



Women Rights and Fight for

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ABSTRACT :

The fight for women's rights has been a long and ongoing struggle, marked by significant milestones and achievements as well as ongoing challenges. Women's rights encompass a wide range of issues including but not limited to political, social, economic, and cultural rights. Historically, women have faced discrimination in legal systems around the world, leading to the development of specific laws and regulations aimed at addressing gender inequality and promoting gender equity. This includes laws related to women's rights in areas such as employment, reproductive rights, domestic violence, and more. In employment, laws have been enacted to combat gender discrimination, ensure equal pay, and promote workplace diversity and inclusion, reflecting the ongoing battle against the persistent gender pay gap and barriers to women's economic advancement. Reproductive rights have been fiercely defended and contested, with landmark legal cases and policies securing the right to access contraception and safe abortion services, while facing continuous challenges and opposition in various regions. Domestic violence laws have been strengthened globally, aiming to protect women from gender-based violence and provide necessary support and resources for survivors. Efforts continue to be made to ensure that laws are fair and just for women in all societies, recognizing the intersectional nature of gender discrimination that affects women differently based on race, class, sexuality, and other factors. Despite significant progress, the fight for women's rights remains a dynamic and evolving struggle, requiring constant vigilance and advocacy to safeguard and advance the gains made, address emerging issues, and strive towards genuine gender equality and equity across all aspects of life. The review article presents a comprehensive overview of women's rights and their ongoing struggles for equality. It explores the historical roots of the women's rights movement, key legal advancements, and the persistent social and economic challenges women face. The article also delves into cultural influences, the impact of feminism, and the importance of intersectionality in understanding diverse women's experiences. Highlighting global perspectives, it compares the status of women's rights across different regions and examines international efforts to promote gender equality. The review concludes by addressing current issues and future directions, emphasizing the crucial role of activism and advocacy in advancing women's rights.

Keywords Gender discrimination, gender identity, social justice, women status, women's rights.

The struggle for women's rights has been a historic journey marked by perseverance, resilience, and ongoing challenges. From the suffragette movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries demanding voting rights to contemporary battles for equal pay and reproductive autonomy, women have continuously fought against systemic oppression and discrimination. Across the globe, women have mobilized to dismantle barriers, challenge social norms, and secure legal protections that affirm their dignity and equality. This fight is not just about securing individual freedoms but about transforming societies to recognize and embrace the full spectrum of women's contributions and capabilities. Despite significant progress in many areas, the quest for gender equality remains unfinished, necessitating continued advocacy, policy reforms, and societal shifts to ensure that every woman can live free from discrimination and fulfil her potential.

Netflix indeed offers a vast library of content in multiple languages and is available internationally, catering to diverse tastes and preferences. If someone interested in historical movies and series focusing on women's positions in different societies, here are a few recommendations from various regions that highlight these themes:

1. India:

- **"The Great Indian Kitchen"** - A contemporary film highlighting the everyday struggles and systemic gender discrimination faced by women in traditional Indian households.
- **"Razia Sultan"** - A historical drama about Razia Sultan, the only female ruler of the Delhi Sultanate.

2. China:

- **"Mulan"** - Both the animated classic and the live-action adaptation tell the story of a young woman who defies gender norms to save her country.

- **"The Empress of China"** - A TV series that portrays the life of Wu Zetian, the only female emperor in Chinese history.
3. **Dutch:**
- **"A Noble Intention"** - A historical drama set in 1888 Amsterdam, touching on the social issues and struggles faced by women in that era.
4. **British:**
- **"The Crown"** - A critically acclaimed series that, among other themes, explores the role of women in the British monarchy and society.
 - **"Suffragette"** - A film about the early feminist movement in the UK, focusing on the women who fought for the right to vote.
5. **Global:**
- **"Hidden Figures"** - An American film about three African-American women mathematicians who worked at NASA and played a crucial role in the space race, highlighting both racial and gender discrimination.
 - **"The Handmaid's Tale"** - While fictional and set in a dystopian future, it offers a powerful commentary on women's rights and societal roles.

