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NATIONAL CONFERENCE
On

**Dynamics of Women's Movement in India:
Historical Legacy and Contemporary Challenges**

Editor-in Chief
Dr. Yogita Mandole



Co-Editor
Dr. Jitendra K. Aherkar



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CHIEF PATRON

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CHIEF PATRON MESSAGE

It is a matter of pride and privilege for the institution to host a National Conference on **“Dynamics of Women’s Movement in India: Historical Legacy and Contemporary Challenges”**. I am sure the deliberations of the seminar will come with valuable suggestions to enhance the dynamic role of women in society. I also want to acknowledge the work done by Eminent Women in India and around the country who are making a difference. They’re the unsung ones who, day by day, in villages and communities around the country, are building better lives for the Society. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Principal for his endless support to the college. I would further like to thank the teaching and non-teaching staff for their support and making the conference a grand success.

On this Occasion, I convey my best wishes to the Conference.

Shri. Mahendra K. Ghelani

Chairman

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The main aim of the conference is to create awareness and healthy discussions among professionals, academicians and research scholars on major issues related to women development.

This National Conference is a stepping stone in visualizing the dreams towards a better future of Rural Youth in India and in national and international perspective.

I appreciate the initiative taken by the Department of History as well as Dr. Jitendra Aherkar for conducting such a relevant seminar, which will benefit to the industry as well as academicians.

I also extend my heartfelt gratitude to the advisory committee and all the participants for their enthusiastic efforts to make this seminar successful.

Dr. Dilip S. Patil

Professor and Director, DLLE

University of Mumbai

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It is a proud and great honour for us to organize National Seminar on **“Dynamics of Women’s Movement in India: Historical Legacy and Contemporary Challenges”**. The objective of this Conference is to bring Eminent Economists, Professors and Researchers from different Colleges Universities and Representative from different States in a single Platform. The Proceedings of the Conference would be useful for all the sections of the Society.

I am very glad that we have received, large number of quality papers from various institutions from all the corners of the Country which includes both theoretical and empirical work.

The financial assistance received from Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) towards support of the conference is greatly acknowledged.

I am thankful to our Chairman – Adv.Shri.Mahendra K. Ghelani , for giving us strong support and encouragement whenever required.

I am thankful to Taran Publishing House for their ceaseless and meticulous efforts in publishing the proceedings of the Seminar on time.

Finally, I take this opportunity to convey my thanks to all the Delegates and Professional Colleges, Teaching and Non-teaching staff of the college for their active participation in this Seminar.

Dr. Jitendra K. Aherkar

Convener of the Conference

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PREFACE



The so called modern era has indeed been very active in changing the role of women in the society today. But is today’s women been set at par with the men across the world is still debatable. As from the geneses of human origin women had been playing its primary role as a home maker which indeed has helped the human civilization to envision prosperity and reach for enduring heights of greatness. But in this quest it is the same woman who has to take a step down in comparison to men. Though enough revolutions are taking place all over the world to eradicate such differences but still it seems to be a distant dream.

One cannot ignore the fact that women form a large potential untapped human resource reserve. Whilst participation of men in all arenas is unquestioned, the participation of women in all the walks of life is complicated by the fact that the woman is subject to a number of coded and unwritten social mores in patriarchal, male dominant society, which traditionally restricted the scope for women growth and development in political, economic or social endeavours. Increasing education opportunities for women and other improved legal and social security system had contributed towards their development. But such steps had not shown even progress throughout the globe and merely succeeded in creating illusionary effects of status and parity. Gender differences has always been enshrined in the religious and social laws which have limited the roles which a women can perform in all the spheres in comparison to men and hence have retarded their progress and development for all these years.

Our world has witnessed woman performing great roles as a leader, administrators and entrepreneurs. These great woman personalities have indeed given enough proof that they are in all the possible ways equal to men. Thus it clearly indicates that today’s world needs both men and women to work together in making this world a better place rather than walking the same paths which have been followed for centuries. Our motives and meaning of life, contentment and success have indeed undergone a drastic change. Today it needs both men and women to work together as equals to make this world complete. It calls out to all of us in redefining the role of women in every aspect of life without which the real growth and progress of human civilization would be incomplete.

Prof. Hasan Sanadi

University of Technology and Applied Science-HCT-Muscat, Oman

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Keynote Address

Changes and Challenges: Women' Studies/ Movements, and Possibilities of Transforming Ancient Indian History

Prof.Kumkum Roy

Centre for Historical Studies,

Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

On December 31st 1974, 10 women presented what would turn out to be a path-breaking report on the status of women in India to the then Minister of Education and Social Welfare, Nurul Hasan. In their prefatory remarks, they noted that they had no model or frame of reference to fall back upon, and that there was a paucity of data. However, this was not all. The team acknowledged the importance of taking into account social diversities and inequalities. They also remarked on the fact that Constitutional rights remained a distant dream for most women, and expressed the hope that this would change once the report was taken into consideration. Although there have been significant changes, the concerns voiced in the report remain valid and relevant nearly fifty years after they were formulated.

The report itself was organized around nine themes—approaching the study of status, demographic perspectives, the socio-cultural setting, women and the law, economic issues, education, politics, policies, and the mass media. While these themes remain as if not more relevant today as when they were identified, there have been shifts in emphases as well as explorations of new domains.

Many of these have been shaped by the complex relationship between women' studies, which have generally relied on state support, and women's movements, which have emerged and drawn sustenance from a wide range of grass roots concerns. The relationship has been often been constructive, sometimes conflictual and challenging, but always significant in distinguishing women's studies from several other, more established and entrenched disciplines that have responded more slowly to the changing milieu. I will try and illustrate some aspects of this relationship by examining the changing understanding of ancient Indian history that has emerged as a result of this engagement, even as it is yet to gain widespread acceptance. For this, I will focus on the understanding of the category of status, of the economy, political processes and socio-cultural beliefs and practices. While we will work with these distinctions, it is obvious that none of these domains constitutes a water-tight compartment—the concerns of one flow into and influence the others in more ways than one.

History as a discipline has undergone far-reaching changes over the last few decades. While top-down histories of kings (and occasionally queens), as well as political structures such as

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empires continue to dominate the discipline, especially in the perceptions of non-specialists, space has been opened up for investigating histories of marginalized groups, including forest-dwellers, shifting cultivators, pastoralists, craft producers, and ordinary people, both women and men. These spaces have been opened up to a great extent because of the pressures and challenges posed by a range of diverse and interrelated peoples' movements—dalit, feminist, workers, peasants, and of those who are broadly concerned with issues of the environment. While there are often differences in the perspectives of these groups, there has also been intense dialogue and the emergence of intersecting, inclusive perspectives that attempt to weave together the concerns of these movements, challenging those within entrenched academic disciplines to revisit their domains, opening these up to scrutiny and revision. On example of this is the attempt to move beyond a focus on a more or less monolithic category of 'woman' to a more complex understanding of gender relations as manifested in relations of production and reproduction, in mainstream political processes, and in the construction and contestation of gender identities in cultural expressions, including religious, ritual and other practices.

The question of sources

Exploring these new possibilities has led to a revaluing of sources/ evidence, and will hopefully stimulate further developments in future. Concerns with reconstructing histories of the everyday have led to an appreciation of material culture beyond the preoccupation with spectacular, monumental archaeological finds, even as these continue to receive attention, as do inscriptions, coins, and sculpture. In the context of ancient Indian history, it has also led to revisiting the vast and diverse textual traditions in Sanskrit, Pali, Tamil and Prakrit. These include religious/ ritual texts, scientific treatises, shastras dealing with a wide range of subjects including social norms, epics, poems, plays, chronicles, and biographies, to name a few. While it is recognized that most of these texts were written by and for upper class/ caste men, usually located in an urban milieu, and from their perspective, fresh questions have often permitted a new understanding of these textual traditions.

Revisiting the question of status

Let me use one example to illustrate how our understanding of the status of women has shifted as a result of new questions and perspectives. When we were in school in the 1960s, and even as we studied in college and in the university, one of the staples on which we grew up was that there were women who were recognized as Vedic seers, and this was taken to be an indication of the high status of women in the past. This was comforting, because the Vedas were recognized as the earliest texts in the subcontinent, and given their high ritual and cultural significance, the ability to participate in the process of their composition/ compilation seemed to be an obvious marker of high status.

It was in the 1980s and 1990s that we find the attempts to question and revisit this understanding. This was partly owing to the interaction amongst women activists and academics. These roles and identities have fortunately never been water-tight, and women have moved across and blurred these distinctions, even as there have been implicit and

explicit hierarchies. In this context, in what is now recognized as a classic revision, Uma Chakravarti drew attention to the figure of the Vedic *dasi* instead of the women seers—pointing out how the preoccupation with the latter had rendered the former invisible even as they were treated as objects, to be gifted on ritual (and perhaps other) occasions. In other words, their presence, even though documented in the text, had been ignored in the process of constructing an image of a glorious past. Their voices find no space in the anthology of hymns that constitute the *Rgveda*, for instance.

A closer examination of the *Rgveda* also indicated that out of more than a thousand *suktas* or hymns that found their way into the anthology, about 15 to 20 were attributed to women, including goddesses. In other words, women seers were evidently exceptional; male seers were far more prominent. Thus, it was evident that our knowledge of women seers had to be contextualized, rather than abstracting them and projecting them as the norm, to produce a picture of the past that was somewhat misleading.

Also, as part of the process of contextualization, some of us pointed out that the *Rgveda* is a text concerned with the north western part of the subcontinent, and that the historical processes and cultural meanings that we may be able to recover from the text would pertain to this area; other parts of the subcontinent, from which we have evidence of habitation, may have followed different norms and practices. In other words, the Vedic world needs to be visualized in terms of and in relation to non-Vedic ones as well. This opens up space for acknowledging diversities at a variety of levels.

Redefining the economic

Insights from feminist perspectives have led to a broadening of the concept of the economy, even as this is yet to gain widespread acceptance. These conceptual insights, almost invariably tied in with a preoccupation with the everyday, have emerged from several vantage points. On the one hand, there is a recognition that at present, women's paid work is substantially associated with the unorganized sector, with all the problems and limitations this entails. While recognizing the substantive significance of this realm has allowed for investigating its importance in different contexts, searching for and retrieving these virtually invisible domains within the past is a challenge. At present some tentative steps have been made in that direction, even as much more remains to be done.

As important, there have been discussions about the nature and significance of domestic work, and a recognition that this lowly, taken for granted domain is crucial, both in economic as well as cultural terms. Many of these discussions are located within the framework of social reproduction. Briefly, this encompasses the contexts of biological reproduction, as well as the ways and means through which everyday social life is reproduced both in the short term and in the long term, through the transmission of norms and values.

In this context, it may be useful to examine the ways in which reproduction was conceptualized within texts such as the *Manusmṛti*. Here, a distinction was made between the

woman/ wife, who was visualized as the *ksetra* or field, with her husband as the owner of the field or the *ksetrin*. In cases where the *ksetrin* was unable to obtain the desired offspring, provisions were made for the intervention of another man, designated as the *bijin*, literally the one who possessed seed. In such situations, the child was supposed to belong to the owner of the field, even as it was recognized that the provider of the seed played a major role. What is interesting though is that the ‘field’ herself was not expected to lay claim to any kind of ownership of the child.

We may never know the extent to which these ideas about reproduction, the role of reproductive partners, and claims to the outcome were accepted in every day practice. Were these more relevant to upper caste/ class men than to others? Were there regions where such constructs were irrelevant? In any case, it is likely that there were complex negotiations in everyday situations. Also we are yet to understand and explore the ways in which bonds of emotion and affection may have modified the rigid hierarchies envisaged in the sastras. Nonetheless, the fact that these provisions were detailed and discussed with such care indicates a preoccupation with reproduction, which was viewed as something that was social rather than natural or automatic.

This is also evident from the fact that several texts list twelve different kinds of sons. While the ideal was the son who was born of a virgin, duly married, and where both parents belonged to the same varna, a whole range of variations were recognized—such as sons of widows, sons born prior to marriage, as well as sons born from women of different varnas. While their social standing was carefully hierarchized in the texts, what is interesting is that virtually all possible sons were included. At the same time, the silence about daughters seems almost deafening.

Apart from reproductive women, other women had significant roles in the process. These included the *dhatrs*, the foster-mothers/ wet -nurses. They could be drawn from within the kin group as well as from outside. The traditions that such women adopted in child rearing remain undocumented—therefore the extent to which these interventions would have shaped social reproduction are inaccessible at present. And, yet, there are occasional, tantalizing glimpses of the way in which some of these women may have exercised influence. Consider the extraordinary example of Mahapajapati Gotami, the foster-mother of the Buddha, who played a pivotal role in creating a space for women who wished to renounce the world and attempt to attain nirvana or liberation.

Returning to a more mundane plane, feminist scholarship has brought to light evidence for women’s participation in the workforce. This includes providing labour for a range of agricultural activities as well as the processing of agricultural produce, providing support for the manufacture of pottery, a crucial requirement for storage facilities, as well as for cooking and serving food in pre modern times, textile production, reed working, dairying, brewing, etc. At the same time, while women’s participation, almost self- evident, is now widely acknowledged, it is important to recognize that the control that women exercised over what was produced and how it would have been disposed of was probably minimal. In other words, their labour was mobilized, even as they probably did not have control over the processes of production.

Our understanding of economic resources has also been redefined over the decades. So, discussions on women's property have moved beyond a somewhat static and sterile preoccupation with *stridhana* to an exploration of other possibilities. *Stridhana*, literally the wealth of women, consisted of moveable items such as jewellery, utensils and clothes. That what was defined and recognized as 'property' was context-specific, and subject to variation depending on one's means of livelihood has only been gradually recognized. With this recognition, it becomes imperative to revisit the question of access to and control over resources in more nuanced ways, rather than in terms of a simple binary of the presence or absence of 'rights'. Thus, individual control over resources emerges as one of a range of possibilities. In several situations, as amongst forest-dwellers, hunter-gatherers, shifting cultivators, fisherfolk, pastoralists, and others, some resources were probably regarded as common to all, even as others may have been thought of as individual possessions. This differentiation and contextualization enriches our understanding in a variety of ways.

In a different context, the somewhat unique relationship of women to the material domain has been explored in the context of sex work. This has involved moving beyond the binaries of stigmatization and voyeurism that was a characteristic of some of the scholarship on the theme in the first half of the 20th century.

That the realm of sex work was complicated is evident from texts such as the *Kamasutra*, which recognize as many nine different categories of women who could be assigned/ were engaged in sex work. These included the *kumbhadasi*, literally a slave woman whose major function was fetching water. Placed above her was the *paricarika* or serving woman, who may also have acted as an attendant. Above her was the *kulata*, literally the woman who had brought disgrace to her *kula* or family, i.e. a woman considered guilty of sexual transgression. Fourth in the hierarchy was the *svairini*, the self-willed woman, again probably one who defied sexual norms. Above her was the *nati* or actor, and then the *silpakarika* or woman engaged in craft production. In other words, professional women as well as those engaged in a variety of occupations could be expected to provide sexual services. Placed above them was the *prakasa vinasta*, literally one who had been publicly ruined—perhaps used to designate women subjected to sexual violence. Then we find mention of women who earned a living by their looks, the *rupajiva*, and finally, at the top of the hierarchy, the *ganika*.

What is evident from this list is that women from a variety of economic categories could have rendered/ or been expected to render sexual services. It is possible that such services were extracted through coercion, especially in the case of more vulnerable women, located in the lowest rungs of the hierarchy, as well as through persuasion, and, in some instances, women may have chosen this mode of livelihood. It is perhaps important to keep these differences in mind, as it enables us to visualize sex work in a more nuanced way. What is also noteworthy is how occupational categories are interwoven with women whose sexual lives deviated from what was regarded as the norm. It is within this complex context that the wealthy courtesan is acknowledged as a member of the urban elite. While the courtesan or *ganika*, also sometimes designated as the *nagarasobhana* or the ornament of the city, had a high social status and was much sought-after, this may not have been true of the other women. At the same time, all these women, from the lowliest to the most celebrated, probably had a degree of control over resources, and evidently were expected to use these in a variety of ways. The

resources listed range from metals such as gold, silver, copper, bronze, and iron, to furniture, utensils, bedding, blankets, clothes, perfumes, spices, ghee, oil, grain and cattle. These provisions provide us with a glimpse of the kind of transactions that sex workers participated in.

Transforming the political

We have seen how the possibilities opened up by feminist interventions have led to a recognition of the importance of reproduction, work, and resources. The challenge to the conventional understanding of the political has been equally if not more dramatic. This has involved developing tools that enable a range of understandings of relations of power, which are by no means confined to the visible public domain, but extend beyond that to the everyday practices that go into the making of household relations within the domestic space, amongst other spheres.

One of the possibilities that has been opened up is of exploring multiple typologies of power rather than working with a monolithic definition. Spencer-Woods enumerates and summarizes these possibilities as follows:

The plurality of different types of power can be expressed by making each category of power plural, yielding “powers-over,” “powers-with,” and “powers to.” Powers-over include domination, coercion, brainwashing, intimidation, argumentation, physical and verbal abuse, and physical violence. All these forms of power are directed at the goal of controlling the actions or words of other persons. Powers-with involve relational and group social agency, from persuasion, inspiration, empowerment, negotiation, affiliation, cooperation, and collaboration, to group identity-creation, decision-making, and agreement-generating processes that lead to coordinated group actions. Powers-with is often aimed at resisting and overcoming attempts at domination by individuals or groups using powers-over the resisting social group. Powers-to create change, I would argue, that can occur at the individual social agency level or can be generated using powers-with others in social organizations and movements.

Some of these insights have enabled a deeper understanding of internal relationships within households, which as we have seen, are crucial for social reproduction. Also, households have been amongst the major sites for organizing productive processes. especially in pre-modern contexts.

Other, related ideas urge us to visualize the ways in which household relations are shaped through a dialectic between self-interest and altruism, creating space for acknowledging the importance of bonds of affection and emotion apart from the more obvious hierarchies that are apparent within households, in terms of differences in generational status/ age, kinship locations, and gender. These strategies enable us to recognize the complex negotiations that are often a part of household relations. This has the potential of allowing us to move beyond the binary of dominance and subordination, and recognize as well as create spaces for more fluid and dynamic relationships.

As part of this set of tools, we also have access to concept of heterarchy, operating as an alternative to, or coexisting uneasily with notions of hierarchy.

Briefly, a heterarchical situation is one in which:

the relation of elements to one another ... are unranked or when they possess the potential for being ranked in a number of different ways (Souvatzi).

What this means in effect is that some people may be acknowledged as leaders/ chiefs/ superior in one context, but this power/ authority does not automatically extend to other spheres. So, for instance, someone may be recognized as being a leader in organizing building activities or craft production, but others may be considered better in farming or herding. In other words, while heterarchies are not invariably or uniformly egalitarian, they allow for variations in power relations in different contexts. This opens up possibilities of relatively flexible social relations. Also, neither hierarchies nor heterarchies are automatic/ natural ways of organizing social relations—it is necessary to work towards establishing and maintaining them these.

The recognition of such possibilities helps us to move beyond the well-worn strategies of recovering histories of elite women, who acquired access to power as part of ruling lineages, as wives, daughters, widows etc, often as pawns in marital alliances between powerful and even rival men.

Once we recognize the domestic space as a crucial arena for constituting as well as contesting relations of power, it enables us to understand the preoccupation with regulating it, evident in the shastric tradition. One example of this is the frequent attempt to recognize and hierarchize forms of marriage. Most Brahmanical Sanskrit *shastras* or codes of the period recognized eight different forms of marriage, arranged hierarchically. The forms of marriage which were considered best involved *kanyadana*, the gift of the virgin, ideally to a man belonging to the same *varna*. Less desirable forms of marriage included those where lovers chose one another, marriages by abduction, and even rape. Apart from legitimizing overt violence, which has often been remarked upon, what is interesting is that some of these ‘lower’ forms included provisions for bride price, perhaps an acknowledgement of the economic value of the labour of the bride. Moreover, unlike the more privileged forms, where the consent and participation of the father of the bride was of primary importance, some of the ‘lower’ forms required the consent of the mother as well as the father. In other words, they suggest an acknowledgement of non-patrilineal kinship ties. Recognizing these variations within the shastras was probably a concession to customary regional practices, as well as to the norms prevalent among different socio-economic categories. So, if marital alliances were a means of creating and maintaining relations of power, examining these alternatives allows us to visualize these in a variety of ways.

Marriage was one among several rites of passage that were codified and systematized within the Brahmanical tradition, evident in the compilation of the *Grhya Sutras*, literally manuals of domestic or household rituals. Amongst other things, these rituals served as occasions for constituting gendered identities. For instance, generally the male head of the household, the *grhapati*, was expected to initiate the performance of rituals. While the presence of the wife was essential, she was simultaneously regarded as subordinate. It is unlikely that the rituals were performed in an identical fashion by all socio-economic categories throughout the subcontinent. Documenting and exploring possible variations and their implications would

open up possibilities for visualizing power relations within households as well as within the wider social network in a variety of ways.

Some of these variations can be observed in attitudes towards the widow, who was often stigmatized within the ‘high’ Brahmanical tradition, as her very existence represented her failure as a *pativrata*, a woman devoted to her husband. The death of her husband was taken as a sign that she had failed in or neglected her duties towards him. As in other instances, it is unlikely that this understanding was universal. Tracing variations and alternatives therefore enables us to arrive at a more complex understanding of the past, where the political is no longer confined to a highly visible public domain, but extends into the interior realms of what is ostensibly private and domestic.

Socio-cultural possibilities—acknowledging diversities

The *Towards Equality* report began by exploring institutionalized religious traditions, broadly suggesting that most of these were misogynistic in practice if not in theory. Related to this are kinship relations and cultural practices, including rituals, some of which we have touched upon, which tend to naturalize hierarchical gender relations. This is often done by sanctifying them as being divinely ordained.

While many of the ideals and practices of social intercourse were probably shaped by the dominant Brahmanical tradition, best exemplified in various Sanskrit shastras, feminist and other scholarship has drawn attention to alternatives as well.

This has led to a serious and systematic engagement with other traditions, exemplified for instance by studies of Buddhism in general and of texts such as the *Therigatha* in particular. This is an anthology of compositions attributed to *theris*, elderly bhikkhunis who had attained the ultimate goal of nirvana. The compositions provide us a glimpse of the diverse social backgrounds of the women who were attracted to the sangha and the alternative way of life it offered.

The sangha itself was marked by a strong element of institutionalized misogyny. In spite of this, women evidently created and found space within it. At a different level, the existence of lay women patrons, who provided material support to the sangha, is documented in both textual traditions as well as in inscriptions. What is evident then is that overt misogyny could probably be circumvented in a variety of ways. Recognizing such possibilities enriches our understanding of the past.

If early Buddhism offers one alternative, an exploration of early Tamil textual traditions suggests other possibilities. Tamil Sangam poetry has been conventionally classified into *akam* and *puram*, approximately corresponding with the interior and the exterior worlds. The compositions, depict a wide range of human emotions, ranging from love to heroism and grief. While most of the poets were men, some were women. Even without going into the details, there are two elements that seem significant. First, the varna-jati order, though known, does not seem to have been central in this region during the period when the poems were composed. Second, the conceptualization of gender relations was not invariably hierarchical.

The compositions suggest that women as well as men could initiate and enjoy intimate sexual relations. At the same time, such relatively egalitarian mores did not extend to other domains. Martial activities, and long-distance exchange, both of which were valorized, were envisaged in sharply gendered terms.

What is also significant is the emergence of several diverse, yet intertwined religious traditions in different parts of the subcontinent. It is quite likely that many of these were old. We get to know about them from the mid-first millennium CE onwards, when many of these traditions were textualized in the Puranas, encyclopaedic texts composed in simple Sanskrit verse. Amongst other things, they included narratives about the principal deities such as Vishnu, Shiva and various forms of the goddess, and norms for the performance of various vratas, relatively simple rituals. Access to these rituals was open to women and shudras, unlike the more exclusive Vedic sacrifices. Recently it has been argued that women were both complicit and active in the creation and maintenance of these traditions, claiming a degree of space and agency within an overarching patriarchal framework. Thus, in addition to the ideal of the *pativrata* or the devout wife, we now find routine mention of the *svvrata* or the woman who was adept in performing rituals. Many of the rituals designated for/ designed by women were meant to acquire and retain husbands, as well as progeny, reinforcing the values of an idealized domesticity.

These texts also acknowledged the importance of the goddess, often visualized as a spouse of Shiva or Vishnu, but also as an independent deity, sometimes maternal, but also martial. The ways in which such multivalent figures were understood in the context of practices of worship would have varied. The powers attributed to the goddess may have inspired women (and men). Alternatively, they may have conveyed the message that such powers were only available within the confines of a relatively inaccessible divine realm rather than in everyday praxis.

Another development, best documented in Karnataka *c.* 9th century and subsequently, is visible within the Jaina tradition, where a debate about whether women were capable of attaining liberation or not engendered a rich vocabulary destabilizing the binary of gender categories. The argument revolved around whether and how people could be classified according to their material bodies, emotions and sexual orientations, which need not necessarily coincide or be unified. Acknowledging such possibilities may have introduced a degree of fluidity beyond the binaries in which gender relations were generally conceptualized.

More widely known, and often exoticized, were various Tantric traditions, documented, with regional variations, almost throughout the subcontinent in texts and visual representations. Perhaps the two most striking features of the tradition were, first, its defiance of caste hierarchies, creating space for relatively low status women and men to participate in rituals. Second, these rituals often involved cross-sex intercourse, which, far from being viewed as a

hindrance to liberation, was visualized as a means of attaining one's goal. This was accompanied by the consumption of liquor, meat and fish, and various ritual gestures and chants. Whether the role reversals envisaged in the ritual context impacted on social relations in the wider world is uncertain; in any case, the existence of these counter-cultural practices posed a challenge to neat hierarchies.

Finally, the end of the first and the beginning of the second millennium CE witnessed the emergence of new devotional modes of worship, which envisaged an intimate bond between the devotee and the god. Within this tradition, the male devotee occasionally visualized himself as feminine vis-à-vis the divine—in a relationship of complete surrender and subordination. Also, even if exceptional, there were women devotees, whose compositions were preserved within the Vaishnava and Shaiva traditions of the Tamil region and the Virashaiva tradition of Karnataka. Three women, Andal, Karaikkal Ammaiyar, and Akkamahadevi, stand out in particular. The compositions of the first and the last are marked by a remarkable reworking of erotic imagery, while the second adopted a desexualized mode of representation, as an old woman, an almost ghoulish figure, in her devotion to Shiva. Each of these figures was venerated within a predominantly masculine tradition.

To return briefly to where we began—one of the major achievements of decades of scholarship has been an acknowledgement that we cannot work with a one size fits all for Indian history in general and gender histories in particular. The relevance and significance of the specific, with its wealth of detail that often resists being constricted within neat, tidy frameworks, is a reminder of a richness and diversity that is typical of our pasts. It also goes without saying that acknowledging and respecting these diversities is crucial if the process of democratization envisaged in our Constitution is to be preserved and strengthened. In this context, it is likely that the relationship between women's studies / movements and the discipline of history will continue to be fruitful and exciting in the years ahead.

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Dynamics of Women's Movement in India Historical Legacy and Contemporary Challenges

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Introduction

The first wave feminism, the phase was marked by the first generation of English educated women's struggles against child marriage, widow burning, female infanticide and efforts for education for women and voting right. Its gender politics touched only women from upper caste and upper class. In the second wave of feminism that began in the mid- 1970s, the educated middle class women who were actively involved in different social movements of students, youth, workers, peasants, tribal, Dalits and civil liberties played central role. They abhorred paternalism of benevolent males and upper-class women's 'charitable' and 'philanthropic' social work and declared themselves as fighters for women's rights. Here the gender politics was focused on 'women's agency' and women to seen not merely as passive and mute victims of discrimination, injustice, and exploitation but women as active agents challenging gender-based discrimination and gender violence in all spheres of their lives. The third wave essentially covers perspectives from those marginalized or excluded from previous 'waves' of feminism – Dalit women, tribal women and women of colour, women from the post-colonial, young women, differently abled women, women from ethnic and religious minorities and women with alternate sexuality. This wave has deepened the discourse of discontent. 'Third Wave' acknowledges the benefits of second wave feminism and provides the world-view of a young feminist from the global South. Issues around identity and culture impacting gender relations have come centre-stage in the era of globalized world of 21st century.

Current stage of Gender Politics is informed by a third wave of feminism whose ideological moorings lay in post-structuralist interpretation of gender and sexuality. Here disciplines such as literature, politics, art, cultural criticisms, history, and sociology have played dominant role in defining gender politics. They critique male-female binaries that are seen by them as artificial constructs created to maintain the power of dominant groups. Proponents of third-wave feminism claim that it allows women to define feminism for themselves by incorporating their own identities into the belief system of what feminism is and what it can become through one's own perspective. Contemporary gender politics encompasses macro-micro and meso realities in all spheres, economy and polity, jurisprudence and policy making, local-national-regional-global governance.

While the diversity in the social fabric of India has historically seen continuities and contestations, interactions between different social segments have increasingly come to be mediated through socio-economic processes, where the needs and principles of a marketized economy prevail. This has been even more so apparent since the 1990s. While the years after independence saw significant attempts to negotiate these rights in different spheres with the

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aim of keeping alive the guiding principles as laid out in the Constitution; current policy frameworks and paradigms of development pose serious challenges to these efforts.

Critique of Environmental Policies and Action for Livelihood Concerns

Economics of Gender and Development sees a connection between the exploitation and degradation of the natural world and the subordination and oppression of women. Eco feminism emerged in the mid-1970s alongside second-wave feminism and the green movement. Eco feminism brings together elements of the feminist and green movements, while at the same time offering a challenge to both. It takes from the green movement concern about the impact of human activities on the non-human world, and from feminism the view of humanity as gendered in ways that subordinate, exploit and oppress women. It is both an activist and academic movement which see critical connections between the domination of nature and the exploitation of women. Eco feminist activism grew during the 1980s and 1990s among women from the anti-nuclear, environmental and women's rights movements (Mies and Shiva, 2014). Rural and tribal women are demanding land rights in panchayats and fighting legal battles (Velayudhan, 2009).

Livelihood concerns of women such as fuel, fodder, water, animal care, agriculture, kitchen gardening, food security and food sovereignty is taken up by feminists not only at the policy levels but also in terms of mobilization of women and formulation of successful models by rural and tribal women's collectives. E.g., Navdanya in Uttaranchal and *Annadana* Soil and Seed-savers in Bangalore and Asha Kachru's efforts of organizing women farmers.

"Ecofeminists say 'no more waiting'... We are in a state of emergency and must do something about it now... around the world, economies, cultures and natural resources are plundered, so that 20 percent of the world's population (privileged North Americans and Europeans) can continue to consume 80 percent of its resources in the name of progress."¹ Our aim is to go beyond this narrow perspective and to express our diversity and, in different ways, address the inherent inequalities in world structures which permit the North to dominate the South, men to dominate women, and the frenetic plunder of ever more resources for ever more unequally distributed economic gain to dominate nature... Everywhere, women were the first to protest against environmental destruction. It became clear to us, activists in the ecology movements, that science and technology were not gender neutral. As with many other women, we began to see that the relationship of exploitative dominance between man and nature (shaped by reductionist modern science since the 16th century) and the exploitative and oppressive relationship between men and women which prevails in most patriarchal societies, even modern industrial ones, were closely connected."

Ecological Movements, the 'resource base of our feminism'

Across the North East, there is a growing body of politically conscious and empowered women, who have stepped in to fill a vacuum that neither government alone, nor struggling militant outfits and rebel organisations have been able to close. The *Meira Paibis of Manipur*, *Naga Mothers' Association of Nagaland*, the *Nari Adhikar Sangram Samiti (NASS)* and the

¹Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva (1993) *The introduction to Ecofeminism*, Fernwood Publications, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, ISBN 1-895686-28-8

Asom Mahila Sachetan Mancha of Assam, among others, have striven to reach afflicted women and vulnerable sections of the community to arrest continuing hazards to their life and liberty and bring some semblance of order. Most of their members have experienced untold suffering, whether by being part of the struggle, or, having been victims of it. The participatory “politics” of activist groups, such as the NMA or the NASS for example, straddles the borders between normative female behaviour and aggressive resistance, of which a glaring and unique demonstration was the now iconic slogan “Indian Army Rape Us” on a banner draped around the nude Meira Paibis on the streets of Imphal, in the wake of the Manorama murder case; Triggering off a major focus on militarized societies in India’s northeast, this moment in the region has come to assume a symbolism that draws from the power of women’s agency and their political awakening.² But more significant is the involvement of an increasing number of women who have taken initiatives at peace-building in these very societies through active negotiations, spontaneous activism both within and outside the state and by continuing to write and speak vociferously at various forums against violence and for the need for conflict resolution and peace building to reach out to ordinary women trapped in endless litigations within the family.

Reproductive Rights of Women:

When it comes to reproductive rights of women, most of the efforts of the women's groups in India have been directed against excesses committed in the name of family planning programmes. Now, Indian Council of Medical Research, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, and Institute of Research in Reproduction (IRR) has shown readiness to discuss scientific, medico legal and operational dimensions of bio-medical research conducted on human subjects. UNFPA (1998) and WHO have drawn guidelines about population policies that its focus shifts from targeting women for population control to women's reproductive rights (Sen, Germain, and Chen, 1994). Ethical guidelines for bio-medical research are drawn. Still in the interior parts of India, poor women have been the main targets of the abusive sterilization operations and unsafe injectable and oral contraceptives. Recent research on adolescent girls and abortion have highlighted the problem of teenage pregnancies, trafficking of young girls for sex trades and complicity of the criminal justice system. Campaign against sex determination resulted into central legislation banning amniocentesis, *chrion-villai-biopsy*, and sex pre-selection techniques for femicide. But much is needed to be done to make the legislation effective in the real life. CEHAT and the Lawyers Collective have jointly supported a petition (Public interest Litigation in the Supreme Court of India) filed by Dr. Sabu George for effective implementation of the Act (Patel, 2009).

Declining Child Sex Ratio

Sex ratios are a critical indicator of both social attitudes towards women as well as changing dimensions of social denominators about Gender and Development. The report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India — *Towards Equality* — first drew attention to this startling reality. The Committee’s findings had pointed to two extremely significant trends –of declining work participation rate and declining sex-ratio, both of which were critical indicators to assess women’s status. It has also enabled women activists, scholars, and

²Equality, Pluralism, and the State: Perspectives from the Women’s Movement - A Report, Indian Association of Women Studies: XIV National Conference on Women’s Studies, Guwahati, 4-7 February 2014pg 14

policy makers to engage with the wider linkages of these emerging social trends. However, the problem of declining sex ratios has become worse as well as more complex over the years and, in fact, reached alarming proportions in certain states. Concern about this has been voiced on international platforms and through UN agencies. Studies have highlighted the multiple dimensions of the problem. These also point to the enormous and growing scope for such sex selection, given the advance in technologies which facilitate pre-birth selection through assisted reproductive technologies and practices which find favour during abiding patriarchal norms and mind-set.

Activists have continuously pointed to the total lack of political will displayed about the implementation of the PCPNDT Act and its provisions, delay in the issue of notifications and guidelines. All these allow for complicity between retrogressive social beliefs and modern-day practices. These find complacent allies in the large and diverse community of medical as well as pre-natal diagnostic practitioners. There continue to be divergent patterns about sex ratios and related trends at the regional level, even as there is a tendency for more and more districts and states to draw closer to an all-India pattern which is becoming more universal along and across certain regional divides. Over the decades, the Sex Ratio (number of females to every 1000 males) decreased sharply, starting from 972 in 1901 to a low of 927 in 1991, and since then has shown a steady increase, reaching 948 in 2011.

Examination of the data points to the following trends: the state-wise comparison of CSR from 1991 to 2011 shows that the phenomenon has widened and deepened, spreading over the entire northern and western belt in 2011 compared to only Haryana, Punjab, Delhi, and parts of Gujarat having very bad ratios in 2001; North East India has some of the best CSRs in the country. However, maps for each state showing the difference between 2001 and 2011 bring out that things are not so good in Manipur, Nagaland and in parts of Arunachal Pradesh; the statistics also show the difference in boy and girl children as well as for all ages in the five-year age data of 2011. The basic question is why families are agreeing/choosing to go for sex selection which manifests itself as son preference and daughter aversion. There is a need to focus our attention to the need to look at concrete factors which influence decision making, rather than accepted notions of cultural stereotypes which frame cultural values, mind-sets, and the attitude of mothers/families in particular ways which are broadly seen to be traditional. More disturbing was the fact that otherwise apparently modern and progressive decisions, such as of educating the girl child and advancing the age of marriage were being taken alongside a purpose which was to give away the girl in a “good marriage”, which also necessitated allocating resources for dowry and the accompanying marriage expenses. It was clear that even when overt forms of discrimination may not be there, sex selection was being practiced; the small family norm translated into “at least one boy and at the most one girl”. She posited that there appears to be a connection between neo-liberalism, falling workforce participation rates of women and the declining sex ratios. New Reproductive Technologies and ways of Assisted Reproduction opened new possibilities of sex selection and pre-selection, she said.

