

A Study of the Concept of Women in Post-Independence India

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Abstract - The fundamental objective of many strategies and policies was to promote the progress of women. Encouragement to pursue higher education and finish it, as well as encouragement to look for and accept employment, are some of the most crucial ways that women may be encouraged to become more independent. Despite the execution of the laws and programmes, there are still certain rural communities that believe women should be in the male's place. The country as a whole is plagued by the abuse and mistreatment of women and girls. However, as a consequence of industrialization and globalization, women now have more opportunities for promotion. Most often, women in urban regions raise their level of life by pursuing higher education and landing well-paying employment. One of the main subjects discussed in this research study is the status of women in post-independence India, as well as their empowerment, gender problems in post-independence India, their political participation, and the difficulties they face as working women.

Keyword - Post-Independence, women

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INTRODUCTION

When it comes to many civilizations, the disparity between men and women is one of the most important ones. Gender-based inequality in India manifests itself in a variety of ways, one of which is the disparity in literacy rates between men and women. Even within the same family, women tend to do worse than males in many parts of the nation. There are many examples of this, including education and the development of abilities, but also nourishment, health, and survival. Since the country's independence, girls' education has been a top priority. However, when India gained independence 60 years ago, it was a daunting task for the new administration to overcome. A dismal 8.9% of women in the United States were literate in 2010, while the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) for girls in elementary school was 24.8%, with the GER for girls in upper elementary school at 4.6%. First and foremost, post-independence, the subject of women's education was one that needed to be addressed quickly.[1]

In India, the devaluation of women and the societal dominance of males persist. Femininity has always been associated with lesser social position for women than it is for males. As a result, there have been social and economic issues. Abuse of women's rights and uneven access to education, work, or the right to be born are only two examples of other difficulties.

Studies focusing only on the history of women have lacked depth, breadth, and depth of knowledge. Even if she was a royal, a monarch, an office-holder, a person of intelligence, or a commoner, she was never the primary subject of historical texts. However, in recent years, it has become clear that women are not just an essential element of society's social fabric, but also its most critical component. This is the fruit of many years of hard work and dedication by persons of renown and brilliance.

However, when it comes to the state of women throughout history, it would be fair to say that it was a roller coaster, but not as exhilarating as a roller coaster. For centuries, women had a prominent role in society, rising to the top of the social ladder in the ancient era before a slow decline and then a precipitous fall in the mediaeval era.

British dominance in India had a long and significant impact on the country's social, economic, and political structures. Identification, expression, and affirmation of the situation and difficulties of indigenous women were among the most significant. A whole new and magnificent chapter in India's history of female empowerment began with the entrance of males such as Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Jyotiba Phule, etc. Indian women's rights have been recognized and appreciated because of the modern scientific education, changing socio-

political conditions, and intellectual awakening. Religious reform movements and assaults on societal ills that directly affected the social position of women and their sense of self-worth, such as anti-widow laws like sati and purdah, were crucial in this setting. On the other side, the focus on women's education was a big step forward. People like Phule created their own schools and made great contributions to the education and advancement of women.[2]

Many British laws were passed in an attempt to better govern and administer the people of India (even though they were colonial), but laws like the prohibition of the Sati Act, the Hindu Widow Remarriage Act, the Age of Consent Act, the Child Marriage Restraint Act, the Female Infanticide Prevention Act, and others had a significant impact on women in India,

Mahatma Gandhi's entry on the Indian political scene and his mystic politics were another significant milestone. In the truest sense, he became the leader of the people. Gandhian mass movements included a significant number of women. During this time period, women abandoned the notion that their life were confined to the four walls of the home and to household tasks, and instead became active participants in politics, as well as leaders and influencers. Gandhiji was the one who took them out of the confines of their homes and onto the national stage. A vast number of people joined protests such as the Non-Cooperation or Quit India campaigns. Rather than just being recipients of justice, women's roles were shifting from those of recipients to those of supporters and comrades in the broader national struggle. They even started their own women's groups, the most notable of which being the All-India Women Commission (AIWC). The Gandhian, communist, revolutionary, and other nationalist movements all embraced them by the 1940s. As well as Amrita Pritam, Usha Mehta, Usha Mehta, Vijay Laxmi Pandit, Usha Mehta, and so on. The fact is that the agenda of the national movement has always included problems pertaining to women. When half the people participated in it, the sweetness of freedom was much more palatable.[3]

