



A JOURNEY OF INDIAN WOMEN: FROM ANCIENT WALLS TO TECHNOLOGY, LAW, JUDICIARY AND MASS MEDIA

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Abstract

Woman's empowerment is a burning topic of the day. It has become a global issue not combined to only one or more countries. Women empowerment is a dynamic multi dimensional process which inspires the women to realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life. The status of women in Indian Society is one context, woman has been given an exalted status to be respected and honored. Women are considered to the 'symbols' of honor of their family or community. Women have also been used as a means of taking revenge or teaching a lesson to the rival group. Women have limited access to those provisions and needs which assure good quality of life to an individual, such as education, health and financial assists. Their role and influences in decisions – making, both at home and outside is by and large, restricted with greater share given to man. This paper discusses the status of women in different period. The author strongly feels that education of women is of Paramount importance for attaining empowerment of the women. We hope to change atmosphere in educational institutions, so that education will not serve to consolidate gender inequality, but actually promote equality.

Keywords: Women, Ancient Walls, Mass Media.

INTRODUCTION

The status of women in Indian society is one context, women has been given an exalted status to be respected and honored, in other contexts she is also characterized as being a sex symbol, enticing males, sensuous and temptress. Similarly on the hand, she is shown as symbolizing power of 'shakti' on the other, as weak, docile, fragile and needing protection of man at all stages life. Thus she always has to be dependent on man due to the assigned weakness of her nature. The myth and ideology of subordination has been effectively translated in practice and become an integral part of reality. The various forms of inequalities and discrimination against women are seen in some principal areas and practiced in various ways. Women have limited access to those provisions and needs which assure good quality of life to an individual, such as education health and financial assets. Their role and influences indecision-making both at home and outside is by and large restricted with greater share given to man. Women are considered to be the symbol of honor of their family or community. Sexual 'purity' in case of women is to be maintained at all cost, while the males enjoy relative flexibility in sexual attitude and conduct. Early marriage or child marriage is a practice that is supposed to maintain this purity though it result in several disabilities for women. Since the symbol of honour and prestige of family or community resides in women, they are the first to be target in any situation of conflict between two groups. During war times the women of the vanquished side are considered to be the legitimate possession of the

victors. Human history is replete with such examples in which women have been the worst suffers in the aftermath of war and became victims of mass scale kidnappings, rape, torture and forced marriages. Women have also been used as a means of taking revenge or teaching a lesson to the rival group. In caste and communal conflicts in India women are often raped simply to terrorize the other group or to take revenge.

POSITION OF WOMEN DURING VEDIC PERIOD

Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru in his famous work "Glimpse of Indian Culture" has traced the Indian women's status in ancient India. He felt proud to mention that the position of women in ancient India was far better than that in ancient Greece or Rome. If we go through vedic literature we would come to know that a women was considered to be goddess like Greek goddess Athena. No discrimination whatsoever was made between a male and a female. Noone was considered superior to the other. In fact in Vedic era women enjoyed equal opportunities available for man. They had an equal honorable status in society. They enjoyed complete freedom to get every type of education which the man received. They were also free to select the profession of their choice. She was highly respected and adored as the queen of the home. In Vedic literature we find the people performing various rituals to obtain noble daughters. In cultured families a talented daughter was regarded as the pride of the family. It was popular saying " Kanyam Kulgeevtam" means daughter is the soul of the family.

POSITION OF WOMEN DURING POST VEDIC PERIOD

The high status accorded to women in the Vedic period was downgraded with passages of time. After 500 BC, i.e. When the Parana's and Epics were becoming popular and law's of Manu contained in Manu Smriti were getting hold on the people, the society adopted an indifferent and narrow attitude towards women. However, in the Epics (Ramayan and Mahabhart), We find the women at home, at court, in the battle fields. We find in this period that co-education was prevalent without prejudice in the society particularly in the Ashrams. During this period some women selected medical profession also. During 8th century AD, some works authored by Indians were translated into Arabic language. One such work on midwifery is attributed to a Hindu lady whose name was given as Russ. In this period daughters of the kings were imparted education along with military training. In Kashmir, Sughandapiha was appointed the ruler of the state

POSITION OF WOMEN DURING MUSLIM RULER

The prestigious position of women in Indian society was adversely affected during Muslim Rule over India. The women became the target of some Muslim Kings' lust. A sense of insecurity brought about many social evils which checked the flow of women education. 'Purdha' system and child marriage became prevalent among Hindus. Customs of Sati (burning of wife dead husband) and prohibition of widows to re-marry were the other evil practices for which the women were targeted. In north India, most of the parents particularly the Rajputs and Jats used to kill their daughter as soon as she were born for security reasons i.e. to save them from hands of foreign invaders and rulers. Women were assigned as secondary place by society. Slavery and domestic drudgery became her lot. Few women not only were able to receive education but also became successful rulers. They were Sughand and Didda (10th - 11th Centuries in Kashmir, Karpurdevi at Ajmer (12th Century). Rani Durgawati of Godwana (10th Century) Jiga Bar (17th Century). Ahilya Bai of Indore and others Mora Bai (16th Century) the great saint-poet wrote hymns which are still very popular among the masses.