However, the positive news is that the number of girls missing at birth due to the practice of gender biased sex selection was 3.3 lakh girls per year for the period 2007-12. This reflects a decline from an average of 5.8 lakh girls missing at birth per year in the preceding 6 years.

The period between 2004 and 2006 witnessed the first visible signs of change³; This decline in the number of girls missing at birth since 2004 must be understood against the backdrop of the legal, policy and programmatic measures taken to address gender biased sex selection in India and community dynamics in response to its consequences. There has been a shift towards arresting the gender imbalance in sex ratios in a few states. In addition to the implementation of the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, a comprehensive set of efforts to build value of girls, counter gender discriminatory attitudes and create awareness on the adverse consequences of such discriminatory practices. India has strong public policies to increase gender equity, vigorous media campaigns and legislation. The growing visibility of gender biased sex selection in the media is an indicator of the enhanced attention and increased volume of discourse around the issue. The outreach of the issue included intensive engagement with a range of stakeholders including policy makers, administrators, the judiciary, medical community, media, and community leaders. (Patel, 2010).

Feminism and Women-with-Disability

Disabled women occupy a multifarious and marginalized position in Indian society, based on their disability and on sociocultural identities that separate them into categories constructed according to such properties as caste, class, and residential position. Disabled women thus can have plural identity markers that make their daily experience perplexing and difficult.

A culture in which arranged marriages are the rule inherently puts disabled woman in a difficult position. However difficult, the possibility exists for "normal" women to resist this cultural arrangement, while disabled women confront an uphill task. Some disabled girls in the rich or middle class might be able to negotiate the difficulties inherent in arranged marriages, albeit with a great deal of compromising. Disabled sons retain the possibility of marriage, as they are not gifting but the receivers of gifts. Disabled as well as nondisabled men seek "normal" women as wives, and therefore participate in the devaluing of people because of disability (Erevelles, 2000).

In a society where there is widespread female infanticide, aborting imperfect children will not cause any stir or rancour. This becomes clear in respect to the feminist campaign against amniocentesis as a sex-determination test. While there is an ongoing discussion of the ethical contradictions that prenatal sex testing poses for feminists, prenatal testing to identify and abort children at risk for disabilities does not get addressed (Patel, 2009).

For disabled women themselves, these issues become secondary because cultural stereotyping denies them the role of motherhood. As elaborated by Sudhir Kakar, a psychoanalyst (1978, 56), whether a woman's family is poor or wealthy, whatever her caste, class, or religion, whether she is a fresh young bride or exhausted by many pregnancies and infants, an Indian woman knows that motherhood confers upon her a purpose and identity that nothing else in her culture can. Each infant borne and nurtured by her safely into childhood, especially if the child is a son, is both a certification and redemption of her ability, role, and status as a woman. Disabled women are, however, denied the possibility of this fulfilment, as marriage and consequent motherhood are both difficult achievements in a

³ "How many girls are missing at birth in India? Trends in Sex Ratio at Birth (2001-2012) UNFPA, July 2015

socially restrictive environment. (It will be worth mentioning that single motherhood in the Indian culture has been the privilege of only very elite women. In general, having a child out of the wedlock evokes stigmatization.) The denial of women's "traditional roles" to disabled women creates what Michele Fine and Adrienne Asch (1988) term "role-lessness," a social invisibility and cancellation of femininity that can impel disabled women to pursue, however hopelessly, the female identity valorized by their given culture but denied to them because of their disability.

A great deal of thoughtful work by Indian feminists analyzes the impact of the evaluative male gaze. However, the essential difference between being sexual objects and objects of the "stare" has not been understood. If the male gaze makes normal women feel like passive objects, the stare turns the disabled object into a grotesque sight. Disabled women contend not only with how men look at women but also with how an entire society stares at disabled people, stripping them of any semblance of resistance. Neither Indian feminism nor the Indian disability movement acknowledges that disabled women are doubly pinned by the dominant male gaze coupled with the gaze of the culture that constructs them as objects to be stared at.

In a culture where any deviation from a normally accepted archetype is seen as a marked deviation, the impaired body becomes a symbol of imperfection. The myth of the beautiful body defines the impaired female body as unfeminine and unacceptable. Disability is thus constituted as being profoundly of "Other" in our society. The roots of such thinking are found in Indian mythology: Lakshmana, brother of Lord Rama, cuts off the nose of Shurpanakha, sister of King Ravana, who is interested in him. That Lakshmana can only respond to what he defines as non-acceptable behaviour by disabling the ugly female monster indicates how disability and desexing are equated in the Indian psyche. The assumption that sexuality and disability are mutually exclusive also denies that people with deviant bodies experience sexual desires and refuses them recognition as sexually typical despite their differences.

Indian feminist scholarship has looked at embodiment along the axes of caste, class, and historical phases such as the impact of colonization; however, the impaired body has not been considered as having analytical consequence. This continues to render the disabled invisible in a manner very similar to the invisibility experienced by blacks in a white racist society. As Robert Young (forthcoming) argues, "In a racist society it is necessary for the African-American subject to be rendered invisible in order to enable the Euro-American subject (whiteness) to preserve the illusion of autonomy, rationality, and control" (cited in Erevelles 2000, 35). Erevelles's application of this analysis to disability pursues a similar argument. She says that a (nondisabled) subject, upon encountering its Other (the disabled subject) finds it necessary to suppress the memory of this deviant image to support the illusion of normalcy and wholeness. That these claims to normalcy or wholeness are themselves illusions becomes vividly apparent when one examines how constructions of a normative self are in fact predicated on the existence of the disabled Other. In principle, some disabled women might have benefited from the activities of certain women's groups, but no documentation exists of specific instances. On the other hand, ample evidence abounds that disabled women are the victims of domestic violence and sexual violation.

The IAWS recommends the inclusion of issues and challenges faced by women with disability as part of the Women's Studies Curriculum, with special emphasis on how conflict (both familial and social) has its profound impact on understanding the structures within which

disability operates and remains embedded. In this context the issues of structures and communicational access of care must take centre stage within the dialogue of women's groups.

The Sexual Harassment at the Workplace and #Me Too Movement:

Sexual harassment at the workplace has been one of the central concerns of the women's movement in India since the '80s. After 30 years of consistent effort, Indian women have managed to get The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013. Due to pressure from child rights organizations, previous year the Parliament of India passed The Protection of Children from Sexual Offence Act, 2012, aimed at protecting children in India against the evil of child sexual abuse. Since 2012, after gang rape of a young woman physiotherapist in a moving bus in Delhi, there has been nationwide protests and intense discussions on the context, forms, and scale of gender-based violence, including, more specifically, sexual violence. These debates, perhaps the most intense and widespread in recent history encompassed vastly different sections of society, movements and organizations and sought to address the multiple sites of violence extending across regions, social classes, and communities. All these point to the fact that women are directly in the line of fire in the current scenario.

During the 1990s, the most controversial and brutal gang rape at the workplace involved a Rajasthan state government employee who tried to prevent child marriage as part of her duties as a worker of the Women Development Programme of Government of Rajasthan. The feudal patriarchy who were enraged by her (in their words: "a lowly woman from a poor and potter community") 'guts' decided to teach her a lesson and raped her repeatedly in public view. After an extremely humiliating legal battle in the Rajasthan High Court the rape survivor did not get justice and the rapists -- "educated and upper caste affluent men" – could go free. This enraged a women's rights group called Vishakha that filed public interest litigation in the Supreme Court of India (Patel, 2010).

In 1997, the Supreme Court passed a landmark judgment in the Vishakha Case punishing Bhanwari Devi's rapists and laying down guidelines to be followed by establishments in dealing with complaints about sexual harassment. The court stated that these guidelines were to be implemented until legislation is passed to deal with the issue. The moving force behind these guidelines was the intervention of several feminist NGOs and women's groups after the rape of Bhanwari Devi, who was raped as punishment for carrying out government-sanctioned work, as we have earlier seen. In the years since these guidelines, several universities have come up with carefully-formulated sexual harassment codes, as have some NGOs and some private sector employers. The codes put in place by the latter two kinds of organizations are uneven in character, depending on the presence within the organization of feminists with a perspective on sexual harassment. Where such a perspective is lacking, the committees and policy become just one more employer-generated disciplinary mechanism against employees, especially since, in most such cases, there are no trade unions.

University policies (for instance, at Delhi University; Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi; North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, Jadavpur University, Kolkata), have tended to arise from existing democratic politics in the university community. The Supreme Court guidelines acted as a catalyst to focus the energies of progressive political groupings on campuses and of

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individual teachers and students towards the formulation of appropriate codes and implementation mechanisms. In an academic environment, the definition of sexual harassment would have to be different from other kinds of workplaces.

An open challenge to the pervasiveness of a culture that allows men to humiliate, harass, intimidate, and exploit women, with impunity has come because of global #MeToo Movement. Power of #MeToo movement lies not just in the individual/collective narratives that are being shared in the public domain and not as whisper campaign, has resulted in a public discourse on 'misogyny' and 'toxic patriarchy' on the one hand and #MenToo Movement to combat false cases.

Improvement in the Societal Role of Educated Women, but there is a Glass Ceiling:

There are improved education and employment opportunities for middle- and upper-class women. Women are entering traditional male bastions and massive occupational diversification has taken place in the upper echelons of power structures as well as in professions such as doctors, lawyers, chartered accountants, architects, engineers, scientists. General awareness about women's entitlements has increased among the state and non-state actors. Highly educated women are climbing the upper echelons of power structures in administration, judiciary, corporate world, politics, and educational institutions. Statistical profile of women in India provides yearly account of Indian women's advancement in the spheres of education, employment, political participation, positions in criminal justice system and entry into decision-making bodies. This has also generated tremendous anxiety among Indian men that manifests in violence against women and misogyny in day-to-day life.

Movers and Shakers

Women's rights groups, activists, civil society organizations, independent researchers including academia such a women studies department across the country are currently the main actors promoting women's concerns. At the same time there are strong biases based on class, caste, religion, and ethnicity that marginalize women from historically neglected and deprived sections of society. Patterns of exclusions draw their strength and sustenance from long histories of social and economic inequalities, discrimination, and marginalisation. With increasing vulnerabilities in the economic sphere, mounting tensions about the rights of diverse communities and ethnicities, the inequalities based on caste and class hierarchies have got exacerbated. These also determine people's abilities to garner their citizenship rights. Given the uneven and unequal nature of development and lack of respect shown for federal democratic principles in the modes of governance adopted, the negotiation of these rights has itself come to be problematic.

Feminists Shaping Health Movement

One of the important concerns of the women's movement has been health of women. The movements in opposition to domestic violence, sexual abuse, dowry deaths are directly related to the health of the women. But these movements are not considered as health movements, perhaps because in these campaigns, it is the basic dignity of women as human beings is the primary, core issue. There have been movements in which women's groups participated or took lead by identifying these as health issues. For example, the opposition of the women's organizations to hazardous injectable contraceptives. The Stree Shakti

Sanghatana in Hyderabad, Saheli in Delhi demonstrated against the use of Depo-Provera, the hazardous injectable contraceptive. These and other groups (Forum for Women's Health, Mumbai) campaigned against NET-EN and Nor-plant, the other injectable contraceptives. Health groups including the Medico-friend Circle and AIDAN supported this campaign. Saheli filed a PIL on this issue. Thanks to all those moves, the government decided not to include injectable contraceptives in the Family Planning Programme, though it refused to ban them. Women's movement has a profound influence on different health action groups in India most of whom are funded and work in a focused manner in specific small areas. These health action groups have taken up women's health issues which had been neglected earlier. For example, conventional health work would limit itself to Maternal and Child Health, whereas during last 20 years, women's reproductive health issues have been increasingly taken up. Thus, the women's health has had a much broader, longer influence on health activism in India.

Feminists in War-zones and Conflict Areas

Sexual violence in conflict areas- Kashmir and North east- is impacted by special legal regimes while in communal violence, women's bodies are targeted. In conflict zones, the violence against women is embedded in special laws as also in regular laws, such as the AFPSA, which carries a colonial legacy (Philipose and Bisnoi, 2013).

Meanwhile, the gains made by the women's movement about amendments in various laws in 2013 are significant. There is a breakthrough into the absolute impunity for men in uniform- an explanation in the Cr.P.C. states that any form of sexual violence by public person did not need sanction for prosecution. The sanction clause was removed. As per Sec.376 (2) custodial rape by men in armed forces - was termed as 'power rape'.

The 1984 anti - Sikh violence witnessed sexual violence against women, although there was no formal acknowledgement of it. In the Naroda Patia case in Gujarat in 2002, sexual violence was central to communal violence and every member of the mob was named/ blamed by the trial court. Post December 2012, it was acknowledged that power and prejudice intersect and an understanding that in a coercive context- there is need for a recognition of 'power'.

Feminist Solidarity with Sex Workers

Set within the existing national and international debates feminist debates have explored the category of sex worker, autonomy, and nature of work/labour, from a specifically Indian location. It contended that forms of sexual labour reconstructed the social stigma associated with those communities who have been involved in that work. Feminist and Dalit positions on sex work were analysed along with that of religious groups, to explore questions of justice, given that these have generated critiques and justifications to 'normalize' this form of work. Radical feminists treat sex work as a product of capitalism while the civil societal gaze looks at women involved in such labour within the logic of appropriation and patronage. One argument has been that India had seen an implicit relationship being established between traditional sex work and the caste structure, and the 'naturalizing' of sex work in relation to Dalit communities - be it the Devadasis, Jogins, Muralis, or the Kalavanteens of Maharashtra, all of whom were brought under the stigmatized identity of 'prostitutes' under the colonial

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legal framework, overlooking questions of livelihood, caste exploitation, and sexuality. Following Victorian morality, while the national and social reform movements did not lobby with the colonial powers to deny the category of labour to this section of society, the Dalit, nor the women's movement, had a homogeneous response on issues of sex work in India.

Solidarity with Women and Transgender Survivors of Sexual Violence:

The brutality of incidents involving rape, sexual violence and its various manifestations in women's lives require us to have a deeper understanding of sexuality and the implications of sexual violence. These affect not only women, but also transgenders and men. Yet issues of sexual violence affect women in very different and specific ways. There is a need to discuss feminist perspectives on rape within the legal discourse, as also the idea of consent and coercion, which have specific meanings about evidence in cases related to sexual violence. The legal system obscures women's experiences of rape and sexual assault through extra legal considerations such as morality, virtuousness and appropriate sexual behavior, which include notions of a 'reasonable' and 'unreasonable' woman. The understanding, of sexuality within the legal discourse needs to be broadened, along with transforming the judicial system, to also encompass a broader theoretical understanding which includes the context in which crimes against women occur, to address issues of social responsibility and the need to challenge patriarchal social and sexual assumptions to prevent stereotyping of men and women's experiences from feminist perspectives (Shah, Merchant, Mahajan and Nevatia, 2014).

Feminism and Intersectionality

The intersectionality of caste, class, ethnicity, and gender in the subordination of women, which strongly suggests that solutions to the gender question would have to be found on multiple fronts and not on the plank of patriarchy alone; when women dare to defy the system, success is sure to come. While success may not be visible in tangible and immediate terms in the sense of a complete end to oppression, the very act of resistance is empowering, giving women a voice, which together with other voices becomes powerful enough to shake the foundation of oppressive regimes; social and political crises act as an impetus for struggle and resistance— be it in the domain of literature, law, or social movements. This fact is illustrated by the surge of critical writings. At the empirical level, we see it in the mass movements led by the young, educated youth in India's metropolitan cities and smaller towns post the December 16 rape of the 23-year-old para-medical student in 2012. Similar processes are visible in the Northeast, which saw the phenomenal rise in the women's movement in the states of Manipur, Nagaland, and Mizoram as a reaction to atrocities perpetrated by army personnel on hapless citizens

Over these years, the anti-Sikh riots showed the need for the women's movement to be drawn into the struggle against communalism, while the Shah Bano case forced a re-think on debates about the Uniform Civil Code, given that the slogan had been hijacked by communal forces and there was a need to explore other ways to gender just solutions, including within the existing frameworks for religious communities. Events in December 1992 and 2002 and developments in the South Asian region indicated that communalism and fascism were real possibilities. Developments in Pakistan, where Malala Yousafzai and other young women's

struggle for women's education, had become symbolic of the new energy which had infused the women's movement and their link with other democratic struggles.

In inter-caste and inter-religious marriages, the dominant sectarian caste/ religious councils act extremely violently against the Dalit and minority communities despite court verdict and state protection to the couples.

Polarisation of Public Opinion

In India, legislation against child marriage has emerged as a critical area of state intervention with the National Population Policy (2000) and the National Empowerment Policy (2001) insisting that 18 be the legal age of marriage for girls and the Prohibition of Child Marriages Act (2006) recommending that all marriages below the age of 16 be made void. One of the papers mapped state legislative interventions in the light of conflicts between state and community, e.g., conflicts between the Muslim Personal Law Board in Andhra Pradesh and the State Women's Commission on this issue; the state's evident incapacity to implement its laws, child marriage prohibition officers not knowing that they have been vested with this responsibility, the multiple bureaucratic hurdles and bottlenecks that make it difficult for families to access social sector schemes aiming to raise the age of marriage for girls and the strategic use of these laws by household and kin-based patriarchies to foist kidnapping cases on 'elopement' marriages just below the legal age of consent. While there is, on the one hand, a strong conservative tendency to criminalize sexual activity amongst 'very sexual young adults', as one respondent pointed out, and this tendency is reflected in the language of court judgments, there is also the disturbing rise in the incidence of political organizing by intermediate backward castes in states such as Tamil Nadu, that seeks to prevent women from invoking the law to sustain marriages of choice, especially when they choose to live with Dalit men. It was pointed out that the links between the policies of the state to curb/ contain child marriage and the social impulses, fears, and anxieties of a caste society to control women's sexual choices and relationships must be closely scrutinized and further elaborated by feminist scholarship, through a critical reading of the making of laws.

When the 5-bench multi-religious bench of The Supreme Court of India has given the verdict on much polemicised issue of 'Triple Talaq' that instant divorce invalid as it violates fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution of India; it brought out intersectionality of gender justice, minority rights and identity politics. Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan, a community based all India Muslim women's organization had conducted multicentric research on status of Muslim women in 2014 and filed the petition and campaigned consistently to build public opinion against triple talaq took a position that it is against Koran. Awaz-e-Niswan a community-based feminist organization based in Mumbai took a position that tripe talaq is against gender justice. Thirty-two years back, when Ms. Shahnaaz Shaikh had filed a public Interest Litigation in response to triple talaq given to her by her professor husband at mid-night and thrown out of her matrimonial home, it became an issue of identity politics. The petition stated that Sharia subjugated Muslim women by imposing *pardah*, allowing polygamy and unilateral divorce by man to his wife/wives and by depriving divorced Muslim women of maintenance rights.

Sharp polarization around ban on entry of women in reproductive age to Shabrimala Temple and inter-religious marriage of Hadiya shook not only Kerala but whole of India. Popular opinion that was supportive for entry of women in Shani Singnur temple and Haji Ali Dargah in Maharashtra turned divided in case of Kerala.

It was inevitable to engage with the state and government policies given the prevalence of patriarchies so deeply embedded within all domains – households, kin/communities, markets and state institutions and actors. Women as a category is mediated with various realities and the main actors are divided on certain issues such as the sex workers versus prostituted women divide.

Feminist Groups and Social Media

Feminists' groups have made excellent use of social media by launching yahoo groups and Google groups; besides cyber forums, blogs, etc. for quick communication and coordinated action, sharing of intellectual work and resources, creating archives with photographic memories, reports, posters, diaries, songs, documentary on women's issues which are available online. E.g. Feministsindia@yahoo.com, www.prajnyaarchives.org, www.sparrow.com, www.avaarchives.com, www.cwds.com. Art, humour and music-both offline and on the social media have been effectively used by feminist groups as a form of resistance and influencing of the young and old alike. Cyber space is a new area of concern for feminists as it has become a site for gender-based violence through face book and other social networking sites. There has been growing number of reported complaints of women students being sexually harassed at educational institutions. And shockingly there has been a trend of social media slandering or community shaming of those who have complained. They have been targeted, called names, and accused of spoiling the 'image' of the educational institution.

Alliance of Feminist Groups with LGTB groups

During the last decade of the 20th century in India, the hitherto private realm of sexuality emerged as a focal point and basis for various forms of political assertion. India is increasingly witness to people asserting their right to be different as sexual beings in terms of their sexual orientation, gender identity, and sexual practices. The more established definitions of activist politics are now being forced to engage with new political concerns articulated by people who claim gay, lesbian, *hijra*, transgender, *kothi*, and numerous other identities under the rubric of queer (Narain, 2004). There is no obvious solidarity between the struggles of these various groups (in fact, there are serious differences, particularly around issues of class and gender which need to be acknowledged) but the queer political project, which is at an incipient stage, really attempts to build one community out of a diverse range of communities and practices. Common to each of these identities-apart from their roots in sexuality-is their questioning of the heteronormative ideal that claims that the only way in which two human beings can relate romantically, sexually, and emotionally is in a heterosexual context. The word queer, as used by David Halperin, demarcates not a positivity, but a positionality vis-à-vis the normative.

The term 'Gender' had its beginnings in India in the 1970s as a feminist contribution to public discourse, destabilizing the biological category of 'sex', we find that gender has taken two distinct forms since the 1990s. On the one hand, gender as an analytical category is being used to challenge the notion of 'woman' as the subject of feminist politics. This challenge comes from the politics of caste and sexuality. On the other hand, gender is mobilized by the state to perform a role in discourses of development, to achieve exactly the opposite effect; that is, gender becomes a synonym for 'women'. Thus, the first trend threatens to dissolve, and the second to domesticate, the subject of feminist politics. Gender is a network of power relationships within which human beings are located and are constantly being constructed. So, it is a sociological and political category; a fluid process and hence can be changed.

In India, the realities of the non-normative experience-i.e., gender identities, sexual practices, sexual identities, culturally sanctioned forms of erotic behavior-all contest the embedded nature of heterosexism in law, medical practice, culture, and society. They have traditionally existed and continue to exist in the contemporary context.

Resistance to heterosexism takes place through a proliferation of identities and practices such as jogtas, shivshaktis (both of which are traditional and culturally sanctioned forms of gender non-conformity, particularly by men who take on the gender identity of women), etc., which are too many to be enumerated. Outside the framework of communities there are stories of individual people who assert their right to a different life. The most publicized example is the marriage of Urmila Shrivastava and Leela Namdeo in 1988, two women from a rural background who were serving in the Madhya Pradesh constabulary. This, of course, is not the first such instance of resistance as there have been at least 10 documented cases of women who not just live together but want societal recognition for their relationship and hence attempt to marry each other. What is interesting to note is that these women have invariably been from a small-town background and have had little exposure to Western culture or the queer-rights discourse. Thus, even without the strength of a community to back them, these women have individually contested the heteronormative social order.

From late 1980's the growing awareness about the AIDS epidemic made it increasingly legitimate to talk about sex outside the realms of law, demography and medicine. International funding for HIV/AIDS prevention played a significant role in the creation of new NGO's dealing with sexuality or funded sexuality programmes in old ones. Another factor that made sexuality visible in public space, both elite and non-elite, was the opening up of the media in the 1990's, as part of structural adjustments in the Indian economy.

In the 1980's, the initial response of the established leadership of the women's movement was entirely homophobic, denouncing homosexuality as unnatural, a Western aberration and an elitist preoccupation. An important landmark is the 1991 National Conference of autonomous Women's Movements in Tirupati at which an open and acrimonious discussion on lesbianism took place, with the greatest hostility coming from leftist groups, *decrying lesbianism as an elitist deviation from real political issues*. Since that time, there has been intense dialogue within the women's movements, and great shifts in perception have taken place, especially on the Left. Openly homophobic arguments are almost never made (publicly) any more within the women's movement. But there continues to be the sort of argument

which suggests that sexuality is less urgent than the bigger issues facing the women's movement.

Women's Movement and LGBT Rights:

About Article 377, women's groups expressed deep regret and shock and registered its protest at the Supreme Court judgment of Dec.11th, 2014, on Section 377, overturning the progressive judgment of the Delhi High Court (Shah &Muralidhar) of July 2, 2009, and creating a set back to the struggles and efforts of LGBT people and all others who have supported these struggles. The Delhi High Court Judgment had foregrounded Dr. Ambedkar's insistence on Constitutional morality being the bedrock of rights of all citizens rather than public morality in India's deeply hierarchical and prejudice entrenched society. In 2009, a landmark ruling in Delhi's High Court had seen homosexual acts decriminalised, making consensual gay sex legal under law for the first time since 1861, when British colonial authorities brought in Section 377 of India's penal code, which outlawed "sexual activities against the order of nature." (Narain, 2004).

Queer politics in a sense can trace its roots from the feminist movement in India as the largest number of people presently in queer politics is drawn from the feminist movement. This movement that began in the early 2000's did not see itself as a kind of minority politics, thereby getting trapped in the 'us' vs. 'them' dichotomy. The word 'queer' is used consciously to differentiate itself from other categories such as LGBT politics and queer politics is approached through the idea of intersectionality. Sexuality is not seen through the prism of equal rights or identity. There is no one notion of sexuality and sexuality is interconnected with the concepts of caste, class, religion, and sex in a fundamental way. So politically lesbian suicides would also be an issue of violence against women and not simply an issue of the LGBT movement. So, queerness is seen as something bigger than sexual preferences.

Gay Pride parades (also known as **pride marches**, **pride events**, and **pride festivals**) for the LGBT community are events celebrating lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) culture and pride began in 1969 in New York city. The first marches were both serious and fun, and served to inspire the widening activist movement; they were repeated in the following years, and more and more annual marches started up in other cities throughout the world. Many parades still have at least some of the original political or activist character, especially in less accepting settings. The variation is largely dependent on the political, economic, and religious settings of the area. However, in more accepting cities, the parades take on a festive or even Mardi Gras-like character, whereby the political stage is built on notions of celebration. In India, it began in 1999 in Kolkata, and annual marches are organized in many cities like Delhi, Mumbai, and Chennai in solidarity with the cause globally.

An important part of the third wave of feminism is sex-positivity, a celebration of sexuality as a positive aspect of life, with a broader definition of what sex means and what oppression and empowerment may imply in the context of sex.

Connection of Indian feminist groups with international debates and actors

Women's rights activists emerged from the struggles of solidarity for global issues such as anti-war movements, fight against racial discrimination, working class and trade union movements, national liberation struggles in Africa, Latin America and Asian countries, assertion of identity by native population and minorities, they were connected with international debates on role of revolutionary movement in women's liberation, relationship of women's movement with the state, why the need for 'autonomy' of women's organizations from mainstream political parties, importance of networking with perspective of 'Think globally, Act locally'. Since mid-1980s, the Indian feminists have played crucial role in an International Network for policy advocacy called DAWN i.e., Development Alternatives with Women. Vision of DAWN has been crystallised in *Development, Crises and Alternative Visions* by Sen and Brown (1987).

Largely the language of 'equal rights' has been learnt from the capitalist West. At a global level, the neoliberal economy is dominating, but the struggles are moving on and gaining political ground. Cross-movement solidarity has been created in spaces like the **World Social Forum**, the engagement with the *Buen Vivir* or Living Well movement, as it's called in Latin America creating livelihoods in a shared economy. There is a positive trend in women strengthening solidarity across regions and continents, and in playing more significant roles as decision makers in movements to reclaim the commons. The Convention on the Abolition of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1993 and India is a signatory to it and the Indian women's groups meticulously report against it, raising the issue of human rights violations of women at the global arena.

Over the past few years' possibilities and concerns have emerged of using Resolution 1325 of the UN Security Council on women, peace, and security in maintaining women's central position at the peace table. In India, the resolution is not considered a peace measure. The problem also arises from the fact that the state does not recognize any conflict areas but calls them as disturbed areas. However, despite such problems the UNSCR continues to be a significant tool in the hands of women of the Global South including India to press for increased gender sensitivity in the peace discourse and greater participation of women in the peace process at decision making levels.

One Billion Rising:

Violence against women is rising across the globe. One Billion Rising is the biggest mass action to end violence against women in human history. The campaign, launched on Valentine's Day 2012, began as a call to action based on the staggering statistic that 1 in 3 women on the planet will be beaten or raped during her lifetime. With the world population at 7 billion, this adds up to more than ONE BILLION WOMEN AND GIRLS. More than 200 countries are part of this global movement and the Indian women's groups has played an active, enthusiastic, and very important role in all the activities organized under this mass movement in different parts of the country and thereby highlighting the different dimensions of the issue regionally and globally. In 2016, the theme of Revolution continues with a call to focus on marginalised women and to bring national and international focus to their issues; to bring in new artistic energy; to amplify Revolution as a call for system change to end

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violence against women and girls; to call on people to rise for others, and not just for ourselves.

Cyber space has emerged as a potential space for transnational activism, even as the rise and consolidation of religious identity- alongside the ‘shrinking’ of the welfare state -has made Dalit women more vulnerable to exploitation and discrimination, leading to further marginalization (Dalit Women 2016). On the other hand, there is a renewed spurt in the display of energy and activism of Dalit women’s collectives, e.g., the All-India Dalit Women’s Forum, National Federation of Dalit Women and All India Dalit Women’s Forum, founded in 1994, 1995 and 1996, respectively. At the global level, the UN World Conference on Against Racism - held in Durban, South Africa in 2001 provided an opportunity to draw parallels between Dalit women’s oppression and racism. The ‘Delhi Declaration’ of (2006) emerged around the same time, with transnational Dalit feminist activism highlighting issues of survival and dignity, even as there were other problematic issues of identity and sovereignty.

Indian women groups to an extent are also connected to the international debates around engaging with Men and masculinity in addressing violence against women. The Indian women studies academic world relates to the international world in terms of theorizing on feminism, using nuanced categories for interrogation into different aspects, cross sharing at international conferences and programmes. But there are doubts of the extent to which the activist world across the country is connected to international debates and actors.

Women's Movement and the Development Agenda

During 1970s and 1980s, the women's movement highlighted marginalization of women from the economy. The efforts of women activists were directed in agitation and propaganda for women's rights, sexual -fighting against escalating violence against assertive women and team-building to counter sexual harassment in the streets and at work-place. Feminists are demanding equal share for women in the public spaces such as streets, gardens, clubs, transport any time of the day and night (Phadke, Khan and Ranade, 2011). In the 1990, the women's movement is demanding its legitimate place within the mainstream with its own agenda of empowerment of women with partnership with men. It has been able to identify its allies in all sections of society (Ramchandran and Kameshwari, 2014). Its horizontal and vertical networking has created congenial atmosphere to execute development agenda with the help of effective use of information technology, communication channels, modern managerial practices, efficient law, and order machinery. The development policies pursued in recent years have directly impacted the rights enjoyed by different social segments and aggravated prevailing inequalities in multiple sites and domains. While the inter-sectionality of gender- based experiences of inequalities with prevalent hierarchies is not new, the increasing overlap and convergence between different forms of discrimination and exclusions is adding to the vulnerability of specific sections of women and posing greater challenges to their quest for a life with dignity. Gender experts have evolved gender related development indicators (Rustagi, 2004).

In instances where women had taken an active part to stall the so- called development projects and entry of private industrial corporations that directly and adversely affected their livelihood, it was found that from their initial inclusion, participation and, graduating to

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leadership roles, they faced opposition from within the movement, their families as well as from society and the government at large. Yet, slowly but surely, they found their way into decision making bodies. However, after the movement ended, both possibilities existed: they either moved to a different level of leadership away from the masses of women or became less visible. Men grudgingly acknowledged the role of such women, but their perceptions of who owns these resources remains patriarchal. The real outcomes of such movements must be analyzed based on their commitment to gender concerns and to also ensure that women should equally share their benefits.

Women have *en masse* participated in women-targeted economic development programmes, such as micro credit, livelihood and other anti-poverty interventions and the very notion that the state might intervene in community management of its resources. Women and the oppressed castes are using the spaces opened by state developmentalism and the challenge is to map how they are doing so and, what new contestations are generated when they do so. Both by assuming 'empowerment' to be an automatic outcome of women attending meetings, seeking loans, and initiating livelihood activities, or by denouncing in entirety these initiatives and therefore not engaging with them, we overlook an issue that begs serious investigation viz., the question of how the social identities of women and solidarities and tensions amongst women are re-worked through rural development programmes. Thus, perspectives from women's movements shape and influence inter-linked struggles and campaigns for the right to food, to minimum wages, to social security and pensions and more broadly to social protection. Labour and feminist movements and discourses have been intersecting and shaping each other's demands and campaigns. Maternity Benefits, for example is a victory of the labour as well as the feminist movement. They called for greater reflection on the vocabularies we use and the way we represent our struggles to ourselves and to others, whether through the 'rights or 'empowerment' frameworks. The state government's welfare schemes for unorganized workers have been expanded to bring domestic workers within their ambit.

The most difficult areas have been providing educational opportunities for the poverty groups, Dalit, and tribal women, low -cost housing, environmental and occupational safety, and human rights concerns. The state, political parties and beneficiaries of women's groups too have duty to ensure democratic and multicultural atmosphere within which the women activists can take judicious and gender-just decisions about allocation of developmental resources and development funding for construction of schools, community centres, sports-clubs, libraries and reading rooms, low-cost hospitals, and low-cost housing for the poverty groups. Gender Budgeting as a tool is used by elected women representatives to promote gender equality. Thus, the message of the women's movement and its struggle for the rights of women can no longer be a movement for sectional rights. Women's struggle for their democratic rights as citizens, hence, remains inextricably linked to issues of equality and respect for diverse pluralist traditions. This highlights the immense possibilities, as well as the challenges before us.

Gender Budgeting

During past 2 decades' gender politics around local, state and union budgets in India has sharpened in its analytical rigour among gender economists as well as women's rights groups. "Peoples access to services and resources are determined by government budget policies.

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Gender budgets initiatives around the world have attempted to systematically examine how government budgets address discrimination about women's access to housing, employment, health, education, and other services." (Elson, 2006). Budget is an important tool in the hands of state for affirmative action for improvement of gender relations through reduction of gender gap in the development process. It can help to reduce economic inequalities, between men and women as well as between the rich and the poor Hence, the budgetary policies need to keep into considerations the gender dynamics operating in the economy and in the civil society. There is a need to highlight participatory approaches bottom-up budget, child budget, green budgeting, local and global implications of pro-poor and pro-women budgeting and inter-linkages between gender-sensitive budgeting and women's empowerment. Understanding the relationship between macroeconomic policies and the Union Budget, state budgets and the local self-government institutions in the context of economic reforms and globalization is a MUST as it has influenced women's lives in several ways. It is good economic sense to make national budgets gender-sensitive, as this will enable more effective targeting of government expenditure to women specific activities and reduce inequitable consequences of previous fiscal policies. The Gender Budget Initiative is a policy framework, methodology and set of tools to assist governments to integrate a gender perspective into the budget as the main national plan of public expenditure. It also aims to facilitate attention to gender analysis in review of macroeconomic performance, ministerial budget preparations, parliamentary debate and mainstream media coverage. Budget impacts women's lives in several ways. It directly promotes women's development through allocation of budgetary funds for women's programmes or reduces opportunities for empowerment of women through budgetary cuts.

Contemporary Challenges posed by COVID19 Pandemic

Feminists have long been demanding greater recognition of the contribution of paid and unpaid work of women to national income, economic growth, national efficiency, and productivity. The urgency of this has been emerging with more force as the health emergencies have devastated the lives of millions of women facing multiple marginalities of caste, class, ethnicity, and gender. Research on earlier pandemics such as Ebola, have found a significant negative impact on women's long-term health and economic vulnerability even after the crisis. Feminist activists worldwide have been quick to raise their collective concerns, share resources online, call for solidarity and demand of gender responsive state interventions to address the extraordinary challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. UN Women in Asia and the Pacific in consultation with women's rights activists are continuously taking stock of the situation, amplifying voices of the communities, and ensuring support services for livelihoods, reproductive health and are striving to ensure that the post-COVID world is built on principles of human rights, gender equality and decision-making role of women in all areas of governance. They have highlighted concerns of women migrant and informal workers. Women activists have demanded that special attention should be paid to the gender impact of digitalization and access to information and communication technology considering the shift to online education and remote work, which is problematic in many parts of the region, where the digital gender gap is wide. Women's rights movement also recommends more sharing of emerging and good practices from the region to address the challenges.