Then why did these movements lose their courage, mystique, and enthusiasm after independence? What happened after independence, when these concerns were at the heart of the national movement, that they were not given the attention they deserved? New India was confronted with a slew of pressing difficulties, including political instability, religious turmoil, and economic reorganization at the time of its independence from British rule. As a result, the remainder of the concerns were put on hold. Since India's post-independence era was marked by greater focus on nation-building and economic recovery, women's problems fell to the background. The Indian Constitution, on the other hand, provided certain legal rights to all people beyond the age of 18

without regard to their education, property or money, such as equal rights, freedom of expression, and the right to vote. As recently as 1947, the country's social, economic, and political landscape was dominated by patriarchal ideals. Despite the existence of constitutional provisions, the application of the same was unclear. Laws in favour of women progressively returned to the forefront of public discourse. Due to criticism from certain conservative elements, Hindu Code Bill became four independent enactments in the 1950s: Indian Marriage Act, Indian Succession Act, Indian Minority and Guardianship Bill and Indian Adoption and Maintenance Bill. All four enactments were ultimately passed as separate laws. From the mid-1970s through the early 1980s, a large number of self-governed women's organizations appeared in metropolitan areas. Equal pay legislation, for example, was not finalized until 1976 due to a lengthy implementation process. The Shah Bano case was an example of a community that faced significant opposition. As a result, social reform among Hindus has gone farther than it has among other groups, despite the fact that it is still insufficient. While certain rights have been exercised and others remain on paper in progressive societies, it is important to emphasize that not all rights have been fully realized.[4]

The belief that women were respected, elite, and equal to males in pre-Vedic or Vedic times is comforting to many researchers. However, Tara Ali Baig's comparison of Vedic women with modern Indian women, in which women at the top of the social and economic hierarchy enjoy greater mobility, educational advantages, and opportunities to achieve feats of strength and ascend to the highest levels of authority or status, makes more logical sense. That does not indicate, however, that they are living in a fair and equal society. They have their own set of obstacles just because they are women, but lower-level women have a slew of additional challenges. There has always been an androcentrism, but sexism has quietly seeped into preaching and practices. Victim blaming is a fact in today's culture, even when it comes to crimes against women. The roles, values, and structure of family and society have been shaped by the sexual dichotomy.

History has proven that power distribution patterns that are unjust are destined to be challenged and changed at some point, and the same is true for the discriminatory treatment of women that was questioned by intellectuals and philosophers in the past. Western feminist movements are a reaction to this.[5]

Although there were organized waves and movements in the West demanding feminist rights and demands, no such waves or movements seem to have arisen in India in the same sense, even if some real attempts were made to improve

the lot of women and give them power. They are still needed. In both pre- and post-independence times, this is true. When compared to the West, there were no organized movements with clearly defined goals that made significant progress over time in India. India is also making attempts to alleviate the predicament of women. Both British-era socio-religious reform initiatives and Gandhian mass movements in India were led by persons at the top of their respective fields, such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, and others. Women had an important role in the movement, but it was led by males, and they weren't quite feminist endeavors; rather, they were reform-oriented. Although some reformers have made significant contributions, most have taken tiny steps to support the cause of women.

For women's conditions in post-independence Madhya Pradesh, the most prominent trend is the need and attempts to integrate women into society's mainstream. To put it another way, the clamor for equal rights and improved living conditions for women has led to a conflict of interest with the patriarchal outdated worldview and societal standards. When it comes to Madhya Pradesh's women, it instantly raises the essential issue of whether or not the state has made any progress toward women's empowerment. For the existence of resistance and debate about women's position, it must be understood that women have been subjected to some type of abuse, injustice or discrimination that compelled a response. Otherwise, there would be no use in harboring any kind of animosity or even thinking about it. Moving doesn't have to be forceful or violent in order to be effective, but it must be structured and focused on a certain purpose.[6]

POST-INDEPENDENCE INDIAN WOMEN

There is a specific need to safeguard mothers and infancy, as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Indian Constitution guarantees all people the right to life, as well as equality and freedom. All residents must abandon traditions that lower women's social standing. The Indian Constitution includes provisions and programmes with the express purpose of raising women's social standing. Since its first democratic constitution was adopted in 1950, women have had full legal, social, and political equality. Each nation must uphold the rule of law and ensure that women are treated fairly. Laws, treaties, and declarations haven't changed society's view of women very much, and they're still often seen as second-class citizens.

