



CHANGING STATUS OF WOMEN IN MAHARASHTRA

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ABSTRACT

The present study deals with a study of changing status of women in Maharashtra. This study primarily focuses on Socio Legal awareness among the women, educational improvement of women, Women employment and economic role, National awareness and Participation in political field. So, Women's position changed as the social structure, family and lifestyle where they are becoming dual earners in present society. The aim of the present study was to highlight the Changing Status of Women in the Modern Period. The informative study is broad based quantitative and qualitative analysis. Besides, study includes interviews with women and their connected adult colleagues. This study primarily focuses on the changing status of women within Maharashtra (India). The informative study is broad based quantitative and qualitative analysis are undertaken. Besides study includes interviews and cross interviews with women and their connected an adult colleague. The survey is done in Six Division of Maharashtra.

KEYWORDS:

changing status, social structure, Women's position, lifestyle, Socio Legal awareness, educational improvement, Women employment, National awareness and Participation in political field.

INTRODUCTION

In the latter half of the eighteenth century, the position of women had reached the greatest degree of improvement which was effective in the 19th century where women changing status were observed in the socio-economic progressive way. Today, there is a rapid transitional period in the status of women. The following are the accounts of changes in the socio-economic status of women mainly focus on this special class of women. Consequently, new social roles started emerging both for men and women. Advance in science and technology led to new production processes, occupations and skill, which in turn, led to an increased demand for women labour. Women today enjoy better health and hygiene conscious because of the progress in the national health programmes including family planning. The social institutions and customs not only frustrated the free growth of women but also regarded them unfit for participation in social, political and religious functions of any significance. During the British rule, new systems were established based on principles of liberty and equality and in turn generated a new climate to bring changes in the old, traditional feudal, un-egalitarian social structure and norms based on equality. They favoured and encouraged education for women by establishing schools and colleges and by introducing English education. After independence, many militant movements rose against the government. Independence reinforced the challenges and struggles to improve the status of women. Hence, in the modern days women status was changing from the effect of education, women participation in all fields and women welfare programmes in five major factors which contribute to the socio-economic changes. This changing status of women also helps her to become independent in their life economically, socially due to opportunities of education.

OBJECTIVE:

- To Review the Changing Status of Women in the Modern Period.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

- **COLLECTION OF DATA:**

Secondary data collected for this study such as articles concerning changing status, social structure, Women's position, lifestyle, Socio Legal awareness, educational improvement, Women employment, National awareness and Participation in political field in key words and titles of papers were selected. As the focus of the paper is more on the terms changing status of women in Maharashtra, only articles which tend to concentrate more on the women status were considered.

- **RESEARCH DESIGN:**

Descriptive research design has been used in the present research. The purpose is to find out To Review the Changing Status of Women in the Modern Period. For further research, it is important to prove the positive effects in women. Additionally, the articles are analysed the Social Legal changes, Educational improvement, Women employment and economic role, National awareness and Participation in political field, So Women's position changed as the social structure, family and lifestyle where they are becoming dual earners in present society. This is of importance when designing the framework of changing status of women.

CHANGING STATUS OF WOMEN:

The status of women—social, economic, political, and general—in India Maharashtra is much higher than in ancient and mediaeval periods. Women today enjoy many more rights—social and legal—and have greater freedom and voice, and participate more freely in public affairs. But it is also true that they are still discriminated against, harassed, humiliated, dominated and even exploited. In ancient India (Vedic and Epic periods), women by and large were treated 'equal to men'. They were treated and honoured and considered to be 'embodiment of all divine virtues on earth'. They were considered not only as pivots of domestic life but also of entire social organisation. Of course, there are scholars who refer to several passages from religious scriptures to point out that they enjoyed 'low status'. These passages refer to women as 'unworthy of being trusted', as 'only means of satisfying the physical desires of men and secure them progeny', as 'root of all evils', as 'things of possession', and so on. But all these references were 'contextual' i.e., given in some context. In the social field, they never observed purdah, had freedom of mate selection, were not denied education, and enjoyed freedom in the household as well as outside it. In the economic field, they had limited rights of property succession as wives and mothers.

However, they did not serve and earn wages because it was not necessary for them to do so. In the political field, their status depended upon the then-existing political system. Since there were no elected governments, they had no voting rights or the opportunity of holding political posts. They were not permitted entry in the sabhas (assemblies) because these were used for gambling, drinking and such other purposes too. Kautilya has referred (in Arthashastra) to women soldiers armed with bows and arrows. In the religious field, they enjoyed full rights and regularly participated in religious ceremonies. In the Pauranic, Brahmanical and mediaeval periods, the status of women was lowered by imposition of several restrictions. Pre-puberty marriages came to be practised, widow remarriage was prohibited, husband was given the status of God for a woman, education was totally denied to her, custom of sati was introduced, purdah system came into vogue, polygyny came to be tolerated and women were forbidden to offer sacrifices and prayers and read religious books. In the Muslim period, more restrictions were imposed on them due to the rigidity of the caste system and imposition of Brahmanical austerities on the entire society.

