International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR)
E-ISSN: 2582-2160 ● Website: www.ijfmr.com ● Email: editor@ijfmr.com

Technical Advancement & Women's Privacy in India

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Abstract
India has an old tradition of religious tourism with some ups and downs; women are also part of it. Many holy places are situated near rivers and ponds. Before visiting the holy places, people take a holy dip in this water, and for some special festivals, people visit the rivers for a holy dip only. In a male-dominated society, it's easy for men but hard for women to find proper bathing places and changing rooms. In India, there is a rural and urban educational division; that is why the government's efforts do not work properly. Approximately 50% of rural women are illiterate, and these women are a major section of pilgrim tourists. With the advancement in technology, many people have electronic recording devices. With the help of these devices, they record women's privacy without their information. Many young girls and women are even unaware that it can happen to them. Many people record their own activity, but accidentally they record others also, but some people intentionally record women's activity and sell them in the market. These distorted-minded people don't have morals and ethics or even normal social norms. This paper explores how technical advancement hampers the privacy of women at religious places. What majors can be taken by society, civil society, and government?

Keywords: Women's Safety, Cyber Security, Women's Education, Religious Places, Advance Technology.

Introduction

India has a rich tradition of religious tourism, with millions of men and women undertaking pilgrimages to sacred sites, temples, and shrines each year. However, rapid technological advancements have introduced new challenges to women's privacy at these sites. With the proliferation of smartphones, CCTV surveillance, AI-based monitoring, and hidden recording devices, women face an increasing risk of unauthorized recording, privacy violations, and digital harassment. Many holy sites are located near rivers or ponds, where devotees take ritualistic holy dips. While men face fewer restrictions, women often struggle to find secure spaces for changing clothes and bathing, making them vulnerable to digital exploitation. The misuse of modern technology in religious spaces is exacerbated by low female literacy rates, particularly in rural areas. Many women remain unaware of these risks, leaving them more susceptible to privacy breaches and cyber threats. While technology enhances security and accessibility, its improper use raises serious ethical and safety concerns. This paper explores how modern technology is being misused at religious places, its impact on women's privacy, and potential solutions involving government regulations, civil society interventions, and technological safeguards to protect women's

dignity. It also examines the role of literacy in empowering women to recognize and defend themselves against digital threats in sacred spaces.

Problem Statement

The problem statement of this paper is thus centered on the Technological advancements in religious tourism have exposed women to privacy risks through hidden cameras, AI surveillance, and unauthorized recordings. Low literacy levels and inadequate secure spaces worsen their vulnerability. While technology improves security, its misuse raises ethical concerns. This paper examines these threats and proposes regulatory, technological, and awareness-driven solutions to protect women's dignity at sacred sites.

Significance of the Study

This study addresses the rising digital privacy threats women face at religious sites due to hidden cameras and AI surveillance. It informs policymakers and religious authorities on safeguarding measures while empowering women through awareness and literacy. The findings aim to foster safer and more respectful religious experiences.

Literature Review

Studies on religious tourism highlight its cultural significance but reveal gendered challenges, with women facing inadequate infrastructure and safety concerns (Singh, 2018; Sharma & Gupta, 2020). The rise of smartphones, hidden cameras, and AI surveillance has led to increasing digital privacy violations, disproportionately affecting women due to lower awareness and weak legal protection (Kumar & Rao, 2019; Patel, 2021). Research emphasizes that low female literacy rates, especially in rural areas, heighten vulnerability, while digital education can empower women against cyber threats (Desai et al., 2022). Scholars argue that existing privacy laws remain inadequate and call for stricter regulations, gender-sensitive infrastructure, and ethical technology use at religious sites (Verma & Mehta, 2020; Choudhary, 2021). Proposed solutions include AI-driven privacy shields, surveillance control, and community-driven reporting mechanisms to balance security with personal privacy (Roy, 2023; Bose & Iyer, 2022). This study builds on prior research by examining real-world implications, advocating policy reforms, and emphasizing digital literacy as a key safeguard for women in religious spaces.