Challenges Ahead

The list of challenges faced by women in contemporary Indian society is indeed long. In a nation which promises to carry forward diversity in faith, languages, and ways of living, we see greater aggression in defining ‘correct’ behaviour, which acquires special characteristics with reference to women and the attempt is to present a homogenized notion of the nation, nationhood as well as of Indian womanhood. While political formations actively propagate such strident assertions with moral overtones, the media and the market play their part in defining these. Such homogenized ‘mainstream’ articulations seek to marginalize and delegitimize pluralistic discourses, thereby also exacerbating exclusions and denials in both the cultural and the political domain. The exclusion and marginalization of women appears to be a common pattern cutting across religions, communities, and regions, posing challenges at both the individual and societal level.

These concerns cannot be perceived in isolation from the State, its policies, and the changing terms of interface between the State and its citizens. The withdrawal of the State from the public sphere in favour of the private sphere in recent decades also marks a departure from fundamental concerns of wellbeing. The reduction in investment in social and public goods in the name of reducing fiscal deficits has seriously affected educational institutions, as well as citizens’ ability to garner their rights. The retreat from universal commitments, accompanied by withdrawal of subsidies and support has resulted in a rising burden on the poor, especially women. There has been a change in the character of the judiciary even as gender biases prevail. The increasing use of military and para-military forces against citizens and people’s movements has posed intense conflict in the pursuit of democratic goals.

In recent years, as the discussion on violence against women has acquired greater visibility, there is a realization that this violence is enacted and embedded in the wider context of growing inequalities, social hierarchies, and gender-based prejudices. Further, there is evidence today to show that in the two decades since the initiation of the ‘new’ economic policy and imposition of a monolithic market-driven model of development, the challenge of ensuring the well-being and quality of life of the masses has become greater. This is visible in various indices of development. Gender gaps have widened and social inequalities including those premised on historically determined exclusions, have deepened in numerous ways. These inequalities are manifested in inter- and intraregional divisions, caste and community-based divides, and inequality reflected in ownership and access to resources, especially land, housing, food, and water. This is more specifically true for gender-based hierarchies, e.g., about labour; wage disparities; rural-peri-urban-urban livelihood and employment patterns and the feminization of poverty. There is a persistence of caste, tribe, and community-based disparities, of discriminatory attitudes towards issues of disability and, towards expressions of non-normative sexual orientations. Overall, the structural barriers to attaining a human and ‘humane’ life appear to have become more rigid.

Since 2012 especially there has been nationwide protests and intense discussion on the context, forms, and scale of gender-based violence, including, more specifically, sexual violence. These debates, perhaps the most intense and widespread in recent history encompassed vastly different sections of society, movements and organizations and sought to address the multiple sites of violence extending across regions, social classes, and

communities. All these point to the fact that women are directly in the line of fire in the current scenario.

The women's movement, over the last several decades, has engaged in debates on these issues from its myriad locations. While studying the impact of globalization, it has critically engaged with processes of policy formation to argue that these need to be democratized along with the content of policies. There are at present sustained and resurgent efforts to resist and challenge hegemonies in the spheres of the state, natural resources, labour, body, markets, culture and ideology, conflict, language, sites of law, boundaries of relationships and the interfaces of these arenas. While numerous struggles envision a polity and society with a meaningful citizenship, feminists are having a fresh look at experiences from the field, rethinking several of the old questions and seeking new alliances in the face of emerging challenges.

Women are major participants in the new struggles of the day; they are challenging new forms of patriarchies and seeking to forge broader alliances and building alternatives. It is not just against the state women face conflict and confrontation even within family, caste, religious and ethnic groups, within professional institutions, in regional struggles, and other spaces. They experience conflict as part of collectives from forces outside, but also within them. They are targets of sexual violence within the family, in caste and communal conflicts and in situations of state repression. Social change and radical political movements sometimes provide the locus for challenging traditional gender roles and norms; simultaneously, however, newer forms of marginalisation are being engendered. The state is increasingly complicit with these processes of marginalisation present today more in its repressive, extractive, and appropriative roles than the ameliorative one of providing constitutional guarantees. It is based on such an understanding of the state that the women's movements approach law recognising its repressive role, but going beyond this, as a site of possible reform as well. For the marginalized, the law opens new vistas through the language of rights, compensatory jurisprudence, legal certification, while also exhorting vigilance to issues such as patronage of vested interests, dominance of customary justice, and other reactionary processes (Dietrich, 1992). The state, market, and family mediate the arrangements of women's labour within the larger domain of work. Recent restructuring of markets and developments in technology have contributed towards the marginalisation of labour, with disproportionate impact on women (Patel, 2009).

One result has been the increasing presence of women in streams of migration. Another has been the interlocking of markets in land, water, labour, marriage, education, health, which serve to perpetuate, even deepen, inequalities of gender. On the obverse, women workers have contributed greatly to innovations in strategies of collectivisation and negotiation, providing new meanings to ideologies of contract and legitimacy of consent.

Feminist discourses have just begun to understand the significance of the body as a cultural construct and as a site of disciplining. A complex interplay of power configures the body; those that are hungry, impaired, not healthy, considered fat, or altered by technology are an ever-present challenge to the dominant tropes of naturalisation. The body is also central to questions of gender. Women's relationships to their bodies are extended as they continually form, negotiate, re-build, and survive relationships they have with people, locations, and ideologies.

The most potent challenge is posed by women at the margins of the hetero-normative family, conventional conjugality, and patrilineal inheritance; new relationships are forged through migration for livelihood and in confronting notions of stigma. Cultural and territorial hegemony reflected in the idea of the nation-state has been interrogated and articulated in nationality movements, specifically in the North East and Jammu & Kashmir. The misrepresentation and marginalization of women and their interests coincides with this hegemonic representation of 'Indian culture'.

Understanding the significance of language as a tool of dominance has been central to the feminist project originating from international as well as national spaces (Rege, 2006). The diverse voices emerging from the margins those of the queer, sign-language enabled, Dalit, Adivasi, Muslim, are unable to enter conversation with the mainstream or with each other due to the absence of translation. There are, however, also sites of resistance to sustain and revive cultures at the margin as well as inspire new egalitarian cultures. The new social movements such as the Dalit movement asserts its cultural rights through resistance, offering a counter discourse to dominant narratives of power and contributing greatly to an understanding of culture as a site of difference, multiplicity, contest, and negotiation (Stephen, 2009). Women's movements too have contributed to such processes through an articulation of resistance in the form of paintings, songs, films, documentaries, poetry, autobiographies and so on. We have today a conjuncture of opposites persistent exclusion of large sections of people, increasing privilege of a few and the very real possibility of new connections and conversations

We have women leaders of grassroots people's movements against corporate land grab and mining lobbies and from forest dweller communities respectively such as Dayamani Barla from Jharkhand and Keli and Sarmi Bai from Rajasthan, taking an active role in claiming the commons at the political level and leading movements. Grassroots women for example in the context of land are saying that it is not just deeds to land and resources that are at stake; it is about a way of life that is self-reliant and gives autonomy and dignity to everyone. For tribal movements, women came together to demand that they not only wanted to have joint title, but that access had to be recognized for all women, even unmarried daughters, because they too have the right to live with dignity. It is not just the economics of being able to provide and sustain opportunities for material gain; it is about creating livelihoods in a shared economy.

There are also fiery independent militant activist women like Medha Patkar with the politics of her struggle against ecologically unsustainable and unjust capitalist development; Irom Sharmila, force-fed under arrest for over 11 years by the Indian state, as she continues her fast for the repeal of the Armed Forces (special Powers) Act, the law that enables her state of Manipur and the North-East of India in general to be treated as occupied territory. Nalini Nayak, who works with the fisher people's movements on issues of livelihood and ecological sustainability terms (Kurian, Nayak, Vivekanand, 2005).

Conclusion

Last 50 years of feminist activism in India has managed to challenge the 5000 years of patriarchal order by striking at root of exploitation and oppression, subjugation, and degradation of women by deconstructing covert and overt violence against women in

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personal and public lives, to question pillars of male domination within family, kinship networks, organized religion, media, and state. Series of legal reforms with respect to family laws dealing with marriage, divorce, custody of child/children, maintenance, inheritance; domestic violence; sexual violence, workplace harassment, maternity benefits and gender budgeting have become the part of an official agenda due to feminist movement. For this, pioneers of women's rights movement and women's studies scholars worked in unison. Gender politics in India has changed drastically due to shift from mass mobilisation and grassroots level activism to proactive participation of women in decision making bodies of government and non-government structures at all levels, from local self-government to board rooms of corporate governance.

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Gendered challenges and empowerment of women doctors

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Abstract

This paper examines women's education in medicine and how the field of medicine empowered them in society. It analyzes how women faced many hurdles while entering in the professional courses. It evaluates patriarchal and gender biased society's opposition to the newly learned women who entered professional careers. It focuses mostly on the nineteenth century and how lady doctors especially Dr. Kadambini Ganguley and others women doctors faced multiple opposition and underwent dilemmas at that time. Sources were silent on their hurdles and achievements.

Multitalented Indian Women

The 19th century was a remarkable century where questions were raised on women's ability to enter the education field as well as any professional courses. Earlier, women were banned from taking education in the formal institutions right from primary and secondary education. Women completed their primary education informally at home without proper direction and systematic syllabus, through vernacular languages, but it was not sufficient to enter any professional education.

In the nineteenth century, Maharashtra and Bengal had a renaissance. Both regions were forward and recognized the social causes of women. Social reformers and new learned groups of western science felt that women in India should get formal education in institutions and they should learn and earn for themselves.

Indian women were quite skilful in many talent-oriented activities. But these were not popularised or recognized by the society. Many talented women were recognized in various fields among the smaller social groups. Women had marked themselves as singers, artists, poets and authors. Some were in politics and engaged in revolutionary and nationalist activities. They could read, write and do their domestic accounts. There were women Sanskrit scholars who took initiatives to give education to women but in an informal way in their homes.

There was no formal education available for women outside of the house. Pearychand Mitra, the great literary figure of the nineteenth century in Bengal wrote in the preface to his *Adhyatmika* "I was born in the year 1814 (12th July)... While a pupil of the pathsala, at home I found my grandmother, mother, and aunts reading Bengali books. They could write in Bengali and keep accounts. There were no female schools then."¹

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Social Reformers:

Though such a situation was very rare, and male reformers encouraged women to start education through domestic as well as in public spheres, but it was not an easy job to train women for formal education. Learning of women was mingled with many superstitious beliefs. Because they mostly lived at home, they could not develop modernity through education. Almost all social reformers of Maharashtra and Bengal encouraged women in their families and homes to take education at least at home. Anant Shastri Dongre took up the challenge and educated his wife and his daughter Pandita Ramabai. Mahatma Phule trained his wife and Savitribai Phule became the first women teacher. Justice Ranade educated his wife Ramabai Ranade. Mr. Gopal Joshi married Anandibai Joshi on the condition that he would educate his wife. Hindu Raja Radhakanta Deb and Raja Baidyanath Roy, promoted girls' education in Bengal. Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar promoted this movement from the private sphere to public areas.

These efforts were at the personal level. Missionaries also took efforts and started formal schools for girls in Maharashtra and in Bengal. But their objects had changed from learning to the conversion so the people stopped sending the women of their families to the formal missionary schools. The Ladies' Societies and Associations started under the auspices of the various foreign Missionary bodies. The Serampur Mission was working in Bengal, Benaras, Allahabad and Aracan etc. A number of schools were started by Muslims and located in the Muslim areas. But due to lack of funds, two of them had to be closed during the second year in Jaunbazar area in Bengal.

The Charter Acts of 1815 and the Dispatch of John Stuart Mill showed that the responsibility of education was on the government. In 1815, the Society for Promoting Education of the Poor within the Government of Bombay was established, later its name was changed to Bombay Native Education Society. But professional education was far away from all women. Some societies ran schools for poor classes and lower castes. Women were banned from education and this closed their entry to the male oriented medical profession. There were no trained women doctors to treat women in any emergencies.

Barriers for Professional education and Career:

The officials feared that women were not capable in scientific fields. Charles Darwin's theory was implemented on gender roles and their capabilities based on brain theory. Women were said to lack intelligence and were not science oriented. They were to be restricted to domestic duties.

By and large, the observation was that the patriarchal society accepted only two types of professions for Indian women. One was the teaching profession. This attitude and general understanding continue till today. Society felt that the teaching profession is a "safe" profession for women. The psychology of the society behind this theory was that women had good temperament and patience to handle school students. Secondly, women had the inbuilt skill to look after children. So in this scenario, the society had fixed women's profession not based on their skills but based on their being women! This was reflected in the Census reports. According to the Census of India 1971, seven out of every ten women teachers taught at the primary level and one in ten at the specialized, university or adult education level.

Another observation was that society has decided on one other profession for women based on their being women and their reproductive service to a family. Those who were destitute, ugly and or 'non-person' -- widows² and widows could serve others by taking care of them in their illness. This was a general attitude. These women did not work as doctors, but as nurses especially for women during their child birth as midwives, also called as *dais*.

Gender biased patriarchal society had banned normal, married women from entering medicine, especially high caste women. Women's entry in medicine was acceptable only in the midwifery profession. Educational institutions had not permitted women to take general and basic education in the schools, so in such a situation it was a distant possibility to take medical education. How did women overcome this challenge? Was their achievement accepted by the family and society?

Medical Field:

Throughout the world, women faced a struggle to obtain admission in the male dominated field of medicine. The field of medicine was forbidden to women. With this background, when we can see the first five women doctors, we find that their lives were very hard. Coming to the Indian scenario, the European missionary women pioneers faced problems in taking admission in medical courses in Bengal and Madras presidencies. Mrs. Mary Scharlieb was the first medical student in India. Her life throws interesting sidelights on the struggles for medical education for women in Madras Presidency.³ A strong movement was started to open the gates of medical education to women at Calcutta Medical College.

Dr. Anandibai Joshi was well-known as the first Indian and Brahmin woman who completed her medical education in Philadelphia College in 1886. In the same year, Dr. Kadimbini Ganguly completed her medical course at Calcutta Medical College, Calcutta. Dr Anne Jagannathan was another Indian woman who graduated in medicine in India. But Dr. Anandibai Joshi did not have sufficient financial back up for her foreign study. It affected her health in Philadelphia. Dr. Anandibai Joshi did not survive tuberculosis and could not join her position in Kolhapur. Dr. Anne Jagannathan completed her graduation from Madras Medical College and was appointed in the Cama and Alless Hospital for Women and Children in Bombay. Dr. Jagannathan also died during her job due to tuberculosis. So the death rate of women doctors was also higher. Mostly lady doctors died due to tuberculosis or other epidemics.

The First Graduates: Dr. Kadimbini Ganguly and Chandramukhi Bose

In early nineteenth century conditions were not favorable for girls in India to complete medical education. These two students were the victims of these policies. One is Kadambini Ganguly⁴ and the other Chandramukhi Bose, both were the first women graduates in the University of Calcutta and in the entire British India.⁵ But both gave a strong fight to appear entrance exams in Bethune College, Calcutta. But the management refused.

Dr. Kadambini was born in Bihar on 18 July 1862. Kadambini belong to a higher caste Bengali community. Dr. Ganguly had a great family background of reformers and Brahma Samaj followers, who were supporters of women's education. Her father, Braja Kishore Basu was a renowned in the Brahma Samaj and who propagated to the cause of women's

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education in the eighteenth and nineteenth century in Bengal. She belonged to an upper caste Bengali community that opposed women's education. She did not get admission in Bethune College at Calcutta because she belongs to non-Hindu community. So she first studied Arts at Reverend Alexander Duff's Free Church Institution in Calcutta in 1876.

After Bethune College refusal, both tried in the University of Calcutta, where also refused permission to Chandramukhi Bose and Kadambini Ganguly to appear for the entrance examination because both were women and therefore not permitted to appear for the entrance examination. The University gave different reasons for both. They gave the reason to Kadambini that she was a non-Hindu candidate. Chandramukhi Bose was a Christian Bengali student, still she was not given permission. The main reason why the management of the University denied them was that they were women. Because these rules were based on those of the Oxford and Cambridge University, Calcutta University followed the same rules and regulations that they did not give permission to female students for appearing for the entrance exam.

Before Kadambini Ganguly, Chandramukhi Bose had already cleared her Entrance Examination in 1876 in Calcutta University. Dwarkanath Ganguly was her mentor and husband. He fought for admission for Kadambini. In 1877, they got permission. Both had passed First Arts in 1880. Kadambini and Chandramukhi were the first two women who graduated in medicine in British India, in 1882. The Calcutta Medical College refused to give the degree to Chandramukhi Bose ⁶ and held back of her result because no one female students passed any entrance examination. Again Dwarkanath Ganguly fought for getting admission ⁷ for Kadambini in the Calcutta Medical College. After her graduation, she was the only (and first) woman to pass MA from the University of Calcutta, and the British empire in 1884. Because the University of Calcutta had refused to declare the name of Chandramukhi Bose.

The Times of India ⁸ has given coverage to the Convocation programme "A Convocation for the conferring of Degrees". Mr. H. J. Reynolds, the Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University presided over the convocation function. Among the recipients of the B.A. degrees were two young ladies of the Bethune Female School, Miss Chandramukhi Basu and Miss Kadambini Basu. The Director of Public Instruction remarked that Ganguly's graduation was 'the most notable event in the history of female education in Bengal.' ⁹

Medical Education

Kadambini married in 1883 and later she took admission in Calcutta Medical College in 1884. She got a scholarship of Rs. 20/- in 1885. Kadambini suffered due to the bitter attitude of the British officers, the Brahma Samaj and as well as from the Hindu community because she fought and took her education as well as she married with a widower Dwarkanath Ganguly. In spite of these negative attitudes and non co-operation from society, she continued her studies but in 1888, she failed in one paper and could not get the degree in MB examination.

B. K. Sen has published an article in 2011, in which he has revealed a lot of truth on her struggle for getting her medical degree. He has mentioned that a Brahma Samaj professor who was against women's education failed Kadambini in Materia Medica and Comparative Anatomy, so she would not get a degree in medicine and ultimately she would not practice. ¹⁰

However, the Principal of the College awarded her the diploma called Graduate of Medical College of Bengal (GMCB) in 1888. That was how she could start her medical practice.

Dr. Anandibai Joshi secured her degree at Philadelphia Women's Medical College in 1886; in the same year another Indian woman who graduated in medicine was Dr. Kadambini Ganguly in Calcutta Medical College, India in 1886.

Professional Journey:

Dr. Ganguly practised after getting her degree in medicine. Unfortunately Dr. Anandibai Joshi did not get a chance to practice due to her sudden death. She was appointed at the Kolhapur hospital. Dr. Kadambini started her study after her marriage and did very hard work. This news reached Florence Nightingale and she admired Dr. Ganguly's hard work, her study, her marriage and that she had started her education and practice within a short period after having a baby. Nightingale wanted to recommend Dr. Ganguly to Lady Dufferin for any post in female ward of Lady Dufferin Fund Hospital in Calcutta.¹¹

Dr. Ganguly was appointed at the Lady Dufferin Women's Hospital, Calcutta on a decent salary of Rs. 300 in 1888. She continued her practice in the hospital from 1888 to 1893. When Dr. Ganguly appointed in the hospital that time she was a mother of eight children.

But she felt that European and British lady doctors humiliated her for not having her highest medical degree as MB; so she went to Scotland for further medical courses. The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons was highly renowned for professional medical courses and awarded a licentiate to students who has cleared their examination. This organization was famous throughout the world and the prejudice against women students decreased in the 1890s. Dr. Ganguly completed three diplomas, for LRCP in University of Edinburgh, LRCS in Glasgow, GFPS in Dublin in July 1893. According to Srabani Sen, Kadambini completed three courses within three months. These were tough courses and it was considered impossible to complete Triple Diplomas in less than three months. Among the fourteen successful candidates of the year, she was the only female candidate who completed triple diplomas within a very short period successfully. Mr. Sen pointed out that she was the first Indian lady doctor who achieved such a rare distinction.¹²

Personal Life

Dr. Ganguly played a dual role. She was the mother of eight children, and she was practising, working as a surgeon and simultaneously she was engaged in political and social services. She gave enough time to her household duties. Her husband was a strong pillar of support in all her activities. In fact, he was a great mentor and encouraged her and supported her in all her academic pursuits and legal fights. When she went to Scotland for further studies, her husband took care of their children in India. She had a great skill in needlework.

An American historian, David Kopft has mentioned their relationship with each other. He remarked that "It was most unusual, being founded on mutual love, sensitivity and intelligence."¹³ Dr. Ganguly was more free and emancipated than the women of the then Bengali society. Florence Nightingale was also expressed her surprise about how Dr. Ganguly took care of her children and continued her studies after her marriage. She was shocked when she heard that Kadambini had not taken any maternity leaves and she joined

within a short period after her delivery. ¹⁴ Dr. Ganguly was active and working till her last breath. She died on October 3, 1923, after having conducted an operation the same day.

Social Opposition:

Due to many hurdles and the opposition from Hindu and Brahmo community, she would not get success in her private practice and failed to become a renowned private practitioner. Reluctant Indian women never entered any hospitals and dispensaries. They refused to take treatment from European male and female doctors. But it was added by the Indian patriarchal society and subjectivity minds of people that women doctors are not good. Secondly, society had not accepted that a lady doctor can do surgeries successfully, and never got patients treated by lady doctors. Families denied their intellectual and strength power. ¹⁵ Rather they humiliated the women doctors. Such incidents were experienced by many lady doctors in urban as well as in rural areas. Dr. Rakhamabai was not successful till she treated a sick goat successfully in Surat. Dr. Ashtaputre had similar experiences in Dhule, Maharashtra.

The same treatment was received by Dr. Ganguly. She began to practise obstetrics and gynaecology at Lady Dufferin Hospital in Calcutta. The society opposed Dr. Kadambini because she was educated when society had not permitted women for professional education, she took courses from foreign countries and moreover she married a widower. Sen has mentioned one incident that once she was called for home delivery by a rich family. After the delivery, both mother and child were well. Dr. Kadambini and her assistant were given food in the veranda and later told to clean that area. This incident showed that the society treated child birth is a polluted stage. But they treated her like a dai rather than a lady doctor. ¹⁶

Being a Gynaecologist and Obstetrician, she had to visit the patient's house at any odd time as well as during night time, and hence many criticised her work.

“... In 1891, *Bangabasi*, a local and orthodox magazine targeted her as a despised symbol of Brahmo womanhood and indirectly called her a ‘whore.’ Dr Nilratan Sarkar, Shibnath Shastri and Dwarakanath Ganguley took the matter seriously and went to the court not only to defend Kadambini but also to support the liberation of women from the strangulating forces of dreadful customs and evil prejudices of the then society. The court delivered judgement in favour of Kadambini, and Mahesh Chandra Pal, the editor of the journal *Bangabasi*, was smacked a fine of Rs. 100 and six months imprisonment. ¹⁷ It showed mixed responses by legal activities and in society.

Appreciation:

Dr. Kadambini took charge of the medical treatment of the Queen Mother of Nepal Dev Shumsher Jang Bahadur Rana who was suffering for a long time during 1895-96. Dr. Ganguly treated the Queen Mother very well and she recovered from her long illness. ¹⁸ After this achievement, Kadambini used to be called by Royal families for treatment.

Dr. Ganguly was talented. Another incident showed her intellectual ability and correct diagnosis. She was a brave doctor who took brave decisions for her patients. A male doctor diagnosed a tumor in a girl's abdomen, but Dr Kadambini diagnosed and confirmed a case of the pregnancy and performed a surgery and delivered the baby, and the mother and infant were both safe. ¹⁹

Contribution in National and Social Activities:

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Along with her husband Dwarkanath Ganguly, who always supported her in all her activities, Kadambini and five other ladies were allowed to attend the Indian National Congress's Bombay session. In the session Kadambini delivered the vote of thanks. She was hailed by Annie Besant for being a symbol signifying the uplift of India's womanhood. In the Indian National Congress's Calcutta session 1890, she delivered a lecture in English. After the partition of Bengal, she organized a Women's Conference in Calcutta in 1906. In 1908, she organized a meeting to support Satyagraha workers in Transvaal, South Africa. She formed an association to collect money with the help of fundraisers to assist the workers. During the first World War, she presided over the meeting of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj in Calcutta to honour Mohandas Gandhi during his Calcutta visit in 1914.²⁰ Till a year before her death, she, accompanied by Bengali poet, Kamini Roy, worked for a government committee to enquire about the conditions of women miners in the Bihar and Orissa areas. After serving her nation through medicine and her social activities, she was active till her death. Ganguly passed away on October 3rd 1923.

Conclusion:

The great women doctors of the nineteenth century, had faced difficulties and struggled very hard for gaining education and employment. Being women, they played all roles in their personal and professional life. They faced fierce opposition from orthodox Indian society. Their lives were influenced by Indian society. They shattered the gender barriers. The hollow criteria of the patriarchal system were shaken. It showed that both these great ladies empowered themselves in all spheres of life.

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Normative texts and reconstructing gender history: theory and practice

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ABSTRACT

The present paper will explore the similarities and differences between normative texts such as dharmashastras and the actual position of women in the pre modern period. The early historians who worked on Indian history took normative texts at their face value. It was believed that India had a rigid caste system, which affected its progress. The social life was considered as being determined by the varna system, which allotted particular functions to people belonging to different varnas. However, recently scholars have realized the lacuna in this argument as it is found that normative texts prescribed and they did not describe the real situation. This is also found in the case of Kautilya's Arthashastra and Manusmriti. As they did not describe the contemporary situation they did not represent the real picture. Similarly, one cannot take the normative texts concerning man-woman relationship at its face value. One needs to note a gap between theory and practice in the sense that the social reality was different from the textual references. For example, the early medieval texts depict a situation where women were compelled to be submissive. They did not have property rights and lacked education, which affected their position in society. There is some element of truth in this argument as women were not allowed to obtain education in the agraharas. At the same time, it is important to test the prescriptions of normative texts in the context of regions such as south western India. The present paper is an attempt in this direction. It is shown that women in this region enjoyed a better social status compared to women in other regions of India. Women in this region acted as administrators. The society in this region did not follow the rules of dharmashastras, mainly due to the fact that it stayed away from the centre of the Sanskrit heartland. Prevalence of matriarchy and matrilineal inheritance provided social security for women in this region. It produced women like Ashu of Geniza documents and the Queen of Ullala of the Portuguese sources. The inscriptions inform that property was enjoyed not only by royal women but also ordinary women who figure prominently as temple donors.

Different attempts have been made in the past to reconstruct the gender history representing the women in the pre modern India. The colonial and nationalist historiography have taken a particular stand presenting a negative and equally positive picture of women. For this construction, they depended mostly the normative texts such as the dharmashastras that are prescriptive rather than descriptive texts. Mere reference to the negative injunctions in the normative texts does not mean that the women had an inferior position in the society. The paper contends the need for a realistic picture of women in ancient India. Such a study should not ideally depend only on the Brahmanical literature, but it also should use Buddhist and Jaina sources as historians tend to ignore the later sources. On the other hand, the early colonial and nationalist historians mostly depended on the Brahmanical sources.

We begin with the description of women in the Manu dharmashastra considered as a text representing the position of women in ancient India. It mentions that 'Men must make their

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women dependent day and night, and keep their control those who are attached to the sensory objects'.⁴ However, the text also guides men regarding the ways of controlling women. The text is also aware that due to some circumstances, men are not able to control women. He refers to such women when he says, 'Drinking, associating with bad people, being separated from their husbands, wandering about, sleeping, and living in other people's houses are the six things that corrupt women [do]'.⁵ It shows that Manu was aware that his own law was not followed by some men and women, thus implying that Manu dharmashastra represents different pictures of women. In some cases, men were able to 'control' women while in some other cases they failed to do so. At the same time, the western scholars such as Neitze note a few positive remarks made by Manu about women as he states, 'I know of no book in which so many tender and kind remarks are addressed to woman as the Law-book of Manu; these old greybeards and saints have a way of being polite to women which has perhaps never been surpassed'.⁶ Nevertheless, Neitze has failed to note the negative remarks made by Manu about women. It is a moot point whether the injunctions of Manu were really implemented.

It is important to know how women are depicted in the standard texts. For example, A.L. Basham's 'The Wonder that was India', depicts different pictures of women. He cites a few cases where women enjoyed a free life, as they acted as dancers, musicians, poets, ascetics, and even prostitutes. At the same time, he quotes from *Arthashastra*, a normative text, showing that women in harem lacked the freedom as they were closely guarded by the officials appointed for this purpose.⁷ The text lays down various punishments for the women who violated the rule of respective the words of their husband. At the same time, Basham refers to the Buddhist and Jaina texts, which refer to women acting as business persons or exhibiting their knowledge of vedas and shastras.⁸ At the same time, Basham was a scholar who did not subscribe to colonial and nationalist ideologies. However, today a few scholars have questioned the use of the texts such as *Arthashastra* for the constructing history as those texts are normative and lack validation as a historical source. Considering the fact that *Arthashastra* attempted to create an ideal society of the Mauryan or the post Mauryan times, it would be difficult to accept it as the only source to reconstruct the history of women.

Uma Chakravarti argues that the attempt equate with the traditional law concerning women with the references to women in the Brahmanical scriptures was a part of colonial discourse subscribed mainly by the colonial and Indian traditional elites. The colonial government insisted on the citation from the Brahmanical scriptures to decide the laws concerning the life of women in the modern period.⁹ They did not realize that the law mentioned in the ancient texts represented a view of only a section of the population while the reality was different. It is also noted that Raja Rammohan Roy was compelled to read Brahmanical scriptures to justify his demand for banning sati in the 19th century. Consequently, women became an

⁴ Wendy Doniger and Brian K. Smith (eds). *The Laws of Manu*, New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1991, p. 197.

⁵ Ibid, p. 198.

⁶ Cited In Ibid, p. xxi.

⁷ A.L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, Calcutta: Rupa & Co., 1967, p. 179.

⁸ A.L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, p. 178.

⁹ Uma Chakravarti, 'What happened to the Veda Dasi? *Orientalism, nationalist and script for the past*', in Kunkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (eds), *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1993, p. 90.

object of conflict and discussion in the colonial and nationalist discourse.¹⁰ With reference to the debate concerning sati, it is also suggested that, ‘officials advanced their positions from within a common discourse on India whose chief features were the centrality of brahmanic scriptures, unreflective religious obedience to these texts ...’¹¹ It implies that the colonial authority respected the provisions of legal texts when attempts were made to regulate the sati system in contemporary India. However, they did not realize that sati system was practised by a few sections in the society and not the whole population. The Brahmanical law, for example, was not practised to a great extent by the non-Brahmanical population particularly those considered as the sudras, who comprised the majority population of India. Brahmanas, on the other hand, comprised only a minority of the population. It is in this context that one should analyse the role of women in ancient India.

A. S. Altekar studied the position of women in ancient India based on the Brahmanical texts. He divided ancient India into different periods such as age of Rgveda, age of Later Samhitas, Brahmanas and Upanishads, age of Sutas, epics and early smritis, and age of later smritis. Through this periodisation, he discussed the history of India from 2500 BC to 1800 CE, at the same time ignoring non-Brahmanical sources. It can be considered as serious problem with this work. He argued that the position of women progressively declined from the early vedic to the early medieval period. However, according to him the only saving grace was the proprietary rights sanctioned to women. He considered this as the result of suspending sati and *niyoga*. The latter institution refers to a practice of allowing a widow to obtain a son from her brother-in-law.¹²

Uma Chakravarti has rightly termed the above argument as ‘Altekarian paradigm’ and suggested the need to avoid such an approach towards women in ancient India. This approach depended on the Brahmanical literature, a product of the colonial and nationalist approach towards the sources. She argued that ‘...the study of identity of women is based almost entirely on Sanskritic models and the myths conditioning women’.¹³ It is suggested that the construction of a positive image of women in the ancient period and their negative image in the medieval and modern periods was the result of the historians subscribing to nationalist ideology, which needed to counter the colonial assertion that women were not treated well in the ancient period. In this connection, Chakravarti suggests the need to understand the real position of women in the pre modern period. It would be difficult to construct a positive or a negative image of women in any period of history as during different phases, there were different categories of women who benefited or suffered from the contemporary religious and social institutions. Thus, one needs to question the argument that there has been a progressive decline of the position of women from the ancient to the medieval periods.

It has been a fashion among the historians to discuss the role of queens in administration in ancient India. For example, B.A. Saletore, in the context of south western India, has shown the queens such as the queen of Bhatkal, queen of Karnad, and queen of Ullal called

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 91.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 92.

¹² A.S. Altekar, ‘The position of women in Hindu civilization: Retrospect and prospect’, in Kumkum Roy (ed), *Women in Early Indian Societies*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2011, p. 50.

¹³ Uma Chakravarti, ‘Beyond the Altekarian paradigm: Towards a new understanding of gender relations in early Indian history’, in Kumkum Roy (ed), *Women in Early Indian Societies*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2011, p. 75.

Abbakka.¹⁴ One may argue that Saletore was working within the perspective of nationalist ideology. He wanted to prove that in pre modern India women obtained an important position. At the same time, he did not discuss the position of women who suffered from the institutions such as devadasi, prostitution and exploitation by the feudal lords of the locality.¹⁵ The queens enjoyed political, economic, and social support, as they possessed royal authority and power. It was the duty of the lower officials to implement the decisions of the queens even though one may note that in some cases lower officials revolted against queens. However, one needs to note regional peculiarities, as some regions allowed rule by females more than other localities. This is particularly found in coastal Karnataka, which follows matrilineal inheritance. Property among the non-Brahmanas, in this region moves from the hands of mother to the daughter. It is the son-in-law who is more important than the son. On account of this daughter obtains an important position rather than the son. This system has made women in this region more resilient when compared to women in other regions. Consequently, the injunction found in Manusmriti is not exactly followed here. Nor do we find the Altekarian paradigm in this region. Consequently, it is not surprising that women enjoyed property rights in this region. There is a difference between the property rights enjoyed by women in other regions of India and women of coastal Karnataka, particularly those belonging to non-Brahmana castes. Women, according to dharmashastras, enjoyed property rights only when they lost their husbands while women in coastal Karnataka enjoyed property rights even when their husbands were alive. Women are also mentioned as donating land to the Brahmanas and temples in the inscriptions. Interestingly, large number of women with their first name with their surnames are mentioned.¹⁶ An inscription of 10th century CE states that a woman wanted to give her property to a woman rather than a male.¹⁷ Consequently, the argument that there was a progressive decline of women from ancient to medieval India should be questioned.

The reference to the stories of fallen Brahmanas also indicates that the law mentioned in Manu dharmashastra was not exactly followed. For example, a brahmanical text *Sahyadri Khanda* mentions the stories of Brahmanas who married non-Brahmanas and lost their castes.¹⁸ Even though *Sahyadri Khanda* is a brahmanical text, it does not belong to the normative text category. Similarly, some of the puranas also mention a few stories wherein women are shown as enjoying freedom. At the same time, such stories are narrated to prevent people from indulging in such behavior.

The Geniza documents, belonging to 12th century CE, narrate the story of a Tuluva girl named Ashu. Abraham Ben Yiju, the Jewish trader, who stayed in Mangalore for 17 years, bought her from her owner and married her.¹⁹ Marriage between Jews, Arabs and the locals

¹⁴ B. A. Saletore, "The Queens of Kanara," *The New Review* 5 (17) (1943): 343-357; retrieved from <http://www.southasiarchive.com/Content/sarf.120030/205734/004>

¹⁵ Regarding the devadasi system see B.V. Sudhamani, 'The institution of devadasis - a study in princely state of Mysore (1610-1910)', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, vol. 60, 1999, pp. 667-674.

¹⁶ R. Shama Sastry and N. Lakshminarayan Rao (eds), *South Indian Inscriptions, vol. IX, Part II*, Madras: Government Press, 1941, no. 424. To understand the difference between Dharmashastra provision and the social institutions prevailed in coastal Karnataka see Malini Adiga, 'Dharmashastras, Dravidian kinship system and female inheritance in Karnataka in the early medieval period (400 A.D to 1300 A.D.)', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, vol. 64, 2003, pp. 173-184.

¹⁷ K.V. Ramesh and M.J. Sharma (eds), *Tulunadina Shasanagalu* (vol. 1), Mysore: Geeta Book House, 1978, p. 51.

¹⁸ Levitt, S.H., *The Patityagramaniraya*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2017.

