

A Study on the Changing Socio- Economic Conditions of Women in India

¹Mrs. B. Anitha, ²Mrs. K. Pranitha

Assistant Professor, Department of History, St. Joseph's college for women(A),VSP

Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, St. Joseph's college for women(A),VSP

Abstract

The role of women in today's world is significant in all dimensions. In the 21st century it is proved that women can perform multitasking with great ease. There is an increase in highly skilled professionals such as IPS, IAS, IES, engineers, scientists, technologists, auditors', journalists, public relation officers, pilots, Business executives, Entrepreneurs', Architects, politicians, etc.

However even in our modern society men are still the stronger gender. We can't forget that a women's life is a lot more complicated than a men's life.

This paper studies the opportunities available for women to develop socially as well as economically so that the status of woman can reach equal to the extent of men in this male dominated society.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To examine the Role of Women in ancient period.
2. To discuss the role of women in the society in comparison with modern women.
3. To compare the rights available to women in comparison with men.

METHODOLOGY:

For the submission of this paper secondary data was collected from magazines, books, journals, government reports and websites.

KEY WORDS: Comparison, opportunities, complicated, dominated, significant

HISTORICAL REVIEW OF WOMEN IN THE SOCIETY

In the Rig Vedic, Puranic and Buddhist times women were not the chattels that they were put them in the dark. During medieval period they enjoyed a fair amount of personal freedom. They were treated as to equal of men. Gender inequality was not shown in their rights and privileges in the society. They had every access to education high learning and training as well as participation in all functions. The Rig Vedic period produced women seers who took active part in agriculture, in manufacturing bows and arrows, and weaving cloth. By and large monogamy was in rule. Re-marriage of widows was permitted. The status of wife was honored and as prestigious as husband in the family.

The Aryans after inter- marrying the local denied the women to avail the benefits of education, equality and freedom. Buddhism however, renewed the Vedic tradition of giving a place of honor to women. The period also had produced women missionaries and intellectuals. After the Buddhist period confusion prevailed in the society. Women were honored and protected in the family but were not given freedom.

They were not allowed to inherit property or to remarry. Manu a lawmaker declared that women were to be protected and honored albeit in an inferior position, then Muslim rule came into existence and women's status further worsened. practices such as purdah child marriages ,female infanticide, and sati marked this deterioration during 18th century the British tried to make an effort to modify the Indian social structure .Laws were passed to permit Inter-caste marriages

,widow re –marriage and divorce under certain conditions .without hurting conservative susceptibilities, facilities were provided for education of women .These movements brought an awareness of the prevailing issue in the system, which are not requested for the revival of old values and social pattern.

Women are important in our society. Every woman has her own job or duty in this modern society in which men are unfortunately still the strongest gender .we can't forget that a woman's life is a lot more complicated than a man's life. A woman has to take care of her own personal life and if she is a mother, she has to take care also of her children's life too. Worse still is she is married, additional stress can be on her shoulders. yet they will still perform very well in the work environment in some cases better than their male counterparts.

The many silly commentaries that we hear today against women occupying certain roles in the workplace are therefore bovine nonsense. Present day women are determined and is able to manage economic, social and religious activities. The silly comments, like women are not as strong as men and therefore, certain jobs like engineering, defense and technical are not meant for them. Here a question arises that can a man do everything that a woman does? / gender roles are based on norms or standards created by society. In the United States masculine roles are usually associated with strength, aggression and dominance, while famine roles are associated with passivity. Nurturing and subordination what then are leadership and managerial roles based on? Today, we see women work either as the manager or the managed. In both situations we find women to be more efficient and can work with as they are usually a lot more critical on matters that require a much more robust approach and often produce results within time allocated.

The nation of perpetuating backwardness of women especially in rural areas is one of the significant contributors to poverty, unplanned family sizes, poor reproductive health, hunger etc. In India with the rural setup, women are looked at only as child bearers, with limited use of contraception, largely due to ignorance and lack of opportunity to get exposed to a more sophisticated way of living and making money, equality between women and men and girls and boys, is crucial to achieving sustainable

development and meeting internationally agreed goals. The EU has attempted to provide leadership on issues of gender by making gender equality as a primary objective in the various projects. Sadly, in 2012 only 28 percent of new EU project proposals had gender as a primary or significant objective, far below the target of 80% for 2015. Luckily, however consensus is growing around and need to demonstrate more sturdy leadership to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment stay visible and high on the agenda.

The vision that the constitution of our country "India" reflect this new thinking of women empowerment, taking this step further into making a much more felt reality is the need of the hour. The vision that one day the world especially in the developing countries, will look at women as significant contributors to the GDP of a country and to the well being of not just their families, but society as a whole. Within few years from today there shall be a significant improvement in the numbers of women leaders at various levels (a situation which can be guaranteed if the rights of women are properly institutionalized within policies of organization). The attitudes and expectations surrounding gender roles are typically based not on any inherent or natural gender differences, but on stereotypes, or over generalizing about the attitudes, traits, or behavior patterns of women and men. It's admirable how the western countries have developed in all fields of life. The education system, their health care system information technology etc are in the highest rankings. In western countries men and women are working shoulder to shoulder in the same pace and both are contributing and playing their parts equally in the developmental process. They are given basic education as well as fundamental and higher education without any restrictions from the society. Early pregnancies or early marriages that are prevalent in India have stopped many Indian girls becoming relevant in society, are unheard of. That is why those countries are that much developed. They are educating and encouraging both the sexes equally without discriminating or neglect of the girl child. In this way there is competition and where there is competition there is invention and invention leads to massive development in one way or another.