Concept: Technological Advancements & Their Impact on Women's Privacy

The widespread use of smartphones has led to unauthorized filming and photography, exposing women to exploitation, cybercrime, and blackmail, particularly those from rural backgrounds who lack awareness of digital threats. AI-driven surveillance, including facial recognition and crowd monitoring, while enhancing security, raises ethical concerns as women may be unknowingly tracked and their footage misused. Mobile applications introduced by religious institutions for virtual darshan and bookings often require location access and personal data, increasing risks of cyberstalking, phishing, and breaches. Additionally, many religious sites lack proper security measures to protect women, and even when surveillance exists, it is often misused. Low digital literacy further limits women's ability to safeguard themselves from cyber threats. Traditional gender norms add another layer of risk, as dress codes and the absence of women-only spaces make them more vulnerable to privacy violations, particularly when changing or bathing at pilgrimage sites.

Legal & Social Challenges

Existing Laws on Women's Digital Privacy: India has various laws addressing digital privacy violations, including:

- **Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000** – Covers cybercrime, online harassment, and unauthorized recording.
- **Section 354C of IPC** – Addresses voyeurism, making unauthorized filming of women punishable.
- **The Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019** – Seeks to regulate data collection and prevent privacy breaches.

However, enforcement remains weak due to lack of awareness, slow judicial processes, and limited technological resources.

The Connection Between Literacy and Digital Privacy Awareness

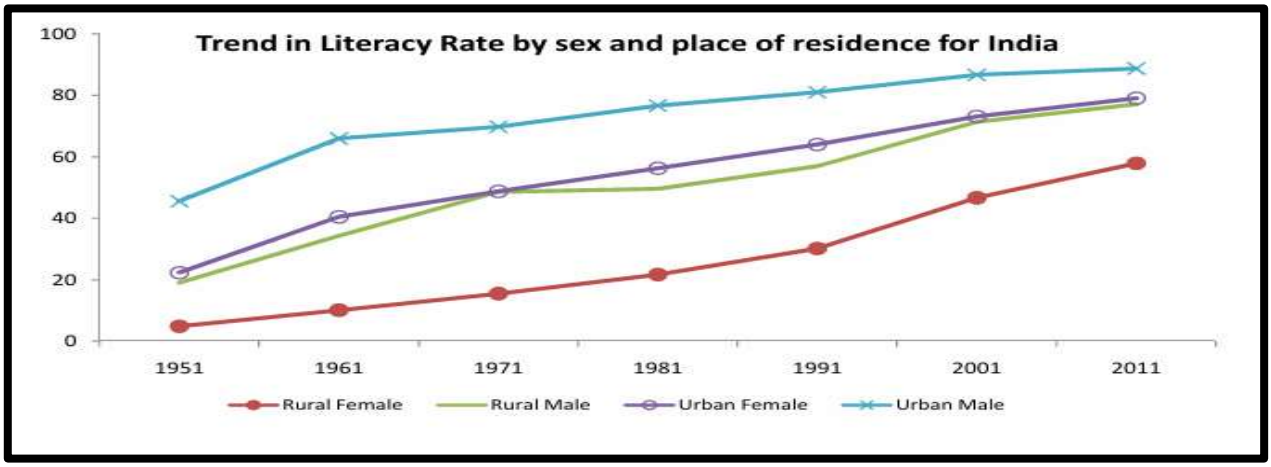
The rise in literacy rates has **direct implications for women's ability to navigate digital threats** in religious places. However, **literacy alone is not enough**—it must be accompanied by **education on digital safety** to ensure women can:

1. **Recognize unauthorized surveillance** (hidden cameras, facial recognition AI).
2. **Protect themselves from cyberstalking, blackmail, and online privacy violations**.
3. **Safeguard personal information while using digital payment systems at religious sites**.

For women—especially those from **rural and marginalized communities—low digital literacy leads to greater vulnerability**. It is crucial that **as literacy rates rise, digital safety education is integrated into learning programs**.

Statistical Analysis & Data Interpretation

1. Overall Literacy Trends in India (1951–2011) : The literacy rate in India has improved significantly over the decades. However, a persistent gender gap remains, especially in rural areas.



3.1 : Trend in Literacy Rates in Post Independent India

Year	Rural			Urban			Combined		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
1951	4.87	19.02	12.1	22.33	45.6	34.59	8.86	27.15	18.32
1961	10.1	34.3	22.5	40.5	66	54.4	15.35	40.4	28.31
1971	15.5	48.6	27.9	48.8	69.8	60.2	21.97	45.96	34.45
1981	21.7	49.6	36	56.3	76.7	67.2	29.76	56.38	43.57
1991	30.17	56.96	36	64.05	81.09	67.2	39.29	64.13	52.21
2001	46.7	71.4	59.4	73.2	86.7	80.3	53.67	75.26	64.83
2011	57.93	77.15	66.77	79.11	88.76	84.11	64.63	80.88	72.98
% Increase in 2011 over 2001	**24%**	**8%**	**12%**	**8%**	**2%**	**5%**	**20%**	**7%**	**13%**

Source: Census of India, Office of Registrar General, India.

