

INDIAN WOMEN : THEIR SOCIAL SITUATION & CONSTRAINTS

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In the first page of the Bible it is inscribed “Man and Women are created after the image and likeness of God”. Even in Hindu religion Woman is given a sacred place. Women make up almost 50 percent of the human resources of our country and they can be even greater instruments in the development of human resources than men. Their role is tremendously important because they can enter in any profession or economic activity. They also remain as mothers and care-takers of our potential human resources – the children. Now there is a growing awareness among nations that women need to play a significant role in all aspects of development process. Now let us discuss the social situation and constraints of Indian women.

FAMILY ORGANIZATION :

“If we go back to an age old tradition of India there is no distraction between man and woman all being equal manifestation of ‘Brahman’.¹ The ideals of Indian women are very much the same as those of Indian men-unity and equality, greatness and fullness, Purity and perfection.

But the position of women deteriorated as the vedic ideals began to fade off with the passage of time. During the period of Smritis , women were denied some rights. Domestic life became compulsory and unquestioning devotion to the self sacrificing service to husbands became their only duty. Therefore generally female child is brought up with the idea that she is bound to suffer. Her authority is subordinate to mother-in-law. “That does not mean that the status of mother in-law is indicative of status of women in general.”² It will decline with the old age widowed and with the upcoming of daughter-in-law, as the mother and wife of the chief of the family. Her position is influenced by her husband’s social and economic situation. Sometimes dowry and gifts that the parents offer give status to women in her family. But it is worthy to note that no women plays a significant role in decision making, Marriage and motherhood were a women’s only achievements. They play the supportive and nurturing role. Women are supposed as a weaker sex, inferior in intellect, domestic chattel of the master, It is else to be noted that the value of the services rendered by the women is not included in the calculation of the national income. Their number is also not included in the labour force of the country. According to Dr. Malcolm Adiseshiah the value of the work of housewives and women in family is about the one third of our national income. In joint families women are depressed but in nuclear families they get greater freedom of association and movement.

WOMEN IN INDIAN ECONOMY :

People think that women are economically suppressed and are not dependent as males. ‘chul aani mul’ is the principle put before her and women are unable to take part in social development. Much of women’s work till today has remained unpaid. Entry into paid employment has no doubt brought millions of women in the main stream of economic activity. “Evidence of the male-female disparity in unemployment comes form both industrial market of Economics and the third world”.³ Low pay and unskilled work leads to impoverishment among women, Lenin said, housework is the most unproductive work. This work is unpaid having no fixed duty hours and holidays.

EDUCATION :

Ignorance is the root cause of human suffering Education of women can work as a two-edged weapon which can push women forward towards the betterment of the nation and society. The education policy in India stressed the new status and equality of women in the following words. ‘Education will be used as an asset of basic change in the status of women’. The national education system will play a positive role in the improvement of women.

Therefore the image of Indian women created by a few women hooding high positions and academic qualifications does not reflect the actual position.

MARRIAGE :

“Marriage was a sacrament as per Hindu view of life. The aim and goal of Hindu Marriage was to obtain Pregnancy so as to discharge the obligation towards gods and ancestors”.⁴ But in the past early marriages was the social evil. But new the average age at marriage has gone up by two years in the case of males and by form years in the case of females. In spite of legal bindings the custom of early marriages is still prevalent in Northern Indian society. New under Hindu widows Remarriage Act. 1856 the widow or the divorced wife can remarry in all regions, though in the post the widow has to follow the custom of ‘Sati’.

PROSTITUTION :

Because of economic exploitation of women prostitutions takes place. Divorced and separated women in need of shelter and money join pretensions for their livelihood. Sometimes break down of joint family system, ill treatment by parents guardians and in-law lead girls into the life of call girls. But the main reason of this problem is poverty. In this situation Geeta Sane in her book. “भारतीय स्त्री जीवन,” says, “वेश्यावृत्ती समाजाला आवश्यक आहे. ही कल्पना समूळ नाहीशी होईतो, तारुण्याच्या उंबरठ्यावर उभ्या राहिलेल्या हजारो कोवळ्या कन्यांची कत्तल होत राहणार आहे. वेश्यासंस्था जिवंत असेपर्यंत स्त्रिया स्वतंत्र नाहीत किंवा त्या स्वतंत्र होऊही शकत नाहीत. कारण ही संस्था म्हणजे स्त्री स्वातंत्र्याची अखंड होळी आहे.”⁵

FREEDOM AND SUPERSTITION :

Superstitions and old customs are the obstacles in the development of Indian women. In rural areas there is alarming burden of superstitions. The rural women are far from the scientific advancement. She is not in touch with science. She only believes that God is the operation of her life and whatever is happening is due to her luck determined by god. The customs of giving a female child in marriage with Goddess Yallama is still prevalent. These female children later on become Devdassies and later on prostitutes. Though there are legal provisions against this custom the people of rural area are so much influenced by the supreme power of Goddess Yallama that they cannot abide the law.

But in urban area this Picture is somewhat changing. Though there are superstitions. They are less in number as compared with the rural areas. In rural area the female child is completely restricted to be have freely. If the girls desired to go outside of the house her parents would warn her to come before sun setting. In some of the societies there are restrictions regarding ‘what to eat and what not to eat’.

As compared with rural girl, female child in urban area is some what getting freedom. But that does not mean that she is absolutely free.

CONCLUSION : In this way the Indian woman is the weakest section of our society. They are illiterate economically dependent on males for their basic needs. They are victims of social and economic exploitation by the male dominated society. Even Law is unable to give them security and status in their life.

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