



## STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIA

Dr. Mahesh N Patil

### **Abstract**

*Though the Government of India has taken all efforts to abolish the difference between men and women. According to the Constitution of India, men and women are equal before law. The government is laying special emphasis on the education of girls. In the recent competitive examinations, women have done better performance than men.*

*In spite of it, many women are suffering mental and physical tortures in their in-laws' houses. Their husbands demand more and more dowry. They consider their wives as good source of getting dowry. Bride-burning and bride-killing occur every day in India. This is how the status of Indian women is going down. The women can get back their rightful place in society if law is properly enforced to check male-superiority.*

### **Introduction**

Indian women are described by many other developing countries as emancipated to a large extent and progressive in outlook. In the political field, in the services, and in school, colleges and universities women serve along with man and have generally distinguished themselves. Scores of women in this country hold position of responsibility and are to be found in many professions where they were seldom seen before. Politics and legislatures are, however dominated by men, there being only a sprinkling of women. Strangely, there are not many women legislators even in the advanced countries.

There are no legal barriers in the rising status of women, but practice matters more than theory. In almost every country man and woman are equal in the eyes of the statutes. But equality in law is not always translated into practice, and the result is that the women have not got their due status in any country and so is the case in India.

- Swami Vivekananda once rightly remarked that "There is no chance of the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on one wing."

The recent years in India has, no doubt, shown good emancipation of the status of women, especially in the urban areas with equal opportunities of education provided to girl child, but the position has not improved much in rural areas especially with the weaker sections of society. The women continue to be denied opportunities of equality education and participation in the affairs of home and society at large. Men usually work to earn their living outside or inside home and women look after the household chores and bear children. Very few women in rural areas are crossing the limits of their household to join their male counterparts in showing their talents overboard. Along with rise in status of women in all fields in this country there is a considerable rise in crime against them. Despite the fact that India has a strong written Constitution proclaiming law of equality and welfare of women, barbaric and savagist practices still continue to haunt women in the form of female foeticide, female infanticide, child labour, child marriage, dowry, rape, sexual harassment, gender inequality, molestation, eave teasing, forced prostitution, child pornography, etc. The condition of an Indian widow is quite deplorable as she is despised by her family as well as by society. Marriage continues to be a profitable business which puts the bride on the debit side and groom on the credit side. In the name of dowry thousands of women are maimed, disfigured or burnt alive. According to report by the National Commission for Women-New and the Women's Rights Commission-WRC, the crime graph against women is increasing at an alarming rate. Rape has become the orer of the day with the rapist assuming a cosmopolitan age-no-bar, country-no-bar outlook. Minor girls become an easy prey. Just think about the number of unreported cases which are often tucked away under the carpet out of social stigma and threat. It is the victims who suffer the most. They shy away from the law because of its inhuman and sadistic attitude towards the victims in the form of indecent interrogations that devalue their moral self. Even if a woman is economically or intellectually superior, she is not safe from the clutches of this gruesome act.



Yet another social scourge that lurks behind the Indian society is child marriage. In many parts of the country people belonging to backward community hundreds of minor girls and boys are married in total violation of the child Marriage Restraint Act. At an age when she ought to be in school with books and friends, she is forced to get married. She is forced to become mother at a time when she is not emotionally or physically prepared for it. Moreover, a girl-child's birth is greeted with a sense of abomination. Girls are killed even before they are born when the parents realize that life inside the womb is not that of a boy but that of a girl. Technologies like amniocentesis, scanning, pre-natal analysis have resulted in the steady decline of the sex-ratio.

The curse of Dowry still dominates the Indian marriage system. Exchange of dowry has existed in India since time immemorial. The basic spirit behind it was not bad. It was custom prevalent among the affluent that they gave away some part of their money along with materials to their daughters at the time of their marriage considering it a right of the brides as a share of the property or saving so her parents. It was always voluntary on the part of the parent of the girl and no pressure or demand whatsoever was exercised by the groom or his parents. The system was almost negligible with those who couldn't afford it or who didn't have any surplus resources to give it away to their daughter on her marriage. But, as time passed and the greed for money increased with the improvement in life-styles, the conception of having or accepting dowry turned out to be a matter of right with the grooms and their parents. As such, the customs of dowry become a curse in Indian society. Dowry becomes a day-to-day happening. Apart from bundles of crisp notes, dowry has to be given in the form of luxury cars, furniture, gold ornaments and a well equipped house or a flat. The middle class families are the worst sufferers of this menace. The birth of girl-child in their house creates a further as they are scared of the day when their daughter has to be given off in marriage along with a huge sum of money and materials as a dowry. Heavy expenditures have to be incurred in marriage functions which can't be avoided as the competition is very hard. Things have started to ease to a great extent with girls getting property educated and capable to stand on their own legs without any help from their husbands. The independence of women financially is a healthy step towards the emancipation of women. They are no longer dependant in their husband's income and resources. They can claim to be on equal status with man with her increasing involvement in all the productive fields. She is now an active participant in the earnings of the households or their male counterparts. There is no dearth of women parliamentarians, high officials, managers, police officers and the like. Everywhere we see women shrugging shoulders with men in banks, offices, schools, colleges, hospitals and everywhere.

