

Indian Journal of Modern Research and Reviews

This Journal is a member of the '*Committee on Publication Ethics*'

Online ISSN:2584-184X

Research Article



A Review of the Status of Indian Women Academics

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19850798>

Abstract

This research examines the current situation of Indian women academics in higher education, highlighting their responsibilities, contributions, challenges, and representation in the sector. Despite the fact that more women are enrolling in postsecondary education programs, they are still disproportionately underrepresented in senior academic and administrative positions. In order to analyse the status of Indian women academics, the study used qualitative research methods, including article reviews. The primary research findings indicate that lack of institutional support, work-life balance issues, and gender bias are some of the main challenges experienced by Indian women academics.

Manuscript Information

- **ISSN No:** 2584-184X
- **Received:** 26-03-2026
- **Accepted:** 23-04-2026
- **Published:** 28-04-2026
- **MRR:4(4); 2026:** 237-239
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- **Plagiarism Checked:** Yes
- **Peer Review Process:** Yes

How to Cite this Article

Katiyar K. A Review of the Status of Indian Women Academics. Indian J Mod Res Rev. 2026;4(4):237-239.

Access this Article Online



www.mrrjournal.in

KEYWORDS: Indian Women Academics, Academic Challenges, Work-Life Balance.

1. INTRODUCTION

The academic adventures of Indian women are characterized by a resolute and steadfast quest of knowledge despite societal and cultural obstacles. Women's access to education was previously restricted in India because formal education was mostly available to men. A slow transformation started throughout the colonial era. The first Indian girls' school was founded in Pune in 1848 by pioneers like Savitribai Phule, who is recognized as the nation's first female teacher, and her husband Jyotirao Phule. Around this same period, women started to show up in higher education as well, but in lower numbers.

Early in the 20th century, notable achievements were made by women who broke down boundaries, such as Kamini Roy, the first female honors graduate in British India. Cornelia Sorabji, the first female graduate of Bombay University and the first woman to study law at Oxford University, trailblazed after her. Anandibai Joshi was among the first Indian women to earn a degree in Western medicine from a foreign university in 1886. Since the country's independence, the Indian government has established a number of initiatives to promote women's education because it is crucial to its economic growth. The 1950 Indian Constitution guarantees everyone, regardless of gender, equal protection under the law and equality before the

law. The elimination of gender disparities in education was the aim of programs and policies such as the National Policy on Education (1986) and its subsequent revisions. Throughout this time, there was a noticeable growth in the number of female students enrolled in schools and other higher education institutions. Indian women scholars now form an essential element of the academic system and make substantial contributions to a wide range of subject areas. Female enrolment in higher education was 49% in the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2019–20, a significant increase over earlier decades. Academic leadership is increasingly held by women, as seen by the notable contributions made by a large number of female vice-chancellors, deans, and professors.

and evaluation of the situation of Indian women academics in higher education. This means evaluating their participation, obligations, difficulties, and contributions in learning environments. The goal of the research is to identify the factors that are driving and impeding their professional development and to offer recommendations for enhancing gender parity in higher education.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To provide a comprehensive picture of the position of Indian women in academia, the research will use a qualitative methodology.

