
THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIA

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Abstract: “It is impossible to think about the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is impossible for a bird to fly on only one wing.” – Swami Vivekananda

Woman is the largess on the earth. She is a creator and mentor of the whole universe. One can't expect human existence without woman. Our Vedas and Upanishads have rightly termed woman as 'Nari tu Narayani' and she has been hailed as 'Yatra Naryastu Pujyate Tatra Ramati Devata', That is to say Gods are pleased, where females are worshipped. Thus, woman has been always placed amongst the divine. However, in reality her picture is altogether different. Woman has never demanded any exclusive place in the hierarchy. She has just expected the society to treat her in a human way. She has just demanded 'a room of her own'.

Introduction: The status of women in India has been subjected to wind shear effects right from the ancient vedic aeon to the modern computer era. The equality with man which she once enjoyed declined to the pits during the medievals – an age of ignorance, pushing her into an abyss of darkness being ruled by the devils of Sati, Jauhar, Purdah, Devadasi, Dowry to name few. However a great epoch has begun with the dawn of reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Jyothibha Pule, Savitribai Phule, William Bentinck and many more helping hands who fought for the freedom of Indian women, breaking the bonds of asinine superstitions, evil and false practices. They advocated female education agonizing that 'Ignorance Is the mother of all evil' and encouraged widow remarriage, abolished sati, child marriage and tried refining the moronic and psychic thoughts and taboos that prevailed in the then society, which include confining women to four walls of the house with a sheer purpose of doing household duties being treated no less than slaves.

Thanks to the reformers, who enlightened the world bringing out the importance of woman on this earth and gave rebirth to the dreary suffocating souls. India is now able to see women on thrones; flying in space, climbing the mountains, crossing the channels and perhaps walking on moons in the near future. The recent political scenario in particular is appreciable to some extent. The leafs of the history are revisited by efficacious women rulers like Smt. Indira Gandhi, the first woman Prime Minister of India, Dr. Sarojini Naidu, Mrs. Vijaya Laxmi Pandit, Mrs. Sucheta Kripalani of the recent decades to the women of the present Smt. Pratibha Patil, the first woman President of India, Meira Kumar the first woman Speaker of India, Sonia Gandhi, Mayawati, Sushma Swaraj, Jayalalithaa, Mamata Bannerjee, Brinda Karat and many more leaders and activists like Irom Sharmila, Medha Patkar along with Pandita Ramabai, Swarnakumari Devi, Sarala Devi Chaudhurani, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Aruna Asif Ali, the brave Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi, Rani Rudrama Devi and Razia Sultana of the past. The renaissance in

Indian women is not limited to political fronts but the flame has touched every field and frontier of India, from arts to sports, business to battle fields. The above achievements may help one conclude that the women of India are enjoying a crowned and equal status, with the country providing them with a large support and scope for further development. But let us give a second thought. Are the women of India enjoying a respectful status, in a fearless environment? Is she really free?

As per the Indian Constitution I would say "Yes!", for the terms, 'Justice', 'Liberty', 'Equality', and Fraternity are enshrined in the Preamble of our Constitution itself, with various Articles designed, Acts passed, Bills proposed and Laws made in favour of women. But referring to the recent monstrous incidents that took place and are incrementing day by day the answer is a "Big NO." Even after seeing remarkable advancements made by women in diverse fields, life time efforts made by many reformers to improve the woman condition in India and framing serious laws, woman in India still seems endangered and the question of her equality, honor and dignity is left to air. With only 11 percent of representation of women in Lok Sabha and 10.6 percent in Rajya Sabha, India ranks 107th in the world, according to the latest data released by the Inter-Parliamentary Union with almost all the neighbouring countries like Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, Nepal, Pakistan standing in a better place than India with ranks 36, 70, 64, 23, 57 respectively. Despite of many renowned women politicians in India, the country still needs to score much better in the long run, for which the passage of the bill that promises 33 percent reservation to women in Parliament will be the step of initiation.