POSITION OF WOMEN DURING BRITISH RULERS

After Muslim Rulers the east India Company of British established its rule over India. The company showed apathy and indifference towards women education. Probably the commercial company did not think profitable to educate women as they required male clerk for running their administration. A number of superstitious also held back women education William Adams (Calcutta University), 1941 wrote about female education in 1938 . all the established native institutions of education exit for the benefit of the male sex only and whole of the female sex is systematically consigned to

ignorance and left whole without even – the semblance of a provision for their instruction. There were no state schools for girls under the company rule. A few girls attended the boys schools. The protestant and roman catholic Mission Aries made individual efforts to open Girls Schools with the aim of spreading Christianity through education and literacy. Their main aim was to propagate the Gospel among Indians and they had nothing to do the education of Indian People. It was only in 1850 that the Government extended the support to girls education. Some British officials and non officials opened girls schools in their private capacities. The important institutions of this type was the Bethune School founded by Mr.J.E.D Bethune in 1849. This school gave an impetus and inspiration in the country.

POSITION OF WOMEN AFTER INDEPENDENCE

Independence of the country brought a wind of change in the lot of Indian Women. The ushering in of the Republic Constitution for the country coincided with the rise of a spirit of equality and equal opportunities in all the affairs of the nation. The constitution of India has given absolute protection to Women regarding their rights for employment, education, civil, re presentations, freedom to speech and trade or profession (Article 15 and 16). the freedom struggle had indeed presented a number of opportunities for many gifted women to show their talents for leadership. Soon after attaining independence by India, the United Nations General Assembly elected an Indian lady Mrs. Vijay Lakshmi Pandit as its President and the World Health Organization elected another eminent Indian Lady Rajkumari Amrit Kaur as its Director. There were a number of women members India's Parliament State Assemblies after first election of free India. Freedom brought a sprit of awaking among the women. The old restrictions of caste, religion and sex had to be modified if not creedal to gather. The National Republic Government become extremely anxious to do justice to women who had been facing injustice for centuries, by providing facilities to all types of Education, including professional and by creating opportunities of employment. The central social welfare Board was constituted in 1953. It has its Centers throughout India. It has been looking after various welfare scheme for girls and women including education and employment since its inception.

Independence of the country brought a wind of change in the lot of Indian women. The parents in free India are coming out of their shackles of ignorance, fear and taboos for not sending their daughters to receive higher education. Now the women in large number attend Colleges and universities. They are showing rather better performance in various fields of higher education. They are securing honorable positions in centre / state level entrance tests for joining some professional courses in centre / state level competitions for employment. The persistent old and deep rooted prejudices against women that they should not be given higher education and must

not take up employment in order to become earning member of family have almost totally been uprooted. Now the girl/ women can be seen working as clerk, typist, Stenographers, Doctors, Auditors, air Hostess etc. and driving cycle, Scooters, Car, even flying Airplanes. Now women can be seen working successfully as lawyer, Judges, Executives, Adviser to Centre/ state Government, Scientists, Political Leaders and Ministers. Hardly there is any field left where the women have not entered. They have double benefit or chances of employment in some Departments / institutions which are exclusively for males. For example in schools of Girls or Colleges for women generally no male teacher is appointed but in the Boys schools female teachers can be appointed. The national labor commission observes – The spread of education has opened up more employment opportunities for women in non manual clerical, administrative and professional work. The largest expansion has been in government service. An employed women is not confined in her home. She gets an opportunity to come out from security of four walls of the home to have contacts with the outside world. This widens her mental horizon instills in her self confidence and self dependence it also makes her bold to face the problems of life more effectively and with greater degree of confidence. She can enhance her academic / professional qualifications through distance education courses and aspire for higher career. In this way not only she can play an active role for progress of their family but also for nation.

The constitution of free India empowers the women to show their mettle or worth in any educational, social, religious, spiritual, political, charitable organization etc. There is a provision of giving 30% representation to women in Panchayats and it is likely to be extended to other such bodies. These provisions further encourage the women to receive maximum education, if their source allow it is also well known fact that well educated women are expected to know well their rights and their obligation towards their home, society and nation at large. Indian women are to play significant roles for rearing, educating, teaching manners, transmitting their culture to their children and also to deal with friends, relatives on various functions and occasions. They are also maintain status and future of their families by working shoulder with their life partner. There is dire necessity that women should supplement the family income for its sound growth because the cost of living feeding and educating children is soaring day by day. It has become extremely difficult to an average salaried man to make both ends meet with his meager salary. Thus it is essential that girls / women must avail of the opportunity, for receiving general education technical and professional education etc. made available by Government and Private organizations after freedom of the country. Shri Fakruddin Ali Ahmad former president of India, in his message for International Women year said 'The women of India played a silent, self-effacing role of sustain, Indian civilization down

the ages for their greater participation in national life. It is necessary that they should occupy position at the decision making and planning. In spite of tremendous progress which has been made in the field of education, particularly women education through various committees. Commission appointed by Central Government and endeavors taken by the private religious and voluntary agencies since independence of the country, still there is a vast scope of further improvement in women education. There is a need to further increase their educational opportunities with sufficient improvement. It has rightly been said that progress of the country can be judged by the position accorded to women in it. We hope to change atmosphere in educational institutions, so that education will not serve to consolidate gender inequity, but actually promote equality.

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