There is rampant harassment of women including the sexual abuse. Every day passes with events of women abused and exploited at the hands of men openly in buses, trains, offices, roads and everywhere as she is considered as a soft target for the man's lust. The reasons for this state of affairs is not very far to seek. The main reason is the western life and dress style that is adopted by our young men and women. The modern dresses for women are more revealing than covering their feminity which becomes the cause for thir being victims of violence against them. The free mixing of young women in parties without protection is increasing day by day and it is no surprise when a lonely woman is exploited in open day light or during the late hours in the night. As such, along with their claim for seeking liberty to work alongside man in every field, the women have to learn to protect themselves from the piercing eyes of their male counterparts by firstly dressing nicely, as not to reveal their bodies in open, especially at work in offices factories and the like and secondly, be always prepared to encounter the exploits of man in every case. Many women are learning martial arts to face the circumstances they are apt to face during their day to day activities.

The need of the hour is that women are socially, economically, culturally, intellectually, educationally, and psychologically empowered in the form of good health and security. They should not be considered merely and instrument for the satisfaction of the man's sex and producing children, but as in equal part of human existence and development in all fields. Various laws have been formulated for the protection of women. But they are not being devotedly implemented by the society. Unless laws are implemented without any discrimination of bias, crimes against women would not subside. The women themselves have to be very active to fight for their due



causes against the undue dominance of men in all form. The justice against woman is too much delayed in courts for want of evidences and proper laws. The cases of crime against women especially the rape should be settled on priority basis so that the culprits of these crimes are rigorously punished without wastage of much time. The flexibility of Indian law makes many serious criminals go scot-free after the procedures of law take long times in the courts.

The empowerment of women lies in their free access to quality education. The government should ensure that girls are enrolled in schools alongside boys not only in cities and towns but in remote areas too. There is a strong inhibition among the rural folk about sending girls to schools. This inhibition needs to be removed if we want to see Indian women free from the male dominance. The woman is no longer a commodity to sell or to keep within the four walls of house for only the up-keep of the house or an instrument for male dominance. This fact needs to be brought home to millions of India living in remote areas or the lower sections of society. The emancipation of a few women of the urban India doesn't make much difference to about 56 percent of Indian population. Woman should turn to be active partners in the developmental process of the rural India. They should be allowed to get their due share in village politics like Panchayat Raj and other co-operative movements.

### Conclusion

We cannot think of a free India unless the women are set free from the male dominance in every field. Woman is traditionally named as Grihalakshmi, the pivotal point of familial universe. She is synonymous with nature. Both of them sustain life. A nation's progress and prosperity can be judged by the way it treats its women folk. Indian tradition is to hold woman with high respect and honour. Exploitation of women should be dealt with sternly. Man should cease to think that he is the sole master of his family and assets. Woman should claim her right of being an equal partner to everything in the house. Her dependence on her male counterpart should be the thing of past as she has to try to break all the shackles of slavery that she has been burdens with for a long time.

### References

1. Anne Edwards (1987) 'Male Violence in Feminist Theory: An analysis of changing conception at sex / gender violence and male Dominance' in Jalna Hanmer and Mary Maynard. Women Violence and Social Control. The Mac Millan Press Ltd., London.
2. Eichler Margrit (1980) The Double standard. Biddles Ltd., Guildford Surrey. Great Britain.
3. Gross. Elizabeth (1986). 'What is Feminist Theory?' in C. Pateman and E. Gross (ed.) Feminist Challenges. Allen and Unwin, London.
4. Kirti Singh (2005) Law, violence and Women in India. UNICEF and UNDFW.
5. Liz Kelly and Limda Regan (2006). "Violence Against women: A briefing document" British Council. England.
6. March, A (1982) 'Female Invisibility in Androcentric Sociological Theory' *Insurgent Sociologist*. 11, 2, pp. 99-107.
7. Paul Smith (1987). 'Men in Feminism: Men and Feminist theory' in A. Jardine and P. Smith (ed.). Men in Feminism Methuen, New York.
8. Rurth Sheila (1995) Issues in Feminism. Mayfield Publishing Company. California.
- 3 Preetam Khandelwal " Employment in Organised Sector in ] 990' s- An Analysis from-Gender Perspective", *IJ.I.R. VoJ.40, July 2004, p.23.*
8. 5 Murlidhar C.Bhandare, "The World of Gender Justice", New-Delhi, Har Anand Publications Pvt. Ltd., p.142.69
9. 7 Dr. S.C.Tripathi and Vibha Arora, "Law Relating to Women and Children", ]st ed., Allahabad, Central Law Publications, 2004, p.196.