of the four walls of the household and becoming workers. Employment has given women economic independence and the feeling of importance. They now feel that they can stand on their own and look after the entire family by themselves. This has boosted their self-pride and self-confidence.

We observe that there are so many positive changes are occurred in women's status. The constitution of India has greatly enhanced the status of Indian women by throwing upon them all its series on equal terms with men. All the men and women of India are equity entitled for individual freedom, fundamental rights including the right to participate in social, cultural, religious, educational, economic and political activities.

### **Some of them are:**

**The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, The special Marriage Act, 1954, The dowry prohibition Act, 1961, The suppression of immoral Traffic of women and Girls Act 1956, The Equal Remuneration Act 1976 and others.** It is highly significant that women in independent India have achieved great progress in all walks of life. We can confidently assert that India is the only nation among the developing countries of the modern world where so many women occupy high administrative positions quite successfully.

But, the power to govern the home and the authority still rests in the hands of male head of the household. The dominant father model still persists in most of the middle and lower class families. Leaving aside a few, in the so-called modern families wives have not become equal partners to their husbands even if they are well-educated or more educated to their husbands.

Women as daughters or wives have to seek permission from their fathers/husbands for going outside home or for receiving higher education. In some families, it is seen that husbands do not allow their wives of the same caliber and education to take up any job assignment of the same status outside the home.

To conclude, let us quote Jessie Bernard (1981) who advocate that the status of women cannot be compared with that of men. It is generally said that men have higher status because they are usually better educated and have more organizational skills and experience than women.

**References:**

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