However, the situation did undergo some change owing to the Bhakti movement which permitted some social and religious freedom to women. In the British period, the status of women improved a little because of spread of education, Christian missionaries' interest in girls' education, abolition of social customs like sati, enacting of some legal measures (like Widow Remarriage Act, 1856, Special Marriage Act, 1872, Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929) and a few social movements initiated by enlightened leaders like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Justice Ranade, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Maharishi Karve, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Annie Beasant, Mahatma Gandhi, etc., and the growth of women's organisations like Banga Mahila Samaj, Bharat Mahila Parishad (1904), Women's Indian Association (1917), National Council of Women in India (1925), and All India Women's Conference (1927).

The change in the status of women got further impetus after independence because of the enactment of new laws (Special Marriage Act, 1954, Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, Hindus Succession Act 1956 and Anti Dowry Act 1961).

The laws pertaining to women's employment are:

Factory Act, 1948,

Employees State Insurance Act, 1948 and

Maternity Benefit Acts.

Other factors which affected women's status were:

effect of education, leadership provided by educated elite women, increasing opportunities of employment, change in the rigidity of the caste system, and so on. The need for linkage between programmes oriented to women and national policy towards weaker sections has come to be increasingly realised.

Several commissions have been appointed by the central and the state governments to suggest measures for protecting women's rights in various fields. Two such commissions were appointed by the Central government in 1971 and 1992. The National Commission for Women (NCW), set up in January 1992, was directed to look into women-related issues, probe the status of women, examine various legislations and point out loopholes and gaps and assess the causes of discrimination and violence against women and suggest possible remedies.

the present status of women - indicators of higher status of women

Some observers associate changing status of women with factors like increase in divorce and female share of divorce petitions outnumbering that of men, increase in inter-caste marriages, decrease in number of crimes against women, and so forth. But factors which really point out the high status of women are: involvement of women in paid-work and acquiring economic independence, increase in the number of higher and better-paid positions in different departments occupied by women, increase in the number of female entrepreneurs and managers, etc., increase in the number of women in legislative bodies, increase in the number of girls studying in universities, colleges and professional institutions, and so forth.

Women's status can be analysed at two levels: women in the rural areas and women in the urban areas. In the urban areas, their status may further be examined at three sub-levels: rich women, middle-class women, and poor women. In the rural areas, there is little difference in the status of women who are non-working and those who are working. But in the urban areas, middle-class women are at the crossroads.

The rich and the poor have always had a lifestyle of their own but the middle-class women have different perceptions and values. This class distinction is like three parallel streams with well-defined boundaries which are sacrosanct.

Not many decades ago (say, up to the 1950s), the urban middle-class women had their role clearly defined. They knew what was expected of them and responded accordingly. It was a predictable lifestyle with known challenges and solutions and with a little effort, they could adapt to their roles with reasonable ease and grace.

Today, a large number of women with more education and with work to do for earning livelihood find adjustment difficult. While earlier the priority for most girls was marriage at the right time and leading a life based on roles of wife, mother and daughter-in-law, parents remained more concerned about the family background of the prospective son-in-law before fixing the marriage of their daughters. The demands of dowry were high.

Walking out of marriage i.e., separation or divorce did not have social or legal sanction. Women after marriage had, therefore, no option but to try and make their marriage work. The relations between husband and wife were based on mutual trust where he appreciated and helped her in her efforts of adjustment based on patience, humility and understanding and she trusted him. Family hierarchy was well defined. The father-in-law was the boss and his word was law. It had to be obeyed.

A woman had respect for social norms. But today, housekeeping and bringing up children are no longer a full-time job for a middle-class woman. She is desperately trying to ape the rich class. Today, the main criteria for selecting a girl as life-partner are her education and her employability. This is an age of earning couples.

The girls have taken up the challenge. Professionally, they have practically left no field where boys could claim exclusivity. Working couples leave their kids behind in creches and pick them up in the evening. Marriages have become late by choice because couples tend to give due weight to their career graphs. 'Live-in' relationships are

being tolerated and divorce is no longer a social stigma. The traditional institution of marriage seems to be slowly losing its sanctity.

