

# History of indian women essay



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History of Indian Women In The Past And Today Introduction The status of women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennia. From a largely unknown status in ancient times through the low points of the medieval period, to the promotion of equal rights by many reformers, the history of women in India has been eventful. History There are very few texts specifically dealing with the role of women; an important exception is the *Strīdharmapaddhati* of Tryambakayajvan, an official at Thanjavur around C.

1730.

The text compiles strictures on womenly behaviour dating back to the *Apastamba sutra* (c. 4th c. BCE). The opening verse goes: *mukhyo dharmah smrtiShuAvihito bhartrA shushruShANam hi* : the primary duty of women is enjoined to be service to one's husband. where the term *shushruShA* (lit.

"desire to hear") covers a range of meanings from the devotee's homage to god, or the obsequious service of a slave. Ancient India Scholars believe that in ancient India, the women enjoyed equal status with men in all fields of life. However, some others hold contrasting views.

Works by ancient Indian grammarians such as Patanjali and Katyayana suggest that women were educated in the early Vedic period. Rigvedic verses suggest that the women married at a mature age and were probably free to select their husband.

Scriptures such as Rig Veda and Upanishads mention several women sages and seers, notably Gargi and Maitreyi. Some kingdoms in the ancient India

had traditions such as nagarvadhu (“ bride of the city”). Women competed to win the coveted title of the nagarvadhu. Amrapali is the most famous example of a nagarvadhu.

According to studies, women enjoyed equal status and rights during the early Vedic period.

However, later (approximately 500 B. C. , the status of women began to decline with the Smritis (esp. Manusmriti) and with the Islamic invasion of Babur and the Mughal empire and later Christianity curtailing women’s freedom and rights. sati Sati is an old, largely defunct custom, in which the widow was immolated alive on her husband’s funeral pyre. Although the act was supposed to be a voluntary on the widow’s part, it is believed to have been sometimes forced on the widow.

It was abolished by the British in 1829.

There have been around forty reported cases of sati since independence. In 1987, the Roop Kanwar case of Rajasthan led to The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act. Jauhar Jaunar refers to the practice of the voluntary immolation of all the wives and daughters of defeated warriors, in order to avoid capture and consequent molestation by the enemy. The practice was followed by the wives of defeated Rajput rulers, who are known to place a high premium on honour. Purdah Purdah is the practice of requiring women to cover their bodies so as to cover their skin and conceal their form.

It imposes restrictions on the mobility of women, it curtails their right to interact freely and it is a symbol of the subordination of women. It does not

reflect the religious teachings of either Hinduism or Islam, contrary to common belief, although misconception has occurred due to the ignorance and prejudices of religious leaders of both faiths. Devadasi is a religious practice in some parts of southern India, in which women are “married” to a deity or temple. The ritual was well established by the 10th century A. D.

In the later period, the illegitimate sexual exploitation of the devadasi’s became a norm in some parts of India.

Crimes against women Police records show high incidence of crimes against women in India. The National Crime Records Bureau reported in 1998 that the growth rate of crimes against women would be higher than the population growth rate by 2010. Earlier, many cases were not registered with the police due to the social stigma attached to rape and molestation cases. Official statistics show that there has been a dramatic increase in the number of reported crimes against women. edit] Sexual harassment Half of the total number of crimes against women reported in 1990 related to molestation and harassment at the workplace. Eve teasing is a euphemism used for sexual harassment or molestation of women by men.

Many activists blame the rising incidents of sexual harassment against women on the influence of “ Western culture”. In 1987, The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act was passed to prohibit indecent representation of women through advertisements or in publications, writings, paintings, figures or in any other manner.

In 1997, in a landmark judgement, the Supreme Court of India took a strong stand against sexual harassment of women in the workplace. The Court also laid down detailed guidelines for prevention and redressal of grievances. The National Commission for Women subsequently elaborated these guidelines into a Code of Conduct for employers.

Dowry Main articles: Dowry, Dowry death, and Dowry law in India In 1961, the Government of India passed the Dowry Prohibition Act, making the dowry demands in wedding arrangements illegal.

However, many cases of dowry-related domestic violence, suicides and murders have been reported. In the 1980s, numerous such cases were reported. In 1985, the Dowry Prohibition (maintenance of lists of presents to the bride and bridegroom) rules were framed. According to these rules, a signed list of presents given at the time of the marriage to the bride and the bridegroom should be maintained. The list should contain a brief description of each present, its approximate value, the name of whoever has given the present and his/ her relationship to the person. However, such rules are hardly enforced.

A 1997 report claimed that at least 5,000 women die each year because of dowry deaths, and at least a dozen die each day in 'kitchen fires' thought to be intentional. The term for this is "bride burning" and is criticized within India itself. Amongst the urban educated, such dowry abuse has reduced considerably. Child marriage Child marriage has been traditionally prevalent in India and continues to this day. Historically, young girls would live with their parents till they reached puberty.

In the past, the child widows were condemned to a life of great agony, shaving heads, living in isolation, and shunned by the society.

Although child marriage was outlawed in 1860, it is still a common practice. According to UNICEF's "State of the World's Children-2009" report, 47% of India's women aged 20-24 were married before the legal age of 18, with 56% in rural areas. The report also showed that 40% of the world's child marriages occur in India. Female infanticides and sex selective abortions

Main article: Sex-selective abortion and infanticide India has a highly masculine sex ratio, the chief reason being that many women die before reaching adulthood.

Tribal societies in India have a less masculine sex ratio than all other caste groups. This, in spite of the fact that tribal communities have far lower levels of income, literacy and health facilities. It is therefore suggested by many experts, that the highly masculine sex ratio in India can be attributed to female infanticides and sex-selective abortions. All medical tests that can be used to determine the sex of the child have been banned in India, due to incidents of these tests being used to get rid of unwanted female children before birth.

Female infanticide (killing of girl infants) is still prevalent in some rural areas. The abuse of the dowry tradition has been one of the main reasons for sex-selective abortions and female infanticides in India.

.. In today's time Women have built themselves nicely. Though it is gradually rising, the female literacy rate in India is lower than the male literacy rate.

Compared to boys, far fewer girls are enrolled in the schools, and many of them drop out. According to the National Sample Survey Data of 1997, only the states of Kerala and Mizoram have approached universal female literacy rates.

According to majority of the scholars, the major factor behind the improved social and economic status of women in Kerala is literacy. Under Non-Formal Education programme, about 40% of the centers in states and 10% of the centers in UTS are exclusively reserved for females. As of 2000, about 0.

3 million NFE centers were catering to about 7.2 million children, out of which about 0.12 million were exclusively for girls. In urban India, girls are nearly at par with the boys in terms of education. However, in rural India girls continue to be less educated than the boys.