

## WOMEN IN SOCIETY

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### ABSTRACT

The changes that have taken place in the position of women in society have been tremendous and cannot be denied. Women have come a long way from being submissive to independent. In modern times, women are more confident than ever before. They are also more aware of what they can do to change their lives and make them better. They are now earning equal pay, having equal opportunities to climb the ladders in their careers, and pursuing hobbies that were once reserved for men only. By comparison, women in the medieval world were not as independent or as self-aware. They also weren't as prevalent in society as they are today. But even after many years of development women are still not treated as an equal to men. But do women in all gender aspects, really enjoy better status in society today than they did in medieval times?

**Keywords:** Women, Society, Development.

### INTRODUCTION

Who are women and what part do they tend to play in a society governed by rules, customs, norms, and principles that determine what is acceptable and unacceptable in any given society? The ideologies a society tends to hold in place and practice alongside are referred to as social values that express what is morally right and/or wrong in a particular society. The influence of social values on gender roles has been very prevalent among women and even trans-women that were given legal status by the legislation that had been passed in 2019. Some cultures have developed a concentrated preference toward certain gender roles in their community over many decades. This is not to say that people who opt for such roles voluntarily are bad; rather, it emphasizes how various societies in different parts of the world value men's and women's work differently.

Women are expected to tend to the needs of their families, while men are supposed to take care of everything else. Women have been fighting for their rights in society for the longest amount of time and yet a gap between the genders persists. If an explanation is to be

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demanded, sociologists would have to analyze the worldly aspect of the possibility that it arises from countries where there are traditions and rules about gender roles presumed for centuries. In most societies, women are second-class citizens. In some societies, women are expected to carry out domestic tasks, whereas, in others, they are expected to not even perform such chores at home. In the current period, women in developing countries continue to face social discrimination and injustices. While they keep advocating for certain rights, there are still many aspects that are not yet addressed.

## **WOMEN IN ANCIENT TIMES**

Throughout history, all societies have had many different roles for each sex, but those roles have changed over time. Women in particular have undergone several changes in their daily lives and roles during the centuries. Among multiple changes that have occurred, there is one common factor across history; the position of women has been historically lower than that of men. Women in ancient times were often relegated to domestic duties, but many examples show that they could have much more. In ancient society, women always held several important roles. They were often revered as powerful priestesses, healers, and nurturers. One thousand years ago, the status of women was much higher than it is today. The first reference to this was found in ancient Egypt. Men were treated differently from women, or even; women were treated as much as equal to men. Ancient Egypt's women enjoyed exemplary rights such as the right to own properties, and the capacity to acquire wealth through work, outside the home.<sup>1</sup> They also enjoyed great protection under the law.

Women's roles varied depending on which culture they resided in; however, they were always respected and valued for their contributions to society. As the world entered the medieval period, women's rights began to deteriorate across Europe and Asia, due to the increasing secularization of government and increase in religious influence, such as Christianity, on society. Women became increasingly subjugated to male authority figures such as fathers and/or husbands. The few exceptions included widows who inherited wealth from their deceased spouses.

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<sup>1</sup> Kemal Yildirim-“Women of Ancient World”(2017)

## A SOCIOLOGICAL ASPECT

The study of the place of women in society, especially the rights and opportunities open to them, was originally termed "sociology" but has come to be more commonly called "women's studies". Society is an environment in which people interact with each other. However, the society in the world today is not gender-balanced and it has been like that for a long time. Women are often under-represented in politics, business, and other fields of life. The reason for such is that, historically, with Egyptian times as an exception, women have not had the right to vote, own property, make or enter into contracts or be able to voice out or participate in societal affairs. This lack of rights has resulted in many other disadvantages for them. Women are also more likely to work in jobs with lower pay, and less likely to be working full-time than men.<sup>2</sup> This gender gap has persisted in many more different aspects for decades and remains.

## ROLE OF WOMEN

### *Medieval period*

Women took on many different roles during the Middle Ages than in today's society. The medieval era was a time when women played a major role in society and often were also thought of as being equal to men. However, even though women in medieval times were seen as equals to men, they did have some special restrictions imposed on them by the church and other powerful figures in society. In the medieval period, the role of women was to stay in the house and take care of children, and do other household chores. They were expected to be wives and mothers. Women were not allowed to go outside without a male family member accompanying them in some societies. Women were considered weak beings that needed protection from the harsh world outside. Women's opportunities increased in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when society started turning away from religion and more toward secularism. The idea that men and women should be treated equally became more popularized in everyday life and women started gaining more rights, such as educational opportunities. They started to gain more basic rights in society such as a job, pay, and a voice. Along with women, the entire society started gaining knowledge and education. But with every gain, there is a price to pay. Women were fired from their jobs when they became pregnant. Their families had to pay a dowry for their daughter to get married to a man. When women didn't marry or become nuns

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.psmag.com/politics-and-society/women-in-society>

because of their family's wishes, they would usually work in the textile industry or the sex industry.