Statistical Information on the Position of Women in India

The purpose of this study is to present a comprehensive analysis

Parameters	Data
Total Female Population (2021)	Approximately 662.9 million, constituting around 48.04% of the total population (World Bank, 2021)
Female Literacy Rate (2011 Census)	70.3%
Gender Parity Index for Primary Education (2020)	1.03, indicating slightly more girls than boys are enrolled in primary education (UNESCO)
Female Enrollment in Higher Education (2018-19)	Women constitute 48.6% of total enrollments in higher education (AISHE, Ministry of Education, Government of India)
Maternal Mortality Ratio (2016-18)	113 deaths per 100,000 live births (Sample Registration System, Government of India).
Life Expectancy at Birth (2021)	71.0 years for women (World Bank)
Sex Ratio at Birth (2019-21)	929 females per 1,000 males (Sample Registration System, Government of India)
Female Labour Force Participation Rate (2021)	20.3% (World Bank)
Gender Pay Gap	Women earn 19% less than men on average (Monster Salary Index, 2019)
Women in Agriculture	Women constitute about 37% of the agricultural workforce (NSSO, 2019)
Women in National Parliament (2021)	Women hold 14.4% of the seats in the Lok Sabha (lower house of Parliament) (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021)
Dowry Deaths (2020)	6,966 reported cases (National Crime Records Bureau, NCRB)
Crimes Against Women (2020)	A total of 371,503 reported cases, including domestic violence, rape, and trafficking (NCRB).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Due to socioeconomic, cultural, and political influences, women's status in India has changed dramatically over the years. This literature review aims to explore the historical and contemporary status of women in India by examining scholarly articles, government reports, and sociological studies. It covers the historical context, socio-economic factors, education and health, cultural norms, political participation, legal frameworks, and contemporary developments.

Historical Context

There have been times of both veneration and suppression for women in India. The Vedas and Upanishads, two ancient Indian writings, highlight the responsibilities that women played in education and spiritual growth. However, over time, patriarchal norms became dominant, with texts like the Manusmriti codifying restrictions on women's freedoms. Practices such as purdah and sati during the medieval period further limited women's rights (Sharma, 2016).

Socio-Economic Factors

Although there has been progress, gender inequality still poses a threat to women's socioeconomic standing in India. After independence, women's rights were improved by legal reforms.

that include the Hindu Code Bill. However, the female labour force participation rate is still low, influenced by socio-cultural barriers and safety concerns. According to the World Bank (2021), only 20.3% of Indian women were part of the labour force in 2020, reflecting the ongoing challenges in achieving gender parity in employment.

Education and Health

Health and education are important determinants of women's status. The female literacy rate has increased from 8.6% in 1951 to 70.3% in 2011 (Census of India, 2011). Despite this progress, there is a significant gender gap in education, especially in rural areas. Health indicators have also improved, with reductions in maternal mortality rates due to initiatives like the National Rural Health Mission. However, issues such as malnutrition and limited access to healthcare services continue to affect women disproportionately (Jejeebhoy & Xavier, 2017).

Cultural Norms and Practices

In India, cultural traditions have a significant impact on women's status. Women's responsibilities in the home and in society are still determined by patriarchal thinking and customs. The dowry system, although illegal, remains prevalent and contributes to domestic violence and female foeticide. Despite

legal advancements, changing deep-seated cultural attitudes has been slow (Chowdhury, 2019).

Political Participation and Representation

In India, women's political participation has gradually increased. Increased participation at the local level has been made possible by the Panchayati Raj system's seat reservation for women in local governance. However, their representation in higher political offices is limited, with societal biases and a lack of support acting as significant barriers. As of 2021, women held only 14.4% of the seats in the national parliament (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021).

Legal Framework and Gender Rights

India has enacted several laws to protect and promote women's rights, including the Domestic Violence Act, 2005, and the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013. While these laws signify progress, their implementation remains inconsistent, often failing to provide adequate protection and justice for women (Agnes, 2019).

Contemporary Developments

India's continuous fight for gender equality has been brought to light by recent campaigns and initiatives. The #MeToo movement has brought attention to sexual harassment and assault, sparking widespread dialogue and demands for accountability. Government programs like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao aim to combat gender biases and promote female empowerment. Despite these efforts, achieving true gender equality remains a complex challenge (Kapur, 2020).

4. CONCLUSION

The status of women in India is a reflection of both sustained progress and enduring problems. Reforms in the law and socioeconomic programs have made progress possible, but systemic obstacles and deeply ingrained cultural norms still stand in the way of gender equality. Sustained efforts in education, legal enforcement, cultural transformation, and economic empowerment are essential to ensure that women in India can achieve their full potential and contribute equally to society.

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