



STUDY OF WOMEN'S STATUS IN CONTEXT TO HER PAST AND CURRENT POSITION IN SOCIETY– REFLECTIONS FROM INDIA

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Abstract :

The status of women refers to the position of women in society in relation to men.. In reality there exist inequality in women's access to education, healthcare, physical and financial resource and opportunities in political, economic, social and culture field. The status of women in complex society like India is not uniform and is hard to define. In recent yrs, the traditional role of women have undergone many changes due to economic needs and efforts were made to bring visibility and mainstream women's contribution to the overall growth and development of society.

Indian women have a multifaceted personality. She is the centre around which the whole world revolves. She strongly influences the moral, social and creative development of her children. She is dutiful and housekeeping, children rearing assisting in agriculture and industry. Men and women are two basic components of our human society. Women constitute 48% of the India's total population.

This paper investigates whether the status of women in India is changing with time or it is still stagnant as previous status. Are women of India getting equal status same as men as mentioned in Indian constitution i.e. Right to Equality (Article 14 & 15) that means the equality before law, equal protection in the law, not discriminating against any person on ground of sex, religion, caste and place of birth and no discrimination in matters of public employment on ground of sex only as provided under Article 16 of the constitution.

INTRODUCTION

“You can tell the condition of a Nation by looking at the status of its Women.” **Jawaharlal Nehru, Leader** of India's Independence movement, and India's first Prime Minister.

The sociologists had described women by propounding different perceptions. Women's status is a complex issue and a hard to define Subject, Around the world, women's status in each society and culture varies in different ways. Thus there is no uniform status of women in Indian society. However, civilization showed the overall Upliftment of women's position.

According to historian ROMILLA THAPER

“Within the Indian sub-continent there have been infinite variations on the status of women diverging according to cultural malice’s, family structure, class, caste property rights and moral”. The Indian philosophy poses the women with dual character on the other hand, she is considered fertile, patient and benevolent but on the other hand she is considered aggressor and represents ‘shakti’.

Status of women in India- A Historical perspective

Women are considered to be pivot not only in domestic life but for society. This is evident through a study of epics. A study of different stages of civilization with special reference to women conducted by Vijay Sharma Kaushik and Bela Rani presents a true picture of women in different ages.

The position of women in ancient India was inferior to that of man. The position became worse even during the mughal rule. They could not overcome the nasty rule of pardah system of the time. Further, there was sati system no change in fate of women even during British rule in India.

The situation began to change when many national figures started a struggle for freedom. Mahatma Gandhi openly invited the help from women. Many women came forward among them Sarojini Naidu, Vijay Lakshmi Pandit, Mrs. Aruna Asaf and others. A revolutionary change took place in the status of women when Mrs. Indira Gandhi became the first women Prime Minister of India. Many women thereafter occupied prestigious position in India. They excelled in almost all fields such as sports, politics, administration, science and technology and arts.

Present or current status of Indian women

By going through history in the context of women’s position it may be mentioned that particularly after establishment of class society and trend to accumulate private property in the post- Vedic period, women’s position in society hit patriarchal values.

The middle class educated women, particularly in large urban areas who are working and moving freely now, give an impression that Indian women’s status has substantially improved. She is now politically powerful but in small towns, rural areas, or city slums she still suffers social and economics oppression. Though girls and women have made much educational gains in recent years, but still have a long way to go before their historic educational disadvantage is eradicated. The education system of India, like many other social institutions, has long been discriminatory towards the women. In 1916 SNDT Women University in Bombay became the first institution of higher learning to admit female students.

It had a number of high schools and colleges affiliated to it. In the beginning, it was (and is still) believed that women should aspire to become good wives and mothers, not intellectuals, doctors, lawyers etc. Women used to wash men’s clothing, cared for their rooms and served them meals. They were forbidden to speak in public (these practices are more or less still continuing).

The proportion of women students has increased steadily after independence and mostly in the last decade. The literacy rate of women has gone up from 8.86 per cent in 1951 to 29.75 per cent in 1981, 39.29 per cent 1991 to 54.16 per cent in 2001. Enrolment of women in higher education has also grown since 1995. But these figures are not satisfactory when compared with the enrolment figures of boys. The main hindrance in the women education in India is rural residence, low caste, low economic standing combined with the traditional attitude towards women education as a whole. These factors tend to deny opportunities of education to a girl. While broadly speaking (and as shown above) education of female students has strided and it is not surprising that today in many faculties and department of universities and colleges, more girls than boys are seen.

According to the Constitution of India, women are legal citizens of the country and have equal rights with men (Indian Parliament). But still she has to face injustice in her life. Violence against women is widely prevalent in society. There is a growing feeling that women suffers from discrimination and disabilities in more subtle and covert ways.

Discrimination against Women

It should be noted that in a vast country like India – spanning 3.29 million sq. km, where cultural backgrounds, religions and traditions vary widely – the extent of discrimination against women also varies from one societal stratum to another and from state to state – some areas in India being historically more included to gender bias than others. There are even communities in India, such as the Nair's of Kerala, certain Maratha clans, and Bengali families, which exhibit matriarchal tendencies, with the head of the family being the oldest woman rather than the oldest man. However, many Indian women face discrimination throughout all stages of their life, beginning at (or even before) birth, continuing as an infant, child, adolescent and adult. The stages can be divided in following sections:

- Before Birth / As an Infant
- As a child
- After Marriage
- As a Widow

Thus, the dual existence of women in high position and yet undergoing various types of sufferings, exploitation continues to be part of her journey.

Although many constitutional provisions are made for the empowerment & upliftment of women but still women's are facing many problems in today's society some of them are eve teasing, physical and mental harassment in work places, dowry, acid attacks, prostitution domestic violence etc. these issues have just become a common heads lines of every newspapers and news too.

Objectives

- To analyze the status of women in context to her past and current position in society.
- To study are women getting equal status as mentioned in constitution of India.

METHODOLOGY

Entire paper is based on secondary sources, like different reports of NGOs and surveys conducted by Indian govt. and private agencies. Besides this knowledge from some articles and journals too were helpful in these findings.

Conclusion

From the above discussion we conclude that status of women has changed to some extent only with the help of educational provisions. But her journey towards the equal status in society is still incomplete. She has to go a long way to get a respectful and equal status among the males in Indian society. In today's times women's status is lowering sometimes due to crime against women. Man and women both are the members of the same society so both should be treated equal in all respects. Being a responsible citizens it is the duty of every person to contribute in the welfare and development of its country. And a country is called developed only when the status of women is good. Changes happen when we start with on self.

I being a woman think that mind is the source of upliftment of any person in society, nation and worldwide. Changes never happens on its happen only when we want we are only one who can bring change in our life and others too. If you cannot change yourself then you would never be able to changes others too.

Its duty of every women to rise up by their own as we are not dependent on anyone but others are dependent on us.

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