These films and series provide insight into the historical and ongoing challenges faced by women in worldwide societies and culture. The history of women's rights is a rich and complex narrative, marked by significant milestones and movements across the world. Here is an overview of some key periods and events:

Ancient Period

Ancient Egypt

- **Property Rights:** Women in ancient Egypt had the right to own and manage property. They could inherit property from their parents and had equal rights to land ownership.
- **Legal Rights:** Egyptian women could enter into contracts, initiate divorce, and represent themselves in legal matters.
- **Social Roles:** Women often held significant religious and political roles, including positions like priestesses and even pharaohs (e.g., Hatshepsut and Cleopatra).

Ancient Greece

- **Limited Rights:** Women in most Greek city-states, especially Athens, had limited legal rights. They were typically excluded from political life and were under the guardianship of male relatives.
- **Domestic Sphere:** Women's primary roles were confined to the household, managing domestic affairs and raising children.
- **Exceptions:** In Sparta, women had more freedom and were encouraged to engage in physical training, own property, and participate in public life to some extent.

Ancient Rome

- **Patriarchal Society:** Roman society was patriarchal, and women were under the authority of their fathers or husbands.
- **Legal Rights:** Roman women had limited legal rights but could own property and run businesses with the consent of their male guardians.
- **Marriage and Family:** Marriage was often arranged, and women were expected to bear and raise children. However, Roman law also provided some protection and rights in marriage, including the right to divorce.

Ancient India

- **Vedic Period:** Women enjoyed relatively higher status and could participate in religious ceremonies, receive education, and choose their husbands (Swayamvara).
- **Post-Vedic Period:** Women's status declined, with stricter controls over their rights and increased emphasis on their roles as daughters, wives, and mothers.
- **Law Codes:** Ancient texts like Manusmriti codified the subordination of women, restricting their legal and social freedoms.

Medieval Period

Europe

- **Feudal System:** Women's rights and status were largely determined by their social class. Noblewomen had some influence and could own land, while peasant women had fewer rights and worked alongside men in agricultural labour.
- **Legal Restrictions:** Women were generally excluded from political power and formal legal proceedings. Their legal status was often tied to their husbands or fathers.
- **Religious Influence:** The Catholic Church played a significant role in shaping women's roles, often emphasizing their subordination and promoting ideals of chastity and piety.

Islamic World

- **Early Islam:** Islamic law (Sharia) granted women rights to inheritance, education, and participation in public life. The Quran and Hadiths provided guidelines for women's rights and status.

- **Medieval Islamic Societies:** Women's rights varied widely across regions. In some areas, women held significant cultural and intellectual roles, such as in the courts of Islamic Spain and the Abbasid Caliphate.

Asia

- **China:** Women's status fluctuated across different dynasties. Confucian ideals promoted women's subordination to male family members, but some women wielded significant power, such as Empress Wu Zetian during the Tang Dynasty.
- **Japan:** In early Japan, women held relatively high status and could inherit property. However, during the feudal period, women's rights diminished, and they became more confined to domestic roles.

Africa

- **Matrilineal Societies:** In many African societies, lineage and inheritance were traced through the mother's line, granting women significant social and economic roles.
- **Varied Status:** Women's roles and rights varied widely across different African cultures and kingdoms, with some women serving as queens and political leaders.

The ancient and medieval periods were marked by diverse and evolving attitudes toward women's rights and positions in society.

18th and 19th Centuries: Historical milestones

- **Enlightenment Era:** Philosophers like Mary Wollstonecraft argued for women's education and equality in her seminal work "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" (1792).
- **Early Suffrage Movements:** The Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, organized by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, was a significant event in the U.S. advocating for women's right to vote.

Early 20th Century: Suffrage Achieved

- **United States:** The 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ratified in 1920, granted women the right to vote.
- **United Kingdom:** The Representation of the People Act 1918 allowed women over 30 to vote, with full suffrage achieved in 1928.
- **Other Countries:** Many other countries granted women's suffrage during this period, including New Zealand (1893), Australia (1902), and Finland (1906).

