

Navigations: A First-Year College Composite

Volume 2

Issue 1 *Explorations: Fall 2017 Learning
Communities*

Article 6

February 2018

The Struggles of Women in West Bengal India

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Recommended Citation

Ayala, Arianna; Gormally, Elizabeth; Luttrell, Alexis; and Mickle, Olivia (2018) "The Struggles of Women in West Bengal India," *Navigations: A First-Year College Composite*: Vol. 2 : Iss. 1 , Article 6.

DOI: 10.32727/15.2018.10

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/navigations/vol2/iss1/6>

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Baruvuri, Sowmya. "Women's Education in India: How Serious Are We Really?" *Women's Web*, 13 Oct. 2015, <http://www.womensweb.in/2015/10/womeneducation-in-india/>.

The female literacy rate in India is at 65.46% per the 2011 census. It is still below the world average of 79.7%. Parents in India who have a son and a daughter will likely send only the son to school if they cannot afford the cost of education for both. When a young woman wants to go on to higher education, it becomes a problem with the parents, relatives, aunts, and neighbors. When a young man wants to go on to higher education, his parents and community will see it as "an achievement and [an] opportunity for the boy to settle well."

Bhandare, Namita. "Why Indian Workplaces Are Losing Women." *The Wire*, 5 Aug. 2017, thewire.in/165005/indian-workplaces-losing-women-nationwide/.

This article brings to light the struggles Indian women face when it comes to securing employment in their home country. The number of women in the workforce has dropped almost eight percent over the past two decades. This article also reveals that women began to go missing right as advances in education were being made. In certain parts of India, there is no correlation between an increase in educational opportunities and an increase in jobs available for educated women. Bhandare's research suggests that women do want paid jobs to help increase their status and well-being of their daughters, but these jobs are difficult to obtain for most. Stereotypes, cultural norms, and social shaming inhibit both men and women from trying to increase the number of women in the workplace. This article makes use of graphs to display the drastic changes India has undergone as a country throughout the years and how the numbers of women in the workforce have fallen. The percentages give a realistic and shocking sense of how much value is lost when educated women are not allowed to be a part of a nation's work force.

Freed, R. S. and Freed, S. A. "Beliefs and practices resulting in female deaths and fewer females than males in India." *Population & Environment* 10.3 (1989): 144-161.

Author Ruth S. Freed reports on the preference of sons over daughters in India, which is revealed in each census since the 19th century. Freed also talks about the number of cultural practices that play a role in sexual imbalance, maternal mortality, female infanticide, female feticide, Sati, murder, dowry murder, and suicide. She states that the majority of maternal mortality cases result from "unhygienic lying-in and postpartum conditions and practices." These practices predominantly take place in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, as well as the union territory of Delhi. In recent years, there have been laws passed that legally ban female infanticide and sati; however, those laws are regularly disregarded by the government. Freed concludes her article by asserting that "[d]espite these efforts, most of the beliefs and practices here described have proved to be tenacious."

Nag, Diya. "Where Are India's Working Women?" *The Asia Foundation*, 3 Apr. 2016, asiafoundation.org/2016/03/09/where-are-indias-working-women/.

In this article, the author focuses on the gaps between men's and women's rights and gender roles, and how these gaps are causing a decrease in the number of women in the workforce. While Indian women are typically restricted to rural work involving agriculture,

Indian men are well represented in technology and manufacturing jobs. These barriers not only prevent women from moving up in the workforce but also in the social hierarchy. The workplace does not provide adequate care for mothers and their children, so working mothers are often looked down upon for seeking employment outside the home. Throughout her article, Nag offers several percentages of difference between the men and women in India. From average salary to social expectations and perceptions, the numbers convey shocking and drastic disparity.

Samay, Ei. "West Bengal Tops in Domestic Violence Against Women." *The Times of India*, 8 Aug. 2017, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/west-bengal-tops-indomestic-violence-against-women-report/articleshow/59970073.cms>.

West Bengal has ranked first in incidents of domestic violence. In this article, the author references a 2016 National Crime Records Bureau report that recorded over 30,000 crime cases against women; 20,000 of these involved domestic violence, including wife beating, demand of dowry, and pressure to commit suicide. The author emphasizes that it is critical to bring awareness to these acts of domestic violence. Awareness efforts have helped many women feel more comfortable reporting their cases of domestic abuse. Near the end the article, the author references individual women's rights activists who claim this kind of violence is more prominent in lower middleclass families.

Sharma, D. C. (2003). "Widespread concern over India's missing girls. Selective abortion and female infanticide cause girl-to-boy ratios to plummet." *The Lancet* 362 (8 Nov. 2003): 1553.

Sharma reports in her article that the boy to girl ratio in India is declining due to the high percentage of girl children being aborted and/or killed. She references consolidated data from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which shows the decline in ratio over a 10-year period. The report links this decline to the abortions of female fetuses and the killing of newborn baby girls, also known as female infanticide. Sharma offers several reasons for these infanticides. One main reason is that the Indian family traditionally prefers boy children because they are the ones responsible for continuing the family name. Sharma also asserts that female infanticide is not "an issue on the priority list of state governments." Finally, the article addresses the interventions that some professional organizations are working to develop. For example, the Indian Medical Association and the Federation of Obstetrics and Gynecological Societies of India (FOGSI) have launched counter-infanticide campaigns.

Singh, Daljit. "Report on Girls' Education in India." *Jolkona*, 19 March 2012, <https://jolkona.org/report-on-girls-education-in-india/>.

"Education is a basic human right that should be exercised fully in all nations, but for many girls in India, attending school is not an option." In this article, Daljit Singh argues that a girl's education is necessary for establishing a sense of equality. Although India's government guarantees equality, it continues to be a country full of "male inheritance, . . . early marriage, dowry, honor crimes, lack of girls' education, witch hunting, violence against women, and trafficking." Singh also points out that "there are schools, but most girls do not attend, often because of religious reasons or cultural pressures."

“Women Unaware of Their Rights Under Domestic Violence Act.” *The Indian Express*. Express News Service Kolkata, Nov. 26, 2015, <http://indianexpress.com/article/cities/kolkata/women-unaware-of-their-rights-underdomestic-violence-act/>.

This article focuses on the Domestic Violence Act, established in 2005. Even though the National Crime Records Bureau has ranked West Bengal first in domestic violence, there has been little effort to raise awareness about the Domestic Violence Act. The cause of women not knowing their rights has been unreported crimes of domestic violence. Additionally, in times of need there are very few protection officers women can turn to. Because there are more victims of violent crime than officers to help, it is difficult to raise the awareness about the rights of women. The article concludes with the author’s reference to the promises made by the Minister of State for Women and Child Development and Social Welfare, who claims the government is going to take actions to improve the conditions of women.