¹⁹ Elizabeth Lombound, *Abraham's Luggage: A Social Life of Things in the Medieval Indian Ocean World*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018, p. 258.

has been a common practice. There is no reference to a social opposition to this marriage. It is also suggested that such a marriage was essential to enhance the business prospects of foreign traders. The *Bobbarya Pad-dana*, belonging to the Tulu folklore, refers to the story of a marriage between a Settiti (a woman of trading caste) and the an Arab.²⁰ *Koti-Chennayya Pad-dana* shows that there was a marriage between a Brahmana girl with a Billava, a person belonging to a 'low caste' in the caste hierarchy of costal Karnataka.²¹ It shows that by studying the folklore, it is possible to obtain a realistic picture of women.

Scholars have used the Brahmanical literature to discuss the position of women in the pre modern period. By using colonial and nationalist ideology, it has been suggested that there was a progressive decline in the position of women during this period. This paper contends that apart from Brahmanical and normative texts, it is also important to analyze other sources such as inscriptions, Jaina and Buddhist sources, and folklore to obtain a realistic understanding of the position of women in the contemporary period.

²⁰ Amrita Someshvara, ed., *Tulu Pāḍḍana Samputa* (in Tulu and Kannada), Hampi: Kannada University, 1997, p. 441.

²¹ Rasika Puttige, *Kotichennayya*, Bangalore: IBH Prakashana, 1971.

Role of women in Sikh history

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Abstract

It is generally said that the state of development of a society can be judged from the status a woman which she occupies in it. Everywhere gender issues and women empowerment became the most debatable aspects. The rights of women were deprived in the male dominated system which compelled them to raise a movement against patriarchal system. With result feminist movements spread throughout the world. This paper seeks to enlarge the role of Sikh Women in the socio-political milieu of Punjab's history, with reference to, role played by Sikh ideology, scripture Guru Granth Sahib and Sikh Gurus in placing women equally in the contemporary Hindu-Muslim socio-cultural ambiance. It also delves into the execution of their proficiency in the social-cultural as well as their competency in making freedom movement a mass movement as envisaged by Mahatma Gandhi. This attempt leaves us with new thoughts on the position and status of Sikh women and her conducive role in present scenario. Is she liberated or still on the journey of liberation from last so many centuries?

I.

Since ancient times, the role and the status of women in the Indian society has been somewhat ambivalent. There has not been a uniform glorious past for them. There has always been heterogeneity in the status of women in our society. Various women seers *Apala*, *Ghosha* and *Vishvara* were given equal spiritual stature as their hymns were recorded in the Rigveda along with those of different male saints. However, various events of consideration of women as a property have also been mentioned in various literary sources. *Manu*, the first codifier of the Law wrote:

*“from cradle to grave, a women is dependent on man in childhood on her father,
in youth on her husband and in old age on her son.”*

“पिता रक्षति कौमारे, भर्ता रक्षति यौवने । पुत्रा सथारवारे रक्षन्ति न स्त्री स्वतहती ।”

With the *Bhakti* wave in the fifteenth century emerged Sikh philosophy leading towards the Sikh egalitarian society. Katherine Young accords that, ‘the popularity of *Bhakti* resulted in no small measure from its inclusion of such marginal groups as women and *sudras*. Being female was generally no bar to *Bhakti*’.²² With the dissemination of this philosophy, Sikh Gurus entrusted responsibility of *Guru Darbars* and the *Sangat* (religious congregations) on the *Guru Mahals* (wives). It was under their guidance, practices of the *Guru homes* were

²² Katherine K. Young, *Hinduism*, in Arwind Sharma, ed., *Women in World Religions*, Albany, 1987, pp.77.

gaining strength.²³ The Sikh women were liberated from tracing their lineage to fathers or adopting husbands name after marriage. All men received the last name 'Singh' and the women the name 'Kaur'.²⁴ By using different metaphors like *Durga*, *Chandi* and *Bhagauti* in his poetic writings, the tenth guru *Guru Gobind Singh* imbibed the spirit of valour in the Sikh women. By acknowledging women power in the society, the Guru validated the path shown by *Guru Nanak* in the sixteenth century.

II.

This article locates the study of gender role in shaping Sikh history. To analyze the contribution of women in Sikh history, one must trace the history of Punjab, which can be traced back to the Bronze Age Civilization, 2500 BC. It has been the land of warriors, artisans, traders, and peasants. It not only played a conspicuous role in revolutionizing the economic growth during sultanate period but was also pioneer in promoting social reforms. With the receptive and open-mindedness ideology of Punjab's culture ethos, it attracted and encouraged the expansion of the Sufism. In Punjab, the elements of vigor, creativity, adaptability, optimism and the spirits of conciliation and generosity are alloyed in a remarkable social and cultural synthesis.

Even in the medieval period, when the *Bhakti* saints and *Sufis* were preaching against idol worship, caste distinction and other social evils of society, women had no identity of their own. Considering them as a commodity they had to face insults, discrimination, inequality and even class cruelty. Since its inception, Sikhism provides equal status to men and women. From the theological perspective, no distinction is made between them and is vividly clear in the holy composition "*Guru Granth Sahib*". Women in Sikh history not only preached with high moral values, rather created, highlighted, and established new ideals. They have a long history of fighting patriarchy, enacting radical change, and taking up leadership roles. The beneficence of Sikh woman can be understood while evaluating the socio-historic progress of Sikhism. It was *Guru Nanak*, and the successive Sikh Gurus who can be credited for the restoration of position and dignity to the women which they had lost over the centuries as well as for condemning those who described them inferior to men. These were the bold affirmations of the glory of motherhood which is at the heart of contemporary feminist thinking in religion. In an emphatic statement in '*Asa Di Vaar*', *Guru Nanak* states:

From women, man is born;

Within women, man is conceived

To woman, he is engaged and married

Woman becomes his friend;

Through woman, the future generations come

When his woman dies, he seeks another woman

To woman he is bound

So why call her bad? From her, Kings are born.

² Dr. Jaspal Singh, Mata Khivi, in Dr M. K. Gill (ed), *The Guru Consorts*, New Delhi, P.50., *The Guru Mahal Gatha* (Punjabi), 1992. New Delhi, P.10-11.

³ Rajpurthi & Belarani Sharma(ed), *Sikhism and Women*, New Delhi, 1995, P.270.

From Woman, woman is born

Without woman, there would be no one at all.

O Nanak, only the True lord is without the woman.

That mouth which praises the lord continually is blessed and beautiful.

O Nanak. Those faces shall be radiant in the court of the True LordIII.(SGGS, p. 473). [12]²⁵

To elevate the status of women, third *Guru Amardas* took steps for the equality of women. Sikhs condemned the customs of *sati*, female infanticide, forced widowhood, adultery, and seclusion of women. The prominent women, who occupied a conspicuous place in the Guru's time, belonged largely to the Guru's family either as mother, daughter, wife, or sister. After the Sikh Gurus, women were given a special status in the socio-religious and political matters as well as at the time of battles with the contemporary power.

Mata Tripta, mother of *Guru Nanak*, nurtured her son with high moral values, *Dai Daulatan*, saw in baby Nanak almighty's light, *Bebe Nanki* (1464-1518), sister of *Guru Nanak*, perceived with her keen sensibility the prophet like qualities of *Guru Nanak* and became his first disciple. While recognizing the musical talent of her brother, she gifted a *Rabab* to him which he gave to *Bhai Mardana*, who accompanied him in his travels. It was because of the inspiration given by *Bebe Nanaki*, that *Guru Nanak* depicted his devotion to God in a musical note. Later, '*Chak Nanaki*' was established on her name. *Mata Sulakhani*, wife of *Guru Nanak* looked after the domestic affairs during her husband's thirty years of preaching. The basic ideal of Sikh Religion is to establish equality irrespective of caste, creed and race. For the implementation of this ideal, one important institution is the community kitchen or *langar*, where people from all castes: high or low, any gender: male or female sit together. The wives of Gurus contributed in their own way to give a practical shape to this ideal. *Mata Sulakhani* participated in the community kitchen or *langar* activities. *Mata Khivi* (1506-1582), wife of the second Sikh Guru, *Guru Angad*, was not only an administrator of the *langar*, but also cooked and served in the *Pangat*, where people sit in a row without distinction of caste or creed. As a result, *Mata Khivi* has her honorable name recorded in the *Guru Granth Sahib*.

Says *Balwand*, "Blessed is *Khivi*, the Guru's who dense leafy shade gives sheds to all".

In the Guru's kitchen, food is served abundantly,

Ya, the rice pudding, mixed with ghee, which is nectar sweet. (SGGS-p.967)

In the religious history of Sikhism, women also served as missionaries. The ideal before the Sikh women in the socio-political life was to help society in securing prosperity in peace and victory in war. On one hand, women cheerfully accepted the responsibility of caring a large family; while on the other hand, they participated in the revolutionary struggle on equal terms with men.

Guru Amardas, the third guru, with the support of wife *Mata Mansa Devi*, the Guru raised voice against the custom of *Sati* and installed women as missionary preachers by offering them official seats as *Peeras*. He started the *Manji* tradition, which refers to the seat of the Provincial Sikh leaders and offered two seats (*Peeri*) to women in the list of 22 *Manji* holders. The *Manji's* and *Peera's* were accorded authority to teach the principles of Sikhism to men

²⁵ Sri Guru Granth Sahib, P.473.[12].

and women, respectively. *Mahto Murari* and wife of *Sachan Such*, were the two ladies along with established (12 Peeras) cradles. *Mahto Murari* was granted *Manji* of Lahore, which was an important seat of that time. *Bibi Bhani*, an embodiment of devotion of humanity, as according to few sources was offered a *jagir* by Akbar, when the latter visited the Guru and shared food in the community kitchen. *Bibi Bhani*, *Mata Ganga ji*, *Mata Nanki* provided new dimensions to the institution of *Guru Mahals*.

Moreover, the names of *Mata Gujri*: as an epitome of sacrifice, *Mata Sundri*: as a guide to the Sikhs and *Mata Sahib Deva*: as ‘Mother of Khalsa’ are well known for their active participation in the political as well as in the socio-religious sphere. After the death of *Guru Gobind Singh* in 1708, Sikh community passed through a period of crisis many times, but, both *Mata Sundri* and *Mata Sahib Kaur*, with their wise leadership, always pulled them to a safer path. Sikh used to visit both *Mata ji*’s to seek their political advice during the eighteenth century. Eight *Hukumnamas* (orders) were issued by *Mata Sahib Kaur* from 1708 to 1748 to the *sangat* (congregation) of different areas from Punjab to Bihar (where Sikhs were staying at that time). The Sikhs willingly followed their orders. *Mata Sundri* also played an important role of an educationist in the eighteenth century by transcribing the compilation of *Guru Granth Sahib* at Damdama Sahib, with the help of *Bhai Mani Singh*, who was a great scholar under *Guru Gobind Singh*. He also taught *Gurbani* and philosophy to the Sikhs. She also compiled and edited *Guru Gobind Singh*’s *bani* ‘*Dasam Granth*’ with the help of *Bhai Sheehan Singh*. She also appointed *Bhai Mani Singh* as the ‘Head of *Taksal*’ (educational centre) in Amritsar.

In the eighteenth century, in 1705, *Mai Bhago*, the first woman General, rallied 40 deserters (40 *Muktey*) from Amritsar and led them in the Battle of Muktsar. In praise of *Mai bhago*, scholar Macauliffe said, “the women *Bhago* fought heroically in their ranks, disposal of several of her *muhammadan* opponents and transmitted her name as an Indian heroine for the admiration of future generations”. *Bibi Deep Kaur* and *Bibi Harsharan Kaur* showed faith, courage and bravery and refused to surrender before the enemy even when she was mortally injured in the battlefield. *Bibi Sahib Kaur* in 1793, refused to leave the battlefield when pressed by the Marathas near Ambala with a drawn sword rallied for troops to repulse the enemy. *Nirbhai Kaur*, daughter of *Sardar Wadbhagh Singh*, fought very bravely from 1753-59 at the time of *Ahmad Shah Abdali*’s invasions. *Sardarni Sada Kaur* (1762-1832), wife of *Sardar Gurbax Singh* of *Kanhaiya Misl* and mother-in-law of *Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, ruled her *misl* and served Punjab for thirty-three years. She laid the foundation of the Sikh empire in Punjab, which spanned Punjab from 1799 to 1849. *Maharaja Ranjit Singh* owed his success to her in his initial struggle against rival *Misls*. Similarly, *Bibi Aas Kaur* and *Bibi Rajinder Kaur* also contributed to the Sikh history with all virtues, courage, perseverance, and sagacity. In 1839, last queen of the Punjab Empire, *Maharani Jind Kaur*, after her husband’s death waged two wars against British rule. She led the court, discarded customs of *pardah*, and held meetings with ministers. In the first war of independence in 1857, *Indra Kaur* sacrificed her life and *Man kaur* of *Charwaha* family was hanged to death in the initial stages of 1857 rebellion.

In the twentieth century, Mahatma Gandhi visualized mass participation of women in the freedom struggle in India and its salvation lay in the elevation of her women.²⁶ The women should have an equal share in *Swaraj* as men have. Women in Punjab were aware of odious Rowlatt Act of 1919. After Jallianwala massacre, women voices were identified and given sanctity. In this regard, sacrifices of *Bibi Atri*, *Bhagwan Kaur*, *Jai Kaur*, *Bholi*, *Dharmo*, *Ratto* and *Desan* of different districts of Punjab and specially *Gulab Kaur* of *Ghaddar* movement. The participation of women in Punjab in the non-cooperation movement and further *Satyagrah* of 1930-34 and 1940-42 were inspired and trained under *Smt. Manmohini Sehgal*. A procession of thousand women inaugurated the civil disobedience movement in the Punjab.

On 10th April 1930, when meeting of citizens was held outside Mori Gate, out of 40,000 people, 1,000 were women including daughters of *Lala Lajpat Rai* and *Dr. Mohammed Alam*. In the Satyagraha campaign against the salt law 400 women performed the Tilak ceremony. In July 1930, when Lord Irwin was to address the Central Assembly, it was decided that there would be picketing by a group of women volunteers, on the first day 27 women were chosen from Lahore, Ambala, and Shimla.

With the passage of time in the twenty first century, social pressures, male chauvinistic attitudes, and the forgetting of the essence of the teachings of Sikh Gurus, the position of Sikh women today has suffered a setback. 'Despite emancipatory directions from *Guru Nanak* and his successors, Sikh women were subjected to multiple patriarchies of caste, tribe, family and religion.'²⁷ Many of the progressive teachings of the Sikh Gurus which were 500 years ahead of their time with special references to women in it have been forgotten. 'Because the sacred text has not been meaningfully read, Sikh Women do not enjoy the status that *Guru Nanak* wanted them to have'.²⁸

With dissemination of education, economic empowerment, and an analytical look back at the teachings and lives of the Gurus, the study of Sikh Scriptures has reawakened Sikh women. With the full consciousness of their rights as equal partners in human progress, and citing the Holy Scriptures, women now are more intensely contributing to the all-round augmentation of the society of which she has been playing a pivotal role in moulding and shaping generations from generations. Sikh women have shown enterprise in several fields and are among the most progressive in education and in the professions, such as teaching and medicine.

⁵ Aparna Basu, The role of women in the Indian struggle for freedom, p.20, Dr. Baljeet Singh in proceeding of PHC, The role of women in India's freedom struggle- A case study of Punjab (1919-47), 42nd session, 2010, pp. 227.

⁶ Kamlesh Mohan, Women in the Sikh discourse, in edited and an introduction by Irfan Habib, Religion in Indian History, New Delhi, 2015, p 202.

⁷ Nikki Gurinder Singh, *ibid*, p.253.

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN OF ASSAM IN THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT OF INDIA (1920-1942)

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ABSTRACT:

India was under British colonial rule for almost two hundred years and India became independent after a long drawn struggle. The British colonial rule began in Assam after the treaty of Yandabo (24th February, 1826) which was signed after the conclusion of the First Anglo-Burmese war between the British and the Burmese King. The freedom movement of India was fought in a unique way where men and women took active part. In Assam too, the women played a significant role in the various phases of the freedom movement and some of them even made supreme sacrifices for the cause of the nation. Although both men and women of Assam had great contribution in freedom movement, the contribution of women received no proper recognition in history. The women of Assam also actively participated in the different phases of freedom movement like the non-cooperation movement, Civil disobedience movement and Quit India movement. The Assamese women participated in the constructive as well as obstructive programmes of freedom struggle. The constructive programmes are mainly removal of untouchability, spinning and weaving, creating awareness in the society, emancipation of women etc. The women also participated in the obstructive programmes like boycott, picketing etc. The colonial authority responded to these activities with repressive measures. In this paper an attempt has been made to highlight the contribution of the Assamese women in the freedom movement of India during the period from 1920 to 1942.

Keywords: Women, participation, freedom movement, Assamese

Introduction:

The British colonial rule lasted in India for nearly two hundred years. The battle of Plassey (1757) and the battle of Buxar (1764) paved the way for foundation of British rule in India. However, from the inception of their rule the British had to face opposition from the Indian people in regional level. The first major resistance to British rule was seen on national level in the revolt of 1857. Women like Rani Laksmi Bai, Begum Hazarat Mahal took active part in this phase of anti British movement. With the establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885 people of different parts of India got a common platform to fight against British imperialism. In the freedom movement both men and women actively participated. Sarojini Naidu, Vijaya Laxmi Pandit, Aruna Asaf Ali and many others came forward and

contributed in freedom movement. In Assam too women in large scale participated in the different phases of freedom movement.

Objectives:

The objectives of the paper are-i) To highlight the contribution of the Assamese women in the Freedom Movement of India. ii) to highlight the response of the British authority against the women revolutionaries.

Methodology:

The methodology is descriptive and data are collected from books, journals, internet source etc.

Discussion and Result:

The British colonial rule was established in Assam after the treaty of Yandabo (24th February, 1826) which was signed between the British and the king of Burma (Gait, 1963, p.340). Since the inception of their rule in Assam, the British had to face opposition from the people of Assam. The earliest anti British uprising took place in 1828-30, where a section of dissatisfied Ahom nobility under the leadership of Gomdhar Konwar, Dhanjay Peali Bargohain, Harakanta, Haranath, Jeoram Dulia Barua, Peali Barphukan tried to overthrow the British rule. During the Revolt of 1857, under the leadership of Maniram Dewan, Peali Barua, Kandarpeswar Singha and many others all preparation were made to revolt against the British. In the latter half of the nineteenth century the peasants of Assam also revolted against the British economic exploitation at Phulguri (1861), Lachima (1893), and Patharughat (1894). Though all the early oppositions to British imperialism were ruthlessly suppressed by the British authority, it inspired the people to carry on the struggle in later times. After the establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885 the Freedom movement got a new momentum in the country. It provided a common platform and common programme for the people of different parts of India for freedom movement. Both men and women took active part in this freedom movement. The state of Assam was also did not lag behind. The women of Assam also joined hand with men in this struggle for freedom. Though the participation of women was not remarkable in the first two decades of twentieth century, after the emergence of Gandhiji in freedom struggle, the women of Assam participated it in a large scale from 1920 to 1942. Gandhiji launched non cooperation movement (1920), civil disobedience movement (1930) and quit India movement (1942) and was in favour of freedom for India through non-violence and non co-operation with the British government.

In 1920 INC decided to launch the non co-operation movement under the leadership of Gandhiji. The people of different parts of India were involved in both the constructive and obstructive programme of the movement. Gandhiji's call for participation of women in freedom movement received a good response. He was aware of the courage, perseverance, intelligence and power of women. Although women participation in Assam was limited to a small section of women like Bidyutprova Devi, Hemanta Kumari Devi, Girija Devi, Nalinibala Devi, Dharmada Devi, Puspalata Das, Guneswari Nath and Chandraprova Saikiani in the beginning of the movement. Most of them belonged to or had connections with the families of Congress leaders (Goswami, 2013, p.243-44). The women workers visited both

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urban and rural areas, to spread the message of the movement. Though the task was difficult, they achieved remarkable success in creating awareness among the masses. In Assam the freedom movement got a new momentum with the formation of Assam Provincial Congress Committee in 1921. In the same year Gandhiji visited Assam and his call for non co-operation movement brought a large number of men and women of Assam to the national movement. The prohibition liquor and opium was a constructive programme of Gandhi and the women of Assam also participated in it by picketing in front of the opium and liquor shops (Pujari & Mazani, 2001, p.3). Inspired by Gandhiji a women named Mongri actively participated in the anti-liquor drive. Bhanumati Talukdar from Godebori of Kamrup district was a prominent congress worker. Pramila Medok of Golaghat was another active worker of the movement. Besides these three women, there were hundreds of others like them who came out in support of Non Cooperation movement and later became integral part of the freedom movement (Goswami, 2013, p.244). Most of the women participated directly by joining picketing, promoting spinning and weaving, attending meetings, propagating *khadi* and *charkha* and boycotting foreign goods by using *swadeshi* goods (Goswami,2013, p.244). In both constructive and obstructive programmes of the movement the women of Assam actively participated. Spinning and weaving was major constructive programme where Assamese women excelled remarkably. The women of Assam were efficient in spinning and weaving. As they produced *khadi* in large-scale, it inspired the people of Assam to boycott foreign clothes. In 1926 Assam Mahila Samiti was formed (Kakati, 2014, p.339).

The Congress Working Committee launched the civil disobedience movement in the country in 1930. Gandhiji himself started the movement by breaking the obnoxious Salt laws. Day by day the number of volunteers offering *Satyagraha* increased throughout the country. The people of Assam also responded Gandhi's call during the course of Civil Disobedience Movement. In various places women also took an active part in the demonstration. The women propagated *khadi*. Puspalata Das, a young *satyagrahi* along with Sarala Saxena, Jyotsna Majmudar, Punyaprava Barua organised *Mukti Sangha* to mobilise the girls in the freedom movement (Goswami, 1913, p.p.254-55). The activities and membership of the *sangha* increased rapidly and it became a matter of concern for the British government. Puspalata Das, the then Union Secretary of Panbazar Girl's High School was expelled from the school. However the government agreed to reinstate her on condition that her mother signed a bond guaranteeing her good behaviour. But mother of Puspalata refused to give such undertaking. Inspired by this event several student committees began to imparting training in martial arts among the girls (Goswami, 1913, p.255). Under the leadership of Ashradha Devi and Jagati Devi of Duni in Darran district many women came out from their household works and participated in the movement (Gogoi, 2012, p. 189). Guneswari Devi and Mukteswari Devi of Nowgong were the first ladies of Assam to be imprisoned in the course of national movement (Baruah, 1985, p.549). Other prominent women leaders arrested in different parts of Assam were Chandra Prava Saikiani, the leader of the women picketers at Gauhati and Girija Bala Gupta who had been organising the womenfolk at Karimganj (Baruah, 1985, p.551). The women were beaten or insulted by the police with the object of preventing them from participating or to frighten them and from other such activities (Majumdar, 1988, p.512). In spite of the repressive measures of the British government like arrest and imprisonments, the freedom movement gained increasingly greater momentum day by day and participation of women also increased. Up to 31 August 1932 altogether 1449 persons were arrested, including 80 women activists. Prominent among these Congress workers so convicted and imprisoned were Chandra Prava Saikiani, B.P.Chaliha, M.M.Choudhury, Hem Chandra

Barua, Jyotiprasad Agarwala and many others (Baruah, 1985, p.551). The people of the hill areas were also influenced by the freedom movement. Inspired by the appeal of Gandhiji, the Naga 'queen' Gaidilieu and her followers also actively joined the movement. She was also arrested and put in Imphal Jail. Gaidilieu became a source of inspiration for the freedom fighters of the region. Gandhiji visited Assam again in 1934 and worked for the removal of untouchability. Many women of Assam like Giribla Devi, Swarnalata Devi worked for the welfare of the Harijan (Pujari & Mazani, 2001, p.5). The government responded to the movement with repressive measures. Ordinances were issued to curb the civil liberties of the people. The provincial government was authorised to put ban on the Civil disobedience organisations, to arrest and convict picketers.

The Non Cooperation and Civil Disobedience Movement although not achieved the desired objectives, it strengthened the national movement in many ways. Women had been drawn into the national movement and all section of the society had been politicised. This politicisation and activation of men and women in large numbers imparted a revolutionary character to the national movement (Chandra, 2009, p.294). The Congress Working Committee passed the Quit India resolution on 14th July 1942, demanding end of the British rule immediately with the slogan 'Do or die' (Grover and Mehta, 2018, p. 321). The gradual increase of women participation in the movement led the Congress Working Committee to open women's wing of the Congress both in national and provincial levels. In Assam also the women's wing was set up in September 1940 with Puspallata Das and Amalprova Das as joint secretaries. In the next year All Assam Girl Students' Committee was also formed in Shillong (Goswami, 2013, p.271). In Assam also government arrested Congress leaders including APCC President Md. Tayebullah, Gopi Nath Bardoloi, Siddhi Nath Sarma and many others. Despite stern measures people of Assam continued to boycott and defiance to government ordinances (Baruah, 1985, p.601). Students of Assam, both boys and girls played an important part in the underground movement by organising *Mrityu Bahini* or death squads. When a large number of men were in prison, women leaders took the charge of coordinating the activities. One such women leader was Chandraprova Saikiani who inspired the other women a lot. The *Mrityu Bahini* was formed to carry out subversive activities in an organised way (Goswami, 2013, p.271). The women of Assam responded Gandhiji's concept of Do or Die by participating in all types of programmes of Quit India movement. The District Congress committees decided to hoist the national flag on the police stations and court buildings. On 18th September in a public meeting at Barhampur took action causing death to, Thagiram Sut, aged women Bhogeswari Phukanani and Tilak Hazarik (Baruah, 1985, p.602). It was planned to hoist the national flag on the police station on 20th September in Gohpur, Bihali, Dhekiajuli and Sootea of Darrang district. Puspallata Das was the prominent women leader in this programme (Kalita, & Kalita, 2008, p.414). Kanaklata Barua of Gohpur led about five thousand persons from Chaiduar to hoist the Congress flag in front of the police station. The police officer in charge shot down Kanaklata but Mukunda Kakati who was following Kanaklata did not allow the flag to fall down on the ground and held it high. Mukunda Kakati and Hemkanta Baruah also died in that incident sustaining bullet injuries (Kaman & Kakati, 2010, p. 145). At Bihali police station the flag was hoisted by a women named Tileswari Mahanta. At Mangaldai in Darrang district prominent women leaders were Dobhagi Devi, Daneswari devi and Snehalata Medhi (Saikia, 2005, p.167).

Conclusion:

Thus it is seen that during the course of the national movement of India (1920-1942) the participation of women of Assam was remarkable. The women of Assam actively participated in different phases of freedom movement like Non Co-operation movement, Civil Disobedience movement and Quit India movement. The stern repressive measures of the British failed to prohibit the women in participating the movement. Some of them even made supreme sacrifices for the cause of the nation. But their contribution still not recognised in nation level. Their courage and patriotism should get proper place in national history so that they became a symbol of strength and inspiration for future generation.

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ROLE OF DURGA BHABHI IN THE INDIAN REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT (1907-1999)

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Abstract

This paper analyses the role of Durga Devi Vohra in the Indian Revolutionary Movement against British imperialism. An attempt has been made to locate the role of women in the armed struggle for Indian Independence which is usually associated with male revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Rajguru, Chandrashekhar Azad etc. Durga Bhabhi, as Vohra was affectionately called in the revolutionary circles, not only broke the social norms prevalent in her times by coming out of home and engaging herself in political activism, she also went one step ahead by leading the violent struggle against the Raj when her husband attained martyrdom in the movement.

When we talk about the revolutionary movement in our freedom struggle, the names of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Rajguru and Chandrashekhar Azad comes first to our mind. But we forget the role of revolutionary women like Durga Bhabhi, Sushila Didi, Madame Bhikaji Cama, Pritilata Wadedar, Kalpana Dutt and others who were as important as male revolutionaries. For example, not many of us know that Durga Bhabhi not only helped Bhagat Singh and Rajguru escape from Lahore, but also plotted the murder of Punjab's Governor Malcolm Hailey when he visited Mumbai on 8th October, 1930. This is known as the Bombay Shooting Case or the Lamington Road Shooting Case in the annals of history. In this paper, I will explore the life of Durga Bhabhi whose real name was Durga Devi Vohra and will point out to the role of women in Indian Revolutionary Movement.

Durga Devi was born on 7th October, 1907 in a wealthy family of Allahabad. Her ancestors belonged to Gujarat. She got basic education before her marriage and was married to a young boy from Lahore whose name was Bhagwati Charan Vohra, the future revolutionary ideologue of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA). After their marriage, Vohra motivated Durga for further studies and she took admission in Panjab University. This was unprecedented for the times as in 1920s it was preferred to keep the women behind the purdah, but Bhagwati Charan, being a revolutionary-minded youth, greatly influenced by the progressive ideas of Marxism and Anarchism, inspired Durga to finish her graduation and take up job as a Hindi teacher at the Kanya Vidyalaya in Lahore.²⁹

Durga Devi As A Revolutionary Activist

Meanwhile, Bhagwati had secretly joined the revolutionary organization Hindustan Republican Association (HRA) in the year 1924 where he met bravehearts like Bhagat Singh,

²⁹ M.S. Waraich, *A Biography of Bhagwati Charan Vohra and Durga Bhabhi*, Chandigarh: Unistar, 2012.

Sukhdev, Yashpal and others. He had also established contacts with the communists and was in touch with M.N. Roy. Bhagat Singh and Bhagwati organized the youth-wing of the party which was known as the *Naujawan Bharat Sabha* (Young India Society). Durga Devi became an active member of the youth organization and began to be affectionately called Durga Bhabhi by the fellow revolutionaries. However, her political activities greatly surprised her neighbours and they began to gossip about her. But, she did not care and continued her revolutionary activities.³⁰

Unfortunately a rift occurred between Bhagwati Charan and HRA revolutionaries on a petty issue and the latter started calling the former a ‘CID Agent’. This really saddened Durga Bhabhi and she remembers, “*how her husband was heart-broken*”.³¹ Nevertheless, he continued to help the revolutionary movement in indirect ways and told his wife also to do so. Therefore, when Bhagat Singh and Rajguru assassinated the Assistant Superintendent of Lahore Police, J.P. Saunders, who was responsible for the death of Lala Lajpat Rai, they went to Durga Bhabhi to seek her help in escaping from Lahore. At that time, Bhagwati Charan was in Calcutta (Kolkata) to attend the Annual Session of the Indian National Congress. Yet, he had kept some money with Durga as he had hoped that Bhagat Singh and his comrades might come to his home for help. At this point, Durga Bhabhi took a bold decision which changed her life forever and converted her into a full-fledged revolutionary activist. Along with her four year old son Shachi, she agreed to put on the disguise of Bhagat Singh’s wife, which was a very radical step in those conservative times, and travel with him to Calcutta from Lahore. It was a dangerous plan as the police was recklessly searching for the assassins of Saunders and could have attacked Durga and her son if they had recognized her. Yet Durga showed extreme courage and reached Lahore station with Shachi, Bhagat Singh and Rajguru, who was disguised as the family’s servant. Bhagat Singh took first class tickets for the train bound to Calcutta and along with Durga and others escaped from Lahore.³²

When they reached Delhi, Durga sent a telegram to her husband,

“Bhai Ke Sath Aa Rahi Hoon (Durgawati)”

Coming With Brother, Durgawati.

When the telegram reached Bhagwati Charan, he was in a state of shock that who is this Durgawati? He eagerly waited for her at Calcutta station and when he saw Bhagat Singh and Durga Devi coming out of the coach, he was extremely happy. He felt very proud of his courageous wife and patted her shoulders saying, “*Aaj tumhe pehchana*” (Now I have really understood you).³³ After few days Bhagwati and Durga returned to Lahore while Bhagat Singh remained in Calcutta for some more days. On return, Bhagwati Charan realised that a warrant has been issued against him in the Meerut Conspiracy Case and he went into hiding. In the name of the Meerut case, thirty-one communist leaders were arrested from all over India in March 1929 and the government came up with two draconian bills- Trades Disputes

³⁰ Durga Devi Vohra, ‘Aur Deepak Bujh Gaya’, S. Vidyarthi (ed.) *Zakheere Mein Shahadat*, New Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan, 2012, p. 78

³¹ *ibid.*, p.83

³² Kashi Ram, *Kranti Ke Ve Din*, Mirzapur: Krantikari Prakashan, 1976.

³³ Durga Bhabhi, ‘Shiv Mera Devar’, *Shri Shiv Verma Abhinandan Granth*, Agra, 1982.

Bill and Public Safety Bill to curb the incipient communist movement in India and criminalize the protests by the factory workers against their exploitation. Bhagat Singh decided to register his protest and throw a bomb in the Central Legislature when the bills were being passed.

The party knew that Bhagat Singh would be hanged after this action but these young patriots were ready for the ultimate sacrifice to awaken the masses and terrorise the colonial state. Sukhdev, in a very emotional state, informed Durga Bhabhi, “Go to Delhi if you want to see Bhagat Singh for the last time!”³⁴ Durga Bhabhi reached Delhi along with her son and a comrade of hers, Sushila Mohan. She brought oranges and rasgullas with her which was Bhagat Singh’s favourite food. Bhagwati Charan also reached the spot where the meeting was planned in disguise. Sushila Didi, as Sushila Mohan, was known in the party, put a tilak on the forehead of Bhagat and B.K. Dutt before the duo bade farewell to their tearful comrades.³⁵

Bhagat Singh and Dutt executed the operation as per the plan on 8th April, 1929 and courted arrest. Unfortunately in May, a number of other revolutionaries were also arrested and together all of them were put under trial in the Lahore Conspiracy Case charged with the murder of Saunders and waging a war against the British Government. Chandrashekhar Azad, commander-in-chief of the HSRA, could not be arrested by the police and he sent Sukhdev Raj to Lahore to organize the defence of Bhagat Singh and his comrades. Singh’s father along with some Congress leaders had already organized a defence committee of which Durga Bhabhi was also a leading member. She arranged for the stay of Sukhdev Raj in Lahore and he was greatly impressed by her hospitality. He reported this back to Azad and suggested that Bhagwati and Durga were not CID agents and we should take them back in our party. This was a historical moment as Azad and Bhagwati Charan now came together and a new phase in the Indian Revolutionary Movement began.³⁶

Death of Bhagwati Charan

In 1928 Calcutta Session of the Congress, Gandhiji had promised that if the Viceroy of India doesn’t give ‘Dominion Status’ to India by 31st December, 1929, he would start a Civil Disobedience Movement for ‘Purna Swaraj’ (Complete Independence). On 23rd December, 1929, Viceroy was supposed to travel in a special train bound to New Delhi where he was holding talks with Gandhiji. The revolutionaries feared that if the Viceroy grants Dominion Status to India, there won’t be any movement for complete independence. Hence, to derail the talks, it was decided to assassinate the Viceroy on his way to Delhi. Bhagwati Charan and Yashpal were assigned the task. However, when Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, a leading Congressman and a sympathiser of the revolutionaries came to know about their plan, he requested them to their abort their mission as if the Viceroy gets killed, the masses will blame the revolutionaries for the failure of the talks. Hence, Azad told Bhagwati and Yashpal to stop for the meantime but they did not follow his instructions and went ahead with the plan.

³⁴ Mathradas Thapar, *Mere Bhai Sukhdev*, Delhi: Pravin Prakashan, 1982.

³⁵ Anil Verma, *Batukeshwar Dutt*, New Delhi: National Book Trust, 2010, p.31.

³⁶ Sukhdev Raj, *Jab Jyoti Jagi*, New Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan, 2009.