The old joint family system is also breaking. This has also affected the bringing up of children. A child in a nuclear family is a loner and tends to be self-centred. Old values are being replaced with modern values of equality, individualism and rationality. Though males have yet to be domesticated to share the daily chores, they have been made to realise that they do not hold dominant position in the family. Thus, modern middle-class women have greater privacy, more opportunities, freedom of action and equal rights. They have broken away from many shackles and unfairly restrictive practises. Women have indeed arrived and got their place in society.

Thus, if we were to describe the woman of contemporary times, we could give her following characteristics:

- (1) She has struck a perfect balance between tradition and modernity.
- (2) She seems to be determined to try and prove to man that she is equal to him.
- (3) While earlier, a woman has had an identity always through a male (either she was known as somebody's daughter or wife or mother) and her plight was like a satellite that kept orbiting around one planet—the man, today she has an opportunity to shine independently and reflect an identity of her own.
- (4) She is no longer confined to orthodox beliefs, capitalises on her own potential and merits, and has carved a notch for herself that was once forbidden by society.
- (5) She has begun to take responsibility and decisions for her life rather than just playing wife's and mother's roles. Her aptitudes and skills are slowly breaking down all chauvinistic barriers.
- (6) There has been metamorphosis in a woman. From the conservative woman of the 1940s and 1950s, she became the feminist reactionary of the 1960s and the 1970s, the super woman mother-wife-career woman of the 1980s, and the empowered woman of the 1990s, who demands and enjoys her rights and is not afraid to stand alone. She accepts that this is what I am, this is what I am not, and this is what I have to be.
- (7) She makes her own decisions, and is not a doormat. She doesn't take any kind of injustice meted out to her. She can think for herself, she makes a life for herself, and she instills important values in her children too.
- (8) The new woman is part of the old woman.
- (9) She is not afraid to be tough, aggressive and assertive. At the same time, she is not afraid to be feminine, sensual, gentle, caring, and considerate. She can be a career woman as well as a house-mother. She loves the people around her—family, friends, work-folk, etc., but she also loves herself as a person.
- (10) She is full of aspirations, expectations and desires. But if she fails, she does not act like a weak woman.

Taking the general status of women in contemporary society, it may be averred that:

- (1) There is more representation of women in parliament, vidhan sabhas, panchayats and Nagar Nigams (municipal corporations). There are more women entrepreneurs, more bureaucrats, more professionals, more managers and more administrative officers.
- (2) Rural women are still traditional, deeply ritualistic, and fiercely conservative in their behaviour, but urban women are fighting the real battles of life. Of course, in the urban areas, there are women who belong to lower middle class and work as housewives, teachers, nurses, clerks, stenographers, telephone operators and also women of lower classes who work as labourers, domestic maids, sweepers and rag-pickers, etc. for whom life hasn't changed much. They are still subdued in our society. They are still not economically emancipated from men.

CONCLUSION:

In social, psychological and moral dimensions also, their situation is not identical to that of men. When they start their career as adults, they are evaluated by the society with a different perspective. Since only a few women escape from the traditional feminine world and since they do not get from society nor from family the assistance they need to become in concrete fact the equals of men, they fail to get recognition as successful role-performers.

Researcher observed with discussion with women that socio-economic biases are still prevalent in the maharashtra. to a large extent women have limited means to seek empowerment, for seeking ways to with their deprivation. Moreover, the prevailing gender biases have been found to be magnifying, even after more than a

decade of the New Economic Policy. The economic status of women have been adversely affected by factors like rising wage differentials between men and women, women's marginalization in the informal sector, rising unemployment rates owing to shift from sectors like agriculture and even traditional female sectors of employment. Although the problem has been addressed to some extent by the rise of NGOs, still a serious concern is the falling public expenditure and decrease in subsidies. Adequate research would help us to identify the other problems that are related to women's inadequacy in the provision of healthcare facilities and gender specific physical vulnerabilities (e.g. anemia among pregnant women). This has been further exacerbated by an increase in rural poverty and a fall in the healthcare expenditures. In the healthcare sector, the impact of the rise of NGOs can be expected to be a long term phenomena. Future analysis can be more successful with a more case based approach and study of incentives and organizational structures. Moreover, voluntary community participation among women can be made possible, only if particular attention is given to the nature of incentives by NGOs. In this context, it can be said that in recent years, positive results have been noticed in health care provisions due to NGOs initiatives. Several gender related issues have been solved by education, thereby leading to better employment opportunities. Programs linked with empowerment and employment of women are increasingly focusing on the quality of education which would pave the way for the upliftment of women, economically and socially.