



Cover Page



DOI: <http://ijmer.in.doi./2021/10.11.129>

STATUS OF WOMEN: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

B.N. Sureka

Research Scholar

Department of Public Administration, Osmania University

Hyderabad, Telangana State, India

Abstract

The paper presents the status of women in India in the historical perspective. The status of women is explored from both a historical and contemporary standpoint. Women's historical status can be divided into five periods: the Vedic period, the Smriti period, the Mughal period, the British period, and the post-independence period. These are briefly explained. Women are subject to the same rules. Women cannot be rendered socially and culturally free if they are remained politically and economically enslaved and dependent, because the former will jeopardise the latter. Women's participation in socioeconomic concerns encompasses a wide range of activities, including demonstrations, protests, and support gatherings. Participation aids an individual's effectiveness and connects him or her to the political system. The healthier the democratic system is, the higher the rate and levels of engagement and the more diverse the kinds of participation.

Keywords: Status of Women, Historical Perspective, Vedic Period and Socioeconomic.

1. Introduction

All men and women must be treated equally in a democratic society. In contrast to this essential notion of democracy, women are frequently excluded from several aspects of life, most notably politics. Better political engagement will ensure the attainment of true democratic spirit. People have the opportunity to participate in politics under a democratic society. True democracy is characterised by effective citizen participation. It is a well-known axiom that political and economic democracy cannot exist without each other. Women are subject to the same rules. Women cannot be rendered socially and culturally free if they are remained politically and economically enslaved and dependent, because the former will jeopardise the latter. The dignity of a woman's person must be guaranteed. Women must engage not just in the country's social and cultural life, but also in its political processes. If women continue to be subjected to discriminatory elements of various personal laws, the 73rd amendment's goal of women's emancipation would remain a mirage. Despite several constitutional provisions and legislative measures, women remain backward and deprived of their rightful full role in society despite their contributions in every sector of life. This is due to a variety of historical, religious, and cultural factors. It has been recognised that women's participation in developmental activities is critical since only they can fully address the issues that impact women. The mere existence of women in local bodies would not assure their active engagement and involvement unless they are informed about current development efforts and given the authority to handle essential duties such as planning, finance, and education.

2. Review of literature

Prabhat Dutt (1997) looks at the issues and potential of rural women's political empowerment through panchayat involvement. According to him, women's empowerment in panchayats is contingent on the abolition of the feudal-patriarchal framework in villages. He proposes a long-term campaign and concerted efforts to raise awareness of women's rights and the rights of women's representatives. He came to the conclusion that women's reservation in panchayats is a means to an end, not an end in itself. (Administrative change, volxxiv, no 2 jan-june pp129-148) (prabhat, dutta1997 "political empowerment of rural women in India".

Sarojini Reddy, P. (2002) expressed Women's participation is critical since, more often than not, male politicians do not discuss and deliberate on issues and problems affecting women openly and impartially. Women's political participation is severely limited, presumably because men view women as potential competitors. There is no need for a reservation bill if gender justice and equality are properly recognised. Women should be given equal representation in political parties based on their numerical strength in the country's population. Women should be represented by half of the elected members because they make up roughly half of the population. When women participate in political processes, they are better able to express their frustrations and find legal answers to their challenges and problems.

Limbadi, R. (2007) Despite the fact that various aspects of the PRIs have been thoroughly investigated and debated, the most overlooked aspect is its potential for empowering oppressed groups, particularly Dalits. The 73rd Amendment Act made it possible for Dalits to participate in governance. However, until it is turned into meaningful involvement, such numerical representation does not guarantee empowerment. In rural areas, the prevalent caste system and severe economic and social inequalities made it difficult for Dalit



Cover Page



DOI: <http://ijmer.in.doi./2021/10.11.129>

MPs to function successfully. SC elected officials confront a variety of issues, including threats not to run for office, pressure to quit, no-confidence motions, obstruction to functioning, and non-cooperation from other castes.

3. Status of women: Historical perceptives

The status of women is explored from both a historical and contemporary standpoint. Women's historical status can be divided into five periods: the Vedic period, the Smriti period, the Mughal period, the British period, and the post-independence period. These are briefly explained.

3.1. Women in Vedic period

Women were treated with respect and dignity during the Vedic period. Women and men were treated equally in terms of education, life mate choosing, freedom, and Brahmacharya. The fact that females were married at a reasonably old age at the request of their parents shows that child marriage was not the norm and that women's opinions were taken into account when choosing their life partners. In the later half of the Vedic period, women's attendance in religious rites becomes unavoidable, and there is a discernible shift in women's position and status. Women who had never had children were allowed to remarry, either legally or according to the Viyogacustom, and so have children. Widow remarriages were also authorised, and widows were never shamed by society as a result of remarriage. As a result, the community as a whole demonstrated proper regard for women and granted them significant social and political independence. Female education gradually declined as the time progressed, and their religious rights and privileges were reduced. Women were denied property rights.

3.2. Women in Smrithi period

Manu, a great Hindu philosopher, is credited with establishing a set of Hindu religious precepts. He is a firm believer in the development of human personality in a planned and harmonious manner. Women were seen as prime factors in man's worldly and spiritual prosperity in Manu's teachings, and they were allotted a highly reasonable role in the framework of society. In the words of Manu, a man cannot progress if there are no women by his side, ready to assist him in all of his endeavours. He believed that without women, the world's wheel could not be turned.