Mid-20th Century: Expanding Rights

- **World Wars:** Women's roles in the workforce during World War I and II challenged traditional gender roles and laid the groundwork for future rights.
- **Civil Rights Movements:** The feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s, often referred to as the second wave of feminism, focused on issues such as reproductive

Late 20th Century: Ongoing Struggles and Achievements

1960s and 1970s: Second-Wave

- **Key Issues:** The second wave of feminism focused on a wide range of issues, including workplace equality, reproductive rights, sexual liberation, and legal inequalities.
- **Notable Legislation:**
 - ❖ **Equal Pay Act (1963):** Aimed to abolish wage disparity based on sex in the United States.
 - ❖ **Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (1964):** Prohibited employment discrimination based on race, colour, religion, sex, or national origin.
 - ❖ **Roe v. Wade (1973):** The U.S. Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion nationwide.
- **Key Figures:** Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem, Angela Davis, and others who pushed for radical changes in societal norms and laws.

1980s and 1990s: Institutional and Global Advocacy

- **Violence Against Women:** Increased awareness and legal action against domestic violence, marital rape, and sexual harassment.
- ❖ **Violence Against Women Act (1994):** Provided funding for investigation and prosecution of violent crimes against women and established the Office on Violence Against Women in the U.S.
- **Global Efforts:**
 - ❖ **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW):** Adopted by the UN in 1979, it became an international bill of rights for women, setting an agenda for national action to end discrimination.
 - ❖ **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995):** A comprehensive policy agenda for women's empowerment, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Early 21st Century: Continuing Progress and New Challenges

2000s: Expanding Legal Protections and Rights

- **Reproductive Rights:** Continued legal battles over access to contraception and abortion. Emergency contraception became more widely available.
- **Workplace Equality:** Efforts to close the gender pay gap and combat workplace discrimination continued.
- ❖ **Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act (2009):** Extended the time period for employees to file claims of pay discrimination.

2010s: Social Movements and Technological Impact

- **#MeToo Movement:** Sparked by revelations of widespread sexual harassment and assault, the movement led to increased accountability for perpetrators and changes in workplace policies and public discourse.
- **Legal Reforms:** Many countries enacted stronger laws against sexual harassment and violence.
- ❖ **Reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (2013):** Included new protections for Native American women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and immigrants.
- **Political Representation:** An increase in women running for and being elected to political offices worldwide, with some countries implementing gender quotas.

2020s: Ongoing Efforts and Emerging Issues

- **Reproductive Rights:** Continued challenges, particularly in the U.S., with debates over abortion laws and access.
- ❖ **Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization (2022):** The U.S. Supreme Court decision that overturned Roe v. Wade, significantly impacting abortion rights.
- **Workplace and Economic Equality:** The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted disparities, with women disproportionately affected by job losses and increased caregiving responsibilities.
- ❖ Efforts to implement policies supporting work-life balance, such as paid family leave and flexible work arrangements.
- **Global Advocacy:**
- ❖ **Generation Equality Forum (2021):** Organized by UN Women, it aimed to accelerate gender equality efforts globally.
- ❖ **#HeForShe Campaign:** Launched by UN Women to engage men and boys in advocating for gender equality.

Key Areas of Focus Moving Forward

- **Intersectionality:** Addressing how different aspects of identity (race, class, sexuality, etc.) intersect to impact women's experiences and rights.
- **Climate Change:** Recognizing the gendered impacts of climate change and advocating for women's leadership in environmental sustainability.
- **Digital Rights:** Ensuring women's safety and equality in the digital sphere, including issues of online harassment, access to technology, and representation in tech industries.
- **Healthcare Access:** Advocating for comprehensive healthcare that includes mental health, maternal health, and access to reproductive services.

The late 20th and early 21st centuries have seen significant progress in women's rights, but many challenges remain. Advocacy continues to evolve, addressing both longstanding and emerging issues in the quest for gender equality.

Key Figures in the Women's Rights Movement

Historical Figures

- **Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797):**
- ❖ **Country:** United Kingdom
- ❖ **Contributions:** Author of "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman," advocating for women's education and equality.
- **Sojourner Truth (1797–1883):**
- ❖ **Country:** United States
- ❖ **Contributions:** Former enslaved woman who became an outspoken advocate for abolition and women's rights, famous for her "Ain't I a Woman?" speech.