A true democratic civilized country is that which ensures its citizens peaceful, harmonic and respectful living. When fear conquers this living, a country is no longer said to be civilized nor democratic. It is not just enough to encourage woman empowerment and woman in politics rather, it is more important to provide her with a fearless, respecting, honoring environment preserving her dignity. A woman will then be able to explore herself and showcase her talents to the maximum as stressed by Rabindranath Tagore in his collection of poems 'Geetanjali'. But the current situations in India are quite far from what Tagore has wished for and what Abdul Kalam has dreamt of. The bitter truth is that, India has been ranked the fourth most dangerous country and the worst G20 country for woman as per TrustLaw news service run by Thomson Reuters. Most of the workers in India are females and are being paid less compared to the male labourers. Female foetus abortion and female infanticide speak volumes of the degradation of women's status in society which are leading to a highly skewed sex ratio, an unfortunate factor for women in a patriarchal society. Yet a very disturbing finding in the recent period is that girls at birth have less chance of survival than boys which is contrary to the situation in other countries. Dowry, child marriage, sexual harassments, savage rapes are further deteriorating and have plagued the state of woman in India resulting which many of them are ending up with suicides. More than 100,000 women are killed by fires of which many cases can be linked with dowry issues. With more than 24,000 reported

cases in 2011, rape registered a 9.2% rise over the previous year. More than half (54.7%) of the victims were aged between 18 and 30. Delhi accounted for over 17% of the total number of rape cases in the country. The government stated that India is missing three million girls in 2011 and it is not rape alone. Police records from 2011 show kidnappings and abductions of women were up 19.4%, women being killed in disputes over dowry payments by 2.7%, torture by 5.4%, molestation by 5.8% and trafficking by an alarming 122% over the previous year. Just imagine where India is leading to. If things continue this way and at this rate India will no longer be a place worth of living for women.

Despite the strict laws of the government, day by day the condition of woman in India is crumbling to ground levels. Woman at some stage of her life is still facing discrimination, subjected to abuses and is a victim of violence and crime. The situation is same for a rural or urban woman, a corporate or illiterate. What could be the possible reasons and solutions to make India a place suitable for humans but not savages and worthy for woman to live?

Reasons are many. In our frenzied world, relationships have nothing to matter. A woman can be related in many ways. She is the 'Mother of a child' and 'Daughter of a father', 'Sister and Best Friend', 'A responsible wife who is throughout the thick and thins' apart from a homemaker or the show dolls as recalled by many. I just wonder how many notice the multiple roles she has been playing from the beginning in the life of every man. If they have ever noticed, things would have never been this way with women. Are the present scenarios a tribute to woman for being a kind, generous, caring and loving creation of God? I just wonder if the people have never thought about this. If they would have thought, then they might have not turned into offenders. Especially in a country like India where woman is considered a 'Goddess' and 'Shakthi' personified, why are things so messed up with her and where her status is being dragged to? All my questions straightly answer that, deteriorating ethical conditions, ignored relationships, selfish nature of man, running behind his own desires and money, egos and pride, love and respect for a fellow human being, all put together have made India a near hell. In the revolutionized computing world man is lacking some 'Me' time to assess all the pros and cons about him and that's around him. God created both men and animals with distinguishable characteristics and man in particular after his own image and standing high over all the creation. Now man is just functioning in a way he is not created for and leading to a society where one can hardly find any difference between man and animal. One possible way to stop this transfiguration of man into animal is to teach him morals and ethics and to respect women from his very childhood. Education surely plays a notable role in enlightening both men and women about his/hers dos and don'ts. Man better teach himself first and his family rather than teaching the world or pointing out the loop holes in the government, as the family is the basic unit of society. The mass media must also create awareness of what is good and how to practice it rather than educating the bad as impressions once made on mind and environment reared up in always has a great influence on man's thinking and social life as said by Swami Vivekananda. Also its good, not to entertain the

society's perception of women as show dolls and media has to work on it. And coming to the government's role in constituting a solution for this problem, I would like to remind that if the government fails to do justice, people will take the justice into their own hands which might end up making things worse. When government is meant to serve the people law and order, it has the whole responsibility to take care that the constitution is function well, if not for which, the government has to take the blames. The government should stop making promises and paying lip service and put words into action. It should also note that punishments are meant for human beings and not savages and thus frame stricter laws and see that they are being implemented. However, how much we try to educate or how much hard the government tries to put things under control, all things go vain unless man does not have self-discipline and self-control and will have no respect for others, women in particular who are already ignored in a patriarchal society. Every man should question his inner soul if he is able to create a fearless, peaceful environment for his fellow being be it a man or a woman and try being human by maintaining moral and human values and not humane. Finally I conclude reminding that God compared His love with that of a 'Mother'. It is also believed that "God could not be everywhere, and therefore He made mothers." And Mothers are none other than women. Respect women, Respect Mother. "STOP VOILENCE AGAINST WOMEN!"

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