Women – Strength of society: Gender inequality exist globally, and it exists in various variables. The situation is worse in under developing countries where women are the second citizen and education of a girl child is still not a priority. The cultural issues, stigmas and taboos around women in particularly widows after losing their husband is very suffering. Women are not soft but powerful creatures and have right to equal progress and power in society to achieve national integration, greater cultural and economic development, to remove disparities and achieve social integration, to promote economic and social development at the grass root level, improving women capabilities by involving them and treating them equally in all aspects of the social activities like education, health, employment, income generation is essential. To achieve

all round development women contribution in the physical, mental, moral and intellectual form is required. Women contribution can change the present world. Eliminating gender inequality helps the society in many ways like 1. Reducing poverty 2. Create a sustainable planet 3. Prevent needless deaths and illness and 4. Fostering peace. Without women role in the society it is impossible to stimulate economic growth. Losing the inputs of 50% is taking more than 108 years to close the overall gender gap and 202 years to bring parity in the workplace, reported by UNDP report.

S. No	Particulars	Figures of Norway	Figures of India
1.	Gender inequality index	0.039	0.524
2.	Maternal mortality rate (deaths per 1 lakh live births)	5	174
3	Adolescent birth rate (birth per 1000 women 15-19 years)	3	23.1
4	Share of seats in parliament	41.4	11.6
5.	Population with at least secondary education(2010-17)	Female -96.4 Male - 97.2	Female -39.0 Male - 63.5
6.	Labor force participation rate (% ages 15 & older)	Female - 62.9 Male -74.1	Female -27.2 Male - 78.8

The above figures clearly show the position of India in relation to gender equality, which is very low when compared to the number one country in the world. Gender gap index India ranks 108th position in WEF measurement. In creating economic opportunity, it ranks 142 of 149 countries. It is ranked the third lowest in the world for health and survival rate.

Women in today's world

Women are integral part of today's society. They have an active social life. they participate in various social and cultural functions. Their contribution to society is showing great impact. They are playing important role in politics and are growing. Very often we hear from many elder people that certain higher level jobs are not meant for women. We hear such pronouncements even from those who are educated and mature enough to see that high responsibility did not depend on gender or sex. Today, we accept the fact that women should work just as hard as men and women being nearly half of the population, must be treated as equal partners in our society.

The fact that Indira Gandhi, P.M of India and Golda Meir, P.M of Israel prove to world that women in the position of power can make a difference. Today women in middle class families choose a career to get employment and earn incomes to support their families financially. The women's right movement have changed the society's view, which was controlled by men. The government of India has given great importance to women welfare from the 1st plan itself. 2nd to 5th plans stategised to women education and measures to improve maternal and child health services. 6th plan adopted a multi-disciplinary approach giving emphasis on the three core sectors of health, education and employment. 7th plan stressed on raising economic and social status by bringing them into the main stream of national development through Beneficiary oriented Schemes. 9th plan made two important changes like Empowerment of Women and convergence of existing services available in both women specific and women related sectors for which a special strategy of Women Component Plan was adopted. Laws against female foeticide, domestic violence and sexual harassment in workplace etc. are introduced to protect women rights. Involving technology and modernization changes the society over the generations. Today women in middle class families, choose a career to get employment and earn incomes to support their families financially. Apart from being mothers, they are balancing between office duties and household chores. Parents are also giving equal attention to the education of girls. In the developing countries 50% of the total production of food is done by women. Present governments at centre and state are giving great emphasis for women empowerment. Programs like Mahila E-haat, Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao, Working women Hostels, Swadhar Greh, STEP (Support to Training and Employment Program for Women), Nari Shakti Puruskars, Self Help Groups, Dwacra programs etc are implemented in parts of the country.

Conclusion: What we should ask ourselves how women and men's roles are changing in society.

Is this global change restricted more to the western nations? Did you know that an exception to most other ancient societies. Egyptian women achieved parity with Egyptian men .They enjoyed same legal and economic rights, at least in theory. This concept can be found in Egyptian art and contemporary manuscripts. The disparities between people's legal rights were based on differences in social class and not on gender. Legal and economic rights were afforded to both men and women. Let us please join hands in paying special tribute to our women, our mother, sister, or compatriots and above all our partners. The former first lady Cherie Blair has commented that women are not soft but are powerful creatures and have right to equal progress and power in society, but their education has not been given enough priority. India has a lot of resources for change but it isn't working. To bring in socio-economic change policy and program actions to improve livelihoods, raise social awareness, knowledge, skills and self confidence in women is the support she should get.

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