

## 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY & CHALLENGES OF INDIAN WOMEN

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**Abstract** - For centuries anything that is considered inferior than ‘ Men ’ is only and only a ‘ Women ’. A women is the only entity on this earth who has to face hardship in every changing phase of her life be it a girl child, young girl, becoming wife and ultimately a mother. Why women have to go extra miles than men to prove themselves for being equivalent to men, why women have to struggle to establish their career, why women is considered to the only medium to make a family and keep them happy forever, if women goes through sexual harassment why women is blamed first and if that’s not enough why women is seen with intense scorn sight and become at higher risk of honor killing if they are involved in the love marriage or an inter caste love marriage. Women faces loads of challenges because of the continuing patriarchal society, deep rooted cultural norms and many more constraints in the Indian society.

The main purpose of this paper is to focus on key areas and challenges faced by women in the era of 21<sup>st</sup> century, where women are looking forward for equal opportunities in the society, accepting the challenges of balancing home and work, but there too gender bias, unequal pay, mental and sexual harassment are the key issues for women.

**Keywords :** Women, Gender bias, Sexual harassment, Challenges, Opportunities.

### Introduction

Gone are those days when taking birth as a woman in the Indian society was considered to be a curse, gone has the time when female infanticide was the most common practice of killing girl child in mother’s womb. By old tradition n Indian women has been

considered as home makers, but with changing times, government awareness programmes, higher education and mainly due to higher living standards and increasing financial demands of a family in 21<sup>st</sup> century women has stepped out to choose their own career.

In this era of 21<sup>st</sup> century women is considered to be backbone of the society, today without women’s participation in national, social, economical and in political activities, progress of the country will come to standstill. Though women have stepped out their homes to make their career but still several issues and challenges come their way, we hereby discuss major challenges of women in brief ahead.

### Gender Biases

An Indian women experience the gender biases in a very stage of their life, because Indian society supports male dominance in all the important and challenging tasks and women are considered to be weak and capable of bearing lesser work pressure which reflects even in today’s 21<sup>st</sup> century work place. In today’s time too women potential and capabilities are underestimated when it comes to their recruitment, salary, and promotion. Women from today’s era live their independence on a superficial level, because many of them have to give their salaries to their husband, father-in-law or any elder member of the family, in such an arrangement the so called independent working woman has to still be dependent on somebody.

### Mental & Sexual Harassment

With an ambition to achieve success in corporate sector, women struggle to do better than their male

counterparts leading higher expectations from their bosses. This struggle creates mental strain aiming more success at the same time to balance home and work place and in midst of their struggle stands the biggest insecurity of their superior or subordinates asking for sexual favors in return of growth and promotions.

Women's safety and its issues are discussed and debated all around the globe. Still every year the number of reports on sexual harassment is increasing at an alarming rate. In the past decade, women have progressively earned a higher standard in the workplace. Women are now gaining higher positions and form a big/huge section of any working sector around the globe. Women now are more independent in every sense. They are competent enough to take care of themselves and their families. They are more able to make their own life choices and live on their terms. However, everyday women are mistreated in the workplace by their co-workers. According to the survey, 81 percent of women have faced some form of sexual harassment in their lives. Sexual harassment can lead to anxiety, depression, lower self-esteem, alienation, and overall degradation of their physical and mental health. It's a disturbing fact that women at work still face sexual harassment, which is why many of them even quit their jobs.

Organizations need to come up with tactics and ideas which suit them best to ensure women's safety in the workplace, they must have a sexual harassment policy and it could vary with the demographic and types of harassment one faces in the organizations. Sexual harassment and degradation of women in the workplace is not a recent story. It is prevailing in the world for decades. As a part of society, we must make a healthy and safe environment for our women in the workplace.

### Losing Personal Space

In an hassle of maintaining balance between families and career an Indian working women gets restless, they try to increase their working power which leads to lack of sleep and other health problems. Due to lack of support and help they feel isolated their frustration is at rise and ultimately they have to go

through many emotional and psychological problems. They don't have time for themselves and are unable to share their feeling which gives them a feel of immense lack of personal space. In this state of mind they are left with two options, either to accept depression as a part of life or else to give up their job.

### Women Empowerment and Constitution of India

Makers of our India's Constitution were very much determined to give equal rights to both women and men and for which our Constitution is considered to be one of the finest equality documents in the world. Variety of documents in the Constitution uphold women's rights by putting them at par with men socially, politically and economically providing necessities to secure equality in general and gender equality in particular. The Preamble, the Fundamental Rights, DPSPs and other constitutional provisions provide several general and special safeguards to secure women's human rights.

Isn't it a curious thing that in the initial years of Indian politics, the idea of women as political equals of men was the norm and not deviance? Even when stuffy ideas threatened to seep in and undermine equal suffrage, Indian polity stood united on the fundamental ideas about equal rights. Almost a century after Indian provincial legislatures voted for equal suffrage—the women's movement in India had been fighting for suffrage since 1917—we're still debating the number of women in our state legislatures and Parliament, who belongs and who does not. In December 1946, a newly formed constituent assembly came together to debate and drafts a constitution for a soon-to-be independent India. The debate took place over two years, 11 months, and 17 days. It was an extraordinary project—an experiment that would determine the ability of a country to govern itself. Among the 299 members of the assembly, 15 were women who had either been voted or chosen to represent their provinces, who left their mark on the making of the republic. The assembly was a platform from which they could assert their equality and craft a politically balanced republic.

## Conclusion

Women's first step towards her own development takes forwards her family first, it moves forward with her village, city and makes the nation move forward in full strength. Hence its important that women thoughts, their value leads to the development of a good family, society and certainly a good nation, which would be possible by their induction in the mainstream of nation's development. The real Women Empowerment will come to effective only if they are endowed monetary, property wise to make themselves independent to build their own individual identity in the society. At national level and international level there are many efforts taken to empower women and raise its significance in 21<sup>st</sup> century, but that's not sufficient even the society has to create an atmosphere in which there is no gender discrimination, space of women self decision is given will lot more opportunities with their open participation in political, social and economical segments of the nation.

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