



THE SOCIAL STATUS OF INDIAN WOMAN IN THE GLOBALIZED WORLD

JYOTIRAM U. SONWANE

Parag Vidyalaya & Junior College,
Nr. Shivaji Talav, Bhandup (W),
Mumbai -78. MS (INDIA)

ABSTRACT

As Coco Chanel, a French designer, says, "Women have always been the strong ones of the world. The men are always seeking from a woman a little pillow to put their heads down on. They are always longing for the mother who held them as the infants ", the world of men is incomplete without the woman because she is the half part of their life without knowing them. The woman is the reflection of man, in which he realizes and knows better himself, though she has no right to speak and express her opinion. So Bette Davis says," When a man gives her opinion, he is a man, when a woman gives her opinion, she is a bitch." Why this discrimination? If she bears his children ,she looks after everyone ,she supports him at home and outside ,she is always under the pressure of his hatred and terror ,why this ? He always proves he is strong and powerful than her and how she is weak and fragile, though we are prancing off that we are globalized and modern.

INTRODUCTION

In Vedic period the condition of woman was good, she was given a respect and equal status among men. She was at adorned place in all aspects of life. Through the Indian grammarians such as Patanjali and Katyayana, we come to know that the women were educational in the Vedic period. Rigvedic verses suggest that women married at mature age and were mostly free to select their own husbands, this was known as 'swaymvar'. In fact during his this period, women had superior position than the men. In scriptures such as the Rigveda and Upanishadas, we find many women sages and seers, notably Gargi and Maitrayi.

In near about 500 B.C. the status of women began to decline. The reform movements of Jainism allowed women to be participated in religious orders, but most of Indian women faced confinement and restrictions. During this period, approximately sixth century, the child marriage system came to be in practice.



'The Manusmriti', also known as 'Manav Dharam Shastra', depicted the status of woman and interpreted it as Hindu divine law. It celebrates some derogatory comments about the woman such as- "it is the nature of woman to seduce men in this world; for that reason the wise are never unguarded in the company of females (2/213 "Swabhav ev natrinam..."). Wise men should marry only women who are free from bodily defects, with beautiful names, grace like an elephant, moderate hair on the head and body, soft limbs and small teeth. They should not marry women who do not have a brother and whose parents are not socially well known. Women have no divine right to perform any religious ritual, nor make vows or observe a fast. As it happened now in Shani Shinganapur, Maharashtra. Her only duty is to obey and please her husband and she will for that reason alone be exalted in heaven. It is the duty of all husbands to exert total control over their wives." One should not accept the meal from a woman has an extra marital relations; nor from a family exclusively dominated or managed by women or a family whose 10 days of impurity because of death who have not passed (4/217). Girls are supposed to be in the custody of their father when they are children, women must be under the custody of their husband when are married and under the custody of her son when widows .In no circumstances is she allowed to assert herself independently (5/151).While defending Manusmriti as divine code of conduct for all including women, apologists often the verse: " yatra naryasto pojyantay, ramantay tatra devta.." (3/56 Manusmriti) (Where women are provided place of honor,Gods are pleased and reside there in that household), but they deliberately forget all those verses that are full of prejudice, hatred and discrimination against women.

Some kingdoms in ancient India had traditions such as 'nagarvadhu' (bride of the city). Women competed to win the coveted title of nagarvadhu. Amrapali is the most famous example of nagarvadhu.

The status of women in India mostly deteriorated during the medieval period with the entrance of the Muslims. Several evil practices such as female infanticide, sati and child marriage were practiced during this period. The Muslim conquest in the Indian subcontinent brought 'purdah' to Indian society. Among the Rajputs of Rajasthan, the Jauhar was practiced, Devdasi was practiced in southern India. Polygamy was practiced among Hindu Kshatriya rulers for some political reasons. In many Muslim families, women were restricted to 'Zenana areas' at the house.

