

Position Of Women In India: Historical Perspective

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Abstract

Woman establishes the strategic part in the Indian society. Women in ancient India relished high position in society and their situation was worthy. The country is to study the position of its women. In certainty, the position of women represents the customary of values of any period. The social position of the women of a nation represents the social essence of the era. Though to appeal an assumption about the position of women is a problematic and difficult delinquent. It is consequently, essential to touch this situation in the historical perspective. The paper will help us to imagine the position of women in the historical perspective.

The position and status of today's woman in India is significantly altered in modern Indian society. The population of woman is nearly half of the total population of India. A country or a community cannot be measured enlightened where woman is not privileged. Indian laws are being made without acumen against woman, as a result Indian woman enjoying high situation in our society.

Woman empowerment has to be seen as a attendant of the entire procedure of community modification prominent to a just society and consequently its achievement will be contingent upon the accomplishment of the understanding socio- economic strategies and concurrent variations in the political development. The processes on all these approaches have to be impulsive, to attain the anticipated consequences. This may not be attained unless the current situation is analyzed.

However the status of today's woman in India is high, the general image of woman's situation in India is not acceptable. Therefore woman empowerment in modern India cannot take place unless woman come self-possessed and choose to self-empower themselves. Self-empowerment can instigate by speaking day to day subjects faced by specific woman and undertaking them with a mindset of refining the overall living circumstances of woman at every level and divisions of the society.

Key words: gender discrimination, traditional conceptions, legal enactment, woman empowerment, self-help groups.

INTRODUCTION

The position of women depends upon the economic policies and priorities of the state¹. From time immemorial high importance was attached to customs about women². The local customs which granted rights to women varied from time to time, and place to place³. The government had to give form and shape to safeguard their welfare by eliminating gender discrimination by legislation⁴. Women being an atrophied limb of the human organ depended entirely for her support and sustenance on their husbands⁵. The social position of the women of a nation represents the social essence of the era. Though to appeal an assumption about the position of women is a problematic and difficult delinquent. It is consequently, essential to touch this situation in the historical perspective. The paper will help us to imagine the position of women in the historical perspective.

The pre and post-independence periods witnessed miraculous changes in the social history of women⁶. With the dawn of independence offering constitutional equality and women empowerment, legal enactments against social evils and to ensure welfare-oriented programmes became a must⁷. Since women had decided to play their role in the administration, the concept of the liberalised economy enabled them to become in national economic active programmes in the societies of the 20th century⁸.

STATUS OF INDIAN WOMEN

The conservative attitude and outlook regarding the status of women and their problems began to change⁹. Their status after marriage also witnessed transitions, especially about their wisdom and knowledge¹⁰. For the economic progress and to reap social and cultural benefits, women in Tamil Nadu are engaged in many production activities like preparation and preservation of food, weaving materials, wooden products etc¹¹. So it will also be apt to have an estimate of the labour laws which assists women in their economic pursuits. Due to the physical inequality of women, labour laws have been enunciated to provide benefits, concessions, protection and economic safeguards¹².

In industrial laws, women have a unique position due to their physical inequality¹³. Women workers not only enjoy better rights but also have better remedies in factories, mines, plantations and industries¹⁴. The traditional conceptions regarding the place and role of women are slowly changing in the contemporary Indian society¹⁵. To the end of

the nineteenth century, the status of women in Tamil Nadu was worst due to their economic slavery¹⁶.

POSITION OF WOMEN IN ANCIENT INDIAN HISTORY

Property relations within families depended on women's inequality¹⁷. Thus, women's involvement in the economic development process was neglected¹⁸. The British Government's involvement in the welfare legislation of Indian women also offered space for men's individual property rights concerning those of the Indian joint family property¹⁹. Ideologically woman was considered as a completely inferior species and inferior to the male²⁰. Having no personality, she was kept in a state of utter subjection, denied any rights, and remained subjugated²¹. They were treated as an appendage of men with a distinct and meekly accepted conception of their family duties and obligations²².

The women were to avoid aggressiveness, self-ascertain and competition since these were the most inconvenient attitudes to have under a state of subordination²³. It cannot be denied that women were nothing more than pleasure slaves²⁴. The reason for the inferior status of women in India was the existence of social evils such as sati, childmarriage, polygamy, enforced widowhood, denial of education, the purdah²⁵ system etc. Both the practice of child marriage and the purdah custom led to a low literacy rate among women²⁶.

