



Status of Indian women in ancient, medieval and modern Era

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Abstract

Women play an important role in Indian society. Ancient Indian women had a high social status and were in excellent health. In terms of equality, education, marriage and family life, caste and gender, religion and culture, women in contemporary Indian society preserve or diminish their ancient and medieval status. Vedic women enjoyed financial independence. Some women were working as teachers. The place of production was the home. Clothes were made at home by spinning and weaving. Women also help their husbands in agricultural work. In the religious sphere, women enjoyed full rights and often participated in rituals along with their husbands. Both husband and wife participated in religious rituals and sacrifices. Even religious discussions saw active participation of women. The status of women improved somewhat throughout the Buddhist period, but not much. Women have an important place in ancient Indian literature. Many educated women lived in ancient India. In this paper discuss the ancient, medieval and modern sociology of the status of women in India.

Keyword: Ancient, medieval, modern, sociology, women

Introduction

Women played the most important role in the Indian social structure. Certainly, in Rig Vedic India, women had a high social position and an excellent standard of living. Even women were given the opportunity to reach higher levels of intellectual and spiritual achievement. However, after enjoying unrestricted and prestigious roles in the Rigvedic society, women faced discrimination during the later Vedic age in terms of education and other rights and facilities. Indian culture does not believe that we are now witnessing a significant revolution for women. Women's voices are becoming more prominent in legislatures, courts, and public spaces. The Indian Constitution has always provided women equal rights as men, unlike the West, where women had to struggle for more than a century to obtain some of their fundamental rights, such as the ability to vote. In terms of equality, education, marriage and family life, caste and gender, religion and culture, women in contemporary Indian society preserve or diminish their ancient and medieval status. The purpose of this essay is to raise awareness and provide insight into the issues that women have faced from time to time and what their role has been. The essay will enable us to imagine how women participated in the social, religious, economic and domestic spheres in ancient times.^[1]

Status of Women in Ancient India

Social difference is a constant feature of every human culture. There is a difference based on gender. Men were responsible for earning money, while women were responsible for raising children and taking care of the household. Historical analysis of the status of women in early Indian civilization reveals a downward trend in their status. According to historical examination of their place in society, women in ancient India did not enjoy equal status to men. Only spouses and mothers were accepted as women. They had the same subordinate status as men. The patriarchal system that rules social, political and economic life in India has never supported women in any profession

outside the kitchen! Indian women have had a lower status than men since ancient times and are generally less powerful.^[2] Women's participation in politics has its roots in the reform movements of the 19th century. Social reformers believed that educating women and passing progressive laws could initiate social change. Raising awareness and creating sensitivity towards gender inequality can help in reducing social ills.

Status of women below age Women in Ancient India

According to historical records, Mother Goddess was worshiped in the ancient Indus Valley Civilization of India. This makes it clear that mother was respected in that period. It is said that the status of women was respected and recognized in the Rigvedic era, especially when it came to performing religious activities. The education of young girls was seen as an important requirement for marriage. According to references in Vedic literature, in the Kshatriya society, known as "Swayamvara", brides had special freedom to choose their life partners. Dowry system was not prevalent in Rigvedic civilization. However, it was widely believed that the marriage was a gift or donation. Bigamy was also prevalent, although only among the upper classes; Monogamy was the norm. The new husband respected the woman. The woman participated in her husband's sacrifice.^[3]

However, since the son performed the last rites and preserved the lineage, women in patriarchal societies were expected to give birth to boys. Widows can remarry under specific circumstances. Although husbands were not expected to be as faithful, female morality still maintained a high standard. Divorce was not common in this era. According to the Rigveda, a widow had the legal right to remarry her husband's brother. The Rigveda acknowledged the right of unmarried daughters to inherit their father's property, but married daughters were excluded. Priests began to perform religious rites more frequently, gradually reducing the importance of women in the family. In the era of the Upanishads, the "Anuloma" system of marriage –

between a man from a higher caste and a girl from a lower caste – later became prevalent. The "Grihya-sutras" from the era of sutras and epics suggested the right season and groom for marriage and provide specific guidelines for the requirements for the bride. The bride was expected to be perhaps 15 or 16 years old. The complex processes suggest that marriage was a spiritual bond rather than a legal agreement. Women used to have a respectable place in the house. She was free to sing, dance and enjoy life. In general, sati was not very common. Widow remarriage was permitted under specific circumstances. In general, the Dharma-sutras are less strict than the Smritis of later periods. A husband who wrongfully abandons his wife has to face several punishments from "Apastamba". But a woman who abandons her husband has to do only penance. A mature woman could choose her own life partner after three years if her father did not marry her within a reasonable period. The presence of female instructors, many of whom had deep spiritual understanding, is the most fascinating aspect of this time period.

