

**Status of Indian Women in Different Era: A Geographical Perspective**

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**Abstract:**

*The most important problem before the country today is the one created by population explosion. Due to the growth of population social, economical, and political problems are created. Because of growth of population both the under developed and developed countries face numerous problems. In the developing countries high rate of growth of population has become a hindrance to the development. Population growth can be either positive or negative and in the study of geography it is considered as change. This change is considered as total population variation, annual growth rate, percentage of decadal growth. In the present paper the status of female in different time zone. Geographically various changes in the status of the women in various time span in Indian continent.*

**Keywords:** *Indian Female, Vedic Period, Status etc.*

**Introduction:** Socio – Economic Status of Female during Historical Periods:

**Early Vedic Period**

It is claimed that female position was significantly better during the Vedic period than later periods. In the early Vedic period the women were comparatively more independent, thus they were free to participate in religious, economic, social and cultural activities of the time. They had moved toward to higher education. The marriage institution was also in good health. They were free to express and exercise their option in the selection of husband. Moreover, their position in the society and house of their husband was also good.

**The Later Vedic Period:**

After the foundation of the later Vedic period Female situation began to decline. Their movements and activities in the society began to be strained. The most powerful force behind this changing trend was positively religion.

**The Position of Female In Smritis:**

In the Smritis the position of Female is not good. They contain text which can command no respect from men who cherish the liberty of female as their own and who regard

her as the mother of the race. According to Manu, “There can be no freedom for female at any stage of her life that before marriage she must remain under the guidance of her parents, after marriage under that of her husband and in the event of her widowhood under that of her kids.

**Medieval Period:**

In Medieval period the position of Indian female were unhappy. Female could only marry once among Hindus while a man was allowed to have more than one wife. Among Muslims too this custom of polygamy prevailed. In large parts of the country female had to live behind the ‘PURDHA’. Female were mostly required to live within the premises of their houses to cook food and to feed and take care of their kids and other members of the family. The traditions of early marriage, and ‘SATI’ were really enormous. Some female of the character and personality also arise in the country, but they were exceptions to the general pattern, and did not any way change the image.

**Nineteenth Century:**

In 19<sup>th</sup> century, many individuals, reform society and religious organizations worked hard to spread education among female, to encourage widow remarriage, to improve the living condition of widows, to prevent marriages of young children to bring out of ‘PURDHA’, to enforce monogamy etc. the status of female was improving. Then the government passed some useful Acts such as Sati Abolition Act 1829.

**Twentieth Century:**

In the first section of the present century Mahatma Gandhi and many other enlightened men and women had worked for the uplift men of female. Female played an energetic role in the India's freedom fight back. Article 14 and 15 of the Indian constitution definite the complete equality of men and female. Completely conscious of the new period of independence they are living in, the Indian female are proudly entering into every sphere of human activity and are enriching it by their important contributions. Free India has her female Ambassadors cabinet ministers, M.L.A's, M.P's, Female judge, and magistrates, Teachers, Doctors etc.

**Socio – Economic Status of the Modern Indian Female**

Female in India have not only reached the uppermost position of power, have not only got equal political and civil rights as men without having to fight for them, they have been progressively more joining the higher ranks of government and the various other public services and acquitting themselves with credit.

When we start making an evaluation between the role and status of women in modern India and in the other countries of the world, particularly in the matter of freeing of female, we can't but be struck with positive unexpected contrasts. Till present day, the social and economic status of Indian female have been changed to significant extent but their condition is not yet suitable. Indian society has all along been a male dominated society, where the female's place has been primarily confined to the home, her role limited to procreation, upbringing of men folk by way of creature comforts.

A number of social and religious society, taboos, inhibitions, rituals etc. prevail in Indian society which comes in the way of female's freedom, education and work contribution and also other spheres of life. In Hindu religion, female, there is only one God, the husband, in whose choice mostly she has no voice. She has only one duty, unquestioning, obedience to her husband, unlimited services to him however low he may be morally or however, unfair his demands may be.