- **Rural Female Literacy:**
  - In 1951, only **4.87% of rural women** were literate. By 2011, this figure had increased to **57.93%**—a **24% rise from 2001**.
  - Despite this progress, rural women still lag behind rural men (**77.15% literacy in 2011**) and urban women (**79.11% literacy in 2011**).
- **Urban Female Literacy:**
  - Urban women had a **higher literacy rate (22.33%) in 1951**, growing to **79.11% by 2011**.
  - However, urban males still had a higher literacy rate (**88.76% in 2011**).
- **Combined Female Literacy Rate:**
  - The **overall literacy rate for women in India** grew from **8.86% in 1951 to 64.63% in 2011**, a substantial improvement.
  - However, the literacy gap between men and women persisted, with men achieving **80.98% literacy** in 2011.

Implications for Women's Digital Awareness & Privacy

1. **Rural Women Remain More Vulnerable:**
   - With lower digital literacy rates, rural women are at higher risk of privacy violations at religious places.
   - They may be unaware of hidden cameras, AI surveillance, and online threats such as cyberstalking and blackmail.
2. **Higher Literacy Improves Cyber Awareness:**
   - Educated women, particularly in urban areas, are more likely to recognize privacy threats and take protective measures.
   - Lack of cybersecurity knowledge among less educated women makes them easy targets for digital exploitation.
3. **Need for Digital Safety Education:**
   - The increase in literacy presents an opportunity to integrate digital security training in educational programs, especially for women.
   - Religious institutions should introduce awareness campaigns on cybersecurity risks at pilgrimage sites.

2. Literacy Trends Among Scheduled Castes (SC) (1961–2011) : Scheduled Castes (SC) have historically faced educational disadvantages, and their literacy rates reflect this.

3.2 Trend in Literacy Rates of SC/ST by Sex and place of residence

Scheduled Castes

Year	Rural			Urban			Combined		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
1961	2.52	15.06	8.89	10.04	32.21	21.81	3.29	16.96	10.27
1971	5.06	20.04	12.77	16.09	38.93	28.65	6.44	22.36	14.67
1981	8.45	27.91	18.48	24.34	47.54	36.60	10.93	31.12	21.38
1991	19.45	45.95	33.25	42.29	66.90	55.11	23.76	49.91	37.41
2001	37.84	63.66	51.16	57.49	77.93	68.12	41.90	66.64	57.49
2011	52.56	72.58	62.85	68.64	83.32	76.17	56.46	75.17	66.07
% Increase in 2011 over 2001	39%	14%	23%	19%	7%	12%	35%	13%	15%

- **Rural SC Women:**
  - Literacy rose from **2.52% in 1961 to 52.56% in 2011**, a **39% increase from 2001**.
  - However, SC women remain **far behind SC men (72.58% literacy in 2011)** and the general population.
- **Urban SC Women:**
  - Urban SC female literacy improved from **10.04% in 1961 to 68.64% in 2011**.
  - The gender gap narrowed but still exists, with **SC men reaching 83.32% literacy**.
- **Overall SC Female Literacy:**
  - Grew from **3.29% in 1961 to 56.46% in 2011**, showing **35% growth from 2001**.

Implications for Digital Safety of SC Women

1. **Lower Awareness of Digital Threats:**
   - With SC women's literacy still significantly below national averages**,** many remain unaware of digital privacy risks**.**
   - This makes them vulnerable to hidden surveillance, online blackmail, and cyber exploitation at religious places.
2. **Urgent Need for Digital Training Programs:**
   - Given the rapid increase in literacy, integrating digital safety education into SC women's empowerment initiatives can bridge the cybersecurity awareness gap.
3. **Targeted Awareness Campaigns in SC Communities:**
   - Religious institutions should conduct specialized workshops for SC women to teach them about AI surveillance, mobile security, and online threats.

3. Literacy Trends Among Scheduled Tribes (ST) (1961–2011) : Scheduled Tribes (ST) have historically had the lowest literacy rates, though they have made remarkable progress over time.