At that time the birth of a girl was undesirable, as was the case in all patriarchal communities. The son supported the family financially, warded off dangers, maintained the family's prestige, and lived with his parents. Indian epic literature is composed of the Mahabharata, the Puranas and the Ramayana. Apart from the society, the status of women has declined both in the society and at home. The abolition of Upanayana, neglect of education and lowering of the age of marriage had a detrimental effect on the status and position of women. Women at this time were seen as a commodity that could be traded, sold or acquired. Could have done. However, both Mahabharata and Ramayana provide us with opposite views. Sita is one of the five adorable and ideal women of India along with Ahilya, Tara, Draupadi and Mandodari. There are indications in the Mahabharata that show how women advised men in matters of religion and society. A civilized woman was supposed to support her husband in his religious endeavours. A religious rite of passage, marriage. Women were considered unfit for independence because they required protection throughout their lives. While inter-caste marriages were common in the period from 600 BC to 320 AD, marriages within the same caste were favoured. The Arsha form of marriage was the most common among the eight types recommended in the religious sutras.

Women in the Early Vedic period

When the Aryans came to India in the fifteenth century BC, history as we know it officially began. The matriarchal culture was destroyed by the patriarchal society at the beginning of the Vedic era. This can be seen as the beginning of gender inequality in India. ^[4] The historical era described in the Rigveda shows that religious concerns dominated civic life. Until the entry of Muslims in the eighth century, Vedic culture was widely prevalent. After the Muslim conquest, the history of India is considered to be medieval, during which time a patriarchal society dominated. The Islamic and Vedic eras were quite similar in terms of the patriarchal structure governing the society. The British Raj of the 18th century came after the Muslim period. Additionally, it was largely patriarchal. In previous eras, gender discrimination co-existed with patriarchy and a patriarchal social structure. The status of women in ancient India and their fight for power is revealed through the study

of the Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads and epics. There remains uncertainty regarding the status of women during the pre-Vedic era. It is believed that the Paleolithic man was a nomad who lived in prehistoric times. The main function was to obtain food. Neolithic man developed culture and civilization as he gradually transitioned from a mode of food gathering to one of food production. Men began to establish themselves in the river valleys. According to legend, the Indus Valley Civilization, the earliest recorded civilization in India, reached its peak around the 25th century BC. History shows that throughout this civilization, people mostly referred to female deities. And worshiped natural elements. Mother Nature was a common nickname. The Mother Goddess was the first deity worshiped by the inhabitants of the Indus Valley Civilization.

Women in the Later Vedic Period

The two great Indian epics are the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. These epic depictions of lifestyle are accurate representations of modern social realities. Following the Ramayana, there is a story presented in the Mahabharata, which was probably composed later. Mahabharata and Ramayana may be the oldest written texts of Hindu society. 5]Swayamvara is a common type of marriage depicted in the epics. The institution of marriage, especially among upper castes, is called swayamvara. Women in this traditional type of marriage were reported to exercise their freedom and autonomy to choose their life partners. Through Swayamvara, Sita from the Ramayana and Draupati from the Mahabharata were married. Since the bride's ability to choose her life partner is often hindered, Swayamvara does not provide her choice in the contemporary sense. Under the institution of "Swayamvara" she is required to marry the winner of a competition, which was held to assess the fighting skills of her potential groom. The most revered female character in the Mahabharata is Gandhari. For the sake of her blind husband Dhritarashtra, she undertakes to cover his eyes, setting an example of a true Sahadharmini. The question of whether Gandhari was justified in deliberately impairing her vision is still up for debate. Had she not been blind, would she have been a better friend and more valuable guide to her husband who was completely blind? However, when she saw that her husband was going in the wrong direction, she mustered the courage to confront him. Has he compromised his vision so that he can avoid seeing or feeling sympathy for the wrongdoings of his spouse?

Changing Role of Women in Vaishnava Panth After the invasion of Bengal by the Turks, significant changes took place in the culture and civilization of Bengal. Although somewhat paradoxically, Islamic faith and culture had a significant impact on Bengali society and culture, leading to a decline in its moral and ethical standards. The Smarta tradition in Bengal, which is the recitation of the Hindu code of conduct under Raghunandan and his Navyanay group (the current dominant Brahmanical ideology), entrenched Bengali society in their strict rules and regulations as a defence measure. ^[6] On the one hand, repressive smart rules were opposed by Sri Chaitanya Dev and his liberal Vaishnava faith, but on the other hand, he supported social norms. The social perspective of Bengal was shaped by the responses to Vaishnava movements. The texts, which are mostly literary, help us construct how society is developing. Many historical works from the period of Tapan