POSITION OF WOMAN IN MODERN PERIOD

The position and status of today's woman in India is significantly altered in modern Indian society. The population of woman is nearly half of the total population of India. A country or a community cannot be measured enlightened where woman is not privileged. Indian laws are being made without acumen against woman, as a result Indian woman enjoying high situation in our society.

More over woman are amalgamation the field of science and technology also. In fact, there is no scope of movement in which women are inappropriate or ineffectual. In modern period of India, our legislator made numerous legislative portrayals to save and defend woman from wrongdoing and crimes like dowry demise, 'feminine foeticide', infanticide, unkindness etc. and it stretches the idea of empowerment of woman.

But violence against women has been part and parcel of family life for ages. Husbands used to think that they have a right to ill-treat their wives, and this ill-treatment included beating them, resulting in physical injury. The basis of men assuming such a right against their women-folk is not known.

The fact that they are physically stronger and also the fact that they are wage earners may have made them to think that women are at their mercy and that they could mistreat them starve them for days together, keep them as prisoners in dungeons and what is worse, expect them not to protest against such harsh and inhuman treatment.

Modern women need not submit themselves any more to such barbaric behaviour on the part of their husbands because laws say “Men, keep off your hands from women”. Legislations to improve the economic position of women are many. In ancient and medieval times men seem to have thought that since women were dependent on men and since all expenses of their livelihood were met by men themselves it was not necessary to make separate provision for women.

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMAN

Woman Empowerment not only point near their physical growth, but is concerned with meagre economic development which usually plays an essential role in the overall developmental plan as has been considered of in the case of other disadvantaged classes. The Property Rights Act of 1956, the Equal Remuneration Act of 1975, the Equal Wages Act of 1995 etc. enabled women to emancipate themselves from the hurdles of psychological, social, economic and political constraints²⁷. For redressing the grievances of women, specific remedial measures are undertaken through various steps taken by the Government²⁸.

In Tamil Nadu, as the self-help group is for women, of women and by women, it has created a silent social revolution in a self-gendering social gender empowerment²⁹. The women entrepreneurs' energies are channelised to the newly explored avenues of economic involvement³⁰.

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), Rural Access to Services through Internal Activities (RASI), the Good Will Social Work Centre (GSWC), the Foundation of Occupational Development (FOOD), the Development of Women (DEW) etc., too contribute to women welfare activities through self-help groups³¹.

The government of Tamil Nadu and India in collaboration with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) have helped the economic uplift of women through self-help groups³². The Women Development Fund of the Government of Tamil Nadu, and the Support Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP), a central government-sponsored scheme, are for promoting socio-economic conditions of rural

women³³. The MahalirThittam encouraged the self-help groups as instruments in spreading the knowledge about entrepreneurial activities and leadership qualities³⁴.

However, times have changed, and it has come to be necessary for women also to become wage earners to meet the high cost of modern living. Therefore the Government has started encouraging women to seek employment opportunities. Government's initiative in this regard, Self Help Groups of women, are to be seen all over Tamil Nadu with women engaging themselves in self-employment- making pickles and pappads, paper bags and plastic baskets, candles and confectionary items.

Nationalised Banks have come forward in a big way to finance such projects of the women entrepreneurs. However, now and then reports appear in newspapers that loans obtained are not repaid in time or that funds are misappropriated. However, incidents show that this situation will improve over time.

Woman empowerment has to be seen as attendant of the entire procedure of community modification prominent to a just society and consequently its achievement will be contingent upon the accomplishment of the understanding socio- economic strategies and concurrent variations in the political development. The processes on all these approaches have to be impulsive, to attain the anticipated consequences. This may not be attained unless the current situation is analyzed. The impression of fairness essential that, the law should likewise make resemblances whenever conceivable. In order to precise the disproportion in the social system sex unbiased verbalseems to be one of the gears for the decline of disparity between sexes.

CONCLUSION

However the status of today's woman in India is high, the general image of woman's situation in India is not acceptable. Therefore woman empowerment in modern India cannot take place unless woman comeself-possessed and choose to self-empower themselves. Self-empowerment should be all round in nature. Once this occurs then we can think about stimulating the system towards the way of better health services, sustenance and educational facilities for woman at a very great scale. Self-empowerment can instigate by speaking day to day subjects faced by specific woman and undertaking them with a mindset of refining the overall living circumstances of woman at every level and divisions of the society. In this regard liberal and ingenious woman in the humanity essential to come accelerative to help their less advantaged supporters in as many ways as possible. This shall support us to gain the sources for actual woman empowerment in modern India.

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