The bomb was exploded on the 23rd on the special train carrying the Viceroy but missed him by one coach due to fog. The Viceroy escaped unhurt but his entire pantry was destroyed.³⁷

Bhagwati and Yashpal were greatly reprimanded by Azad for not following his orders although secretly he admired their courage and sense of sacrifice. He sent Bhagwati on another important mission to Bombay which he executed quite successfully. After he came back, Azad now told all the party members to focus on getting Bhagat Singh and Dutt out of jail. They sent a message to the duo in jail and told them to be prepared. A house was taken on rent in an isolated place in Lahore and HSRA revolutionaries started living there in the disguise of a huge family. Durga Bhabhi played an important role in providing this cover. The revolutionaries prepared bombs to attack the Borstal Jail and set Bhagat Singh free. On 28th May, 1930, Bhagwati Charan along with two of his comrades went to the banks of Ravi to test the bombs but unfortunately the bomb exploded in his hand and he died on the spot after hours of bearing extreme pain albeit with extraordinary courage.³⁸

The revolutionaries were stunned by this sudden turn of events and Durga was totally shattered. Azad told her and Shachi, “*Now you two are party’s responsibility.*”³⁹ Durga tried to recover herself and told Azad, “*I will take my husband’s place in the party.*”⁴⁰ Azad was shocked by Durga’s boldness and said, “*You are like mother to us... We will fulfil Babu Bhai’s (Bhagwati Charan’s) last wish by setting free Bhagat Singh and Dutt.*”⁴¹ Plan was made to attack the police van carrying Bhagat and Dutt when they were carried to the court from the jail. But on the day fixed for the action, Bhagat and Dutt refused to give confirmation signal to their comrades who were hiding near their jail. Later, Bhagat explained that he wanted no more deaths to save his own life. He was deeply grief-stricken by Bhagwati’s untimely death.⁴²

Lamington Road Shooting Case at Bombay

But Azad was not ready to let Bhagat die like this. He decided that they would attack the jail anyway. Unfortunately, the bombs that were prepared for this action self-exploded one night and the revolutionaries were forced to flee from Lahore. This incident greatly upset the party members and soon fissures appeared in the organization over other issues too.⁴³ Distressed by these events, Azad decided to dissolve the central committee of the party and told the provincial committees to work on their own independent of each other. On 7th October 1930, the special tribunal appointed to give judgement in the Lahore Conspiracy Case pronounced its sentence. Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were awarded capital punishment and rest were sentenced to long-term imprisonments.⁴⁴ Durga Bhabhi decided to take revenge. Along with Sukhdev Raj and Prithvi Singh Azad, she decided to assassinate the Governor of Punjab, Malcolm Hailey, who was directly responsible for the conviction of Bhagat Singh and others.

³⁷ Times of India, 24th December, 1929

³⁸ Sudhir Vidyarthi, *Kranti Ki Virasat*, New Delhi: Samvad Prakashan, 2018.

³⁹ Durga Devi, ‘Bhagwati Charan Ki Agni Pareeksha: Deepak Bujh Gaya’, P.V. and Shiv Singh (ed.), *Viplava.*, no. May 1939, 1939. *JSTOR*, [jstor.org/stable/10.2307/saoa.crl.25848338](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/saoa.crl.25848338). Accessed 5 Apr. 2021, p.65.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p.66.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p.67-68.

⁴² Shiv Verma, *Sansmritiyan*, New Delhi: National Book Trust, 2017.

⁴³ Yashpal, *Singhavlokan*, New Delhi: Lokharti Prakashan, 2017.

⁴⁴ Lahore Conspiracy Case Judgement, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

Bhabhi got the news that Hailey was visiting Bombay in the same month. She reached Mumbai along with Sukhdev Raj, Prithvi Singh and her son, Shachi. She gave her son to Ganesh Rao Savarkar, elder brother of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and went ahead with her plan. The trio reached the house where the Governor was staying but couldn't enter the place as the security was very tight. They were in a car and roamed on the streets of Mumbai thinking what to do next. They passed Lamington Road Police Station where they saw a number of British Police Officers along with their wives. Prithvi Singh, who was the incharge of the operation, ordered "Fire!" and Durga and Sukhdev Raj opened fire on the police officials. Then they escaped from the spot.⁴⁵

The government was in a state of shock. The police released a statement that one of the assailants was a boy with long hair! They could never imagine in wildest of their dreams that a woman could attack them in such a way. Durga, Sukhdev Raj and Prithvi Singh escaped from Bombay and went to different places. Azad was very angry from Durga that she undertook such a risky operation without taking him into confidence. He called Durga to come and meet him in Allahabad. At that time, Azad was trying to reorganize the party along with Yashpal and Surendra Pandey. He told Durga to meet Gandhiji and convince him to save Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru as the latter was meeting Viceroy Lord Irwin to come to an agreement over the question of ongoing Civil Disobedience Movement. Durga rushed to Delhi and established contact with Gandhiji's secretary. Gandhiji thought that she had come to ask his help to save her own life. But she explained that she did not care about herself and it was Bhagat Singh and others about whom she was concerned. Gandhiji told her that he would do whatever will be possible.⁴⁶

On 27th February, 1931, Azad died in an encounter with police in Alfred Park of Allahabad. Next month, Bhagat Singh and his comrades were hanged one day before the date given by the court. This incident greatly enraged the masses and there were violent demonstrations all over the country. HSRA was in disarray after the death of its two most important leaders. Yashpal and Surendra Pandey tried to reorganize the party but were also arrested soon. Durga Bhabhi was continuously on the run and finally decided to surrender before the police in 1932. She was imprisoned for six months and released with orders for expulsion from Delhi and Punjab for three years. She moved to Ghaziabad and taught in Pyare Lal Girls School for two years, after which in 1938 she moved to Lucknow and was involved with the Congress for some time. She was invited to contest elections, which she refused, and concerned herself largely with preserving the memory of her fellow revolutionary comrades, mostly removed from public gaze.⁴⁷

After Independence

In Lucknow, Durga Bhabhi started a school for young children, which is now the Lucknow Montessori Inter College. She also established the 'Shaheed Smarak Evam Swantantrata Sangram Shodh Kendra', under whose banner various documents related to revolutionaries were collected and published for the first time. As one of the most senior historian of Indian revolutionaries, Sudhir Vidyarthi, informs, Durga Bhabhi made it her goal to "collect literature related to revolutionaries and revolutionary movement for the sake of future

⁴⁵ Prithvi Singh Azad, *Kranti Path Ka Pathik*, Chandigarh: Haryana Sahitya Academy, 1990.

⁴⁶ Yashpal (ed.) *Viplav Azad Ank*, Lucknow, 1939.

⁴⁷ Vachnesh Tripathi, *Krantimurti Durga Bhabhi*, Delhi: Hindi Academy, 1996.

researchers”.⁴⁸ She also wanted to build a martyr’s memorial, a dream which remained unfulfilled till she was alive.

In eighty-two years of public life, Durga Devi began as a home-maker, got involved in the freedom struggle, became a revolutionary with a gun, and finally became an educator and institution-builder. She defied the traditional gender norms and roles prevalent in her times. She died on 15 October 1999, in Ghaziabad at her son’s home. Vidyarthi has written of her last wish: to have the Indian National Army’s band, led by Captain Ram Singh, to play on her funeral. As, she argued, “*aashiq ka janaza hai, zara dhoom se nikle!*”⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Sudhir Vidyarthi, *Shahadatnama*, Delhi: Nayi Kitab Prakashan, 2018, p.59.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p.76.

FABRICATING COLONIALISTIC MENTALITIES : WOMEN OF BENGAL AND THEIR MARGINALIZATION IN COLONIAL CITY SPACE

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Modernisation in the Indian context was more of an artificial creation on the basis of a traditional economic composition rather than the influence from the outside developed countries. With the expansion of industries of raw materials in India and the flourishing of Bengal as the first capital of the East India company, there rose a need to reform not only the economic but administrative as well as social structures of the Bengal society, to fashion it in a way to suit the needs and demands of the British officials. With the intense need for reform, the middle class women were finally stepping out of their homes, transforming herself in her dress, appearance and behaviour made her foray into professions that were entirely dominated by men. In colonial times, the city was not used to witnessing upper and middle class Bengali women on streets and open to the scrutiny of public gaze. Therefore, she negotiated her space in the dominant patriarchal structure of the city through the constant process of contestations and compliance. The women's encounter with the city space through the writings in the colonial period documented their struggle in crafting a space for their own kind in the city. They have written about their interaction with the colonial city which shaped their intervention into the public sphere, and documented writings have also been found on women's education, attire and travel. These categories are connected with the emergence of the new phenomenon in the mid-nineteenth century : the *lekhika* or the woman writer penned by Krishnabhabini Das, Jnanadanandini Devi, Sarala Devi and others.

The public space in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century saw a simultaneous widening of the liberal and reformist politics as well as the growth of a rigid and closed nationalism.⁵⁰ The city was confined within the facultalization of the public sphere in the colonial middle class ideology which upheld a clearly demarcated private and public dichotomy. The city was constructed closely following the ideologies of western materialism and the colonial and Christian missionary reform movements spearheaded by the charter of 1813. Calcutta as a capital city and as the capital of the British in India ruled until 1911 was at the heart of the colonial 'civilizing and modernizing' movements. The civilizing mission was a disguised manifestation of the Englishman's burdens of educating, reforming and

⁵⁰References :

Caste, Culture and Hegemony, 2004. Sekhar Bandopadhyay. Sage India; First edition. P. 123

enlightening the natives and of emancipating native women from what was considered to be a socio-cultural garb of utter ignorance and impurity. The Later came to be shared by the English educated Bengali Bhadrakok of the nineteenth century.

The significant developments of improving the drainage system of Bengal and working on building city streets, maintaining hygiene and order, of spearheading modes of communication like motor cars, and the introduction of electric light and fans in a few homes and electric trams from around 1900 led to the establishment of new schools and colleges which were essential for entering or a criterion for modern liberal professions in government and mercantile organizations. Thus nineteenth century Calcutta had become a real metropolis for the bhadrakok, providing education, opportunities for jobs, printed books, a taste for new cultural values, as stated by Sumit Sarkar.⁵¹ The main question arises about the construct of the 'bhadramahila' situated within the budding cultural values. This class of urban Bengali bhadrakok maintained a fine balance between their paternalistic reform strategies and the conformity to their patriarchal norms of the traditional hindu society. They contributed in the implementation of the model of the formal female education in Bengal following the educational frameworks of the contemporary English missionaries, educationists and administrators. At the same time these urban elites were quite concerned about drawing the *lakshmanrekha* or a boundary line for the education and free movement of women in society. Their anxiety over the conformity to the Hindu patriarchal norms also motivated them to obstruct the free flow of certain popular cultural and literary forms believed to be harmful for the middle class bhadrakok's morality. Interestingly, this ideology was equally shared by the women of the urban bhadrakok families. The model of women's emancipation held up as an ideal for the upper and middle class women through the English educated social reformers often presents a construction of the urban elite *Bhadramahila* who were educated for participating in the 'new social milieu and cultural affairs of educated society.'⁵²

The norms of the new social milieu and cultural affairs of the educated society in Calcutta was governed by the colonial education, Victorian ethics and the surge of 'burgeoise' nationalism that led to the formation of the 'new womanhood'. Under the influence or impact of the liberal western education, the urban elites were made to come to this realization that the need of social reforms and eradication of certain Hindu customs paved the way for colonial critique of Indian tradition and the subjugation of women in Indian societies in the name of religions, customs and traditions. Most of the writings of the *bhadrakok* and the *bhadramahila* dealt with these criticisms. The female education system which occupied a major portion of the writings of the *Bhadramahila* was the outcome of the Victorian ethics which believed in the construction or creation of the 'new woman' who was educated and at the same time cultivated domestic virtues and age old norms.⁵³ He added that " She must be

⁵¹ *Women and Social Reform in Modern India*, 1st January, 2011. Sumit Sarkar. Permanent Black; First edition. P. 439

⁵² *Swadeshi Movement in Bengal 1903-1908*, 1st January 2011. Permanent Black; Second edition. P. 54

⁵³ *Women and Social Reform in Modern India*, 1st January, 2011. Sumit Sarkar. Permanent Black; First edition. P. 231

refined, reorganized, recast, regenerated.”⁵⁴ This split between the private and the public, the home and the world is contained within the nationalist resolution of the question of women under the inevitable impact of the colonial rule. The whole issue corresponded to the nationalist reformulation of the Indian and Western, Feminine and Masculine, Spiritual and Material, and Home and World binaries. The belief in the discrete division of home and the world and the ghar and the bahir even by the young radicals in the nineteenth century was typically a product of the anxiety of the westernization of their women, felt it necessary to construct a ‘new womanhood’ which would fit into their nationalist project. In fact the schools and other female educational institutions which were opened by the Bengali urban elites were a kind of response to the inherent threat of westernization and proselyzation in the educational institutions earlier established by the Christian missionaries in early nineteenth century.⁵⁵ These new women in Colonial Bengal, the city was initially an alien, outside space, *Bahir* when contrasted with the secure inner world of their home, the *Ghar*. Earlier even when they made fleeting appearances in the *baithakkhana*, the drawing room where the outsiders were entertained, it had been strictly under the veil. Reclamation of the city space thus became synonymous with the proliferation of new spaces in their lives, hitherto unexplored, which expanded their horizon that was so long enclosed within the four walls of the home.

By the turn of the century, women were attending schools which began to develop in the metropolitan cities from the mid-nineteenth centuries and which took them away from the domestic confines and the control of kinship networks giving them a public identity beyond the familial. They were also admitted in the colleges and the universities, receiving degrees in the sciences and arts, much earlier than the British women. Some of them went abroad for medical training and a few of them took up employment as teachers and doctors.⁵⁶ Sumit Sarkar and Tanika Sarkar in their *Introduction to Women and Social Reform in Modern India* marked the growing participation of women in the urban education system. Women’s coming into the realm of public affairs began with the initiation of their education in the formal

⁵⁴ *Women and Social Reform in Modern India*, 1st January, 2011. Sumit Sarkar. Permanent Black; First edition. P. 231

⁵⁵ *Women and Social Reform in Modern India : A Reader*, 23rd July 2008. Sumit Sarkar. Indiana University Press; Illustrated edition. P. 146

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public schools, sending a girl child to the school necessitated the disappearance of the purda or the veil. This unveiling of Bengali woman generated sharply divided opinions because while it faced the wrath of the traditionalists, it won support of the progressive Brahmo and Hindu males. However, not all women enjoyed the fruit of social reform movements, those women who crossed the thresholds of the domestic education to study in formal educational institutions like schools, colleges and even universities belonged to the upper and middle classes of the social strata. Those women who enjoyed the fruits of formal education in the second half of the nineteenth century achieved remarkably in the professional and academic fields. Chandramukhi Bose and Kadambini Ganguly were the first graduates of the University of Calcutta and Kadambini even succeeded in becoming the first professional female doctor. These successes which the Bengali women attained through formal education opened up potential challenges for the new patriarchy comprising of the modern, middle class urban elites as women now intruded into the professional public spaces that were designated as the male domain by social conventions. The middle class women nevertheless welcomed the change as education helped them to discover their own voices. Consequently we see in many writings in the latter half of the nineteenth century women enthusiastically promoted female education. Many of the women writers such as Kailashbasini Devi, Krishnabhabini Das, Radharani Lahiri, Jnanadanandini Devi and others who while advocating female education and promoting various forms of female emancipation through the reformation of their attire, behaviour and movement were simultaneously quite conscious of their streak of determination. The textual world of the women writers represents a balance between their private domestic world and the public city space. However the ideological crusade of the Bengali urban educated elite eventually had a boomerang effect. The new emancipated women ended up producing stringent critique of this middle class patriarchal ideology through their writings in various women's magazines and other texts.

Women's public presence in the city necessitates a change in the conventional dress code of the Bengali women. Traditionally they wore a single saree without a blouse and a petticoat whose texture was equated with the economic status of that household. The women who travelled to European cities often dressed themselves in western gowns and shoes. But the way in which the Bengali traditional saree was draped needed a change to allow women to move about in the city. The evolution was introduced by Jnanadanandini Devi in her way of wearing the saree while staying in Bombay. She followed the Parsi way of wearing saree when she stayed with the Manekji family in Bombay. But she used to put the 'anchal' on the left side which was different from the Parsi way of placing the 'anchal' over the right shoulder. She wore her saree with a blouse, petticoat and a jacket. This style of draping the saree became immensely popular among women in the tagore household. This fashion which became popular in the Brahmo households suddenly came to be known as the 'Brahmika Saree'. Another woman, Sunita Devi also used this model of saree and wore it with a 'kuchi'. This mode of wearing the saree with a 'kuchi' and 'anchal' is still followed today. Thus, Jnanadanandini Devi played a pioneering role in defining women's public appearance in the city. In the traditional Hindu household women were also prohibited from wearing shoes. Only the prostitutes and women in the Brahmo families defied this taboo. This posed another hindrance for women stepping out of their homes. Their travels outside the domestic space however brought shoes into fashion. Jnanadanandini also wore shoes when she first travelled

to Bombay. Not only that she advocated the use of shoes by women in opposition to the prevailing custom in her letter to *Bamabodhini Patrika*. Therefore the evolution in women's attire in the colonial city brought in considerable modernization altering the lives of Bengali women by gradually replacing the old customs with the new ones that were consistent with the changing times.

Women's social engagements in the city space began through their participation in the Brahma annual *Maghotsab*. After the division of the Indian Brahma Samaj in 1878 women felt the need to have their separate samity or organization. This led to the establishment of the *Banga Mohila Samaj* in 1879. The former members of the *Bamahitaishani Sabha*, Radharani Lahiri, Swarnapova Bose, Kailashkamini Dutta, Saraswati Sen, Kadambini Bose were the founding members of the *Banga Mahila Samaj*. It grew up as a committee of hundred women members. This inspired the establishment of separate mahila Samities by *Bharatbaorshio Brahma Samaj*, *Sadharan Brahma Samaj*, *Sadharan Brahma Samaj* by Christian women. But the most elaborate social engagements were initiated with the advent of *Sakhi Samity* established by Swarnakumari Devi in 1886. This *Samity* managed to bring together female participants from traditional Hindu families as well as members from the other sects of *Brahma Samaj*. It also helped the helpless widows and women in deplorable conditions to become self-dependent. Other than these, women began to participate in various public meetings and get together which gave them an opportunity to explore those domains in the public world that were exclusively controlled by the male authority. Again Jnanadanandini Devi was a pioneering personality in the modernization of women's social engagements. Her education, cultivation of western culture and exposure to other cities such as Bombay, Ahmedabad and London shaped her social presence. She was so modern in her ways that she could go alone to attend an invitation of the Viceroy in the colonial Calcutta when her husband was unable to perform the formality. This action irked to the traditional custodians of the society who were not accustomed to women fulfilling public obligations on their own. She organized meetings in the evening which became a space for free-spirited discussions among men and women. This had an important influence on modulating the personalities of women of the Tagore household like Indira Devi, Sarala Devi and Pratiba Devi.

The late nineteenth century colonial Bengal witnessed the emergence of *Bhadramahila* in the profession sector. Earlier, the economic structure of the lower class families urged their women to take up work outside their homes and make substantial financial contributions in running the household. This in turn resulted in the greater public presence of these women and concurrently ensured more freedom than what the upper-class women enjoyed. Economic independence was prohibited for women hailing from upper caste and upper and middle classes, in the early colonial Bengal. However, higher education ignited the desire of economic independence in some women who took up jobs in schools, colleges, hospitals and other government institutions. Thus space had to be created for professional women in the workplace with the appointments for women teachers like Chandramukhi Bose, Kamini Sen, Kumudini Khastagir and Sarala Devi and the women medics like Kadambini Ganguly and Jamini Sen. Nevertheless there existed a kind of social prejudice against these highly educated women in colonial Calcutta which contributed in their being unmarried for so long. The

major patriarchal prejudice that worked against the marriage prospects of these *Bhadramahilas* who participated in urban professions was the notion that they were not sufficiently docile and traditional to be married off to a conventional Bengali family. These women thus got the space to explore the professional world and be economically independent without the aid of a husband. Some women like Chandramukhi Bose and Jamini Sen preferred to remain unmarried throughout their lives. Marriage and traditional domestic roles were at odds with the women's profession at that time. This often led to the resignation from their jobs after the women were married off. Such was Sarala Devi who reinforced the fact that economic independence was not the primary object of most of the professionally trained women though we find exceptions like Jamini Sen, Chandramukhi Bose, Kadambini Ganguly. Undeniably the inclusion of women in the workplace in colonial Calcutta did enlarge the boundaries of the urban and predominantly patriarchal professional world. The proliferation of the female educational institutions in the late nineteenth century colonial cities necessitated the engagement of female teachers as they became the role models for bringing more girls and women into formal education.

Accounts of women's travel to foreign cities especially to London constitute important representations of their negotiation with the urban space. For women to travel is to challenge the patriarchy and entrenched norm which prohibited women's movement outside home. It also offers the alternative gaze of the colonized subject looking at the colonizer's city space. The gaze distinctly becomes gendered as we see the woman traveler's encounter with the English woman urges her to address the question of woman from multiple perspectives. The insatiable desire of moving beyond the confines of the home, to carve her space in the public world, to know the city through her own eyes, inform the first flurry of women's travel writing. Indeed the women who first ventured into the public world hailed from the enlightened Bengali families, most of them were Christians and Brahmos. Their religious background enabled them to defy the structures of traditional Hindu Brahmanic patriarchy while their western education and culture opened new windows to the world outside. Sometimes these women moved beyond the precincts of the home as companions of their husbands. At other times, their own desire to fly beyond the caged domesticity motivated their travel to foreign locations such as London. Krishnabhabini Das belonged to these group of women who journeyed along with her husband to England in 1882. She was not the first woman to step out of her native soil. However her experience brought in a change in her attire as an unveiled travelling outside home. She had to wear shoes and adequate clothing to walk on the streets of London and acquire sufficient education to deal with the public life in a foreign land. The first woman to cross the *Kalapani* was Kamalmani Thakur who was the wife of Gyanendromohan Thakur. It was easier for her to break the traditional Hindu customs of veiling the *Kalapani* in 1859 as she had a Christian background. She travelled to London for better treatment with her husband and two daughters, Khetromohoni Dutt, the wife of Gobindachandra Dutt who also converted to Christianity, followed the footsteps of Kamalmani when she travelled to France, Italy and England with her husband and two daughters. Their travels to the city of Marseille, London and Cambridge for higher education was a pioneering act, paving the way for women's journey to foreign countries for the purpose of education. Subsequently the Dutt sisters created an identity for themselves as renowned writers. The first Brahmo women to move to London was Rajkumari Bandopadhyay,

the wife of Sashipada Bandopadhyay. Rajkumari travelled to England during the period of her pregnancy and gave birth to her son in England. She was the guest of Mary Carpenter who was an inspiring figure for the Brahmo women in colonial Bengal. Hemangini Devi who was the wife of Congress leader and barrister, Umeschandra Banerjee was a trailblazer in a sense as she travelled to London without her husband. This was almost unthinkable for a Bengali woman of her times. Further she was travelling in her pregnancy and was accompanied by her four small children. Hemangini's decision to settle in England not only changed her own lifestyle, but also altered the lives of her four daughters who were educated in universities and colleges of London and Cambridge. Jnanadanandini Devi also travelled alone to London during her pregnancy in 1877. She took her children along. Her stay in France and England for two and half years not only encouraged her movements outside the traditional bounds of the Bengali household, but it also contributed to her modernization. Among the first group of women travellers Krishnabhabini is unique in enunciating her comparative understanding of the two great cities-London and Calcutta in one of the first travelogues written by a Bengali Woman, *Englande Bangamahila*. Her movement beyond the domestic world structures of the Hindu Brahmanic patriarchy which believed in the custom of ostracizing a person from the community who had travelled to the foreign land by crossing the sea which was superstitiously treated as Kalapani, the dirty unholy water. For the defiance of this purity-pollution taboo to accompany her husband in England, Krishnabhabini had to leave behind her daughter, Tilottama who was kept under her grandfather's care and was married off in an early age of ten. Krishnabhabini's travelogue is tinged with the critique of the lack of women's freedom in pursuing her studies in the foreign cities and the dual bondage of a woman citizen under the British colonialism. Her journey to England was essentially linked with the metaphor of breaking the cage, articulating her identity and coming out unveiled in the public world by casting aside the inhibitions. Thus in her courageous efforts to create her space in an unknown city she liberated herself from the opinions and reclaimed her voice. Her description of the city of London in constant reference to the cityspace of colonial Calcutta is exemplary as for the first time a Bengali woman outside her cloistered world was documenting her observations and her persistent negotiations with the city space. This process of urbanization and glory of the London marketplace stroke Krishnabhabini's sensibility who tried to fathom an unknown urban space by constantly referring back to Calcutta and drawing comparisons between the two cities. Her critique of the London class structure and the inhuman behaviour towards the poor of London presented her as a socially conscious woman. This most important aspect of *Englande Bangamahila* is Krishnabhabini's comparative understanding of women's condition in both the cities. Her applause of the individuality, education and free spirit of the British women made her conscious of the confined domesticated situation of her fellow women in her native land. She indirectly backed the free movement of women in the public sphere by her praise of the British women. It seems therefore that Krishnabhabini's travel to London was not merely for her individual improvement rather it is under the compulsion of being a companion to her husband. But it ultimately produced the first written documentation of a Bengali women's negotiation with the city space in a form of travelogue through the exploration of London and Calcutta.

Women's intervention in the city space is a journey through the double bind of tradition and modernity. She was celebrated as the model of 'female emancipation' and 'new womanhood'

advocated by the colonial as well as the social reformist agendas. On the other hand she had to bear the onus of the Hindu brahmanic upper caste patriarchy to preserve the sanctity of 'home' and to become the model of spiritual purity upheld by the Indian nationalist tradition. Nonetheless within the site of multiple patriarchies, the women in the nineteenth century Calcutta did create a space of her own through strategic contestation and compliance with the prevalent social norms. Even if it was a marginal zone in the dominant male city space, still it gave her a voice to assert her agency to redefine the cityspace , to reformulate it from the feminine perspective and to relocate it within her writings.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT – A CASE STUDY OF WOMEN PRESIDENTS DURING CORONA PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

Women were treated as weaker section of the society but now women are game changer. Women are dynamic. Women have participated equally with men in all walks of life and also during pandemic. During this Pandemic Covid19 it is seen that women leaders or presidents have gained more importance. The role of women in economy has also been of great importance. This pandemic has brought a flight and different look on women empowerment. Women were always in forefront as an innovator, health care workers, leaders and community organizer too. This has also showed importance of women leaders in the world. Women holds a vital place in the Society. Women all around the world are paving and inspiring all the women with different leadership styles to deal with the Pandemic situation. In this era of 21st Century, women empowerment is a concern and illusion concept. Still in this era we can observe inequalities which is faced by women. This pandemic has taught us to adapt go changes in society too. This study is based on women empowerment with reference to women president or leader of the world. It also tries to elaborate work done by women leaders or president during this Corona Pandemic.

Keywords –Women empowerment, Corona Pandemic, women leaders.

INTRODUCTION

MEANING - WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Women Empowerment can be defined as the process which makes women self sufficient. Women Empowerment is all about making women independent and strong socially and financially. It gives them a sense to make decision. This makes them aware of their rights and powers. Women empowerment has its for sure advantages which helps them to get equal status as men. It helps women in making self sufficient. In India Women Empowerment is based on various factors or characteristics like age, caste, education and geographical area. Women Empowerment means granting them to make choices in their life. Undoubtedly Women Empowerment leads to Nations Empowerment.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This paper highlights on Women Empowerment and also Women Empowerment with reference to Women President or Leaders of the World. This also highlights on the case studies of Women Leader or Presidents all over the world during this Pandemic of Corona. It also briefs about the comparison of various countries of the World.

METHODOLOGY

This paper is descriptive in nature. The data used to study the paper is purely based on secondary data. The journals, articles, web links, have been used as source of information. There is no empirical touch to this paper.

OUTBREAK OF CORONA PANDEMIC

Covid 19 or Corona Pandemic has shaken whole world and all the sectors of the society. Each and every sector has been affected by the Pandemic leading to inerasable impact. This Pandemic has taught us that change is inevitable and needs to be accepted. The world is on the brink of economic slowdown, uncertainty, job losses, disease, depression and negativity. The Coronavirus has brought many challenges before us. It is how we rise to the challenge, how we analyse the situation, rethink our strategies which define our perspective. All the countries of the world, have opted for Lockdown as an initiative to flatten the curve and save lives.

CASESTUDY ON WOMEN LEADERS OF THE WORLD

In today's world women are all rounder they are into all the fields and are growing in this fields. Nationally as well on International level women are empowered. Women can be empowered only by educating them. Educated women will pursue meaningful work and will contribute to the country's economy.

Entire world is hit by the Corona virus Pandemic. The countries are not just hit by Pandemic but also other crisis which have occurred due to pandemic. This has triggered whole world. Women leaders took this pandemic seriously and took proper decisions and acted accordingly with either lockdown or other programmes.

Women have led in many ways during this pandemic which can be explained as follows :-

- As Head of Government
- As Leader of Cities
- As Health Workers
- As Scientist
- As Grassroot Organizers

There are very few countries which are led by Women in the World. There are many countries which are lead by Women. The examples are Germany, New Zealand, Denmark, Taiwan, Iceland, Finland, Norway and Belgium. This countries have reported a decline in the death rate due to pandemic. Apart from this, these countries were early movers in establishing preventive measures, compassionate and transparent communication from their leaders who have been backed by scientific information and took clues from public health officials. These countries were leading in the path to fight against corona pandemic which has set an example for other countries of the world. Countries with Women Leaders have handled the Corona Pandemic very efficiently.

The following are examples of Women Presidents who dealt with Pandemic are discussed below :-

▪ **GERMANY**

Angela Merkel, chancellor of Germany, which has generally managed the outbreak well, has impressed with explanations of the epidemiological R0 factor that went “viral” for their sobriety and clarity. Germany has witnessed lower death rate than other countries around namely Italy, France and Spain. She herself has updated the citizens.

▪ **ICELAND**

Katrin Jakobsdottir’s gave quick response to Covid 19 when the death rate was lower than other European Countries. Iceland joined hands with decode genetics, a biopharma firm to test Covid 19 in the early March. This step of testing and tracing the people helped to control the cases of Covid. They have implemented universal testing for all the citizens as the population is low or small in size.

▪ **NEW ZEALAND**

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern is one of the youngest female leader. To covid she responded very swiftly and tough. She spoke to public with warmth and empathy by using soothing words. Her mantra was Be Strong be kind. JacindaArdern, prime minister of New Zealand, also had a talk with Kiwis through Facebook Live which was causal an interactive. Further it was also comforting and reliable. Her motive was ‘Go hard and Go Early’. It has only 22 deaths from Covid-19 to date. She had applied rapid lockdown and successfully eliminated the virus in both the waves i.e. first and second waves. Here the duration of lockdown has been shorter than other countries of the world especially Pacific.

▪ **TAIWAN**

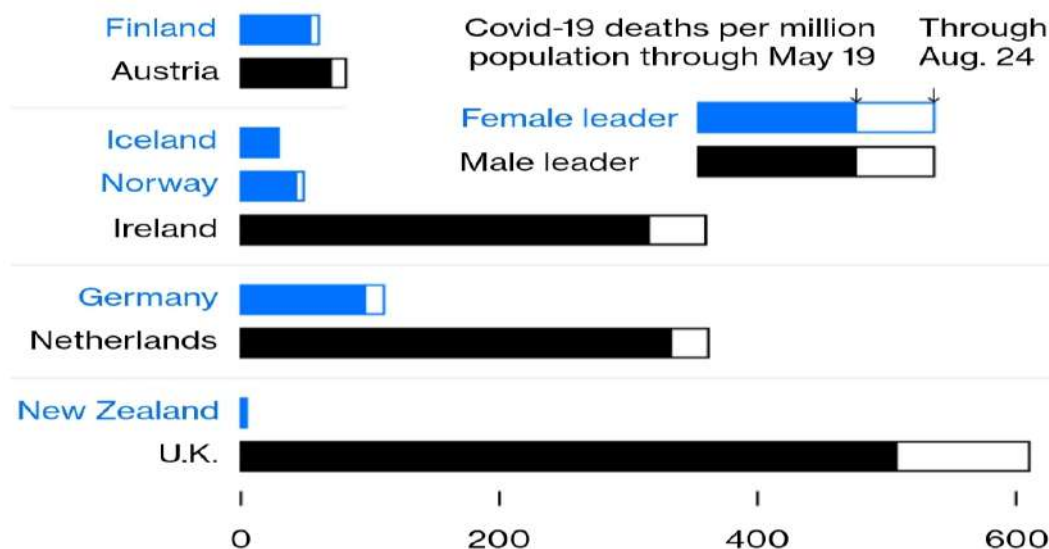
President Tsai Ing-wen of Taiwan, who is the first female president who played a significant role in the country’s Covid 19 Pandemic Situation. Because of her leadership, government undertook efforts to track the travel and contact history for each patient infected with Covid-19. They used advanced technology and disease fighting knowledge. They also kept border closed. She deployed a unified strategy of rules and procedures to protect public health. Here when a traveller arrives in Taiwan in March – April, so they have to hand over their phones to authorities for recording details via GPS signal of traveller through which traveller were tracked and make sure that they are quarantine

▪ **BANGLADESH**

The first Covid 19 case in the country was reported on 7th March and had over 8000 cases. Initially educational institutions were shut down and thereby non-essential business and services were closed, and gave more emphasis on online services. The Government avoided using the word lockdown as it may create panic situation. Then lockdown was implemented with effect from 6pm to 6am. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina took first and foremost role of chief panic-diffuser. She conducts national live-casts with local frontline workers almost every day. She has publicly given directives and the usage of masks was successfully promoted. So far, the country has adopted a precautionary ‘watch and extend’ policy, whereby it is extending the lockdown in a piecemeal way.

▪ **FINLAND**

Unlike other neighbouring countries like Sweden, which has been kept open for business. It has also closed all the schools and colleges in the early period of March. Finland's secret is all about preparedness. Finland has been based on three “S” – Stockpile, Swift Action and Staying with the times. Finland has banned public gatherings and also restrictions on travel. The death rate in Finland is lower than Greece. Finland has made a stockpile of various equipments like surgical masks, protective equipment, medical equipments, etc. The Government is led by Sanna Marin which focuses on staying with time and has educated via social media by disclosing do and don't adding not to believe in rumors or become panic in this situation. Finland Government also assured that public health care system has enough resources to treat all the patients of the country.



▪ **COMPARISON BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE LED COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD**

The comparisons between female-led and similar male-led countries during the first quarter of the pandemic i.e. up to mid-May gives clear differences. In case of Hong Kong which is led by a woman, recorded 1,056 cases whereas Singapore which has a similar but is led by a man, recorded 28,794 cases during the pandemic. Similarly, Norway which is led by a woman, had 8,257 cases and 233 deaths, while Ireland led by a man, recorded 24,200 cases and 1,547 deaths. In case of Taiwan recorded 440 cases and 7 deaths while South Korea had 11,078 cases and 263 deaths.

▪ **CONCLUSION**

Women have proved always themselves. Women have always proved them and they are able to sort things during covid19. Women are underrepresented at the cost of

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society. Hence, it would be easy to conclude outright that women make better leaders than men. This shows that when women can do well in all the fields. These Women presidents have stood different in handling this situation of corona pandemic. These women were praised for their outstanding fight against Covid 19 Pandemic. Female Leaders have been very effective in handling the Covid 19 crisis. Women have also earned honors for their excellence during this Pandemic. This was possible just because of pro-active measures taken by women. This is also an empowerment of women. A recent study reveals that 194 countries fought against Covid 19 and some countries were led by women. Countries led by women like Germany, New Zealand suffered half and death rate was also low as compared to countries led by men. This was just because of proactive policies and measures taken up by women leaders of that country. Hereby concluding it can be said that Countries with Women Leaders have handled the Corona Virus Pandemic situation far better than Male Leaders

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MYSTERY OF ANCIENT INDIAN HAIRSTYLE

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ABSTRACT

KEYWORDS:

- HAIRSTYLE
- ANCIENT INDIA
- LITERARY SOURCE
- SCULPTURE
- MURAL EVIDENCE OF AJANTA.

ANCIENT INDIA IS ALWAYS A MYSTERY. IT IS STILL MYSTERIOUS THAT HOW ANCIENT INDIA WAS SO MUCH ADVANCED IN EVERY ASPECT LIKE TOWN PLANNING OF HARAPPA OR THEIR SCRIPTS. SIMILARLY, THEY WERE QUITE ADVANCED IN THEIR DRESSING STYLES AND THEIR HAIRSTYLES.

THE INBUILT FEATURE OF HUMAN NATURE IS BEAUTIFICATION. INDIA HAS ALWAYS TAKEN TREMENDOUS INTEREST IN EXHIBITING THEIR COIFFURES. ART HAS ALWAYS BEEN IMPORTANT FOR PEOPLE. ONE SUCH ARTISTIC EXPRESSION IS THE KALEIDOSCOPIIC VARIETY OF HAIRSTYLES OF PEOPLE FROM 2ND CENTURY BCE TO 7TH CENTURY CE. THE STUDY OF TYPES AND PATTERN OF DIFFERENT HAIRSTYLES DISCERNING THEIR SIGNIFICANCE IS OFTEN KNOWN AS “KESHA-VINAYASA”.