Inspite of these conditions, women often became prominent in the fields at politics, literature, education and religion. Razia Sultana,the Gond queen Durgavati, Chand Bibi, Nur Jehan, Jijabai are such examples. Some women also excelled in literature,music and arts .Although these were the powerful women ,the condition of the poor women remained same.

In British raj the status of women was improving a little more.With the help of British ,some reformers - Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Mahatma Phule, V. R. Shinde,



Husen Dalwai who worked for the upliftment and betterment of their female counterparts and abolished some evil practices such as Sati, Devdasi, Child marriage, Tonsure and Purdah system etc.

After the establishment of United Nations Organization (1945) , as an organ of UN, United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) formed two functional commissions - one is United Nations Commission on Human Rights and another one is the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW or UNCSW).Every year representatives of member states gather at United Nations Headquarters in New York to evaluate the progress on gender equality, identify challenges, set global standards and formulate concrete policies to promote gender equality and advancement of women worldwide.

As a member of UN, to follow and apply the policies and programs for the protection and progress of women, India brought the 'Immoral Traffic (prevention) Act' 1956, 'Dowry Prevention Act '1961 and to bestow the rights to them , 'National Women's Commission' in 1992.

Now in independent India women are participating fully in every field such as sports, education, politics, media ,art and culture, service sectors ,science and technology etc. It is the effect of that the Indian government is trying to uplift and empower the women but we are not ready to change our mentality and sacrifice our orthodoxical attitude towards women. We have got the independence before 69 years but we are displaying our modernness covered with orthodoxy and hypocrisy. The woman is trying to live in modernized and globalized India, but her modernness has rooted in the past. Her past doesn't allow her to break the bondage of her own sphere and to experience and enjoy the life freely.Until she is thought as a fragile, tender, weak, devoting, and sacrificing nature and an instrument to quench the sexual appease. Though she has the capability to fight and struggle to achieve her goals as equal to men, she is looked down and thought as primitive. So Simone de Beauvoir says, 'She is not born a woman but she is made '.

Woman is not treated properly and respectfully in a bus or train,at her workplace or even at her home. She is insecure even in the crowd of men. She is harassed, assaulted, bruised and demoralized. According to the National Crime Records Bureau,a crime against woman is committed every three minutes,a woman is raped every 29 minutes, a dowry death occurs every 77 minutes and case of cruelty committed by either the husband or relative of the husband occurs every nine minutes. This occurs despite the fact that women in India are legally protected from domestic abuse under 'The Dowry Prohibition Act '1961,'The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act '2005 as well as 'The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act' 2013 came into force in December 2013.

With it, the female infanticide is the major problem of our country. For the sake of son as an heir, because of dowry and poverty, we destruct her before she enters in the world. She is yelling out to come and says, if you want a wife, a sister, a mother, then why don't you want a daughter...? To change this condition, Indian government has launched 'Sukanya Yojana (2014)' to prevent the female infanticide and to develop the health and education of girls as well as 'Sukanya Samridhi Yojana' to increase the gender ratio of girl child.

By thinking it, 'A strong woman is one who is able to smile this morning like she wasn't crying last night', Indian government brought a 'National Mission for Empowerment of Women' ('Mission Purnshakti') in 2010, for the social, economic and educational empowerment. The elixir to overcome these barriers, there is need to improve the literacy to make them aware and independent. Because of it, India launched a literacy program 'Sakshar Bharat' in 2009. It gives the emphasis on adult education as well as women's literacy. Through the great efforts of this mission, the literacy of women reached up to 74.04% and it increased by 11.8% in 2011 than it was 64.84% in 2001. The upper house Rajyasabha has passed a Women's Reservations Bill to reserve 33% of all seats in Lok Sabha and Rajyasabha in 2010.

Again there is need to make the provision of funds through the gender budgeting for them as formulated in Beijing Declaration by UN in 1995. There are many rural and tribal women aloof from this stream of modernization and globalization. There is a need to include them in sustainable development for their empowerment, as Sheryl Sandburg says, "We need women at all levels, including the top, to change the dynamic, reshape the conversation, to make sure women's voices are heard and heeded, not overlooked and ignored".

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