Roychowdhury have previously examined these themes. However, this general historical situation lacks information about Bengali women of the 16th and 17th centuries, which can be obtained from various Vaishnava literature and other sources. In fact, the Smriti Shashtra era began when the Turks Attacked Bengal. To protect Hindu society from Muslim influence, especially with regard to the protection of Hindu women, the conservative Brahmin authorities of Bengal devised their own Hindu laws and customs. The Antinomian frauds, on the other hand, were all that remained of the occult. The culmination of all the oppressive laws and practices against women practiced by the traditional and superstitious Brahmins. We can get information about the status of women in pre-Chaitanya and his contemporary period from various religious texts, writings and literature, which ruled that day. It is a reflection of the sad patriarchal mentality. Women of the pre-Chaitanya period was portrayed in a derogatory light by child marriage, the practice of Sati (committing suicide in one's husband's funeral pyre), Kaulinya-parampara polygamy, and numerous domestic constraints.

Status of Women in Medieval India

Historical Context of Women in the Early Medieval Period

As in earlier ages, women were often considered cognitively inferior. She had to blindly follow her husband's orders. Women were still not allowed to study the Vedas. Additionally, reducing the age at which women can marry hinders their ability to pursue further education. Court ladies, and even the queen's maids, were capable of writing excellent Sanskrit and Prakrit poetry, as can be seen from some of the dramatic works of the time. [7] Several legends mention the princesses' talents in the great arts, especially music and painting. Poetry was one of the many talents expected of daughters of high officials, courtiers, and concubines. According to Smriti writers, women were to be married between the ages of six and eight, or between their eighth year and the onset of puberty. Inter-caste marriages became uncommon during Medhatithi. Marriage with maternal uncle's niece is prohibited. Medhatithi forbade marriage on the basis of mutual affection and advised him to find a bride who was much younger than himself. The bride must be married between the age of eight and reaching puberty. After living with her father for three years after reaching puberty, a girl can choose her own husband or wife if her guardians are unable to match her before she reaches marriageable age.

With the consent of their parents, women may sometimes choose to have a swayamvar ceremony. Remarriage was permitted under specific circumstances, such as when the spouse had abdicated, died, became a monk, lost his or her ability to reproduce, or became a pariah. Women were often distrusted. However, he was respected at home. If the husband abandoned his wife, even if he was guilty, she was to receive maintenance. The expansion of women's property rights coincided with the expansion of land property rights. To protect family property, women were given the ability to inherit the property of their male relatives. With some restrictions, a widow was legally entitled to her husband's entire estate if he died without any children. Daughters also had the right to inherit the widow's property.

Women in Medieval India

Indian history spans 500 years throughout the Middle Ages. It mostly focuses on the history of Muslim oppressors.

Muslims first arrived in India as a warrior class. The Delhi Sultanate period and the Mughal period are the two periods of their dominance in India. Razia Sultan was the only woman who ever held the throne of Delhi. The author of Humayun-Nama was a woman of extraordinary lyrical skills named Gulbadan Begum. [8] Jahanara and Nur Jahan actively participated in government affairs. The greatest Muslim ruler of India was Nur Jahan. She was the epitome of both beauty and bravery in the army. Mumtaz Mahal was a princess of extraordinary beauty, extraordinary intelligence and exquisite taste. India has also produced courageous women like Mangammal, whose benevolent rule is still a green memory in the South, Chand Bibi, whose presence on the ramparts of the Ahmednagar fort is Tara Bai, the Maharaja heroine who was the life and soul of the Maharaja's resistance during Aurangzeb and Ahalya Bai Holkar, whose administrative genius is played by Sir John Malcolm, and of course, the Mughal princesses, the courtiers of Delhi and Agra. She was prominent in life. Court culture was embodied by women such as Jahanara, a partisan of Dara Shikoh, Roshanara, a partisan of Aurangzeb, Aurangzeb's daughter Zebunnisa, whose poetry survives (written under the pen name Makhafi), and others. Shivaji's mother Jija Bai was a She was a loyal woman who, despite being stubborn and dictatorial at home, would defer to her son's wishes. There was a lot of change in the social life of women during the medieval period. Women's dependence on their spouses or other male relatives was a defining characteristic of this time.

