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PANORAMA OF SOUTH ASIAN  
CULTURE LITERATURE AND SOCIETY

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## Condition and Development of Women in Independent India

Supratim Sengupta\*

### Introduction

Swami Vivekananda said, "The best thermometer to the progress of a nation is its treatment of its woman." Without women nothing is possible for men. A woman is the basic unit of society. She makes family, family makes a home, home makes a society and ultimately society makes a country. A country cannot progress until its women take initiatives for development works. Swami Vivekananda has also said, "It is impossible to think about the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved."

The status of women in India has been subjected to great change over the past years. The status of women—social, economic, political and general—in India today is much higher than in ancient and medieval periods. Though the status of women has been raised in the eyes of law, but they are still much far from equality with males.

Theoretically the condition of modern women is high however practically it is low. Women's are still exploited and humiliated in modern Indian Society.

Women in the field of education.

### Growth of women education :

Census year	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
%	8.86	15.35	21.97	29.76	39.29	54.16	65.46

Source : Census of India, 2011.

After Independence, women of India took to education in a relatively large number. For example in 1901, the literary level of the females in India was just 0.6 per cent, it increased to 39.29 per cent in 1991 and to 54.1 in 2001 and 65.46 in 2011. Various

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benefits such as free-ship, scholarship, loan facility, hostel facility etc. are being given to women who go for higher education in many towns and cities, educational institutions meant only for female children have been established.

The educational performance of girl students particularly at high school and college level is providing to be better than that of boys especially after 1980. We have today some universities exclusively meant for women. Girl students are getting admitted on merit basis to the prestigious engineering and medical colleges in a relatively bigger number during recent years.

There are hundreds of women editors, journalists and columnists in the land who are performing meritorious services.

### Women in Political Fields

The Indian constitution has provided women two important political rights—female enfranchisement and eligibility for the legislature. After the independence, the number of women voters and women representatives in Assemblies and Parliament has increased sufficiently. In central cabinet and at the level of state cabinet we find some ministerial portfolios being headed by women. The Nation witnessed in Smt. Indira Gandhi, one of the powerful prime minister who gave her leadership to the country for more than a decade. There are many women members and chairmen of local bodies and legislatures. By their sheer ability and capacity for hard work, Indian women can now exert their influence in every sphere of human activity. They have already demonstrated that they can successfully discharge their duties as an administrator, ministers, and ambassadors and so on. However it may be noted that political awareness is present more among the upper and middle class women than the lower class women. Praibha Paul, the first women President, Meira Kumar, the Speaker of Lok Sabha, Smt. Mamata Banerjee, the Chief Minister of West Bengal are great examples of women's progress in India.

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