The role, status and position of females in India have been a subject of great concern to female, government and the public large science, the dawn of civilization. However it concerned a good deal of attention recently at the international level. Despite enormous efforts, a little has been achieved in bringing qualitative improvement in the female's development.

In Vedic age a female occupied a high position in society. She had equal rights with male and enjoyed freedom in choosing her life partner. Female went to Gurukula to receive education and married only after acquiring education. A female and her husband's equal partner and performed all religious ceremonies along with him. In joint family her authority was accepted and she had full liberty of action. Thus according to Dr. Anil Surya "Indian female played a more active economic role and participated in rituals, and girls in higher society were allowed to undergo the upanayana rite." Surya (2010).

During the post-Vedic age the position of female slowly began to deteriorate. Dr. Anil Surya sees the period from AD 500 to AD 1800 as one the progressive deteriorations in the position of female in the Indian Society.

With the coming of 'Manu code' in post – Vedic age, the Vedic tradition of husband and wife jointly taking part in religious functions slowly come to be rejected. Female's rights depended completely on her husband and he declared that she was not equal to males in her own right. A husband must be worshiped by a faithful wife as God. A married female was not allowed to do anything according to her own pleasures even in her dwelling place." When young she depends on her father, married on her husband, when old on her Son.

During this period, young person marriage became a common practice and female's education was neglected. The female were classed in the same category as 'Shudras'. During the Buddhist period, the status of female was to some extent better but from the 8<sup>th</sup> century onwards with the foreign invasions; the status of females again began to fall.

Since India's independence, several laws have been provided to ensure and protect the rights of female and to give them a good status in the society. The Indian constitution guarantees social justice and equality of status to its entire nation irrespective of social group, creed or sex. The maternity benefit Act, 1961, the factories Act, 1948, the equal remuneration Act 1976, is some of the Laws that protect status of the Indian female.

### **Socio - Economic Factors Female Role and Status -**

**A. Female Education** - Female education is one of the most important determinants of social development. The observations made by many researchers suggest that greater exposure of female to education has resulted in an increased shaping of responsibilities within the family, more continuous employment in jobs, lower fertility patterns and greater participation in social and political activities. Education is a major force in redefining female's role and status, (Gaikawad Surekha 2013).

**B. Female's Economic Participation** - According to the 1981 census of India only 14 percent of the total female population in the nation falls in the category of 'workers' were excluding the household work. General antipathy towards female's employment, responsibilities at home, traditional forms of job-discrimination, high male unemployment, female's work and earning being treated as subsidiary to that of man's absence of facility such as cheap eating facility, child care centers, safe transport are some of the major factors hindering the gainful utilization of female labor force.

Out of the total labor force of female 94 percent are in the unorganized sector only 6 percent are employed in the organized sector. Among female employed in the unorganized informed sector 80.1 percent are employed in agricultural occupation and 19.9 percent are in

the non agricultural occupations. Again out of the total female work force, only 2.7 percent were busy in the industrial sector and 3.3 percent found in services and professions (Gaikawad Surekha 2013)<sup>57</sup>.

**C. Female's Health Status** - Quality of health is another important determinant of social development. It is a key factor in the process of national development. Health is person's greatest possession. It is the source of his or her happiness. In terms of resources for socio-economic development, nothing can be considered of higher significance than the health of the people. An investment in health is an investment in human resource development, on which depends the national development. Development of health in terms of the quality of women's life is therefore imperative.

In spite of impressive progress in certain areas, female's healths have largely been neglected. A large amount of rural females has no access to health care all and for many of the rest what they receive does not alleviate their problem. It has been estimated that 80 percent of the poor urban female in India receive little medical care. Although the health status of female have improved considerably during the last 40 years particularly in the attainment of the basic health indicators, namely, reduction in maternal death rate from 4.8 (1976) to 3.5 (1986) and increase in life expectancy from 51.6 (1980) to 56.5 (1986), reduction in the female infant death rate from 148 (1972) to 100 (1985) and production of female power and so on.

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