THROUGH THIS PAPER OF MINE I WILL TRY TO BRING IN LIMELIGHT THE VARIOUS ANCIENT HAIRSTYLES THROUGH VARIOUS LITERARY SOURCES, SCULPTURAL EVIDENCES OF BARHUT, SANCHI, AMARAVATI, GANDHARA, NAGARJUNAKONDA MATHURA AND MURAL EVIDENCE OF AJANTA.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: BY TAKING THE ANCIENT HAIRSTYLE DEPICTED IN THE SCULPTURE, LITERARY SOURCE AND MURAL EVIDENCES OF AJANTA CAVE I HIGHLIGHTED THEIR FEATURE AND THEIR ARTISTIC SENSE AND THEIR LOVE FOR THE ART.

A TRUE HISTORY OF COUNTRY IS NOT THE CHRONOLOGICAL NARRATION OF THE POLITICAL HISTORY BUT ALSO THE ART WHICH IS THE EXPRESSION OF THE SOCIETY. THE OBJECTIVE OF THIS PAPER IS TO VISUALISE THE VARIOUS FASHIONS OF THE HAIR PREVAILING IN ANCIENT INDIA THE STUDY OF SCULPTURES OF VARIOUS TIME COVERS THE ENTIRE EARLY INDIAN PERIODS INCLUDE SANGA, SATAVAHANA, IKSHVAKU, KUSHANA AND GUPTA. VARIOUS BOOK OF ANCIENT HISTORY THAT THROWS LIGHT ON THE HAIRSTYLES OF ANCIENT INDIA INCLUDES KAUTILYA'S ARTHASHASTRA, HALA'S GATHA SAPTASTI, BHARATA'S NATYASAstra, WORK OF DIVYAVADANA, VATSYAYANA AND MAHABHASYA, WORK OF KALIDASA, AMARAKOSA, VARAMIHIRA'S BRHAT SAMHITA AND HARSHACHARITA.

THE LITERARY CITATIONS TO THE COIFFURES KNOWN TO THE VEDIC PERIOD WAS COPIOUS. THIS VARIETY OF HAIR STYLE MENTIONED IN THE VEDIC LITERATURE SHOWS THE IMPORTANCE THAT THE PEOPLE GAVE TO THEIR HAIRSTYLES. THE VARIOUS NAME OF THE COIFFURES ARE OPASA, KAPARDA, KUMBA, KURIRA, KESA, SIKHANDA, SIKHA, SIMAN, PULASTI, STUKA.

OPASA WAS A COMMON HAIRSTYLE OF BOTH MEN AND WOMEN. THE HAIRSTYLE LOOKED LIKE A THATCHED NET OR COVERED ROOFING OF THE HOUSE WHEN WORN BY WOMEN.

WHEN THE KAPARDA STYLE WORN BY WOMEN, IT HAS FOUR KAPARDA THAT INDICATE THE FOUR CORNERS OF THE ALTARS AND IT FORMED THE CROWN SHAPED COIFFURE.

KURIRA HAIRSTYLE WAS A HORN SHAPED COIFFURE POSSIBLY WITH THE LONG BRAIDS OF WOMEN. IT IS ASSUMED THAT A NET OR VEIL MIGHT HAVE BEEN HUNG FROM THEIR HORN. THIS TYPE OF HAIRSTYLES STILL SURVIVE IN THE HILLY TRACTS OF SUTLEJ AND GANGES.

KUMBA WAS A HEMISPHERICAL COIFFURE THAT OFTEN LOOKED LIKE A POT SHAPED COIL AT THE BACK OF THE HAIR. THIS HAIRSTYLE GOT ITS FIRST MENTION IN ATHARVAVEDA. IT HAS GOT ITS RESEMBLANCE WITH THE TAMIL KUDUM.

SIMAN MEANS PARTING THE HAIR WHICH GOT ITS FIRST MENTION IN ATHARVAVEDA. IT WAS A PROMINENT STYLE DURING RIG VEDIC PERIOD. THERE ARE ALSO SEVERAL HYMNS IN THE VEDA FOR ITS AMPLE GROWTH.

PULTASI IS THE NORMAL HAIRSTYLE WHICH WAS MENTIONED IN YAJURVEDA SAMHITA. ACCORDING TO DR. MOTICHANDRA IT IS A STYLE OF KAPARDA WHICH WAS WORN IN THE FRONT.

SIKHANDA WAS A HAIRSTYLE WHICH DENOTES TRUFT OR LOCK AS A MODE OF WEARING THE HAIR AND SIKHA WAS THE KNOT THAT WAS TIED IN THE HAIR TOP WHERE THE LOOSE KNOT INDICATE MOURNING. SIKHA GOT ITS IMPORTANCE FROM THE AGE OF SUTRAS.

WOMEN OF VARIOUS PLACES FOLLOW VARIOUS HAIRSTYLES WHICH INCLUDE CURLED LOCKS HAIRSTYLE OF MALWA, WOMEN OF GAUDA HAD A TOP KNOT LOCK HAIRSTYLE OR A BRAIDED OR PLAITED HAIR. FROM THE WORK OF MAHABHASYAS PATANJALI WE CAN KNOW ABOUT THE MIDDLE PARTED HAIRSTYLE. THE REFERENCE OF SIKHA CAN BE GET FROM THE WORK OF KALIDASA. WOMEN KEPT THEIR HAIR LONG AND THEY WERE OILED AND COMBED. KALIDASA ALSO REFERED EKAVENI WHICH WAS THE HAIR KNITTED IN SINGLE LONG BRAID. HAIRSTYLES DESCRIBED BY KALIDASA FIND ITS PLACE IN SCULPTURES AND IN THE PAINTINGS OF AJANTA CAVE.

DHAMILLA HAIRSTYLE INCLUDES DRESSING OF HAIRSTYLES WITH FLOWER AND JEWELLERIES.IT WAS A VERY POPULAR COIFFURE OF THE CHOLA PERIOD. VAYUPURANA IS THE PURANA WHICH GIVE AMPLE STYLE OF HAIR THAT INCLUDE LAMBAKESA, MUKTAKESA, EKA JATA, TRI JATIN, CUDALA ETC.

THE AMARKOSA GAVE A LOT DETAILS OF HAIRSTYLE OF THE GUPTA PERIOD. ALAKA AND THE CHURNA KUNTALA WERE THE TWO CURLED LOCK HAIRSTYLES AMONG WHICH CHURNA KUNTALA WAS THE FAVOURITE.

DURING THE PERIOD OF VARAMIHIRA WOMEN DID NOT LOVE TO HAVE SHORT HAIR. IT WAS BELIEVED THAT IF A WOMEN LOOSENED HER HAIR IN THE PRESENCE OF MAN IT INDICATES HER LOVE FOR THE MAN.

ACCORDING TO HIUEN TSANG “THE HAIR ON THE CROWN OF THE HEAD IS MADE INTO A COIL WHILE ALL THE REST OF THE HAIR SLINGING DOWN. SOME CLIP THEIR MOUSTACHES OR HAVE OTHER FANTASTIC FASHION.”

IT IS SAID THAT ART IS AN EXPRESSION OF THE SOCIETY – ITS TASTE, IDEOLOGY, AND TEMPER.IT IS ALSO A REFLECTION OF THE SPIRIT AND THE MANNER OF THE PEOPLE WHO CREATED IT. HAIRSTYLE OF THE INDIAN WOMEN PROVE THIS FACT. THEY SHOWED THE TRUE ESSAENCE OF ART THROUGH THEIR COIFFURES. THEY FOLLOWED DIFFERENT COIFFURE FOR DIFFERENT TIME. SOME ARE FOLLOWED TO PROVE THEM AS A STRONG WOMEN WHERE AS SOME ARE FOLLOWED TO SHOW LOVE FOR THE MEN WHERE AS FEW EXPRESS THE TEMPER OF THE WOMEN. ANCIENT INDIA IS A MYSTERY AND THIS MYSTERIOUS JOURNEY WILL BE CONTINUED THROUGH THE NEXT HALF OF THIS PAPER WHERE I WILL HIGHLIGHT THE VARIOUS HAIRSTYLE THAT WE GOT FROM THE SCULPTURES OF THE VARIOUS PERIOD.

LET ME BEGIN WITH THE SCULPTURES OF BARHUT.THE SCULPTURES OF BARHUT SHOW EVIDENCES OF HAIR COMBED BACKWARDS AND SECURED IN

A ROUNDISH BUN WITH A KNOT CLOSE TO THE HEAD. THIS EVIDENCES OF HAIRSTYLE IS FOUND IN JATAKAS. THE LOCKS OF HAIR ARE TWISTED INTO SPIRALS CLOSE TO THE EAR NEAR THE NAPE. SOMETIMES SCARFS AND HANDKERCHIEF WAS TIED TO THE BUN WHICH WAS DEPICTED IN THE SCULPTURE ILLUSTRATING “MANIKANTHA JATAKA”.

ANOTHER HAIRSTYLE DEPICTED WAS HAIR LOOPED AND KNOTTED LOOSELY. THIS TYPE OF HAIR IS OFTEN EMBLISHED WITH THE FLOWER WREATHS WHICH WAS SEEN IN THE CASE OF A LADY WORSHIPPER REVEALED IN THE PANEL ILLUSTRATING BODHI TREE WORSHIP. IT SHOWS THE RELIGIOUS ASPECT OF THE SCULPTURE. ABHIRA WOMEN COVER THEIR HAIR WITH SCARFS WHOSE REFERENCE CAN BE BROUGHT BHARATA’S NATYASAstra.

THE love FOR MUSIC CAN BE DEPICTED FROM THE SCULPTURE AS THIS SCULPTURE PRESENCE A HAIR COMBED BACK AND ALLOWED TO SLING ON THE BACK AND THE LOCK FALLEN ON THE BACK WAS FURTHER PLAITED DEPICTED IN THE SCULPTURE OF A LADY MUSICIAN. IT WAS MUCH AKIN TO THE IRANIAN HAIRSTYLE.

THE AESTHETIC SENSE OF THE WOMEN IS QUITE OBSERVANT FROM THE SCULPTURE DEPICTING JATABHARA AND SIKHANDA MODES COMBINED. THIS HAIRSTYLE IS FOUND IN SAGES PARTICULARLY TAPASVINIS AND IT IS A COMMON FORM OF HAIRSTMODES COMBINED. THIS HAIRSTYLE IS FOUND IN SAGES PARTICULARLY TAPASVINIS AND IT IS A COMMON FORM OF HAIRSTYLE IN ANCIENT INDIA.

NOW SPEAKING ABOUT THE SANCHI SCULPTURES WE CAME TO KKNOW ABOUT VARIOUS HAIRSTYLES OF WOMEN.IT INCLUDES LONG HAIR COMBED BACK WITH KESAVITHI AND ALLOWED TO FALL ON THE SHOULDERS WHICH WAS EVIDENT FROM THE FEMALE WORSHIPPER. THERE WAS ALSO SMALL DEVIATION FROM THIS HAIR STYLE WHERE KESAVITHI WAS ABSENT.

ANOTHER HAIRSTYLE DEPICTED WAS HAIR COMBED SIDEWARDS AND SECURED WITH A ROUNDISH BUN WITH KNOT CLOSE TO THE NAPE. THIS ROUNDISH BUN WAS INTRODUCED IN 1ST CENTURY IN ANCIENT ROME AND GREECE. THIS IS IDENTIFIED AS KESAPASA. NEXT COME THE HAIR IN THE PEACOCK PLUME MODE WHICH IS ALSO OBSERVANT IN A FEMALE WORSHIPPER CULTURE. BOTH THIS HAIRSTYLES ALSO SHOWS THE RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND OF THE TIME PERIOD AND THEIR LOVE FOR PRAYER.

THEIR LOVE FOR ART CAN BE VISUALISE FROM THE HAIRSTYLE IN WHICH HAIR COMBED BACK WITHOUT PARTING LINE AND TERMINATING INTO TUFT AT HE BACK OF THE HEAD AND A LOOP SHAPED LOCK WAS TUCKED INTO IT WHICH WAS DEPICTED IN THE LADY FLUTE PLAYER. THIS IS A NEW FORM OF HAIRSTYLES AND IT SURVIVED TILL TODAY.

AMARAVATI SCULPTURES BRING INTO LIMELIGHT HE HAIRSTYLE OF THE SATAVAHANA PERIOD.KESAPASA WITH LOOSE KNOT WAS DEPICTED IN

THE FEMALE WORSHIPPER. HER HAIRSTYLE WAS DECORATED WITH FLORAL ORNAMENTS. THIS HAIRDO IS VERY CHARMING.

THE MOST ADMIRERD FORM OF HAIRSTYLE DURING SATAVAHANA PERIOD WAS THE DHAMMILLA HAIRSTYLE WHICH WAS MEANT TO EXCITE PASSION IN THE LOVERS HEART. THIS SHOWS THE ROMANTIC ASPECT OF THE SATAVAHANA PERIOD AND THEIR LOVE FOR VARIOUS ART AND CULTURE. THE PEARL BEDECKED HAIR OFTEN DESCRIBED BY KALIDASA IS OF DHAMMILLA FORM.

NOW COMING TO THE GANDHARA STYLE OF HAIR GANDHARAN SCULPTURES SHOW A VARIETY OF COIFFURES REFLECTING THEIR DEXTERITY IN THE ART OF HAIRDO. THE COIFFURES EXHIBITED WERE ELEGANT AND FASHIONABLE. THE HAIRSTYLE INCLUDES HAIR WITH OR WITHOUT PLAIT AND IT WAS ALLOWED TO DANGLE WHICH WAS DEPICTED IN THE FEMALE DEITY. IN FEW CASES THE LADIES DEPICTED IN THE GANDHARA RELIEFS HAVE THE HAIR PLAITED SIMPLE PIG TAIL ALLOWED TO FALL ON THE BACK OR BRAIDED INTO LOOP KNOT. THE PIG TAIL WAS OFTEN DECORATED WITH A NET MADE OF PEARLS AND ROSSETTES.

ANOTHER HAIRSTYLE DEPICTED WAS THE HAIR WHICH WAS SIMPLY COMBED BACK AND ALLOWED TO FALL IN THE OCCIPUT WHICH WAS SEEN ON WINGED DEVI. HAIR GATHERED INTO A BUNDLE OR A ROUNDISH BUN WAS ILLUSTRATED IN THE PRESENTATION OF THE BRIDE TO SIDDHARTHA. SIMILAR TYPE OF HAIR DRESS WAS REVEALED BY A LADY MUSICIANS AND BASKET CARRIERS. THE BUN OF THE GANDHARA REGION IS THE EVIDENCE OF HELLENISTIC ORIGIN. FEMALE ATTENDANTS AND GODDESS MAINTAINED A HAIR ARRANGEMENT IN THE SHAPE OF SPIRAL ON THE TOP OF THE HEAD OR TOP KNOT. THE WEARING OF CHAPLETS SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN A UNIVERSAL CUSTOM IN NORTH-EAST INDIA. OTHER HAIRSTYLES WERE TOP KNOT WITH FEW VARIATIONS LIKE CURLED SIDE LOCKS SEEN IN A FEMALE DEITY AND LOOSE KNOT ON THE OCCIPUT THAT WAS ILLUSTRATED IN MAYA'S DREAM.

NAGARJUNAKONDA SCULPTURES PORTRAYS COPIUS HAIRSTYLE KNOWN TO THE PEOPLE OF THE IKSHVAKU PERIOD. THEY MAINLY APPEAR WITH THE COVER HEADS. THE COMMON PEOPLE DID NOT GIVE MUCH ATTENTION TO THE HAIR DRESSING BUT WOMEN HAVE EXCELLED MEN IN THE ART OF HAIR DRESSING. HAIR COMBED BACKWARDS AND SECURED IN A ROUNDISH BUN WITH A KNOT CLOSE TO THE HEAD WHICH WAS MOSTLY DEPICTED IN "CHAMARA DHARINIS" OR FEMALE ATTENDANTS AND OCCASSIONALLY IN THE LADIES IN AMOROUS POSTURES.

THE FEMALE ATTANDANT DEPICTED ON AN INSCRIBED PILLAR WEARS THIS COIFFURE IN ANOTHER WAY. SHE COMBED BACH HER HAIR AND SECURED IT IN A ROUNDISH BUN WHERE SMANTA IS ABSENT. MANY OTHER HAIRSTYLES DEPICTED IN VARIOUS SCULPTURES INCLUDE KESAPASA WITH LOOSE KNOT, HAIR WITH OR WITHOUT PLATING ALLOWED TO HANG TILL HIPS, CURLED HAIR, SIMPLE AND UNPLAITED HAIR GROUPED INTO BUNDLE, HAIRDRESSED IN FAN SHAPED TIARAS, UNDRRESSED HAIR.

FINALLY COMING TO MATHURAN STYLE. THE HAIRSTYLES DEPICTED IN THE MATHURAN SCULPTURE BELONG TO THE KUSHANA PERIOD. METICULOUS CARE IS TAKEN BY PEOPLE IN THEIR HAIR DRESSING. THE SIMPLE HAIRSTYLE INCLUDE SIMANTA OR KESAVITHI WHICH WAS DEPICTED IN THE SCULPTURE OF A DANCER. A SLIGHT VARIATION OF THIS HAIR STYLE IS OBSERVED IN A WORSHIPPER.

A DANCING GIRL DEPICTED ON A RAILING PILLAR COMBED HER LONG HAIR BACK HAS COMBED HER LONG HAIR BACK WITHOUT ANY PARTING LINE AND ALLOWED TO DANGLE. THE INTRODUCTION OF THE BUN AT MATHURA COULD HAVE BEEN THE WORK OF THE KUSHANA. THE STYLE OF DRESSING THE HAIR INTO A BUN WAS IN PRACTICE IN INDIA AS EARLY AS HARAPPAN TIMES. IN HARAPPA A PRIEST WAS FOUND WITH SIMILAR BUN TIED WITH THE FILLET. THIS STYLE DID NOT OCCUR IN MAURYAN PERIOD. THIS IS ALSO NOTICED AT AMARAVATI AND NAGARJUNAKONDA AS WELL AS AT MATHURA AND AJANTA.

OTHER HAIRSTYLES INCLUDE HAIR TIED INTO DOUBLE BUN, HAIR IN A NET, HAIR GATHERED IN A BAG, LOOSE HAIR TIED IN A LOOP AND KNOTTED, HAIR ROLLED UP AND DECORATED WITH NET OF PEARLS, HAIR WITH A DOMICAL KNOT OVER THE HEAD, HAIR TWISTED INTO SPIRALS AND MANY MORE. MAXIMUM OF THIS SCULPTURES ARE EITHER LADY MUSICIAN OR WORSHIPPER. THIS SHOWS THEIR LOVE FOR ART AND THEIR VIEWS TOWARDS RELIGION.

NOW FINALLY COMING TO THE MURAL EVIDENCES OF AJANTA CAVE. WE CAME TO KNOW ABOUT THE VARIOUS HAIRSTYLE LIKE LOOSE HAIR (LAMBALAKA), LOOSE HAIR IN COILS AND CURLS, HAIR SECURED IN THE NET, HAIR TWISTED INTO SPIRAL, HAIR WITH A KNOT OVER THE HEAD, HAIR DRESSED INTO A CONCH SHAPED KNOT, BOBBED HAIR, HAIR WITH APPLE SHAPED KNOT. AT AJANTA PARTICULARLY IN LATER PERIOD THERE IS AN INCREASING USE OF FLOWER KERCHIEFS AND CLOTH BAGS IN HAIR DRESSING. IT IS WELL KNOWN THAT SUCH ARTICLES WERE VERY COMMON IN GREECE.

SO WHAT CAN WE SAY FROM THE WHOLE PAPER. THE VARIOUS HAIRSTYLES DEPICTED IN THE SCULPTURES AND IN THE PAINTINGS OF AJANTA THROW LIGHT ON THE VARIOUS COIFFURES OF VARIOUS PERIOD AND AMONG THE PEOPLE WHO LIVED IN THE NORTH WESTERN PART OF THE COUNTRY. THE PERIOD BETWEEN THE 2ND CENTURY BCE AND 7TH CENTURY CE WAS THE FORMATIVE PERIOD OF INDIAN HISTORY. THERE WAS A FLOURISH IN ART AND CULTURE OF THE PERIOD WHICH WAS HIGHLIGHTED BY THE COIFFURE OF THE SCULPTURES AND PAINTINGS OF THE AJANTA CAVE. IN THE MATTER OF HAIRSTYLES SEVERAL INDIGENOUS TRAITS AND SOME FOREIGN INFLUENCES ARE UNMISTAKABLY NOTICEABLE.

IT MAY NOT BE POSSIBLE TO POINT OUT THE HAIRSTYLES ACCORDING TO THE STATUS OF PEOPLE. IN THE EARLY INDIAN ART, THE QUEENS, ATTENDANTS, AND THE PRASADAKAS APPEAR INVARIABLY IN THE SAME HAIR STYLES THEREBY RENDERING IT IMPOSSIBLE TO DISCRIMINATE THE HAIR STYLES ACCORDING TO THEIR STATUS. THERE WAS NO PARTICULAR

STYLE WHICH COULD BE MONOPOLY OF A PARTICULAR CLASS OF THE SOCIETY. THE HAIR STYLES OF THE ANCIENT INDIA THUS HAVE THEIR PARALLAL TODAY IN SOME FORM OR OTHER FOR TRADITION DIES HARD MORE SO IN A COUNTRY LIKE INDIA. THEREFORE, MANY OF THE HAIRSTYLES TODAY HAVE DIRECT LIMITS WITH THE ANCIENT INDIAN HAIRSTYLES.

AGAIN MANY HAIRSTYLES THAT WAS DEPICTED IN THE SCULPTURES, LITERATURE AND PAINTINGS SURVIVED TODAY. THE JATABHARA AND SIKHANDA HAIRSTYLE IS TODAY PROMINENT AMONG PRESENT DAY ASCETICS AND SAGES. EVEN TODAY THE WOMEN IN SOUTH INDIA, MAHARASTRA AND GUJARAT LOVE CHAPLETS.

I BEGAN THIS PAPER WITH A LINE “ANCIENT INDIA IS A MYSTERY”. IT WILL BE BETTER TO SAY INDIAN ART IS A MYSTERIOUS WHICH I HAVE TRIED TO HIGHLIGHT THROUGH THE VARIOUS HAIRSTYLES OF WOMEN THAT EXISTED FROM 2ND CENTURY BCE TO 7TH CENTURY CE THROUGH SCULPTURES, PAINTINGS AND VARIOUS LITERARY SOURCES.

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‘USE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT) BY WOMEN-A REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT IN EDUCATION’.

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Introduction:

Information and communications technology (ICT) is an extensional term for information technology (IT) that stresses the role of unified communications and the integration of telecommunications (telephone lines and wireless signals) and computers, as well as necessary enterprise software, middleware, storage, and audio-visual systems, that enable users to access, store, transmit, and manipulate information. The present decade has been dubbed as the information age. While this concept is not a new phenomenon especially when viewed against its historical perspective, the revolution in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and particularly the internet, is exerting profound effects on information-based services. The proliferation of new technologies opens a number of challenges for teaching, learning and research. Notable among these are those associated with the adoption and institutionalization of these emerging technologies in teaching, learning, and research. As a result, in the last few years, there have been many initiatives to enhance the developed and developing countries capacity to harness this technology in reshaping their educational sectors in ways that are consistent with current knowledge societies. The internet boom in India, therefore, has become one of the major contributors to the economic growth of the country. The use of internet has increased more than 11 times in the last seven years. This rise has led to the growth of cybercafés and internet parlors throughout India with easy accessibility and cost effective services helped by the enhanced speed of the internet.

Need of the study: -

Technology is developed to solve problems associated with human need in more productive ways. If there is no problem to solve, the technology may not be developed and or not adopted. Applying this principle to educational technology would mean that educational institution should create and adopt technologies that address educational problems, of which there are many. Furthermore, a technology will not be adopted by female educators where there is no perceived need or productivity gain.

Conceptual and operational definitions: -

❖ Operational definitions of the terms:

Comparative study - A comparative study is a study that involves the judging of something against a previous or different situation or a study that involves the comparison of two or more things of the same kind.

Impact - a marked effect or influence

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“Dynamics of Women’s Movement in India: Historical Legacy and Contemporary Challenges”
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ICT – an Information and Communication Technology.

❖ **Conceptual definition:**

ICT - Stands for "Information and Communication Technologies." **ICT** refers to technologies that provide access to information through telecommunications. ... This includes the Internet, wireless networks, cell phones, and other communication mediums.

Aim of the study:

To study the role played by technology in the teaching – learning process.

Objectives of the study:

The objective of this study is to explore ways in which the students of secondary section schools deal with technology in the Mumbai region. The study will specifically focus on the following objectives:

- To explore the core purpose of Use of ICT in the current educational scenario.
- To identify the extent of use of ICT among the women teachers of Mumbai region
- To study the difference in the use of ICT by teachers on the basis of gender in the current educational scenario.
- To study the relationship in the use of ICT by teachers and learning by students in the current educational scenario.

Scope of the study:

The Study has included both quantitative and qualitative methodologies applied to cognitive and social development of the secondary section students in Mumbai. The various developmental patterns used by teachers making use of ICT and learnt by students while having access to ICT is also featured. Attention is given to the growth of students.

Review of the related research:

Influence of Technology in Education Framework. The Implications and Challenges of the Implementation of "KYAN" in Government Schools of West Bengal, India by Dr. Sudipta Majumdar (Author), Amrita Majumdar (Author). The Government of West Bengal has been implementing Sarva Shiksha Abhiya since its inception. To optimize its impact, the State Govt. is combining Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan with Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Tools for Education Programme in the primary and secondary Govt. schools. Integration of the ICT in education projects popularly called Technology in Education (TIE) is generally used to familiarize students with the use and workings of computers as well as leverage the power of the ICT for teaching conventional subjects that get registered far effectively compared to conventional teaching-learning method. **Jonassen (2000)** Developed the idea of mindtools: computer-based tools and learning environments that have been “adapted or developed to function as intellectual partners with the learner in order to engage and facilitate critical thinking and higher-order learning” (p. 11). According to him, the role of a mind tool is to extend the learner's cognitive functioning during the learning process, and to engage the learner in operations while constructing knowledge that they would not have been able to accomplish otherwise. “Mind tools enable learners to become critical thinkers. When using cognitive tools, learners engage

in knowledge construction rather than knowledge reproduction” (Jonassen,2000, p.18). **Lowther et al. (2008)** have stated that there are three important characteristics are needed to develop good quality teaching and learning with ICT: autonomy, capability, and creativity. Autonomy means that students take control of their learning through their use of ICT. In this way, they become more capable of working by themselves and with others. Teachers can also authorize students to complete certain tasks with peers or in groups. Through collaborative learning with ICT, the students have more opportunity to build the new knowledge onto their background knowledge, and become more confident to take risks and learn from their mistakes.

Methodology:

A structured questionnaire was used to gather data required for this study covering a number of broad areas of e-resources use such as:

- Importance of ICT
- Understanding of ICT
- Skills developed using ICT
- Self-study usage
- Support to teachers/institution

The tool used for the research was a survey questionnaire which was self-made by the researcher for 75 teachers containing 30 questions distributed under 5 sections and the parameters are Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. It will help to measure the impact of ICT on learning among students and simultaneously keeps a check on the strategies used by the school to promote ICT among students learning and also teachers’ input in the same.

Data collection:

Data collection is one of the most important tasks of the research process. The researcher personally visited and explained the purpose of the research to the principals of the secondary school in Mumbai and also discussed about its implications.

The participants were selected randomly. Prior appointment was taken for the administration of the tool. Before the administration of the tool, the researcher explained the purpose and gave clear instructions regarding the responses on the rating scale. The participants were given the freedom to think and answer. No matter what method is eventually used, there are certain major issues involved in choosing a data collection strategy. Some of these issues include sampling, type of population, question form, question content, response rates, costs, available facilities, length of data collection, and computer-assisted techniques for data collection.

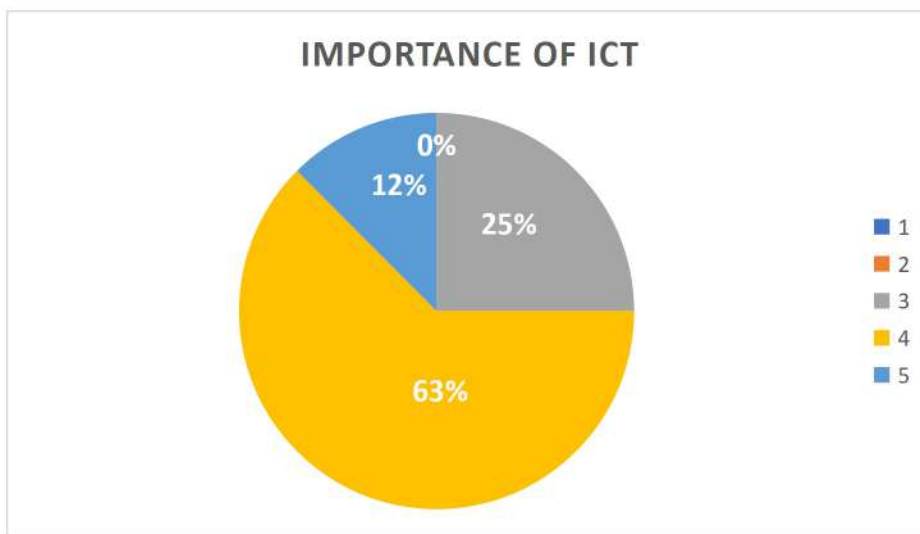
Data Analysis:

The first step in the analysis of data in research is the organization of data. Organization of data includes editing, classifying and tabulation of information. Editing implies checking the obtained data for accuracy, usefulness and completeness. The division of the data into various categories or groups as required for the study succeeds this.

Descriptive Analysis & Interpretation of data:

The scoring has been done in the following manner for convenience: 1 – *Strongly Disagree*; 2 – *Disagree*; 3 – *Neutral*; 4 – *Agree*; 5 – *Strongly Agree*.

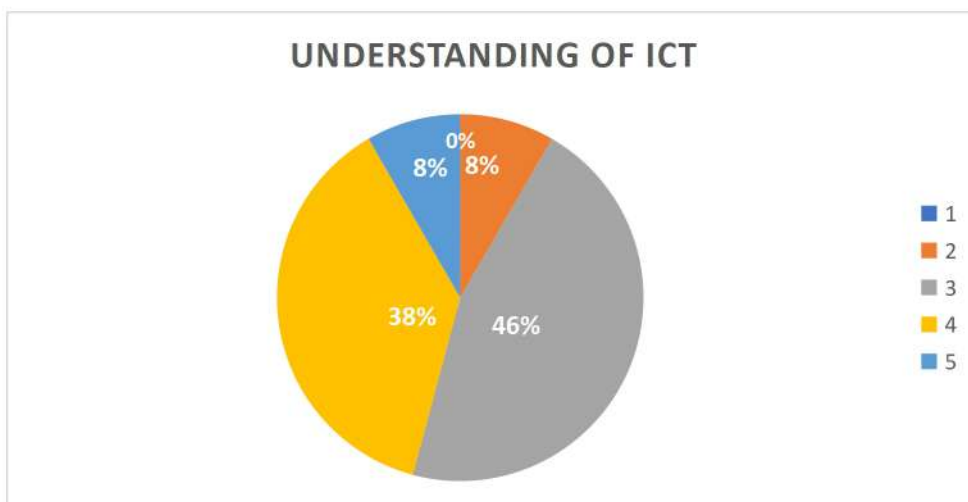
1. IMPORTANCE OF ICT:



Interpretation:

25% of the teachers have NEUTRAL feelings about the increasing importance of ICT in the current scenario. 62% of the teachers AGREE while the remaining 13% STRONGLY AGREE with the fact that ICT is important to sustain in the current world.

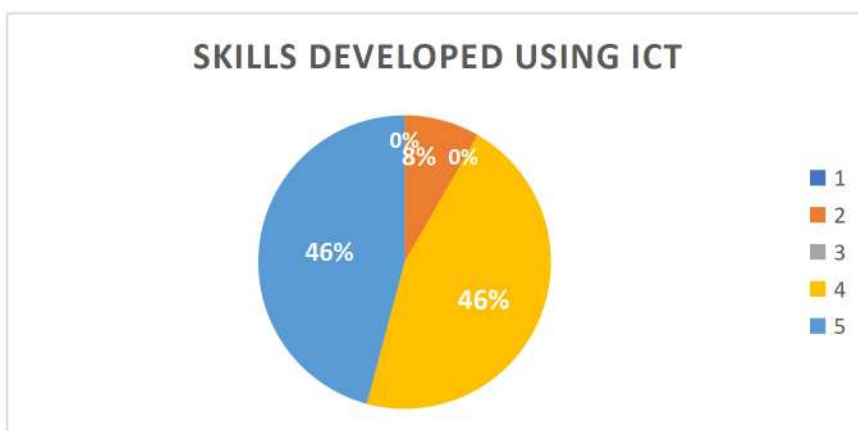
2. UNDERSTANDING OF ICT:



Interpretation:

46% of teachers are NEUTRAL about how ICT can help in the day-to-day study, whereas 38% AGREE and actively participate in the Understanding process of concepts using ICT. There is an equal percentage of teachers who disagree and strongly agree to the understanding of ICT.

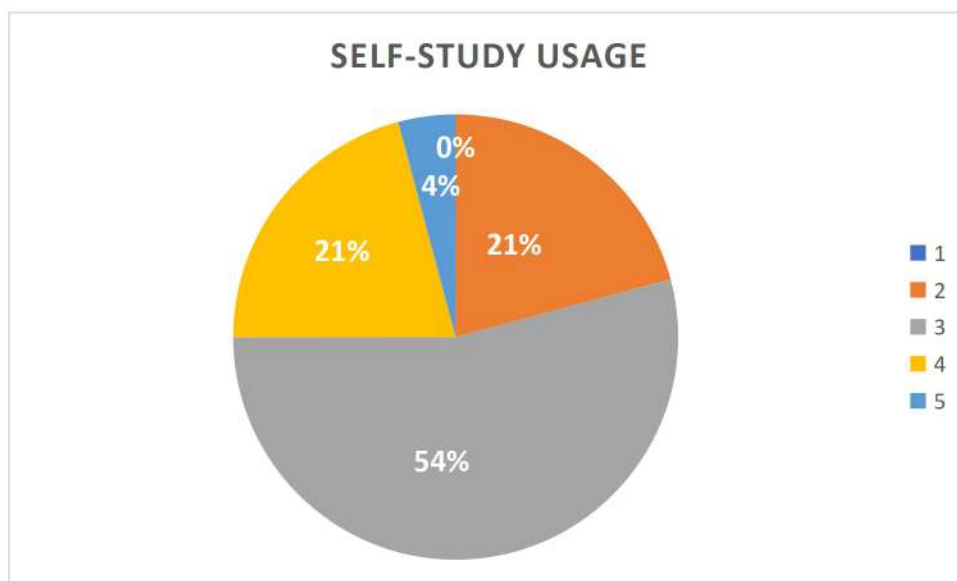
3. SKILLS DEVELOPED USING ICT:



Interpretation:

46% of teachers AGREE and the other 46% STRONGLY AGREE that the usage of ICT does develop skills. Communication skills, analyzing skills, skills of art and craft are all developed by using ICT. Barely 8% of teachers disagree that usage of ICT develops any skills.

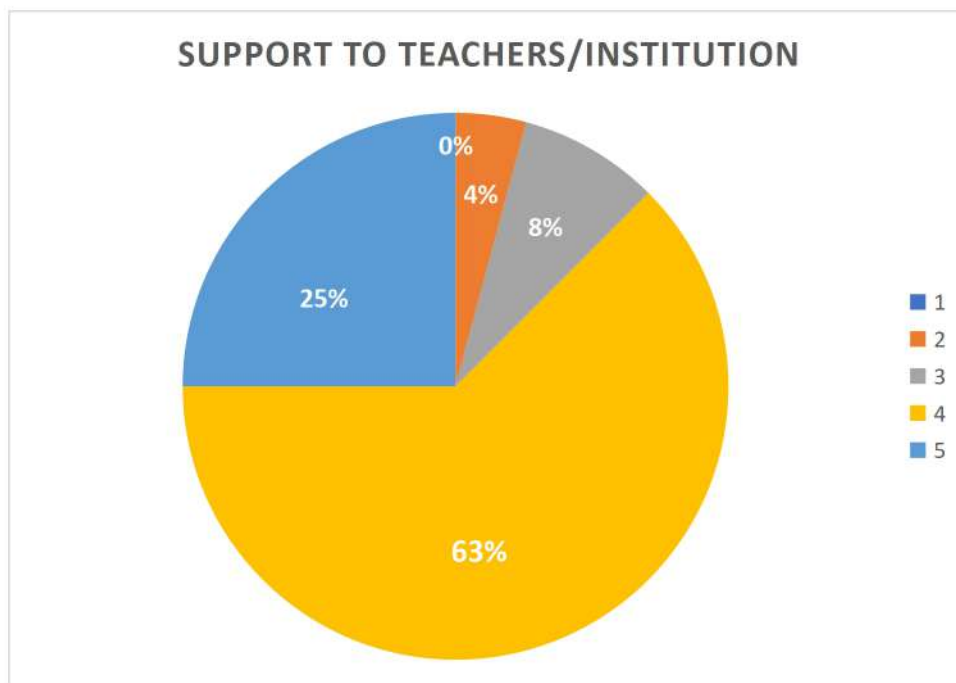
4. SELF-STUDY USAGE:



Interpretation:

54% of the teachers have marked NEUTRAL as they do not use ICT for self-study. The learning culture today is still the traditional way, where the teachers completely rely on technology. There are equal number of teachers who AGREE and DISAGREE with the usage of ICT for self-study.

