

Position of Woman in India and the Role of Woman Towards Protection of Environment

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Abstract: The position of women during ancient time was quite intricate due to some of the contradictory affirmation in various other religions doctrine. Not only in religious book but the views of woman differ indifferent states and cities. In some areas woman was considered to be equal to men but the other states woman was treated in hatred and burden for the nation. This is the real reason the country India is still a developing nation and some sociologists faces difficulty in assessing the position of women in India. This paper will discuss about the position of women during ancient time and woman's empowerment. In this paper it will illustrate about the woman empowerment India and its issues and impacts of empowerment. In this present scenario where men and women is walking hand in hand in all aspects of fields. Thus, the issue of woman empowerment is an acute matter to be looked upon. As still now the position of women is delusion and misconception in actuality. One can see how women is treated and tortured by the evil hands of society but no-one has taken a concrete steps to protect the woman. Though the rights and duties of women is clearly enshrined in the books of constitution. The constitution grants and guarantees rights and equality to woman but it also authorises the nation take effective steps towards constructive intolerance¹. But now the position of women has somewhat changed as woman come and participate in the decisions of Parliament. Men of present generation also upholds their women as a superior element in all matters of their life. Woman are a supporter and guider to the nation. Woman also plays a significant role in the conservation of environment. As woman was considered to be a 'Prakriti' which means nature through the Indian philosophy. As the woman is a cultivator and nourisher which supports a bud to bloom into the new society. Therefore, the woman is the one who strongly believe in to conservation and protection of environment as environment is one of the essential aspect which needs to be taken care of. In recent times some brave ladies named Medha Patekar who was a socialist, Maneka Gandhi who was an environmentalist are actively participating in the safeguarding and protection of environment. India cannot flourish until and unless the woman is not participated in the political, social, economic and environmental issues. It is basic responsibility of the nation to include the women in every aspect of life. Therefore, attempts have been made to increase the status of women in the society. Therefore, this paper is surrounded by the position and role of woman in India. As woman is the real being who can make, destroy and create the nation to attain success².

Keywords: Introduction, Position of women in ancient time, Woman Empowerment, Necessity of Woman's Empowerment

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I. Introduction

“A woman with a book and a pen has the power to move nation. A woman with a mind and a voice has the power to change worlds.” By Sasha Temerte

During the 21st century the woman is going through certain hurdle in the field of politics. The civil and economic condition emanate as a barrier in the development and progression of the condition in the status of women. By the outline of Inter-Parliamentary Union 2017 it suggests that the woman representation globally is 23.6 percent. The rate of participation of women in politics is quite less, so it has been viewed that the woman has to go a long way to increase their position and place in Parliament and nation. In order to secure equal status quo of woman in political background and removing the discrimination in gender equality then the government must take an appropriate steps to remove this disparities in the nation. The famous line of Aristotle is, “In the differences between sexes, men are considered better and more in nature, while women are

¹Arvind Sharma (2005) 'Women in Indian Religions', Oxford University Press, Atharva Veda XIV-I, p. 43-44

²Mago, P. and Gunwal, Isha, (2019) Role of Women in Environment Conservation, SSRN, India

underestimated"³. One of the scholar remarks that the woman toil and labour is for prolonged time and the work of these women are onerous and challenging than that of men's exertion, but still men comments that women likes to be with children, have their supper and does nothing. Same way the hours spent by woman in agricultural activities is far much more than that of men. One of the study of time and energy found that 53 percent of hours spend in agricultural activities is spend by woman. As 31 percent of hours is only spend by men. In ancient time the men used to be more dominant and the woman play the role of mere listener. The agitation and concern of the men to monopolize his ability or prowess in cultivation regard it as a prohibition culture that clearly seen in most of the parts of Indian nation. The woman is not supposed to touch the plough it is totally prohibited for them in most of the states. Therefore, it is totally not justiciable that woman who is working day and night on agricultural land gets less payment than that of men who are getting more pay only on the basis of strength. A report in Uttar Pradesh show that, men unenthusiastic acknowledge that their woman does work. But later by the researchers show that the men only says that the woman eats, spend time with children and does nothing⁴.

