



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

## HUMAN RIGHTS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S DIGNITY IN ANCIENT & CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

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**Abstract:** Human rights are universally recognized principles that guarantee freedom, equality, justice, and dignity to every individual without discrimination based on gender, religion, caste, or nationality. Among the various dimensions of human rights, the dignity and status of women remain one of the most important and widely discussed subjects in social and legal studies. The position of women has changed considerably from ancient civilizations to the modern age.

In the early phases of ancient society, particularly during the Vedic period, women were often respected members of society who participated in education, religious ceremonies, and intellectual discussions. However, with the gradual rise of patriarchal traditions and rigid social structures, women's freedom and social position began to decline. Over time, restrictions related to education, property ownership, and public participation negatively affected their dignity and independence.

The modern era has witnessed major developments in the protection of women's rights through constitutional guarantees, democratic values, legal reforms, and international human rights instruments. Women today have greater opportunities in education, employment, politics, and social leadership. Despite these improvements, challenges such as gender discrimination, violence, inequality, and social stereotypes continue to affect women across societies.

This research paper presents a comparative study of women's dignity in ancient and modern eras from a human rights perspective. It analyses historical developments, legal changes, and social transformations that shaped women's status over time. The study also includes survey-based primary data to understand contemporary public opinion regarding women's dignity. The findings reveal that although modern legal systems provide stronger protection for women's rights, social and cultural barriers still exist. The paper concludes that legal awareness, education, and social reform remain essential for ensuring complete equality and dignity for women in society.

**Index Terms** - Human Rights, Women's Dignity, Gender Equality, Ancient Society, Modern Era, Women Empowerment, Social Justice, Patriarchy.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Human rights refer to the fundamental freedoms and rights that belong to every individual simply by virtue of being human. These rights include equality, liberty, dignity, freedom of expression, and protection from discrimination. In modern democratic societies, human rights have become the foundation of justice and social order. One of the central concerns within human rights discourse is the protection of women's dignity and equality.

Women make up nearly half of the global population, yet throughout history they have frequently experienced inequality, discrimination, and social restrictions. In several ancient societies, women enjoyed respect and participated actively in education, religious life, and intellectual activities. During the early Vedic age in India, women such as Gargi and Maitreyi were recognized for their scholarly contributions and involvement in philosophical discussions.

However, with the development of patriarchal institutions and rigid social customs, women gradually lost many of their freedoms and rights. Practices such as child marriage, restrictions on education, and limitations on property ownership weakened their social position and dignity.

The modern era brought significant transformation through constitutional democracy, social reform movements, and international human rights campaigns. Today, many national constitutions and international conventions aim to eliminate discrimination and promote equal rights for women.

Even though remarkable progress has been achieved, issues such as gender-based violence, unequal opportunities, and social prejudice still continue in many parts of the world. Therefore, a comparative examination of women's dignity in ancient and modern periods is necessary to understand both the achievements and the remaining challenges in the journey toward gender equality.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of scholars and researchers have studied the changing position of women across historical periods and societies.

Historical studies indicate that women in the early Vedic period held a comparatively respectable status. They had access to education, participated in religious rituals, and engaged in intellectual discussions. Women scholars such as Gargi and Maitreyi became symbols of wisdom and philosophical thought.

Several researchers have argued that the decline in women's dignity began with the strengthening of patriarchal social systems. Restrictive customs, lack of educational opportunities, and limited legal rights gradually marginalized women in society.

Modern scholars emphasize the role of constitutional protections and international human rights frameworks in improving the condition of women. Legal reforms and global movements advocating gender equality have contributed significantly to women's empowerment.

Contemporary studies also suggest that despite the existence of legal equality, social attitudes and traditional mindsets continue to hinder women's full participation and dignity in many societies.

## III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The major objectives of this research are:

- To understand the concept of human rights in relation to women's dignity.
- To examine the social position of women in the ancient era.
- To analyse the status and rights of women in the modern period.
- To compare women's dignity in ancient and contemporary societies.
- To identify present-day challenges affecting women's equality and dignity.

## IV. HYPOTHESIS

Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ): There is no significant difference between the dignity of women in ancient and modern eras.

Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_1$ ): Women's dignity and rights are more effectively protected in the modern era than in ancient times.

## V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study follows a descriptive and comparative research methodology. It focuses on analysing historical developments and modern perspectives regarding women's dignity and human rights.

Both primary and secondary sources of data have been used for the study. Primary data was collected through questionnaires and surveys conducted among selected respondents. Secondary information was gathered from books, academic journals, government publications, and online scholarly resources related to human rights and gender studies.

This combined approach provides a broader understanding of historical realities as well as present-day social perceptions concerning women's dignity.

## VI. DATA COLLECTION

### Primary Data

Primary information was collected through a survey conducted among 50 respondents, including students, teachers, and working professionals. A structured questionnaire was used to gather opinions regarding women's dignity and rights in ancient and modern times.

### Secondary Data

Secondary data was obtained from various reliable sources such as:

Books on human rights and gender studies.

Academic journals and research papers.

Government documents and reports.

Online scholarly articles and publications.

## VII. DATA ANALYSIS

Survey Question:

“Do you believe that women's dignity and rights are better protected in the modern era compared to ancient times?”

Table 1 Survey Table

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	35	70%
No	8	16%
Not Sure	7	14%

The survey findings show that a majority of respondents believe women's dignity receives stronger legal and social protection in the modern era compared to ancient times.

## VIII. RESULTS

The study reveals that most respondents consider the modern age more supportive of women's dignity because of improved legal protections, educational opportunities, employment rights, and political participation.

At the same time, some respondents believe that traditional societies occasionally provided cultural respect and moral recognition to women, which they feel is weakening in contemporary society.

Overall, the findings support the argument that modern human rights frameworks and legal reforms have improved the condition and status of women significantly.

## IX. CONCLUSION

The comparative study of women's dignity in ancient and modern eras demonstrates that the status of women has undergone substantial transformation over time. In certain ancient societies, women enjoyed respect and participation in intellectual and social life. However, patriarchal systems and restrictive customs gradually reduced their rights and independence.

The modern era has introduced major improvements through constitutional safeguards, human rights movements, educational reforms, and international conventions supporting gender equality. Women today have greater opportunities in education, employment, leadership, and public life than ever before.

Nevertheless, problems such as discrimination, gender violence, unequal treatment, and social stereotypes continue to exist. Therefore, achieving complete dignity and equality for women requires continuous social awareness, legal reforms, and educational advancement.

## X. SUGGESTIONS

- Strengthening laws related to women's safety and rights.
- Promoting gender equality through education and awareness programs.
- Encouraging women's participation in leadership and policymaking.
- Ensuring strict implementation of laws against violence and discrimination.
- Conducting social campaigns to promote respect for women's dignity and equality.

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