5. SUPPORT TO TEACHERS/INSTITUTION:

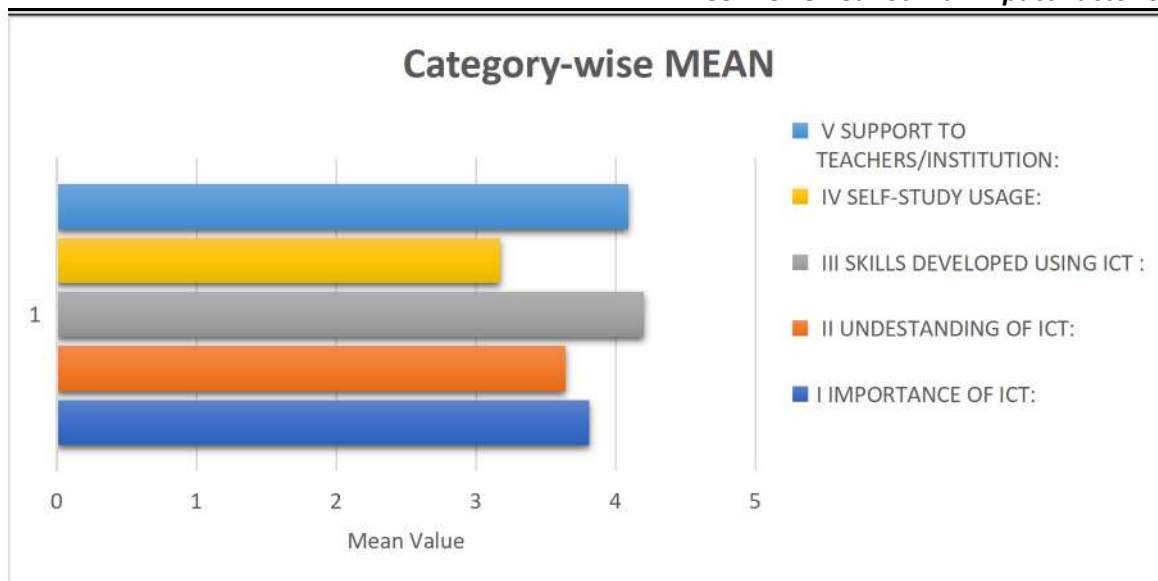


Interpretation:

Most of the teachers either AGREE, 62%, or STRONGLY AGREE, 25%, that ICT is a support to other teachers and also to the educational institutions. It helps in depicting the concepts in a manner that is easily understandable. The teachers need to work on making presentations and all but it really facilitates the movement of knowledge keeping the Maxims of teaching in mind.

6. CATEGORY-WISE ANALYSIS:

CATEGORIES	MEAN SCORES
IMPORTANCE OF ICT	3.8083
UNDESTANDING OF ICT	3.6417
SKILLS DEVELOPED USING ICT	4.2014
SELF-STUDY USAGE:	3.1719
SUPPORT TO TEACHERS/INSTITUTION	4.088

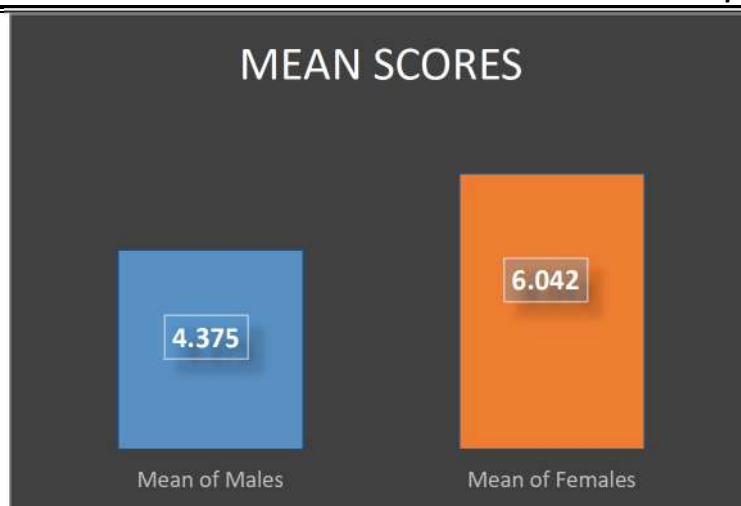


Interpretation:

the mean of all the categories is more than half. it is the maximum in the 3rd category of skills developed using ICT, where the teachers almost strongly agree that the usage of ict does develop skills in them and facilitate better teaching.. just after that comes the category of support to teachers’ and institution, the students agree that ICT,proves to be a good support system to the teachers in teaching. the students agree that ICT,has gained a lot of importance in the current generation. there is a little less agreement among students when it comes to understanding ICT,, they are yet to explore the real usage. lastly, the teachers use this boon of technology a little above the neutral level.

TO COMPARE ON THE BASIS OF GENDER:

Mean of Males	Mean of Females
4.375	6.042



Interpretation:

The study reveals that the Mean scores of females are higher as compared to the male teachers, thereby indicating a revolutionary movement in the field of Education.

7. T-TEST:

❖ *Null Hypothesis:* -

There is no difference in the scores of students after the usage of ICT in teaching.

Groups	Mean	SD	t-ratio	Level of Significance 0.01 & 0.05
Males	4.375	16.5	0.00794797	Not significant
Females	6.042	17.0		

❖ *Interpretation:* -

The tabulated ‘t’ value is 1.96 at 0.05 level and 2.58 at 0.01 level. The calculated ‘t’ is **0.00794797** which is lesser than the tabulated ‘t’. Therefore ‘t’ is not significant at 0.01 & 0.05 level. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted.

❖ *Conclusion:* -

Therefore the **0.00794797** indicates the null hypothesis is accepted, that means there is no significant difference in the concept clarity and knowledge gained after the teacher infuses ICT in the teachings.

Research Findings:

ICT is widespread and essential to play a meaningful role in changing and modernizing educational systems as well as the way of learning. It is part of many aspects of our daily lives.

ICT refers to the technology that access to information. It includes any product that will store, restore, operate, or receive information in a digital form. ICT is similar to IT that ICT focus more on communication which includes internet, wireless network and other communication

mediums. There are some examples of ICT tools, such as computing industry, telecommunications, and electronic display.

The computing industry includes Internet, computer hardware and software. Internet means a worldwide system of interconnected networks and computers. As we know that it is very useful for everyone today. For example, there are more than 70% students who have access to internet to explore their knowledge.

From a teaching point of view, teachers used these devices to deliver to a whole class, and could use the digital content effectively that was available to them. Teachers also reported that ICT offered them enhanced resources to support learning through teaching. The levels of interaction, the immediacy and the ability to refresh work, were all indicated as ways in which ICT could enhance the range of teaching approaches taken. In some colleges, teachers were expecting more of the students used ICT- whether this was due to the higher pace in lessons, work being done more quickly.

References:

1. Building capacity of teachers / Facilitators in Technology- Pedagogy Integration for improved Teaching and Learning (UNESCO2003)
2. GOI (2007). National knowledge commission Report, Libraries Gateways to knowledge: A Roadmap for Revitalization.
3. Kamal, V. (2005). ICT Initiatives in Teacher Education. University News. Vol.43 (18), May 2005, Pp.103-108
4. Khajapeer, M (2001). The Teacher Education in 21st century in India challenges ahead. University News.Vol. 39, No.8
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APPENDIX

Tool prepared for the research: Include at the end in appendix

RESEARCH ON IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON TEACHING-LEARNING

IMPORTANCE OF ICT:

Particulars	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Integrating ICT in education is important.					
2. ICT can encounter the shortcoming in traditional learning.					
3. ICT has an impact on your daily life.					

4. ICT enabled education is a good supplement to face-to-face communication					
5. Integration of ICT can raise the educational standards.					

UNDERSTANDING OF ICT:

Particulars	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
6. I can learn/retain better when I see visuals					
7. I get clarity of the concepts when taught with pictures and videos related to it					
8. Technology helps to clear my doubts with just a few clicks.					
9. I visit to various online discussion forums to clarify concepts					
10. I am a part of a collaborative learning group.					

SKILLS DEVELOPED USING ICT:

Particulars	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
11. I am able to download/upload videos.					
12. I can cross-check the learnings done at school.					
13. I am able to talk about facts while in a discussion.					
14. I am able to fulfil my thirst for more knowledge.					
15. I am able to make more complicated projects using online videos.					
16. I learn art/craft/etc. watching the videos online.					

SELF-STUDY USAGE:

Particulars	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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	Agree				Disagree
17. I am aware of these online educational portals:					
Khan Academy					
BYJU's					
Coursera					
EdX					
18. I daily browse internet to learn more about the topics taught in school.					
19. I think the educational portals help in improving my knowledge.					
20. I frequently use educational portal sites like the ones mentioned above.					
21. I think the content available on educational portal sites covers every topic in the subject.					

SUPPORT TO TEACHERS/INSTITUTION:

Particulars	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
22. My school has a fix installation of smart board in each class					
23. My school has its own website/learning portal/application to promote online learning process					
24. My school provides free access to the internet.					
25. My school uses multimedia production tools for lessons (E.g. MS Office, videos, audios)					
26. Teachers in my school are well trained to operate smart board or any other software.					
27. We have a separate period for learning					

ICT.					
28. Our teachers use the existing online material to teach.					
29. Our teacher creates own teaching materials.					
30. My school has an ICT co-ordinator					

DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICE PERTAINING TO PROPERTY RIGHTS

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Abstract:

Discrimination on the basis of gender is an area of concern, where we need to pay more attention. From the time immemorial history is speaking loudly about the discrimination in the areas pertaining to property rights. Women are discriminating in both houses be it her native or in-laws house. She always has to fight for her share in the property under the Hindu law. Till codification of Hindu law she was entitled to only stridhana¹. However the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 has brought some relief in the field of women's right to property. Again by Amendment of the Hindu Succession Act, in 2005², sea changes in the field of women's heritable right over the property has been brought. This paper will focus on some parts on areas of violation of property rights of women in Hindu family and the legislative measures and instruments thereon.

Key words: Intestate Succession, Hindu Succession Act, Stridhana, Coparcenary property.

Methodology:

In the present work, the methodology applied is doctrinal and hence secondary data collection method is used. For that various text book, articles, journals etc. has been consulted.

Introduction:

Gender inequality facets in different forms among which the most tedious one is effective property rights. The disparity in property rights relating to gender, continuing from ancient times and women are the worst sufferer. Equality of status and equal protection of law are guaranteed to all the citizen of India under the Constitution of India irrespective of any male or female³. it means that state shall not make any difference in imparting equal justice among male and female. State shall make adequate laws to prohibit discrimination on the ground of sex, race, place of birth etc. as per the constitutional provisions state shall make special provisions for the welfare of the women but which is far away from reality⁴.

International Conventions:

In support of property rights of women there are many International Conventions and Declarations. In its pledge to protect the women's right to property the United Nations Organization (UNO) stands at the Supreme position worldwide. The woman is not discriminated only in the sphere of property rights, but discrimination has been creeping in other faces also in the globe.

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The preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 advocates in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

The preamble of the Convention of 1979⁵ provides among other things:

“Recalling that discrimination against women violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity, is an obstacle to the participation of women, on equal terms with men, in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their countries, hampers the growth of the prosperity of society and the family and make more difficult the full development of the potentialities of women in the service of their countries and of humanity.”

For the first time this Convention recognized the gender based violence against women in public and private life as a human rights concern and condemned all forms of sexual harassment and exploitation. It observed that,

“The human rights of women and of the girl child are an inalienable integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. The full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life at the national, regional and international levels and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on the grounds of sex are priority objectives of the international community.”⁶

Property rights from the period of British to 1956:

The admission of Britishers in the soil of India has made a sea change in the social life of the people of this country. With the passage of time and development in the field of law, a number of legislation has been passed by the British to bring the reformation in the field of women emancipation. Although the legislature has enacted number of laws for protecting the interest and dignity of women, conversely these laws have not able to protect the women from the sphere of injustice, the discrimination against women is increasing day by day.

There were not any codified as well as specific laws relating to distribution of property in Hindu joint family. Hence after independence of the Country the law framers work on it to codify the law relating to Hindu personal laws. In the Constituent Assembly the draft of the Hindu code bill was introduced in April 1947 but until 1947 but until February of 1949 the debate on the Bill did not begin.

The Hindu Succession Bill was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on the 22nd December, 1954⁸. The bill seeks to amend the law relating to the succession which is intestate in nature. The original draft of the provisions relating to intestate succession contained in the Rau Committee’s bill underwent substantial changes in the hands of the select Committee which considered the Rau Committee’s Bill in 1954. This Bill follows to a large extent the scheme adopted by the select committee but takes into account the various suggestion made from time to time for the amendment of the Select Committee’s version of the Bill.

A joint Committee of the house of Parliament was set- up under the Chairmanship of Hari Vinyak Pataskar⁷ consisting members from Rajya Sabha and 45 members from Lok Sabha, on the Bill to amend and codify the law relating to intestate succession among Hindus. The Committee had held sixteen sitting in well. The report of the Joint Committee was to be presented on the 9th September, 1955. But the Committee was granted extension of time up to and submitted on 19th, 1955⁸.

Number of legislative enactment has been passed to protect the interest of Hindu Women in the Joint family property. In this regard the judiciary has to perform a significant role in bringing the letters into true spirit. The modern judicial system is the output of Colonial rule. From the era of Privy Council to the supreme court of India, has encountered with lots of disputes and also interpreting the laws relating to the property rights of women.

The basic concept of Hindu joint family is a common male ancestor with his lineal descendants in the male line. Again under Coparcenary⁹ family male members acquired interest by birth which excludes women from them. Male dominance in the family as also in the society led to the growth of customs which further the women's continued dependence on men. Due to the social and economic reasons she was not able to assert herself beyond certain limits.

The Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005:

In this regard the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005¹⁰ plays a significant role in providing property rights to women. Section 6 sub section (1) of the Act seeks to secure that the new provisions now created shall not affect any disposition or alienation including any partition or testamentary disposition which had taken place before 20th December, 2004. This Act has further taken the effort to omit sections 23¹¹ and 24¹² of the Hindu Succession act, 1956 to bring the equality in practice. Omission of section 2 is thereby the bar on her right to seek partition of the dwelling house is removed.

The main aim of the present study is to analyze the applicability of Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005 in protecting the equality between both sexes.

The present study is a fertile ground to understand the economic and social position of female being. Therefore it is necessary to conduct such study in the other states of the country, so that proper analysis can be made and appropriate suggestions may come up and necessary steps can be adopted to escalate the position of women in the society.

After going through the legal instruments and the continuous journey in the field of gender equality in Hindu family, notwithstanding, the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005, still some weakness are visible, in distribution of property rights. Some of them with observations are produced as:

1. Testamentary¹³ succession¹⁴ is a bar on equality of opportunity relating to property between male and female heir. There is no doubt that Will¹⁵ is protecting the interest of testator regarding his own earned property. But at the same time if we want to see the elevation of women's property then it is the need of the hour to put at least minimum favour for the women heir in the Will. Testamentary disposition can reveal the hidden agenda of depriving the women. Therefore a partial restraint is advisable on testamentary disposition to secure the interest of the female.
2. Father is made a Class II heir under the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 and continued to be same under the Amendment Act of 2005. Under the Mitakshara¹⁶ law he came immediately after the mother and under the Dayabhaga¹⁷ law mother follows father. The unfortunate father continues to be the victim of neglect and discourteous. He still continues to linger in class II Entry (i). The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956¹⁸ cast an obligation on the son to maintain his aged or infirm father. Even section 145 of Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 puts obligation on the son to maintain his parents unable to maintain themselves. But the Hindu Succession Act 1956, even after

its amendment in 2005, deprives him of his right to inherit his son as long as there is one heir out of the sixteen heirs catalogued in Class I as amended. For such treatment to father the procreator there seems not any concrete reason. Father and mother and are considered to be same person in Hindu philosophy of law as such the wife of a person is called to be 'ardhangini', which may be the reason that even in the case of defamation the husband or the wife is not considered to be the third party. Moreover, if father dies then the child inherits his property being class I heirs, so the vice versa is the demand of justified treatment. Therefore his position should be elevated and would bring him in the same footing as in the mother.

3. The word legitimate and illegitimate is creating border in the concept of offspring. Such division leads to confusion in distribution of property. Apart from it this inconsistency has been noticed that the Hindu Marriage Act, 1976¹⁹ has abolished the difference between legitimate and illegitimate child by bringing both legitimate and illegitimate child of void and voidable marriage under one category namely 'legitimate'. On the other hand the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 as well as amended Act in 2005 remains silent regarding the concept of illegitimacy. The matter of illegitimate daughter should be given special consideration. Because being illegitimate and also woman has to carry a sorrowful and pathetic life. An illegitimate daughter of a male Hindu dying intestate is not entitled to any share of inheritance. However she is entitled to claim maintenance from her father²⁰ if the right of maintenance is given to her then right to claim at least some ascertained property will be a justified one. An ascertained amount of property in the property of the father can however be suggested to be given her relief from stigma of illegitimacy and dependency,
4. Lack of education or illiteracy is no doubt a stumbling block in achieving the aim under the study. In our country girls education is not attaining high altitude. Even in remote areas it is preferred, better to keep the girls to do household works instead of sending her to school. In such situation from her tender age she is evaluate her status and has to live a subordinate like. The basic education can be made part of curriculum in the schools and colleges to enthuse legal knowledge among the students who will be the future citizen of the country.

Conclusion:

A mere legal approach by way of special laws is not suffice to check unequal treatment towards women. The community as a whole has a crucial role in this regard. Therefore, there is a dire need to generate awareness among the masses about the available laws in this regard as well as the economic and social position of the women in society. And joint effort among all to escalate the position of women in society is the need of the hour. To become a truly progressive society we should allow women to actualize their potentialities and for that we should provide them family, moral and economic support so that they can flourish to fly.

References:

1. it is derived from the word 'Stri' means woman and 'dhana' means wealth. So it means woman's property. It includes mainly gifts obtained by a woman from her relations, her ornaments and her apparel.
2. The Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005 came in to force on 9.9.2005
3. Article 14 of the Constitution of India
4. Article 15(4) of the Constitution of India
5. Adopted on 18th December 1979 and came into force in 1981
6. Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, 1993, chapter 3, article 36 to 44

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7. Published in The Gazette of India Extraordinary Part II, section 2, dated 21st September 1955.
8. *ibid*
9. Coparcenary is a narrower body within a joint family and consists of only those persons who have taken an interest in the property of holder by birth. It commences, with a common ancestor and includes a holder of joint property and only those males in his male line who are not removed from him by more than three degrees.
10. Section 6 of the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005 says that by birth daughter of a coparcener became a coparcener in her own right in the same manner as the son.
11. The Amending Act has omitted section 23 of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956. As per the new provision now daughters either married or unmarried have the same rights as sons to reside in and to claim partition of the parental dwelling house.
12. Omission of section 24 by this Amended Act has imparted a relief to the women who has remarried on the date of succession opens.
13. It means making a will.
14. It means inheriting the property.
15. It is a legal instrument made by a person where after him or her death how property will be disposed is written off.
16. It is the largest school in India applied to all over India except Assam and Bengal. In Mitakshara males acquired an interest by birth in the joint or coparcenary property.
17. This school is applicable in Bengal and Assam where the heirs get the property after the demise of the father.
18. Sections 20 to 22 of Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956
19. Section 16 of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 amended in 1976
20. sections 20 and 21 of Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956

Comparative Study of Women in Indian Society

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Abstract

This paper is presenting real involvement of women in India, it will also give women centric ideology from a moralistic point of view in India. This research paper examines real frameworks and women centric ideologies in India. It will also refers the real condition of women in present scenario. This report acknowledge the factual information about the women in India. 21 century people talk about the women and the status of women in India different kind of roles and the different position of the women in society women is having many phrases like a dowry child marriage we can also talk about the widow remarriage why always women suffer in all over the world. In the current scenario many women have served a very senior position in Indian government like a president speaker Prime Minister of the Lieutenant General and bank manager etc. but they are also facing same kind of problem in the society. The meaning of women centric image is progress in role of women in society .On the other hand we can say the condition of women an intellectual commitment and it also shows political movement that express justice for women and the end of sexism in the world because women is mirror of society, on the bases in all forms.

The status of women in complex society like India isn't uniform . As of late, the conventional roles of Women have experienced a few changes because of financial needs and a few endeavors were made to convey perceivability and standard women's commitment to the general development and improvement of society. Women's in India are not having same status and rights as we are asserting in regards to Equality, Education , Health , Labor , Employment , Marriage and Family life , Race and Gender related , Religion and Culture and so on .The present examination is identified with status of women in Indian society from antiquated days till today. It gives significance on the situation of women in different fields like family life, social life and work circumstance. It features on female foeticide, low education level of women, women's low nourishing status, women's role in basic leadership, their situation according to Indian convention and so on. This paper additionally gives accentuation on number of women in all out workforce, torment of them by men in family life, social life and in different fields where they are members. In conclusion it finishes up on significance of women and role of society for the liberation of women from male commanded society and their persecution and concealment.

Keywords: women image in society , exploitation of women, social credibility of women and how it affect the society. sexual violence.

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Women Image in Society

The status of women in society is not good but women is always contributed in every field . As of late, the ordinary roles of Women have experienced a few changes due to financial needs and a few endeavors were made to convey appreciable and standard women's responsibility to the general development and improvement in Indian society. This paper expresses. Women's in India are not having same status and rights as we are asserting in regards to Equality, Education, Health, Labor, Employment, Marriage and Family life , Race and Gender related, Religion and Culture and so on .The present examination is identified with role of women in Indian current society from antiquated days till present day. It gives significance on the situation of women in different fields like family life, social life and work circumstance. It features on female feticide, low education part of women, women's low nourishing status, women's role in basic leadership in society, their situation according to Indian convention and so on. This paper additionally gives accentuation on number of women in all out workforce, torment of them by men in family life, social life and in different fields where they are members. In conclusion it finishes up on significance of women and role of society for the liberation of women from male dominated society and their persecution and concealment. (ref 1) On the other hand we can see India has increased percentage of literacy among women, and women are also indulging professional fields, the practices of female infanticide, poor health conditions and lack of education still persisting still continue without any support, being house wife woman's 'real domain' and marriage being her ultimate destiny hasn't changed much in present scenario . The matrimonial status, demanding girls of the same caste, with charming looks. They also demanding dowry or women also criticized fair and lovely ads, are indicators of the slow changing social mores. It shows the status of women, one has to look at two sides of the coin; one side which is promising, and another side which is bleak. ref 2)

First I am going to discuss about exploitation of women in society as well in family. But in Indian society women is not counted equally as men. In current scenario women have been thesaurus victims, both physically as well as mentally .There are several causes of sexual as well as moral abuse which are very often highlighted by the media as wel as society, and a lot of those also remain unexplored. Although, such malpractices to women are not of recent origin, its trace is found in the history of ancient India. While identifying its key reasons, it is realized that the long run supremacy of male over female in all respect in the patriarchal society in India is highly responsible for working women. Consequently, they are being trapped for sex, hackled at workplaces and also tortured in Indian family and society. If we want change status of Indian women in society first of all we have to change our mentality than only we can change society because women is mirror of society.(ref 3)

Exploitation of women

In Indian society women are struggling for their dignity , class, caste and educational status, are not safe in current society women have been the victims of exploitations since long time in different fields in their life both physically, socially, mentally and economically. There are many causes of sexual as well as moral abuse which are very often highlighted by the media in Indian modern society, and a lot of those also remain unexplored. Although, such violence against women, sexual harassment, exploitation to women is not of recent origin, its trace is found in the history of ancient India. Women are facing problems in every sphere of life

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whether employment, access to health care or property rights. India is fast developing but women's in India continue to be discriminated. The declining sex ratio in India amply portrays the discrimination shown towards women at the stage of birth. They are victims of crime directed specifically at them, rape, kidnapping and abduction, dowry-related crimes, molestation, sexual harassment, eve-teasing, etc. It is realized that the long run supremacy of male over female in all respect in the patriarchal society in India is highly responsible for arresting the empowerment of women. Women are being trafficked for sex, harassment at workplaces and tortured in family and society. The paper has attempted to find out the Indian perspectives women exploitation in modern society.

Meaning Exploitation: An act that exploits or victimizes someone (treats them unfairly)"capitalistic exploitation of the working class"; "paying Blacks less and charging them more is a form of victimization".(ref 4)

Meaning of Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination. Sexual harassment is "unwelcome verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature that is severe or pervasive and affects working conditions or creates a hostile work environment." Sexual harassment is unwanted sexual activity happened in Indian society. Sexual harassment can make one think she owe sex to someone. Having someone threaten to spread rumors about victim if she don't have sex with them or someone having an authority figure that woman, like a boss, property manager, loan officer, or professor, use their influence or authority to pressure the victim into having sex are examples of sexual harassment. (ref 5)

Women exploitation in India prevalence like sexual abuse by society or dear friends and subsequent rejected of marriages and issues relating to unwanted pregnancy etc. are the real fact, the information of which shows reality of Indian society. In Indian scenario, I want to add something girl students molested by teachers, society or repeated sexual harassment by antisocial activists are also an unfortunate reality. On the other hand we have seen women exploitation, domestic violence ,physical and mental torture on wives by husband is also be part of Indian society, mostly where women are house wife and not working to anywhere ,as a result, they are pushed to keep their head down in a speechless manner tolerating the brutality of their husband helplessly. In the grip of growing consumerism, violence against women has been rapidly increasing and a legitimate human right issue in connection to their socio-economic stability has got impetus. Trafficking of women is strongly associated with economic disparity as prevailing in the country which brings massive development of women into prostitution (Barry, 1995). Therefore, several researches, systematic investigations are being performed to find out the spatio-temporal variation in this regard to ensure women a dignified life. International research network on violence against women (IRNVAW) has been studying worldwide pattern of such violence to share experiences and formulate strategy implication in this context. Contrary to popular belief, child prostitutes are not primarily children lower socio-economic circumstances but also from families from higher income group (ref 6).

DIFFERENT STAGES OF WOMEN EXPLOITATION IN INDIAN SOCIETY

Exploitation of women are divided into various stages. It include crimes, sexual harassment for economic gains like prostitution & women trafficking, adultery, abduction, rape and murder etc. Thus crimes related to women's property like embezzlement, criminal breach of trust, domestic violence by husband as well as society, dowry etc. These crimes affected women psychally as well as mentally. Domestic Violence: In Indian society the man is the

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head of the family and women is the inferior and subordinate partner and societal pressure force women to maintain this status in society. Wife brutally beating is the most frequent form of violence against women in the Indian society and it is expressed as a general problem of domestic conflict. This is playing a significant role in lop sided sex ratio in India. Poor families in certain regions of the country sometimes resort to killing baby girls at birth, to avoid an unwanted burden on family resources. Sex selective abortion has also been common in the country. It's dangerous to abort the foetus after 18 weeks of pregnancy and quiet harmful for mother too at such a late stage.

Dowry : The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 marks the first attempt by the Government of India to recognize dowry as a social evil and to curb its practice. The act was modified with the Dowry Prohibition Amendment Act of 1984, which has again been modified with Dowry Prohibition Bill 1986. Women's organization have played key role in this process of change. The 1961 Act define dowry and makes the practice of dowry- giving and taking, a punishable offence. Dowry is one of those social evils that no educated woman will own up with pride; still many are adhering to it. (ref 7).

We all aware situation of women in Indian society, Indian woman have distinguished themselves in various spheres of life as politicians, orators, lawyers, doctors, administrators and diplomats. They are not only entrusted with work of responsibility but also they perform their duties very honestly and sincerely. There is hardly any sphere of life in which Indian women have not taken part and shown their worth. Women exercise their right to vote, contest for Parliament and Assembly, seek appointment in public office and compete in other spheres of life with men. This shows that women in India enjoy today more liberty and equality than before. They have acquired more liberty to participate in the affairs of the country. They have been given equality with men in shaping their future and sharing responsibilities for themselves, their family and their country.

It is a fact that women are intelligent, hard-working and efficient in work. They put heart and soul together in whatever they undertake. As typists and clerks they are now competing successfully with men. There are many women working in the Central Secretariat. They are striving very hard to reach highest efficiency and perfection in the administrative work. Their integrity of character is probably better than men. Generally it was found that women are less susceptible to corruption in form of bribery and favoritism. They are not only sweet tongued but also honest, efficient and punctual in their jobs as receptionists, air-hostesses and booking clerks at railway reservation counters. As a matter of fact they are gradually monopolizing the jobs of receptionists and air-hostesses.(ref 8)

Conclusion

Today women want equality, education and recognition. Today many acts implemented for woman equality and woman rights ,now a days women have achieved honorable post in all the major fields ,as per the government data After independence, women of India turned to education in a relatively large number. Women have all the best birth control options and yet

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they are the only ones who can decide to say no to an unwanted pregnancy with abortion. Women can also stop their birth control and then force a man to pay for the resulting child. This report acknowledge the factual information about the women in India. 21 century people talk about the women and the status of women in India different kind of roles and the different position of the women in society women is having many phrases like a dowry child marriage we can also talk about the widow remarriage why always women suffer in all over the world.

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Role of Dalit Mahila Samiti: women's movement in India

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Abstract

This paper outline portrayal of laws, approaches, projects, and activism expected to advance India's ex-Untouchables' prosperity (Dalits), with a special issue on women's interests. The role of Dalit Mahila Samiti is briefly in context to caste endeavors of impervious to such attempts.

Introduction

Caste is generally noticeable in India, less so in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. Yet, it infests society in these nations. The circumstance of the most minor caste gatherings, now and again derisively called "untouchables" or "outcastes," is awful all over. They call themselves "Dalits" (signifying 'broken'), and ladies of these gatherings are the most minimized conceivable social class, enduring given their joined hindrances of being female, low caste, and poor. There are more than 200 million Dalits in India¹, 49% of the women's. Dalit ladies make up around 15% of the Indian Populace. Seen from the base, South caste is an unforgiving arrangement of monetary and different kinds of misuse of lower-status gatherings. (census,2011)

Dalit movement arose at various focuses in various locales of the country. It was a blend of mass movements, incredible works about position mistreatment, and appointive legislative issues, with numerous parties are competing to charm Dalit women's. Strong Dalit movements flourished in a few parts of Southern and Western India. Essentially, the National Federation of Dalit women (NFDW), framed in 1995, has constrained. women's movements in India to address the caste Question genuinely. Dalit women's activists have enunciated. The three-overlay abuse of Dalit women's as:

1. Dalits abused by upper castes;
2. Rural laborers subject to class abuse, fundamentally on account of upper position land proprietors; and
3. women confronting man-centric discrimination at the hands, all things considered, including men of their own castes.

History and formation of Dalit Mahila Samiti

The Dalit Mahila Samiti (DMS) is the authoritative name for development of Dalit women's in the north Indian Territory of Uttar Pradesh (UP). DMS is upheld by Vanangana, a women's activist NGO that has its foundations in the Mahila Samakhya (MS) program, which was dispatched by the Government of India in the late 1980's to enable ladies through the well known Instruction approach. The Mahila Samakhya staff was given a firm establishment in women's activist reasoning, also, prepared in grassroots preparation and administration dependent on women's activist strengthening standards. In the Banda District of UP, the MS program accomplished compelling preparation of Dalit women's, including preparing Dalit

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women as hand siphon mechanics to fix and reestablish the hand siphons of bore wells, on which the more significant part of the nearby people depended for their water supply. In 1993, the authority chose to frame a different deliberate association, named Vanangana, to empower further work with Dalit women's. Throughout the following, not many years, Vanangana built up a solid presence in the towns in and around the Chitrakoot and Banda districts of UP.

The women hand siphon mechanics generally had a place with the Dalit or Adivasi networks. Thusly, there was a ton of obstruction from the upper positions and strain when the prepared Dalit ladies were shipped off to fix hand siphons in the upper position areas. Since the technicians moved in gatherings, they figured out how to manage issues of untouchability and had the option to break these restrictions. This had a few sway on position boundaries, however, not broad. Madhavi, one of the originators of Vanangana, notes that their attention was on the ones who had acquired admittance to innovation, how it had modified their own individual identities, and how this was a wellspring of strength for them to take on different issues.

The foundations of the Dalit Mahila Samiti lie in women's activist coordinating. It has required numerous years for Dalit women to arise as heads of their own development. In the late 1980's and mid 1990's, it was a battle for these women essentially to get out of their homes and show that they could deal with innovation. As they acquired insight, they built up the capacity to shape a different women's movement with a reasonable focus on Dalit women's issues. Since 2002, Dalit women pioneers have occupied with the honing of their objectives and structures, and the proper naming of the Dalit Mahila Samiti occurred in 2003. The territory known as the Bundelkhand locale where the DMS is dynamic comprises of gorges, and backwoods, and admittance to towns is troublesome due to helpless streets and framework. In light of its detachment until as of late, this locale has too been known as a place of refuge for dacoits (outfitted posses). The Dalit people group there confronted constraint from the upper position state, yet was likewise regularly got between the savageries of the state what's more, the dacoits.

The Dalit Mahila Samiti is an association of over 1500 ladies. They are coordinated in 7 unique bunches across two sub-locales of the Chitrakoot Locale. Women are the essential individuals from the association. However, men can be selected as allies (sahayogi). Most DMS individuals are ignorant, so they acknowledge the help of the proficient men of their networks who will uphold their motivation.

The connection among Vanangana and DMS is entwined in a manner which is ordinary in numerous women's activist developments, and thusly hard to disentangle. At first, Vanangana itself worked as a grassroots association driven by women's activist reasoning. Albeit the proper construction of DMS arose a lot later, the standards of cooperation and voice for Dalit women's followed by Vanangana guaranteed that Dalit women's interests were consistently vital to Vanangana's plan setting measure. At the prior stage, there was little need to isolate the working class administration from the grass roots administration - the designs and divisions were negligible. So to see how the plan of the Dalit Mahila Samiti has advanced, it is fundamental to likewise see how Vanangana set its plan with the Dalit women.

At first, Vanangana zeroed in on the person Dalit ladies who were the objective of its activation. As these Dalit women started working for transform, they tested male centric standards also as the position structure. The women acquired a ton of experience, and their

mediations on instances of savagery got more honed and more gifted. In any case, the accentuation in examination and planning at this stage was as yet on the women looking for equity, not the caste to which she had a place. This was more or less valid for almost a time of Vanangana's work with women's from Dalit people group.

Like the whole women's activist movement in India, Vanangana was faced with the issue of how religious identity crosses with the different identities of a lady. As a women's activist association, Vanangana took this issue to the ladies they worked with, in a meeting that united around 300 Dalit women in their region. The conversation opened up the significance of also, discernments about caste, Hinduism, and the connection among Hindus and Muslims. Issues like religious fundamentalism, and the position of the Dalits and minorities, were talked about for the first time with local area pioneers.

At around a similar time, an ideological group with a Dalit women pioneer, the Bahujan Samajwadi party (BSP), was acquiring force and acknowledgment in UP. Bahujan in a real sense deciphers as "individuals," or on the other hand "the majority," and Samajwadi implies communist. The political philosophy of the BSP is to advance the interests of Dalits, and their administration is drawn from the Dalit people group.

These powerful cycles finished in 2002 in the padyatras – foot walks - which the Vanangana group attempted in every one of the towns where they worked. They led gatherings with the Dalit local area, and started the way toward foregrounding Dalit personality issues. In every one of these towns there was at that point some type of Dalit ladies' administration as a result of the earlier decade's work. These gatherings were basically exchanges also, banter about the ladies' Dalit character, its which means in their lives and rehearses, and what they might want to change. This was the benchmark in the outlining of a joint plan, and the acknowledgment of the requirement for a different construction for the women's battle. The requirement for a different women's association, with a clear dalit identity. A construction unique in relation to that of Vanangana's arisen, bringing about the development of the Dalit Mahila Samiti.