Building on the social reform movement of the 19th century, the women's movement had its beginnings in the 1920s. During this time of fervent nationalism and arduous war for freedom, the women's movement advanced. The most important of the movement's numerous victories was the passage of a constitution guaranteeing women's rights and adult suffrage in newly independent India. Although some

progress was made, the position of women did not improve much due to these methods alone. In the 1970s, a new women's movement formed, one with political and social appeal. Some people in the modern world, especially those from more rural areas and with more traditional values and beliefs, still hope for a son and see daughters as a burden. Traditional male behavior is highly ingrained in Indian culture. They believe males are inherently superior to women and deserve greater opportunities to lead and make crucial choices.[7]

The position of women has been elevated as a result of these changes. They are making significant contributions to the advancement of society in the areas of politics, culture, economics, and religion. As a result, more and more women are enrolling in college and earning advanced degrees. They are obtaining advanced degrees such as bachelor's, master's, and doctorate, and finding work. Women have positions of authority in a wide variety of fields, including the academic and nonprofit sectors. They work in fields such as medicine, science, education, business, politics, law, engineering, technology, and more. Changing ideals have had a major impact on women's roles in society, which is often recognized as the most noteworthy social trend of the last several decades. It is important to raise awareness of the aspects that have been listed below while trying to learn about the position of women in India after the country's independence:

Technology Implementation

Technology is regarded to have rendered a significant contribution in reforming the lives of the individuals. Women, who have not been enrolled in educational institutions, or possess less education or no education at all, are generating information in terms of usage of technology. With the use of technology, they not only are able to get engaged in leisure activities, but also are able to work and generate a source of income. The benefits of technology are numerous. Individuals in the present existence, are depended upon technology for carrying out number of tasks and activities. These include, paying bills, making purchases, etc. they are able to acquire knowledge and information in terms of various areas and so forth. Research has indicated that elderly women, who are even above the age of 90 years are learning technology. The reason being, women, belonging to all age groups and backgrounds have acquired an understanding that it is essential for them to acquire technology education to not only bring about improvements within their socio-economic conditions, but also to enhance their overall quality of life. The changes that have come about in technology with the developments and advancements taking place have provided new opportunities to women. [8]

Possibilities for Education

In the present existence, individuals belonging to all communities and backgrounds have recognized the significance of education. Education not only enables girls and women to hone their academic skills, but they are able to generate awareness in terms of other aspects as well. Girls too are getting enrolled in schools and higher educational institutions to pursue education. The acquisition of education has enabled women to understand the difference between appropriate and inappropriate. An educated woman or a girl will be able to work towards encouraging education and development of literacy skills among women and children, who are experiencing setbacks, due to lack of education. There are establishment of government and non-government organizations, who are working for promoting education among the marginalized, deprived and socio-economically backward sections of the society. Improvements in educational opportunities are regarded as one of the indispensable aspects that have contributed towards promoting well-being of women. Education enables women to acquire independence and not entirely be dependent upon others. Household management is regarded as the primary task that women are engaged in. Education enables them to implement all household responsibilities in a well-organized manner. These include, household chores, maintenance of the house, child development, health care, taking care of the needs and requirements of the elderly family members and so forth. [9]

Opportunities for Employment

Whether women belong to urban or rural communities and whether they are educated or not, in some cases, it is considered important for women to get engaged in employment to supplement family income. Getting engaged in employment opportunities is regarded as one of the crucial aspects in leading to their empowerment. Employment opportunities not only enhance the skills and abilities of women, and generate income, but they are able to bring about improvements within their overall quality of life. When the income generated by the male members is not sufficient to meet all the needs and requirements of the household and family, then it is necessary for women to get engaged in some types of employment opportunities. Well educated women, are normally engaged in reputed jobs in educational institutions and organizations, whereas, some women establish their own businesses, or set up nursery schools or training centres. The women belonging to rural communities are the ones, who are employed in the agricultural sector and implement farming practices. They may or may not possess the basic literacy skills. Women are also engaged in manufacturing and production of handicrafts and artworks and carry out their own businesses of food items. Hence, it can be stated, women are engaged in different types of

employment opportunities, in accordance to their skills and abilities.