Position of women in ancient time

In Vedic time, the woman did not feel biased. There was no intolerance in any aspect of sex, creed or education. It was evident from one of the mantra from Brihadaranyaka Upanishad that Gargi and Maitreyi who was considered to be a highest learner and knowledgeable woman. By the ancient Vedas it suggests that several mantras and other kinds of verses should be taught to the woman as it is regarded to be obligatory for a woman to learn without which no woman can conduct sacrifices of agnihotra. If any woman who studies Veda from the Katha school then they were called as Kathi and if a woman studies in Rigvedic Bahvrichi School then they were called to be Bahvrichi. Woman were also taught about mimamsa and if anyone learns mimamsa— sutra of the priest Kasakritsna is known to be Kasakritsna. But after some time the broad based education started to decrease. The liberty of woman for establishing to Vedic language in according to upanayanaseems to be diminishing gradually. In earlier time by the verses of Mahabharata and Ramayana there were woman who was considered to be highly educated but slowly the type of education were subjected to be narrow to arts and crafts only. By learning these they can be eligible to become good housewives. One of the scholar Santosh Kumar Das assumes that it might be due to the conquering and attacking of foreigners in India leads to downfall of woman position from vedic studies. In most of the countries around the world, in the prehistoric phases of development the ancient views about the weakness and inferior status of the woman existed. When the foreigners come to India then the people of India who have already achieved a high level of enlightenment greatly impressed by the foreigners and tried to follow the rules which the foreigners has presented before them. Therefore the people started to assume and adopted the rules to a deficient and imperfect customs towards the woman⁵.

Woman's education were considered to be the significant criteria for wedding. It was evident from the Vedic literature that brides in the Kshatriya culture has full freedom to choose their own companion. During this era dowry system was not prevalent but the tradition of danor gift was present. The concept of Monogamy was practised by the people in general sense and Bigamy was also present but it was only restricted to upper class. Though the wife was happily accepted in a new home but her duty towards her husband was just like a maid. The woman was assumed to be sacrificed in the name of their husbands. They themselves do not have their rights and liberty of life. The members of the family expected that a woman should only delivers a male child conducts the last rituals and expands the ancestry. The woman who became widow their remarriage was also organised under certain criteria. Woman's virtue continue to preserve high calibre towards their husband but the husband did not maintain the same level of loyalty and allegiance with their partners. At this time the word divorce was also not present. In matter of property also the Rig-Veda exemplifies that the unmarried girls is the inheritor of their parents property but the married woman are excluded⁶.

Position of woman in Modern Era

In today's world where India has attained Independence and secured achievement but still the woman does not feel secure enough. Though the Constitution guarantees the freedom and liberty in article 14, no discrimination by anyone in the article 15 (1), equality in occupation to each and every woman. Government has

³ Kumar, Dr Pankaj(2017) Participation of Women in Politics: Worldwide experience, IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science, volume 22, pg.77

⁴ Selvam, Dr. S.K. Panneer, (2010) woman education and women empowerment, APH publishing corporation, New Delhi, Pg.1-2

⁵ Selvam, Dr. S.K. Panneer, (2010) woman education and women empowerment, APH publishing corporation, New Delhi, Pg.94-95

⁶ R Aggarwal, Dr.Pragya(2016) Status of women in India: From Ancient to modern age, International Journal of Advanced esearch and Development, Volume 1, India, pg.1-2

reserved seats for woman in Parliament, academics, cultural activities, sports etc. but the torture which society is giving to them is far more pathetic. In one part woman is climbing the ladder of success but on the other hand she is undergoing through brutality and inhumanity caused by the society. While comparing from the past generation the standard of woman and their position has reached far beyond. As now there are uncountable successful woman who is ruling the world by their talent but still more is to be achieved for the security of the woman. By the sex ratio it highlights that still there are people who are considering male child more important than female. There are cities and villages where education of girl is considered to be a burden. The survey shows there are thousands of male but 933 females in 2001 Sensex. In order to remove this indiscrimination the government needs to educate the male person. They need to be punished when the man tortures the woman at home or at public place. The mentality of men should be changed. Woman education is not enough unless and until men does not get proper education. The mind-set of the society needs to be changed. Then only the nation and woman will be safe and healthy.

Woman Empowerment

Basically woman empowerment means permitting and authorizing woman to be competent and self-sustained by granting them desired powers and actions to govern the society. This empowerment was absent in ancient time as because the people in those days considered woman inferior. The woman do not enjoy the basic rights and duties which the constitution has provided to them. The word itself suggest that the woman has the ability to control and supervise the day to day workings so as to change the mind-set of the world. In today's world the powering the woman has become a debated question. Liberalism and powering of woman is still centered upon womanism notion and the title such as vigour, womanhood, gestation, liberating etc. is only entitled for discussion and listed as a belief by most of the thinkers that woman can change the nation. The dawn of woman's sovereignty represents a composite interaction of affairs, principles, Inside and outside gender relation which is continuously moulding and changing the scenario of the thinking of the people. Recently, the woman's liberty has dominated by revisionist womanism of America and Europe⁷.