### ***Present period***

The role of women in society has changed throughout history. With the introduction of new laws, attitudes towards gender have shifted drastically, but still, progress is slow. The fact remains that there are many other aspects of life for women that are unequal to men; everything from wages to healthcare coverage, and no laws passed directly address these issues. Women have been a central part of society. They have played a major role in every sector of human activity from business to politics, law, and much more. Many examples have been set by various remarkable women who've accomplished numerous things for society as well as multiple contributions have been made. They have been able to pave their way in an environment that was not so welcoming at one point in time. Women today are not only seen as homemakers but also as breadwinners. They are very ambitious, proficient, and capable of doing anything they set their minds to. They still have a hard time in the workforce. They are not given enough credit for their work and are often overlooked when it comes to promotions.

### **TREATMENT OF WOMEN IN A SOCIETY**

There are many ways society treats a woman. Women's involvement in society has drastically changed over many centuries. Each society is different, but there are common threads that remain constant even now. They do not get equal pay for equal work, and this has been true for ages.<sup>3</sup> They often deal with sexual harassment or assault because of their gender. Women face sexism in their workplace and other aspects of life because of the way they were born or raised.<sup>4</sup> This can lead to depression which can result in self-harming behaviors or suicide.<sup>5</sup> The media usually portrays women as objects instead of subjects because it is more profitable to present them that way. Treatment of women may have altered over time. In past, women were seen as a possession, not able to make any decisions of their life on their own, but, nowadays they are seen as equals to men and have the freedom to do what they want with their lives. Progress in society is visible by looking back on history.

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<sup>3</sup> Goldman 229

<sup>4</sup> Moynihan 296

<sup>5</sup> Brennan 90

Although certain issues still exist today, they are gradually getting better with time. Protection for girls and women was not always a concern back then- it was common for them to be abused or killed, often as a result of the man's decision. And it wasn't until recent times when morals and social values kicked into the race that marriage to a man became a matter of love, no obligation.

**A New Gender: Transwomen-** To begin with, defining a transgender person, they are individuals who do not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth. Transwomen are women who live with the sex they identify with. In our society, a place for transwomen has been made in the recent century, starting from millennials, awareness that such a gender persists was created. Afterward, the opportunity to interact with people of this gender role. To respect who they are, that they are people like anyone else in every aspect and as long as they desire to live according to their personal choice, is and should be acceptable by all of us irrespective of our religious or social backgrounds or belief.

Their identity and choice of lifestyle are private or public of their own will and aren't open to feedback by any minds. A mental social block still exists in many regarding a third gender where they portray as a gender irrespective of their biological anatomy. Based on the 2019 adoption in the constitution, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 restricts any form of *“discrimination against transgender people in educational establishment and services, employment, healthcare services, access to the “use of any goods, accommodation, service, facility, benefit, privilege or opportunity dedicated to the use of the general public or customarily available to the public”, the right to movement, the right to “reside, purchase, rent or otherwise occupy any property”, the opportunity to stand for or hold public or private office, and in government or private establishments.”*

For media to have any conversion about a person based upon the sexual orientation they define as, is currently not in their cards to play, at least not without any visible consequences from one's society. Transwomen often do not have access to the same privileges that cisgender women have. These privileges could include having a job, going to school, or buying clothes for example. At every point of their life, they are at risk of multiple incidents such as being fired from their jobs, harassed by their classmates or teachers, and/or even being put in danger while out shopping. This issue arises mainly because transwomen are generally seen as men dressing up as women, which causes them to face discrimination from society due to their mindsets.

## CONCLUSION

Women are the start and end of life. Over centuries the gender has been through an immense amount of struggles and faced many hardships to earn their rightful and equal place in society. The issues haven't been resolved but ideas and views have been changed over time and are still dynamic. As long as there is a human race, women will continue to be an integral part of it. Whether a woman by birth or a woman by choice, all of them deserve their rightful place in this world, no matter how a person identifies themselves as. We need to learn how to live with them and help them flourish as the gender still struggles with their rights and place in society.



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