Manu well comprehended the significance of women as an integral part of man, and the two together form a complete whole (From Manu tests1-45). He, on the other hand, denied women's independence, believing that their independence was damaging in every way (From Manu testsV-147-149). As a result, constraints on women's freedom in a variety of activities became impractical, and women's place in Hindu society worsened significantly. In addition, the lack of paternal property succession rights for women resulted in a great deal of reliance on men. Because girls were not permitted to study with boys under male teachers, a huge number of girls were forced to remain at home, giving up any ambitions of obtaining an education. They were trained in cottage industry skills such as weaving, spinning, and lace making, in addition to their normal housekeeping responsibilities. This instruction was designed to help them provide for themselves and their children in times of adversity and need.

3.3. Women in Moghal period

With the arrival of Muslim dominance in India, women's status changed dramatically. Despite the loud denunciation of prominent saints and poets of the day, she had lost all of her previous status and her situation had deteriorated significantly. Due of her dread of alien culture, she was subjected to a lot of restrictions and forbearance.

Sati, which had been abandoned during the smriti period, had been progressively reintroduced and made compulsory in some sections of the country, including Rajasthan and colonial Bengal. Hindus were forbidden from marrying widows. Women were expected to discharge pativarta dharma in all of their commandments and practises. The degradation in the status of Hindu women during the Mughal empire was accelerated by a lack of educational opportunities for women, the practise of child marriage, the Dowry system, Sati ritual, prohibition of widow weddings, and other social and religious problems.

3.4. Women in British period

Women's socio-economic standing changed dramatically after the fall of the Mughal empire and the arrival of British authority in India. The British Administration had been roused by the social reform movement to emancipate women from inhumane societal evils. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, a great social reformer, backed and praised Lord Bentick, the Viceroy of British India, for abolishing Sati.

In answer to Gandhiji's exhortation, Indian women played a key part in the country's freedom movement. His message provided an opportunity for Indian women to break free from the burdens of the past. Women's economic rehabilitation and social change, according to Gandhiji, gave their involvement in the liberation movement much-needed content. Many women took part in the Swadeshi



movement, the Quit India movement, and the non-cooperation movement. Many of them succumbed to the assault of lathi charges and were sentenced to prison. During the liberation movement, women's struggles for equality and emancipation from oppressive societal practises and traditions made significant progress.

3.5. Women in Post-independence period.

Indian women hoped for more liberty and freedom after the country gained independence in 1947. They were adamant that they would be able to break free from a slew of religious, economic, and social taboos that had been unfairly imposed on them. Despite the Indian constitution's assurance that no one shall be discriminated against because of their gender, caste, creed, or religion, Indian women, on the whole, have not been granted a place of respect, status, or dignity. They are commonly thought of as serving as a servant, mother, and wife, as well as an older family member. Following independence, prominent women and other social reformers launched major efforts for women's equality and emancipation.

These movements aided women in gaining constitutional protections for equality, dignity, justice, peace, and prosperity. The eventual result of patriarchal culture is religious ideals and masculine dominance. As a result, unless patriarchal ideals and systems change, men's attitudes toward women will continue to be oppressive. However, by the end of the 1960s, the movement of women's emancipation had begun in earnest. Some of the restrictions to their development have been removed, allowing them to gradually participate in economic activities. It is hoped that a large proportion of women will be able to participate in various economic activities as a result of the spread of education and communication facilities, as well as a growing desire to live a better life, as a result of the liberalisation of traditional and social customs that have historically discriminated against them.

Conclusion

The status of women is explored from both a historical and contemporary standpoint. Women's historical status can be divided into five periods: the Vedic period, the Smriti period, the Mughal period, the British period, and the post-independence period. These are briefly explained. Political involvement is a hallmark of a democratic setup; the nature, success, and efficacy of democracy are mainly determined by the amount to which the system provides equitable, effective, and actual participation to all of its members. Women account for roughly half of the population, thus they deserve special attention in the system and a fair portion of the process. If women people do not have an equal opportunity to engage in governance, democracy will fail to achieve its goals. They are to be partners in nation-building and political growth on an equal footing.

References

1. Pande, Sneha Latha 'Political empowerment of women', journal of rural development Vol.4 December, 1997.
2. J.P. Singh 'Indian democracy and empowerment of women' Indian journal of Public Administration Vol. XLV1, October – December, 2000.
3. P. Eswaraiyah 'Reservation for women in parliament and legislation: an antidote to their Marginalization' social action Vol.53 April – June, 2003.
4. S.N. Sahu, N. Laxmi 'Indian journal of Public - Administration' Vol. 111, Jan-Mar 2005.
5. R. Limbadri 'Grass root democracy: the experience of Dalits in PRIs' Indian Journal of Public Administration, Vol. LIII, NO. 4, Oct.-Dec. 2007
6. Charanjeev Singh 'Diminishing male dominance and Resurgence of women leadership in PRIs: an empirical study of Himachal Pradesh' Indian Journal of Public Administration, Vol. LIII, No.2, April-June 2007.
7. Anil. S. Sutar 'The emerging women leadership – Panchayat's in Karnataka' social action Vol.58 January – March, 2007.
8. NipurTiwari 'Women in Panchayats' Indianjournal of Public Administration Vol. L1V, January – March, 2008.
9. Dr. K. Muthalagu 'Indian women in development perspective?' Kurukshetra Vol.52 September, 2008.