Women in Colonial India

Anti-imperialist women's movements were important for independence in colonial India. Six women attend the Bombay session of the Indian National Congress in 1889. (Kadambini Ganguly and Swarnakumari Devi, two of them from Bengal.) Women's organizations like Swarnakumari Devi and Sahi Samiti, (1887) led by Bharat Sri Mandal., (1910) was created by the women of the Tagore family, under the leadership of Sarala Devi Chaudhurani. Only after that appeal, in the session of the Indian National Congress in Calcutta under the leadership of Anne Besant, it was decided that women should be given the right to universal suffrage in the electoral process of our country. [9] Gandhi's "Civil Disobedience Movement" and "Quit India Movement" in the 1930s brought about a major change. Sarojini Naidu, Pravabati Devi, Kasturba Gandhi, Kamala Nehru, Jyotirmoyee Ganguly, Latika Ghosh, Ashalata Devi, Nelly Sengupta, Captain Lakshmi Sehgal and Aruna Asaf Ali are some of the notable women who played important roles in this campaign for India. National Movement. At that time, most women participated in Gandhi's anti-British national movement, including the Non-Cooperation Movement (1920), the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930), and the Quit India Movement (1942), as well as the largest number of women Was also included. Freedom fighter Matangini Hazra, who sacrificed her life for independent India.

Women in modern India

Indian women during the 19th century

The period from 1700 AD to 1947 is called modern India. The formation of autonomous, egalitarian nationalist communities emphasizing the equality of women and men was sought on a global scale during the intellectual revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries. [10] The caste system of Indian society was attacked. The Indian economy

was badly affected by colonialism and a large group of artisans were forced to leave their country in search of work in new towns and cities. Rural and tribal women's traditional rights to forests, communal property and resources were violated by the new land revenue system. Ownership rules resulted in the creation of a new prosperous middle class of landlords, which turned traditional agricultural land into a commodity, which could be sold, transferred and alienated from the farmers. These landlords then worked with colonial officials to impoverish the farmers. The British established their control in India and modernization began in the 19th century. At the time of the establishment of British rule, the status of women in India was at an all-time low. There was clearly a lot of sati. Muslim women have to strictly observe purdah. Women who danced had lucrative careers. Devadasis were often openly tolerated in Hindu temples. Without a question, the British power attempted to prevent all these mistakes. Pandita Ramabai, Tarabai Shinde and other women reformers drew attention to the prejudices held by contemporary male reformers. In Chennai, the Theosophical Society was founded, and Dr. Annie Besant, who had immigrated from Europe, joined. Additionally, it created a general agenda for social change and lacked a particularly gender-inclusive approach.

Status of Women in the Twenty-First Century

Women do not yet have control over their destiny, and they are treated differently by society. Today, living in the same nation, society and culture as men, they are deprived of their basic human rights and ridiculed by the patriarchal society; As a result, they have not yet achieved their status. They have not left their four walls since the evening, and today they were attacked by male members of the society in a deep forest, on a small road, in an empty field, in the afternoon., and were attacked at night during a storm. They are inferior to men because they are of the feminine gender; they are women; Others"; they do not have masculine gender. The issue of gender equality is raised again and will continue until it is practically established as women are still excluded from society even in the second decade of the twenty-first century. has not attained its true status. According to the famous Indian philosopher Swami Vivekananda, just as a bird can fly in the sky with its two wings, the society is managed by the equal participation of both males and females.

Current status of women in Indian society:

What is the benefit to a man if he gains the whole world but loses his soul? Unfortunately, the vast majority of Indian female citizens are yet to experience the same freedom and equality that Indian women have. When brief research is done using facts, the consequences of favouring male children over girl children are extremely surprising, very disturbing, and yet it is still prevalent in practically all regions and all groups of people in India. are generally prevalent. Is this a country of mass murders? is the question that comes up. Doesn't a girl child in our culturally and spiritually enlightened country have the right to a peaceful birth and equal respect as a male child? Although as a country we are proud of our strong family values, how many of us actually live in an "artificial balance "Live in families where women are killed for giving birth to sons? Ultimately, how we handle one family relationship will ultimately impact all other family relationships. One of the

fundamental institutions of civilization is marriage. A major component of national development is the family unit that the society has created. An unstable and chaotic society will be created by an unhappy, imbalanced family and its offspring.

Conclusion

Working as a domestic help, a small trader, an artisan, or a field worker on a family farm comes under the informal sector. Most of these positions are low skilled, low paid, and do not provide benefits to the employee. But perhaps more importantly, cultural customs vary from place to place. North India tends to be more patriarchal and feudal than South India, despite the fact that this is a generalization. In North India, women are subject to severe restrictions on their conduct, which limits their access to employment. Women have greater independence and a stronger social presence in South India, which tends to be more equal. Despite the fact that there are still few jobs available across the country, cultural barriers are fading and women are more free to engage in the formal sector. However, the conditions of working women in India have recently improved significantly. More and more companies are now occupied by women who work in the same positions as men, and more and more women are finding themselves in positions of respect and prominence. Working is no longer just a necessary adjustment, but a tool to develop yourself.

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