The reduction of violent and criminal acts

Women have been subjected to criminal and violent acts since ancient times. In the medieval and Mughal period, there have been prevalence of practices, which led to degradation in the status of women in society. These practices include, sati, child marriage, female foeticide, female infanticide, polygamy, and women experienced various forms of abuse and mistreatment. In the present existence too, there has been prevalence of crime and violence against women. It takes place within as well as outside the home. The most prevalent criminal and violent acts are, verbal abuse, physical abuse, rape, sexual harassment, trafficking, discriminatory treatment, theft and murder. In India, even girls, who are below 10 years of age are experiencing these acts. Severe disciplinary action is been implemented and doers are subjected to stringent penalties. This is particularly with regards to minor girls. Hence, in order to enhance the status women and above all lead to progress and development of the community and nation, it is vital to treat women with respect and courtesy, make provision of equal rights and opportunities and not discriminate against them on the basis of any factors such as, caste, creed, race, religion, ethnicity, occupation and socio-economic background.[10]

GENDER CONCERNS IN INDIA POST-INDEPENDENCE

Gender based differences and prevalence of violence has taken place not only in India, but in other countries of the world. Gender issues are regarded as a serious problem that has been experienced by women. In some cases, when women and men, both are employed in organizations, women are not given equal pay as men for the performance of same job duties, hence, they experience discrimination in terms of pay. Women are not employed in manual jobs, as it is believed that they do not possess the capabilities to perform manual jobs. Hence, men were assigned manual job duties. On the other hand, men consider themselves to be more capable as compared to women and abuse and mistreat them. Research has indicated that individuals, who are not educated, who are residing in the conditions of poverty and backwardness are the ones, who mistreat women. Whereas, educated individuals, who are engaged in reputed jobs, normally treat women on an equal basis.[11]

In rural communities, individuals have recognized the significance of education. But they possess the viewpoint that education should be provided to the male children. The rural communities in some

cases, are of the viewpoint that if they educate the male children, then they would acquire good employment opportunities and work towards enhancing the reputation of not only the family but also the community. Whereas, girl children are regarded as liabilities. It is believed that girls would only make demands and would yield no return on investment. The girls were trained in terms of implementation of household responsibilities, and take care of younger siblings and elderly members of the household, particularly when their parents go to work. Even if they have been enrolled in schools, they are compelled to drop out of schools, before their educational skills are honed. The parents usually do not believing in sending their girls to schools, because they primarily possessed the viewpoint that they have to eventually get married and would not be able to make use of educational skills in any manner. They primarily would need to manage the household responsibilities in their marital homes.

The individuals, who belong to deprived, marginalized and socio-economically backward sections of the society are the ones, who normally give more preference to the male children, as compared to female children. When they have both sons and daughters in the family, and have limited income, then they normally spend resources in taking care of the needs and requirements of their sons. The male children are treated with respect and care, better food is provided to them and parents ensure to take proper care of their health and well-being. They are encouraged to be informative and strong, so they can take care of their parents and other household requirements, when they become mature. Whereas, girls are provided with proper training in terms of taking care of the household functions, they were of reticent nature and usually were not allowed to give their ideas and suggestions. The girls are required to follow the instructions that have been imposed upon them by the male members of the household. [12]

The overall development of women gets effected due to gender inequalities. The gender issues that have been created by the society degrade the position of women in all forms. The society has created issues by making demands for dowry. Dowry is referred to the price, which the bride's parents are required to pay to the groom's parents, at the time of marriage. The dowry is considered as the major issue, which enables the families as well as the communities to regard girls as burdens. The families belonging to deprived, marginalized and socio-economically backward sections of the society normally experience problems in paying dowry, hence, they do not feel contented upon the birth of the girl child. It is vital for the society to bring about changes within the attitudes and perspectives, particularly in terms of girls and women.

When the girl child is born within the family, she should be made aware in terms of values, cultures and principles. Girls should be encouraged towards

acquisition of education. Upon completion of education, they should be encouraged towards engagement in employment opportunities. When the women have accumulated financial resources, then marriage should be arranged. Hence, it can be stated that making provision of opportunities for women, would not only enable them to augment the status and well-being of their families, but when they are well-educated, they would be able to sustain the livelihood opportunities in a well-organised manner.

CONCLUSION

The status of women in post-independence India has been undergoing changes. The population of women is regarded as almost half of the total population in India. A country or the community cannot be considered civilized, where a woman is not respected and treated with courtesy. In India, there have been formulation of laws and measures that have promoted empowerment opportunities among women. The main areas, which are considered vital and which have enhanced the status of women are usage of technology, educational opportunities, employment opportunities and prevention of criminal and violent acts. In post-independent India, women are progressing.

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