- **Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902):**
 - ❖ **Country:** United States
 - ❖ **Contributions:** Leader in the early women's suffrage movement, co-organizer of the Seneca Falls Convention, and co-author of the "Declaration of Sentiments."
- **Emmeline Pankhurst (1858–1928):**
 - ❖ **Country:** United Kingdom
 - ❖ **Contributions:** Leader of the British suffragette movement, founded the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU).
- **Susan B. Anthony (1820–1906):**
 - ❖ **Country:** United States
 - ❖ **Contributions:** Prominent suffragist and social reformer, co-founder of the National Woman Suffrage Association.
- **Huda Saharawi (1879–1947):**
 - ❖ **Country:** Egypt
 - ❖ **Contributions:** Founder of the Egyptian Feminist Union, advocate for women's education and social reforms in Egypt.

Modern Figures

- **Gloria Steinem (1934–):**
 - ❖ **Country:** United States
 - ❖ **Contributions:** Journalist, social-political activist, and a leader of the second-wave feminist movement; co-founder of Ms. Magazine.
- **Malala Yousafzai (1997–):**
 - ❖ **Country:** Pakistan
 - ❖ **Contributions:** Advocate for girls' education, survivor of a Taliban assassination attempt, and the youngest-ever Nobel Prize laureate.
- **LeymahGbowee (1972–):**
 - ❖ **Country:** Liberia
 - ❖ **Contributions:** Peace activist who led a women's peace movement that helped end the Second Liberian Civil War; Nobel Peace Prize laureate.
- **Wangari Maathai (1940–2011):**
 - ❖ **Country:** Kenya
 - ❖ **Contributions:** Environmental and political activist, founder of the Green Belt Movement, and the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize.
- **Tarana Burke (1973–):**
 - ❖ **Country:** United States
 - ❖ **Contributions:** Activist and founder of the #MeToo movement, which highlights sexual harassment and assault.
- **Simone de Beauvoir (1908–1986):**
 - ❖ **Country:** France
 - ❖ **Contributions:** Philosopher and writer, author of "The Second Sex," which is foundational to modern feminist theory.
- **Ruth Bader Ginsburg (1933–2020):**
 - ❖ **Country:** United States
 - ❖ **Contributions:** Supreme Court Justice and advocate for gender equality and women's rights in law.
- **Shirin Ebadi (1947–):**
 - ❖ **Country:** Iran
 - ❖ **Contributions:** Human rights lawyer and activist, first Iranian and first Muslim woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize.
- **Alice Schwarzer (1942–):**

- ❖ **Country:** Germany
- ❖ **Contributions:** Journalist and one of the most prominent contemporary German feminists; founder of the feminist magazine "EMMA."

Regional Figures

- **Germaine Greer (1939–):**
 - ❖ **Country:** Australia/United Kingdom
 - ❖ **Contributions:** Author of "The Female Eunuch," a key text in the second-wave feminist movement.
- **Lilian Ngoyi (1911–1980):**
 - ❖ **Country:** South Africa
 - ❖ **Contributions:** Anti-apartheid activist and the first woman elected to the executive committee of the African National Congress.
- **Sirimavo Bandaranaike (1916–2000):**
 - ❖ **Country:** Sri Lanka
 - ❖ **Contributions:** First female Prime Minister in the world, advocate for women's rights and social reforms.
- **Aung San Suu Kyi (1945–):**
 - ❖ **Country:** Myanmar
 - ❖ **Contributions:** Political leader and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, known for her non-violent struggle for democracy and human rights.
- **Rigoberta Menchú (1959–):**
 - ❖ **Country:** Guatemala
 - ❖ **Contributions:** Indigenous rights activist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, known for her work on social justice and ethno-cultural reconciliation.

These figures represent just a few of the many women who have contributed significantly to the advancement of women's rights globally. Their efforts have laid the groundwork for ongoing struggles and achievements in gender equality.

Current Challenges and Progress

Current challenges and progress in women's rights span a wide range of issues globally. Here are some key areas of focus:

Challenges

- i. **Violence Against Women:**
 - a) **Domestic Violence:** Continues to be pervasive worldwide, exacerbated during times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - b) **Sexual Violence:** Including harassment, assault, and trafficking, remains prevalent in many societies.
 - c) **Honor Killings and Harmful Traditional Practices:** Such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriages, persist despite efforts to eradicate them.
- ii. **Reproductive Rights:**
 - a) **Access to Abortion:** Faces legal and political challenges in various countries, with restrictive laws limiting women's autonomy over their bodies.
 - b) **Contraception:** Accessibility varies globally, impacting women's reproductive health and family planning decisions.
 - c) **Maternal Health:** Disparities in healthcare access and quality contribute to maternal mortality rates, particularly in developing countries.
- iii. **Economic Empowerment:**
 - a) **Gender Pay Gap:** Women continue to earn less than men for similar work across many industries and countries.
 - b) **Labor Force Participation:** Women face barriers to entering and advancing in the workforce, including discrimination and lack of supportive policies like paid parental leave.
 - c) **Informal Employment:** Many women work in informal sectors without legal protections or benefits.
- iv. **Political Participation and Leadership:**
 - a) **Underrepresentation:** Women remain underrepresented in political leadership roles globally, including in parliaments, cabinets, and corporate boardrooms.
 - b) **Gender Quotas:** While some countries have implemented quotas to increase women's representation, progress remains uneven.
- v. **Digital Rights and Safety:**

- a) **Online Harassment:** Women experience harassment and abuse in digital spaces, impacting their freedom of expression and safety.
- b) **Access to Technology:** Gender disparities in access to and use of technology persist, limiting women's opportunities for education, employment, and social engagement.

Progress

- i. **Legal Reforms:**
 - a) **Legislation Against Discrimination:** Many countries have laws prohibiting gender-based discrimination in employment, education, and public services.
 - b) **Sexual Harassment Laws:** Strengthened protections and awareness campaigns have improved accountability in workplaces and public spaces.
- ii. **Education:**
 - a) **Increased Access:** Efforts to promote girls' education have made significant strides, though disparities persist in some regions.
 - b) **STEM Education:** Initiatives aim to encourage girls and women to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.
- iii. **Health and Well-being:**
 - a) **Maternal Mortality:** Global initiatives and investments have reduced maternal mortality rates through improved healthcare access and interventions.
 - b) **HIV/AIDS:** Targeted programs focus on preventing new infections among women and improving treatment access.
- iv. **Social Movements and Advocacy:**
 - a) **#MeToo Movement:** Has raised awareness of sexual harassment and assault, leading to policy changes and increased accountability in various sectors.
 - b) **Global Advocacy:** Organizations and movements advocate for women's rights at international forums, influencing policies and agreements.
- v. **Community and Grassroots Initiatives:**
 - a) **Local Efforts:** Community-based organizations play a crucial role in empowering women economically, socially, and politically at the grassroots level.
 - b) **Cultural Change:** Changing societal norms and attitudes towards gender equality through education, media, and community engagement efforts.

Emerging Issues

- i. **Climate Change:**
 - a) **Gendered Impacts:** Women are disproportionately affected by climate change due to roles in agriculture, resource management, and caregiving, necessitating gender-responsive policies.
- ii. **COVID-19 Pandemic:**
 - a) **Impact on Women:** Exacerbated existing inequalities, including increased caregiving responsibilities, economic insecurity, and heightened risks of violence.
- iii. **Transgender and Non-binary Rights:**
 - a) **Inclusion and Equality:** Advocacy for the rights and recognition of transgender and non-binary individuals intersects with broader discussions on gender equality.
- iv. **Intersectionality:**
 - a) **Multiple Identities:** Addressing how race, ethnicity, class, disability, sexual orientation, and other identities intersect with gender to shape women's experiences and access to rights.

Conclusion :

Addressing these challenges and building on progress requires continued advocacy, policy reforms, and global cooperation to advance women's rights and achieve gender equality worldwide. Ongoing efforts are essential to raise awareness, implement and enforce policies such as equal pay legislation, parental leave, and anti-discrimination laws, and support women's economic empowerment and leadership roles. Education and healthcare access, especially reproductive rights, are critical components in this journey. Despite significant strides made, many areas still require substantial work to achieve true equality, necessitating a persistent and unified effort across all levels of society and governance. The multifaceted approach to achieving gender equality must encompass grassroots movements, international organizations, and individual actions, alongside strong government policies.

These efforts should ensure that women have equal opportunities in all spheres of life, from the workplace to the political arena, and that societal norms evolve to support and sustain these changes. The road to true gender equality is long and complex, but with sustained dedication and collaboration, significant and lasting progress can be achieved, ultimately creating a more just and equitable world for all.

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