Scheduled Tribes

Year	Rural			Urban			Combined		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
1961	2.90	13.37	8.16	13.45	37.09	22.41	3.16	13.83	8.53
1971	4.36	16.92	10.68	19.64	37.09	28.84	4.85	17.63	11.30
1981	6.81	22.94	14.92	27.32	47.60	37.93	8.04	24.52	16.35
1991	16.02	38.45	27.38	45.66	66.56	56.60	18.19	40.65	29.60
2001	32.44	57.39	45.02	59.87	77.77	69.09	34.76	59.17	47.10
2011	46.94	66.80	56.89	70.32	83.16	76.78	49.36	68.51	58.95
% Increase in 2011 over 2001	**45%**	**16%**	**26%**	**17%**	**7%**	**11%**	**42%**	**16%**	**25%**

Source: Census of India, Office of Registrar General, India.

- **Rural ST Women:**
  - Literacy increased from **2.90% in 1961 to 46.94% in 2011**, a **45% increase since 2001**.
  - However, rural ST men still have **higher literacy (66.80%)**, maintaining a gender gap.
- **Urban ST Women:**
  - Literacy improved from **13.45% in 1961 to 70.32% in 2011**, though urban ST men (83.16%) remain ahead.
- **Overall ST Female Literacy:**
  - Grew from **3.16% in 1961 to 49.36% in 2011**, showing **42% growth from 2001**.

Implications for Digital Safety of ST Women

1. **ST Women Remain Most Vulnerable:**
   - With the lowest overall literacy rates, ST women are at high risk of digital exploitation.
   - They may not recognize the dangers of unauthorized filming, GPS tracking, or cyber threats**.**
2. **Need for Grassroots-Level Digital Awareness Programs:**
   - The steep rise in literacy offers an opportunity to integrate digital safety training in tribal education programs.
   - Government and NGOs should develop cybersecurity workshops tailored to ST women's needs**.**
3. **Religious Institutions Should Support ST Women's Privacy:**
   - Temples and pilgrimage sites should enforce stricter anti-surveillance policies and provide secure spaces for ST women**.**
   - Women-only digital safety initiatives should be introduced in tribal regions.
   -

The Connection Between Literacy and Digital Privacy Awareness

The rise in literacy rates has direct implications for women's ability to navigate digital threats in religious places. However, literacy alone is not enough—it must be accompanied by education on digital safety to ensure women can:

- **Recognize unauthorized surveillance** (hidden cameras, facial recognition AI).
- **Protect themselves from cyberstalking, blackmail, and online privacy violations**.
- **Safeguard personal information while using digital payment systems at religious sites**.

For women—especially those from rural and marginalized communities—low digital literacy leads to greater vulnerability. It is crucial that **as** literacy rates rise, digital safety education is integrated into learning programs**.**

Key Recommendations to Improve Women's Digital Safety at Religious Places

4.1 Education & Digital Literacy Programs

- Introduce cybersecurity awareness as part of adult literacy programs for rural, SC, and ST women.
- Religious institutions should run digital safety workshops during pilgrimages.

4.2 Stricter Regulation of Surveillance Technology

- Ban unauthorized hidden cameras at religious sites.
- Implement strict privacy policies for AI-based monitoring in temples, mosques, and gurudwaras.

4.3 Women-Only Safe Spaces at Religious Sites

- Separate changing areas for women to prevent privacy violations.
- Use RFID wristbands for female pilgrims to track safety while ensuring privacy.

4.4 Stronger Cyber Laws & Quick Legal Action

- Fast-track courts for digital crimes against women, ensuring quick justice.
- Strict penalties for unauthorized filming at religious places.

Conclusion

The rise in literacy rates among Indian women, especially among rural, SC, and ST populations, offers a critical opportunity to enhance digital safety awareness. However, large literacy gaps persist, making many women vulnerable to digital exploitation at religious places.

To protect women's privacy, a multi-faceted approach is needed:

- Strengthening digital literacy programs to educate women on cyber risks.
- Regulating surveillance technology to prevent unauthorized filming.
- Creating secure spaces at religious sites to enhance safety.
- Enforcing stricter legal measures to deter digital crimes against women.

By combining education, technology, and policy reforms, we can ensure that women can practice their faith without compromising their privacy or dignity.

Final Thought

With increasing literacy, women are gaining the tools to defend their privacy. But without digital education, their safety remains at risk. Strengthening technological awareness alongside traditional literacy will be the key to protecting women from emerging digital threats in religious spaces.

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Table / Charts

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