One must understand that the woman's liberty and gender impartiality is one of the most important aspect to attain the success of the country. It was assumed by numerous researchers that if woman will not be the participant in the deliberations of the country then one cannot accomplish the sustainability⁸. It was presumed that complete indulgence of woman and men in the political affairs of the nation is quite critical for establishment. Alone men's involvement in the matter of public importance will not be essential for the nation's development. Henceforth, if woman too engages then the woman has an alternative choices and different solution can be presented to the problems⁹. The position of woman in India has undergone a number of changes in the fields of political, economic, social etc since the time immemorial. In earlier time the woman faced certain crises but with the passage of time the government and the nation tried to grant certain privileges to the woman. Some of the rituals that was followed at the earlier time was somewhat diminished like female infanticide, sari system etc. but still some of the custom is prevalent in most of the parts of the country, like dowry system¹⁰. In order to stop these the government during the British Rule and British Raj period since (1757-1947) has executed some of the laws for these evil practices in India. Bengal sati law in the year 1829, Hindu widow remarriage rules 1856, Female infanticide rules 1870, Later the constitution of India has provided certain rights and privileges to the woman so that they can take their stand when any indiscrimination is faced by them¹¹.

Though the government has given the due status to men and woman but by the survey it was noticed that the literacy rate of female is far less than that of male. By the National Survey Data the literacy rate of men and woman in Kerala and Mizoram is somewhat equal. But in comparison to other states the education system is very low¹².

By granting the power to the woman the nation come across several successful woman like Kalpana Chawla, Mother Teresa, Rani Lakshmi Bai, Kiran Majumdar Shaw who discovered Biocon and was the richest

⁷ Lone, G. Hassan and Wakar A. Zargar(2017). Revisiting Women Empowerment in Modern Era, IRA- International Journal of Management and Social Sciences, volume -9, India, pg-68

⁸ Bayeh, Endalcachew (2016) The role of empowering woman and achieving gender equality to the sustainable development of Euthopia, Pacific Science Review B: Humanities and Social Sciences. 2 (1): 38

⁹ Rekha (1997). "Women, Empowerment, and Economic Development". The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science. 554 (1): 136-149

¹⁰ Dyson, Tim (2018) A population history of India : From the first modern people to present day, Oxford University Press, p. 20

¹¹ Parihar, Lalita Dhar (2011). Women and law: from impoverishment to empowerment, Lucknow: Eastern Book Company, pg30-50

¹² Menon-Sen, Kalyani, A.K. Shiva Kumar (2001) Woman in India how free how equal? United Nations Achieved 2006

woman, Lalitha B. Gupte was the famous successful business woman who is running ICICI bank. There are uncountless woman who has created a history and changed the country¹³.

Necessity of Woman's Empowerment

The Constitution of India has clearly illustrates in Fundamental rights, Fundamental duties and Directive Principles of state policy about the equal status and gender discrimination. The Constitution does not merely lists the power but it empowers the woman to stand by in the deliberations conducted in the Parliament. The Constitution of India in some of the act states about the necessity of woman to be empowered¹⁴. If a woman is empowered then the whole nation will be empowered. Woman empowerment is necessary because of certain reasons;

Decision making process. The basic empowerment of woman starts from home. If a woman has a word to say in the matters of household decision then the woman has certain freedom to live with any compulsion. It has been reported that only 38 percent of Woman takes the decision on matters of child's education, marketing and conducts of the house. It was seen that the education of the woman is considered to be one of the main element to take back the decision. More the woman and man is educated more the woman advises and takes the decision. Hence, education is one of the main criteria for empowering the woman¹⁵.

Considering the woman is equally talented. If the woman is educated and talented then the woman can participate in the political affairs too. Woman's are not a dumb personality. If a woman can teach their child to lead a healthy life then she can mould and change the world too. It's just to empower the woman and naturally the woman can support the nation in politics, economic growth and social security.

To reduce the violence faced by the females in society. The woman needs to be strong, capable and educated enough to fight back the violence. The country like India where woman faced rapes, intolerance and several other violence thus it is essential to power the woman to express their views against the person who has harmed them.

Eradicate the poverty. If a woman is educated then the nation's per capita will increase. As there will be more employment. The woman in business can present their view point on the projects which will drastically increase the growth of the companies. Therefore the woman empowerment is one of the essential criteria that a nation should achieve.

II. CONCLUSION

It is noticed that earlier in ancient time the woman did not face much tolerance as compared to later ages. In Vedic time the position and power of woman was very strong. They enjoyed freedom in religious fields but has less or no power in politics and economic matters. But slowly and steadily the woman was considered as equal to man and the Constitution too guarantees certain rights to the woman. If woman have not been given equal status quo than business, society, community would not have been so developed as it's now. Thus, it is one of the most important element to educate and provide rights and opportunity to each men and women to attain sustainability in the environment¹⁶.

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