Leadership structure

The authority of Dalit Mahila Samiti is as yet developing, and the boundaries of initiative and dynamic are not clear. DMS pioneers have built up the capacity to react to issues on their own generally, and look for help from Vanangana just when fundamental. For instance, essential choices about which cases to take, and the techniques to be embraced, are taken by DMS pioneers - Vanangana individuals are kept educated, what's more, when required, called upon for help.

Goal of the movement

The current objectives of DMS are as per the following:

1. To change position conditions around there/district where they work
2. To advance the initiative of neighborhood women
3. To challenge all types of viciousness against women and men
4. To arrange their terms with individuals from the upper position during races

5. To guarantee that the advantages of government plans reported under the new Dalit-run system, and that force streams to all qualified Dalits.

The procedures used to arrive at these objectives are changed. Vanangana has had a few public gatherings wherein they have had services to consume likenesses of untouchability just as "chua-achut,". Dalit Mahila Samiti currently has a system of going from one town to another to perform a play, "Jhootan," that draws out the issue of untouchability. They at that point look for women individuals who consent to work and battle to end untouchability also, welcome the men to become sathi dars, providers of support. The ladies are given identification and compose up about Ambedkar, JyotiBa Phule and Savitirbai Phule – symbols of the Dalit Movement in the western portions of the country.

Alongside disclosing articulations, the Dalit Mahila Samiti is chipping away at changing practices at the family and individual levels. There is an demand of drinking water and eating together, what's more, subsequently getting families to change untouchability rehearses dependent on their new comprehension of the ideas of immaculateness and debasement (which customarily support distance). The women are utilizing nuanced however incredible methodologies to challenge untouchability and ideas of pollution. Numerous Dais (Customary Birth Attendants) are from Dalit people group; however they are called for conveyances by upper castes. The dais is paid in kind or money for their work. To break the untouchability shame, they take care of the birthing interaction, yet decline to dispose of the placenta and to cut the umbilical string. These assignments were customarily done by them and seen as sullied errands not done by upper castes. The Dalit women have distinguished some key exercises which they will not precede as a technique against customary standards in regards to distance. For example, There are two significant instances that led to a lot of pressure on Vanangana and the DMS. One was the child sexual abuse case in 1999 and the case of Sohagiya in 2003.

Critiques of the mainstream feminist movement

At first the DMS group was blended, with numerous previous activists of the Mahila Samakhya program who came from lower-working class foundations, and who took quite a while disguise women's activist qualities. There were a large number that the authority had to manage –, for example, sexual orientation coaches who came from urban areas, and raised issues with the grass roots ladies identified with individual issue, (for example, sexuality), though the ladies were all the while managing with fundamental issues like absence of admittance to assets. The neighborhood chiefs needed to manage these issues and equilibrium the various perspectives.

The plan of the womens' development at the public level is as yet outlined by working class ladies' viewpoints. For example, in the getting sorted out of the public self-ruling women' development occasions, DMS and Vanangana pioneers take an interest yet with some degree of disengage. Issues of personality are hard to join into the public development, furthermore, standard Indian women's activists need to acquire the governmental issues and needs of different identities.

Conclusion

At the point when we started this task we were shocked with the title and pondered "Are there any developments left?" When the group was asked the same inquiry, their reaction was telling: "When you say "development" the picture that comes to ones mind is of enormous

quantities of ladies, sitting on Dharna (strike) or walking in the roads on a customary premise. What's more, in this way we wonder whether or not to call ourselves a development." This reveals to us something session the pictures and the implying that the word development has made in our psyches. We at that point investigated why our associations - DMS, Vanangana furthermore, ANANDI (which arranged this contextual analysis) - wonder whether or not to consider ourselves a development, we understood that a women's activist viewpoint has implied managing a wide scope of issues, while our picture of a development is very tight. The 'foe' (man controlled society) shows itself from numerous points of view, and is accordingly all over. It's anything but a solid design to be survived or cut down. Consequently the significance of what is a development should be extended to incorporate the entire scope of exercises and cycles, which a women's activist association working for essential change needs to embrace to fabricate a development, as clarified for this situation study.

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“Status of Women in Kashmir Division of the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir”

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Abstract:

Women's education is one of the basic pillars for the development of any country. There is no chance of the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. As for as the refinement of generation is concerned, women's education has been considered to be more necessary. If a woman is educated, she can benefit the children with her enlightenment and learning experiences. Development of education for women has already started early in the Vedic period in India, but Kashmiri women generally faced various types of barriers to success like illiteracy, domestic violence, lack of motivation, support, and many more. India is a country where male dominance in society prevails. It is essential for the harmonious development of the country that women should go hand in hand and shoulder to shoulder with men, but it is possible only through the illumination of education. The study material and information have been collected with the help of research articles, census, educational commissions, books, magazines, etc. This study examines the historical development of women's education, sex ratio, and female literacy rate Kashmir division of U T Jammu and Kashmir. And also examine various causes of the decline of sex ratio and remedial measures to improve the status of women's education in Jammu and Kashmir.

Key Terms: Female literacy rate, Patriarchal, political turmoil, Violence, Women Empowerment, Sex ratio.

Introduction

We believe that women should be treated equally to men as individual and as members of society, and that all facilities and opportunities should be provided for her to develop her individuality and become a full partner in life—both inside and outside the home—and that all facilities and opportunities should be provided for her to develop her individuality and become a partner of man in the full sense of the term. Education plays an important role in the socio-economic development of a country; moreover, women's education has immense importance for the upliftment of the society. Educated women are improving their own socioeconomic status and broadening the intellectual horizons of their children, as well as improving

the socioeconomic status of their families and playing a significant role in raising their family status. There is a strong link between women's education and a country's development. The University Education Commission (1949) has also rightly remarked: “There cannot be an educated man without an educated woman. If general education is to be limited to men or to women, that opportunity should be given to women, for then it would more surely be passed on to the next generations.” Education, on the other hand, makes women strong, empowered,

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self-reliant, and determined in their lives. Education has a central role for upliftment of women to achieve equality and empowerment both in the family as well as in the community.

Importance of Women Education

The literacy rate of a country is an important indicator of the social development of a country. India is considered the highest illiterate population in the world. The resolution on the National Policy of Education stresses the importance of women's education in these words, "The education of girls should receive emphasis not only on the grounds of social justice but also because it accelerates social transformation" We can change society's position only through education of women. It is only the education of women that can help in reducing inequalities and improve their status in society and also within the family. Women empowerment can only be possible through the provision of adequate and functional education to women. The education of women is directly dependent and closely related to the social status of women. Women's education is the key for happy and healthy homes, societal improvement, economic prosperity, and national solidarity. Education of women is more important than of men, if new generation is to be made cultured and educated, if social transformation is to be brought rapidly, and if moral character of the children is to be built during the most impressionable years of their lives it is possible only through women's education.

Development of Women Education in Jammu and Kashmir.

The mission ladies opened a girl's school at Fateh Kadal in Srinagar sometime between 1893 and 1895. The people of Srinagar were shocked by the opening of the girl's school. In the streets, there were murmurs and whispers. People believed the missionaries were trying to pollute the minds of young girls with impure ideas. The girls who were brave enough to attend were very timid and their parents were somewhat on the shake as the public opinion was against them. On the eve of the European, ladies were invited to attend the function by the lady superintend. This she thought would encourage the girls and their parents. All the girls were assembled in the school when on the appearance of the English lady visitors, some 'mischief monger in the street shouted out that the Europeans had come to kidnap the girls. This episode resulted in the closure of the 1st girl's school for some time. A few weeks later the school re-opened and surprisingly the school registered an increase in the number of girls. This phenomenal success emboldened the Christian missionaries to open another girl's school which was attached to the boy's school at Fateh Kadal. The Christian missionaries through brave spirit and inexhaustible patience removed one impediment after another that was placed in their path and ultimately come out with flying colors in the struggle. The missionary girl's school brought an astonishing change in the physical appearance and mental outlook of women folk. The education system of the state of J&K underwent a dramatic shift with the advent of Maharaja Pratap Singh in 1885 as modern education in J&K took shape. The expansion of education steadily continued in his time. As women's education was a serious problem to tackle therefore, the policy pursued by the state council in the beginning was to assist the missionary society to take up the cause of female education. When severity in public opposition disappeared the state government felt that the climate was favourable enough for it to start a few schools in towns and cities.

Maharaja Pratap Singh encouraged Mrs. Amie Besant, the great philanthropist and public worker to establish a college in Srinagar in 1905 for the advancement of higher knowledge in the valley. She named it as Hindu college. Later on the same college was taken over by the state and named it as Sri Pratap College with 1,187 students on its rolls. In 1912, the state's educational authorities formed a mixed committee of officials and non-officials to investigate the situation and report on whether the time was right for girl's schools to open in the state. The members of the committee included Dr. Kulbhushan, Health officer, Dr. Dunichand, Chief Medical officer, Mr, Nanda, Divisional Engineer, P.W.D; Mr Shankar Koul, Head Master C.M.S School, besides the president and a member of the Srinagar Municipal Committee. The committee submitted a common report to the Maharaja strongly recommending that two schools should be started in the cities of Srinagar and Jammu to bring the state in line with the rest of India in the spread of female education. But Pratap Singh remained unconvinced and much pressure had to be exerted on him before he agreed to sanction the proposal. However, it goes without saying that by the end of Maharaja Pratap Singh's period some ground had been prepared for the introduction and establishment of girl's education in the valley. The missionaries made people understand the importance of female education. Among the heroic personalities that made girl education acceptable in Srinagar were

Miss Fitze, Taylor, Miss Churchill, Miss Robinson, and Miss Mallinson. The story of struggle of foreign missionaries against male arrogance and distrust forms a glorious chapter in Kashmir's history of cultural renaissance.

In 1916, Jammu and Kashmir had 311 primary schools, including 36 government-aided schools and 37 middle schools. The number of girls institutions was however only 16 in the whole of Jammu and Kashmir state. By 1920, the government had made some progress in girls' education, with a Muslim school and five primary Hindu schools (three of the middle standard) operating in various parts of Srinagar. However, the schools were only in name, the rate of progress was depressingly slow, and among the girls there was even a single matriculate. In September 1927 *Women's Welfare Trust* came into being in Srinagar with the objective of advancing the welfare of the Kashmiri women by imparting to them knowledge by stimulating household industry among them and by promoting their physical health and well-being. The founding members of the trust were theosophists like Mrs. L.D. Van. Gheel Gildemeester, Shridhar Kaul Dulloo, Miss Margaret E. Cousins, Sri Kantha Toshakhani, and Aftab Koul Nizamat. Education of both girls and adults was the most important plans framed by the trustees for the advancement of Kashmiri women.

Status of Women in terms of sex ratio in Kashmir division

Traditionally also women's positions were confined to domestic affairs only and even today, in some of the areas, women have no access to education. Let us discuss the educational status of women with the help of Districts wise sex ratio and female literacy rate in the Kashmir Division.

Table 1. Sex Ratio (Female per 1000 males) in Kashmir since 1981

Name of District	1981	2001	2011
Srinagar	873	871	900
Budgam	880	918	894
Ganderbal	N.Estb.	N.Estb.	874
Anantnag	888	922	927

Kulgam	N.Estb.	N.Estb	951
Shopian	N.Estb.	N.Estb.	951
Pulwama	896	938	912
Kupwara	858	929	835
Bandipora	N.Estb.	N.Estb.	889
Baramulla	870	909	885
J & K	892	900	889
India	934	933	940

Source: Census of India, 1981, 2001, 2011. N.Estb = Newly Established.

The above table shows the district-wise sex ratio of females per 1000 males of Kashmir Division, U T of J&K, and India as a whole. As we have seen that in 1981, District Pulwama has the highest sex ratio of 896 females per 1000 males and Anantnag in 2nd position in sex ratio with 888, which is greater than of J&K but less than of India as a whole. Whereas District Kupwara has the lowest sex ratio of 858 females per 1000 males, which is less than both of J&K and India. In 2001, Kupwara had the highest sex ratio of 929, which is more than the sex ratio of J&K but less than of India 933 and district Srinagar has the lowest sex ratio, 871. In 2011, District Kulgam had the highest sex ratio of 951 females per 1000 males and was more than the sex ratio of J&K 883 and less than India 940. District Kupwara has the lowest sex ratios of 835 which is less than J&K as well as of India.

Table 2. District wise Female literacy rate of Kashmir (percentage) since 1981

Name of the District	1981	2001	2011
Srinagar	24.66	47.97	63.47
Budgam	8.02	28.14	46.60
Ganderbal	N.Estb.	N.Estb.	47.62
Anantnag	10.14	31.51	54.15
Kulgam	N.Estb.	N.Estb.	49.74
Shopian	N.Estb.	N.Estb.	52.77
Pulwama	9.21	35.40	53.81
Kupwara	4.88	26.83	54.79
Bandipora	N.Estb.	N.Estb	46.24
Baramulla	9.57	31.42	55.01
J & K	41.05	42.22	49.12
India	29.76	54.16	65.46

Source: Census of India, N.Estb. = Newly Established.

The above table shows the District wise female literacy rate with % percentage wise of Kashmir Division with comparison to U T of J&K, and India. In 1981, District Srinagar had the highest female literacy rate with 24.66%, which is less than the J&K female literacy rate of 41.5%, which is also less than the national average of India (29.76%). Whereas District Kupwara has the lowest female literacy rate, i.e., 4.88 %, which is less than both J&K and India. In 2001, District Srinagar once again the highest literacy rate, 47.97% greater than J&K and less then national literacy rate, and District Kupwara, with 26.83%, has the lowest female literacy rate. In 2011, Srinagar had the highest literacy rate, 63.47%, higher than J&K,

and less than India. District Bandipora has the lowest female literacy rate of 46.24%, which is less than at both J&K 58.01% and India 65.46%.

Causes of Decline of Sex Ratio

The decline in sex ratio is an issue of great concern as it shows that our society is still dominated by patriarchal values, beliefs and manifesting itself in the form of discrimination against females.

1. Son Preference and Female Foeticide: Because male children are associated with prestige in the community and social power, this is one of the problem with an imbalanced sex ratio. In addition, land given to the son is likely to remain in the family. Furthermore, parents depend on a male child to look after them in their later years and contribute to the family's financial stability.
2. Excess female child mortality is most pronounced for the girls who have old sisters, and that is usually absent or slight in the case of firstborn girls.
3. Mortality differentials: Higher female mortality is a prime reason for low female-male ratio.
4. Dowry is another cause for sex ratio decline.

Suggestions for Improvement of Women Education

1. Rural women should be encouraged to participate in awareness programs regarding the benefits of getting an education.
2. Scholarship, free education, health facilities, and other economic support should be given to the parents with a girl child.
3. More women teachers should be appointed, and special allowances should be given to volunteer women teachers to work in rural areas.
4. Much more education institutions are needed in the state to increase the literacy rate, especially of women.

Conclusion

It is concluded on the basis of the above analysis that District Srinagar has the highest female literacy rate among all the districts of the Kashmir Division since 1981. But as far as sex ratio is concerned, it decreases from 873 females per 1000 males to 871(2001) and in 2011 it increases to 900. Whereas District Kupwara has shown a negative change in terms of sex ratio, and literacy, there is a positive change in all the districts in the Kashmir division. Its literacy rate drastically increases from 4.88% in 1981, 26.83 in 2001%, and 54.79 in 2011 and sex ratio also decreases from 858(1981) to 835 in 2011 which is lowest in J & K. In all other districts we have seen sex ratio somewhere increases and somewhere decreases, but female literacy rate has shown improvement in all the districts in Kashmir division. The main reasons for the low sex ratio, especially in Kupwara District, is easy availability and access to sex determination facilities in rural and urban areas, poverty and literacy among women force them to go for sex determination, and this leads to abortion of female foeticide. The efforts being made by the Government for the education of women, the position has improved in the Kashmir Division. But still, female literacy remains low as compared to men, and the gender gap in Kashmir is also lower than the national average. Therefore, much more needed to be done in this aspect.

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H.P. Blavatsky's conception of "Universal Brotherhood" in social reform movement

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Abstract

This paper maps the conceptual thinking in the social reform movement. For this, there is emphasize on the particular concept, the concept of "Universal Brotherhood" that was proposed by H.P. Blavatsky. she was the co-founder of 'the theosophical society' in India in 1882. It examines the concept of "Universal Brotherhood" from the 'Humanist' perspective and it is divided into two parts. The first part precisely investigates the historiography over the concept of "Universal Brotherhood" and the major second part of the paper investigates the relative concepts like the concept of 'Karma', 'Duty', and 'charity' which includes the experience of the concepts of 'Justice' 'Right' and 'Good Harmony' that constitute the "Universal brotherhood". And at last this paper argues that H.P. Blavatsky was a 'feminine genius' whose concept of "Universal Brotherhood" was 'human' and 'ethical'.

Madam Blavatsky and colonel Olcott, founded 'The theosophical society' with its international headquarters in Madras, India, in 1882. The theosophical society was working with three objectives and one of the three objectives of society was "To form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, colour, or creed." And it was is working on the basis of "the principle of — universal Unity and Causation; Human Solidarity; the Law of Karma; Reincarnation. these are the four links of the golden chain which should bind humanity into one family, one universal Brotherhood." The constituted meaning in the concept of universal brotherhood lies in the explanation of the traces like the concept of karma, duty and charity. And these traces can be analysed better with the synthesis of the idea of 'feminine genius'⁵⁷ proposed by Julia Kristeva and the Edward Said's conception of 'Humanism'⁵⁸. Julia Kristeva's idea of 'feminine genius' emphasises on the creativity that allows to overcome the traditional, binary model of sexuality because when it "developed to the full in genius pushes the deviation from the standard to its furthest limit and to the highest degree of uniqueness, which is nevertheless something that can be shared." and according to Kristeva " You are a genius to the extent that you are able to challenge the socio-historical conditions of your identity."¹ Edward said puts better as "the core of humanism is the secular notion that the historical world is made by men and women, and not by God, and that it can be understood rationally according to the principle

⁵⁷ See Julia Kristeva, *Is there a feminine genius?* Julia Kristeva has analysed the idea of 'feminine genius' by investigating three feminine genius Arendt, Klein and Colette. She thinks that 'each individual invents his or her sex in the domain of intimacy: therein lies genius, which is quite simply creativity.

² See Edward said, *Humanism and democratic criticism*. Said provides a secular notion of 'Humanism' and its critical practice. Akeel Bilgrami in the forward of the text observes that "it is Said's claim that until we supplement self-knowledge with self-criticism, in fact until we understand self-knowledge as being constituted by self-criticism, humanism and its disciplinary manifestations ("the humanities") are still not visible on the horizon."

formulated by Vico in new science, that we can really know only what we make or, to put it differently, we can know thing according to the way they are made. His formula is known as the verum/factum equation, which is to say that as human being in history we know what we make, or rather, to know is to know how a thing is made, to see it from the point of view of its human maker.”⁵⁹

1

The historiography on the concept on the “Universal Brotherhood” has been better initiated by Tim Rudbog who argues that “Blavatsky’s inspiration for idea of universal brotherhood resided in the Enlightenment ideal and nineteenth-century initiatives of social reform.” and according to Rudbog Blavatsky’s discourse for a universal brotherhood particularly included three major facets. The first was a unique plan to revive ancient Indian culture, counteract the Christian missionaries and British rule, and spread Theosophy or universal esotericism among the Indian people through cooperation with Hindu and Buddhist reformers. This approach to the East was new and has no doubt created precedence for many Western groups and their engagement with the East henceforth. The second aspect of her discourse was a strategy to connect the idea of universal brotherhood with the Theosophical policy of no-dogma, as this was believed to lead to intellectual unity and thereby avoid superficial divisions among men. It was also shown that Blavatsky’s discourse of universal brotherhood was based on the belief that all individual people essentially are of the same origin, and that this belief must be practiced ethically as the first principle of Theosophy. The analysis of the third aspect of Blavatsky’s discourse showed that universal brotherhood was construed as the central cause for which the Theosophical Society was intended to work since its reorganization, by eliminating the obstacles that still hindered its realization and thereby naturally ushering in a New Cycle. In conclusion it is fair to say that the result of the Theosophical Society’s move to India, Blavatsky’s discourse, and the implementation of universal brotherhood was in fact the dawning globalization of esotericism on the basis of Western enlightenment ideals.⁶⁰

2

Blavatsky’s analysis of the concept of *Karma* is a thinking on causality that deals with the life cycle/conscious life and the universal law of retributive, strict and impartial justice. it is a Power which cannot fail, and can, therefore, have neither wrath nor mercy, only absolute Equity, which leaves every cause, great or small, to work out its inevitable effects. And it is “considered as *the Ultimate Law of the Universe*, the source, origin, and fount of all other laws which exist throughout Nature. For Blavatsky, “*Karma* is the unerring law which adjusts effect to cause, on the physical, mental, and spiritual planes of being and it is unseen and unknown law which *adjusts wisely, intelligently, and equitably* each effect to its cause, tracing the latter back to its producer. Though itself *unknowable*, its action is perceivable.” With the help of the concept of *karma* Blavatsky identified ‘thought’ with ‘life’. The

⁵⁹ See Blavatsky, H. P. 1889. *The Key to Theosophy*, London: The Theosophical publishing company, Limited.

⁶⁰ See Tim Rudbog, *The West moves East: Blavatsky’s “Universal Brotherhood” in India*. In Rudbog, Tim & E. R. sand.2020. *Imagining the east: The early theosophical society*: Oxford University Press.

conception of universal brother concerns with human body/human affair. According to Blavatsky “*Karma* gives back to every man the actual consequences of his own actions, without any regard to their moral character.” and “each individual environment, and the particular conditions of life in which each person finds himself, are nothing more than the retributive *Karma* which the individual generated in a previous life.”⁶¹

Blavatsky writes “*Karma* is not individual law but it is interdependence of Humanity what is called Distributive *Karma*, and it is this law which affords the solution to the great question of collective suffering and its relief. It is an occult law, moreover, that no man can rise superior to his individual failings, without lifting, be it ever so little, the whole body of which he is an integral part.” For Blavatsky, in reality, there is no such thing as “Separateness” and here she is providing a critique of the dichotomic thinking like the idea of subject-object, and ‘self and other’. Blavatsky’s existential conception of individual is relational. A better understanding of the existential notion of the existence of an individual with ‘other’ can be understood with the help of Heidegger’s concept of “being-with” that is “our normal social way of being.” Heidegger identifies ‘being-with’ with ‘Dasein’. For Heidegger “Dasein is essentially being-with” and “Being-with is an existential characteristic of Dasein even when factually no other is occurrent or perceived.” Dreyfus clarifies it as “being with is an aspect of being-in-the-world that makes possible encountering of particular others whose way of being Heidegger calls Dasein-with.”⁶² Blavatsky defines “*Karma* as that Law of readjustment which ever tends to restore disturbed equilibrium in the physical, and broken harmony in the moral world. And does not act in the particular way always; but it always does act so as to restore Harmony and preserve the balance of equilibrium, in virtue of which the Universe exists.”

the conception of ‘duty’ is tied with the experiences of existential togetherness as Blavatsky writes “our philosophy teaches us that the object of doing our duties to all men and to ourselves the last, is not the attainment of personal happiness, but of the happiness of others; the fulfilment of right for the sake of right, not for what it may bring us. Happiness, or rather contentment, may indeed follow the performance of duty, but is not and must not be the motive for it.” In the conception of universal brotherhood duty is constituted for an ‘ethical awakening’-as Levinas says- by recognizing the ‘face of other’ that cares for the ‘other’⁶³. It is a debt of an individual that is to be paid to fellowmen. For Blavatsky, “Duty is that which is due to Humanity, to our fellowmen, neighbours, family, and especially that which we owe to all those who are poorer and more helpless than we are ourselves. This is a debt which, if left unpaid during life, leaves us spiritually insolvent and morally bankrupt in our next incarnation. It is a full recognition of equal rights and privileges for all, and without distinction of race, color, social position, or birth.” What makes ‘duty’ ‘international in the highest sense’ is that its members- men and women- of all races, creeds, and forms of thought,

⁶¹ See Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna. 1889. *The Key to Theosophy*, London: The Theosophical publishing company, Limited.

⁶² See Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-world*. Dreyfus’s commentary on the Heidegger’s “Being and Time” presents an empirical interpretation of ‘Dasein’ by analysing ‘being-in-the-world’ as ‘being-with’ and sees human being as shared social activity.

⁶³ See Emmanuel Levinas, *Enter nous*. Levinas in his philosophical works much emphasised on the ‘face of other man as being the original locus of the meaningful’. He advocates for the ethical existence of the being with the other.

who work together for one object, the improvement of humanity; but as a society it takes absolutely no part in any national or party politics. The conception of duty advocates for an inclusive, shared existence of the being where purpose is for common interest and goal. The action of an individual affects the other one. As Blavatsky writes “If the action of one reacts on the lives of all, and this is the true scientific idea, then it is only by all men becoming brothers and all women sisters, and by all practicing in their daily lives true brotherhood and true sisterhood, that the real human solidarity, which lies at the root of the elevation of the race, can ever be attained. It is this action and interaction, this true brotherhood and sisterhood, in which each shall live for all and all for each”.

Blavatsky emphasises on the concrete facts of human society that is concerned with “the lives not only of the masses of the people, but of many of those who are called the middle and upper classes, with what they might be under healthier and nobler conditions, where justice, kindness, and love were paramount, instead of the selfishness, indifference, and brutality which now too often seem to reign supreme.” Blavatsky observes ‘character’ as the root of all good and evil things in humanity, and “this character is, and has been, conditioned by the endless chain of cause and effect. But this conditioning applies to the future as well as to the present and the past.” Blavatsky believes in the transformation of the character that is expressed in the idea of “Progress” and it “can be attained, and only attained, by the development of the nobler qualities. Now, true evolution teaches us that by altering the surroundings of the organism we can alter and improve the organism; and in the strictest sense this is true with regard to man.”

There is no in-itself existence of the being it is always tied with the existence of other with integrity according to Blavatsky “the individual cannot separate himself from the race, nor the race from the individual. The law of *Karma* applies equally to all, although all are not equally developed. In helping on the development of others, the Theosophist believes that he is not only helping them to fulfil their *Karma*, but that he is also, in the strictest sense, fulfilling his own. It is the development of humanity, of which both he and they are integral parts, that he has always in view, and he knows that any failure on his part to respond to the highest within him retards not only himself but all, in their progressive march. In the process of transformation of the individual Blavatsky advocates for the space of ‘free thinking’ that helps to purify the self inwardly and morally. Blavatsky writes “if one thinks it the right thing to do, let him do it openly and boldly, and if wrong, never touch it at all. It is the duty of a Theosophist to lighten his burden by thinking of the wise aphorism of Epictetus, who says: Be not diverted from your duty by any idle reflection the silly world may make upon you, for their censures are not in your power, and consequently should not be any part of your concern.”

The conception of Charity advocates for ‘responsibility’ to take for the other. For Blavatsky “charity mean personal exertion for others; personal mercy and kindness; personal interest in the welfare of those who suffer; personal sympathy, forethought and assistance in their troubles or needs.” Blavatsky criticizes the ‘institutional’ interference in approaching to the needy. She advocated for the human touch, fellow-feeling. Blavatsky writes “We believe in relieving the starvation of the soul, as much if not more than the emptiness of the stomach; for gratitude does better to the man who feels it, than to him for whom it is felt.”

In conclusion, it can be observed that Blavatsky was a ‘feminine genius’ whose thought of ‘universal brotherhood’ goes beyond the traditional and sexual dichotomy by challenging the socio-historical conditions of her identity. Blavatsky identified ‘thought’ with ‘life’ and her

conception of universal brotherhood is constituted with the experience of ‘human’, and ‘ethical’.

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CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CYBERFEMINISM IN INDIA

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Abstract

When the Internet gained momentum in 1990s, the characteristics of social movements changed forever, marking the origin of Cyberfeminism. There has been a boom in research into the effect of cyberspace on social movements since then. This article traces the evolution of cyberfeminism in India and highlights the milestone campaigns that gained momentum through social media. The author also offers critical perspectives on how cyber feminists have used the world wide web to mobilize political support and build communities, voice out dissent, organize social movements and promote intersectionality.

Keywords : Cyberfeminism, Dissent, Intersectionality.

Introduction

Feminism as a new political movement emerged in the 1960s in Europe and the United States, and has since spread to other parts of the globe. When the Internet gained momentum in 1990s, the characteristics of social movements changed forever, marking the origin of Cyber feminism. Cyberfeminism as a movement emerged in several places at the same time ([www.https://historyofcyberfeminism.wordpress.com](https://historyofcyberfeminism.wordpress.com)). There has been a boom in research into the effect of cyberspace on social movements since then. Guillard (2016) opines that social networking services, grassroots movements, and feminist discussions have marked a fourth wave of feminism, which has found meaning via digital spaces. Zimmerman (2017) also sees technology as the distinctive feature of fourth-wave feminism.

Hall (1996) claims to have arrived at the term *Cyberfeminism* independently .She views *Liberal cyberfeminism* as a perspective that imagines the computer as a liberating utopia and *Radical cyberfeminism* that believes in the separatist development of numerous lists and bulletin board systems which self-identify as “women only”. “I attempt to reconcile two conflicting feminist responses to computer- mediated communication in the early 1990s. Since both responses reflect the intersection of computer technology with subversive feminist counterculture, I refer to them collectively as Cyberfeminism” (Hall, 1996, p. 148).

In her essay titled “Cyberfeminism” Hall points that some participants in the 1994 London Conference “Seduced and Abandoned : The Body in the Virtual World” spoke of “Cyberfeminism” as a derivative of Haraway’s “Cyborg Feminism”. The concept was coined by the VNS Matrix in their 1991 billboard manifesto A Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the Twenty-First Century. Virginia Barret of Adelaide, Australia's VNS Matrix (an electronic art project) and Sadie Plant of Birmingham University, England, she says, were influential in popularising the word. In her seminal essay, Haraway (1991) puts forth cyborg feminism, with its pledge of an evolutionary change away from the definition of patriarchy.

Paasonen (2011, p. 335) , a media studies critic, claims that, Cyberfeminism refers to the “feminist appropriation of information and computer technology” on both practical and theoretical levels.

Drawing evidences from her own research on global civic engagement with women of 15 different countries , Shelat (2014) brings to our attention that all of the women she interviewed ascribed a considerable value to social media in their citizenship practice. This was not only because of the increased opportunities for direct people-to-people bonding but also due to the perceived freedom to engage in civic activities beyond those sanctioned by their respective governments.

Citing Shelat (2014), Bhatia (2016) observes that the new media technologies allow the ‘subaltern’ to speak and create a discourse of their own. Prior to the advent of these technologies, knowledge was generated and disseminated by the powerful in order to reinforce the power structures in the society but new media enabled the people being oppressed to generate a different knowledge and understanding of the reality which defied the normative patterns that had been standardized. They developed their own systems of power and knowledge as a form of resistance. This was possible because, online discursive engagement contributes to sustaining civic communities, opening up opportunities for contention and setting the collective agenda for change (Shelat, 2014).

Origin of Cyberfeminism in India

Feminist movements in India have a long and vibrant history. Tracing the evolution of feminism in India, Jain (2020) points that the reform and anti-colonial movements of the nineteenth century laid the groundwork for the first wave of Indian feminism. The movement's goals were to include women in public life with better political rights, access to education, and jobs. Drawing evidences from the works of Rampton(2015), Jain pronounces that India started to look inward after independence to address social problems and establish a holistic development strategy for women. As the state recognised the intersectionality of caste, class, and society, the second wave of feminism grew in scope. The movement put forth demands claiming equal rights in marriage, divorce, inheritance, dowry and sexual abuse justice, and other areas. The Chipko movement led by women is considered to be crucial in the Indian feminism. Kumar (1989) observes that it wasn't until the 1980s that it was celebrated as a mass women's movement, thanks to feminists, and ideas of women's unique relationship to their environment were advanced.

The Five-Year plan in 1980s decided to specialise in the health, employment and education of women, marking the beginning of the third wave of Indian feminism. Women-led non-government organisations sprung up in an attempt to help other women. The movement conjointly took up the rights of Dalit and marginalised women.

The global economic, cultural, social, and political system has been transformed by the convergence of technology and the physical world. A number of writers, academics, and activists have described the fourth wave of feminism attributing the focus on sexual harassment, rape culture, intersectionality, SoMe (Social Media), and online activities. (Chamberlain 2017; Rivers 2017; Munro 2013).

Jain (2020) emphasises that women in India too experienced a cultural change in the 2000s as a result of the impact of economic liberalisation and the introduction of modern technology, which emphasised rights such as women's equality, choice, and independence. “Despite the

fact that the word "fourth-wave feminism" originated in the West, it appeared almost simultaneously in India due to the widespread use of social media" (Jain, 2020, p.3).

Women's rights organisations have attempted to take advantage of social media's potential to raise political involvement and awareness, urge interventions of both state and civil societies, co-ordinate political activities, form issue-based joint action committees to name a few. This article highlights a few milestone campaigns which were initiated by feminists using online digital platforms and social media.

Networking and Mobilising Support

Blogging and social media have helped to democratise the feminist movement by increasing accessibility, encouraging diversity and inclusivity in a movement that has historically lacked these elements. Cyberfeminists in India have been using blogging and social media networking to mobilise political support and build communities.

Subramaniam (2014) views the use of Facebook by Nisha Susan as part of her *Pink Chaddi* campaign as a turning point in the recognition of social media as a vital tool for activism. The Pink Chaddi campaign was initiated in 2009, as a dissent against the right-wing Hindu party Sri Ram Sene that attacked women in a Mangalore pub. The Facebook campaign was launched by a group of women who called themselves "Consortium of Pub-going, Loose, and Forward Women." Within a week of the launch, close to thirty thousand members joined the group. The members of the group then worked together to send 3000 pink panties to Sri Ram Sene's leader. According to Subramaniam, the campaign became popular not only for its innovative mode of protest that challenged traditional notions of activism but also for the way it effectively used social media to garner widespread attention to its cause. "Since then, digital technology has been explored and appropriated in various ways by Indian feminists to not just bring attention to a number of issues but also to transform digital technology itself into a feminist space" (Subramaniam, 2014, p.1).

Voice of Dissent

In India, in December 2013, following the Supreme Court ruling that upheld Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, a ruling that criminalises consensual homosexual acts, The Global Day of Rage was proposed by queer and feminist activists as a form of protest to be observed on December 15th, just four days after the ruling. Coordinated through a Facebook page, the event was held in over 31 cities across the world and saw more than 3000 people in attendance. Feminists believe that Internet can be used as an effective tool for organising demonstrations and voicing dissent. Utilising the evidences from their essay titled "Revolution 2.0? The Role of Digital Media in Political Mobilisation and Protest" by Jan Hanrath and Claus Leggewie, Subramaniam (2014) asserts that Internet users can avoid governments and the mainstream media, which have long served as conceptual, commercial, and organisational gatekeepers and agenda-setters, and instead use the World Wide Web to transcend local and even national public spheres.

Hashtag Activism

Rivers (2017) identifies "Hashtag feminism" and SoMe as the key components that distinguishes the fourth wave from previous waves of feminism. Lane (2015) sees hashtags as a method for women to subvert patriarchal structures in a space where the body is not immediately seen and one's voice can be heard. Lane (2015) continues, "hashtags contribute

to a larger ethos of the language at play, building new conversations around central rhetorical tactics with which users across the globe can identify” (p. 18).

#MeToo has been the most noticeable social media movement in the recent years. Recalling the global history of #MeToo movement, Andersen (2018) points that Tarana Burke, a social activist, founded the Me Too Movement in 2006 to raise awareness about sexual violence and to “empower through empathy.” In the year 2017, Hollywood star, Alyssa Milano encouraged women to use the hashtag #metoo if they had ever been subjected to sexual harassment in order to “give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem.” In the first 24 hours, the hashtag was used 12 million times. It spread beyond Twitter's boundaries to Instagram and Facebook, and it was also featured in global news stories. The initial tweet was in response to sexual harassment allegations levelled against media mogul Harvey Weinstein. In six months time, almost every country in the world had its wave of #metoo.

Citing James and Van Seters, Tella (2018) argues that #MeToo movement meets all of the criteria for what a global social movement should be.

- i. The creation of a common voice, with women from all over the world sharing their stories of sexual abuse.
- ii. The need to alter the status quo of denial and inaction in the face of these occurrences.
- iii. The getting together of people for the sake of social change.

In the Indian context, the rise of social media as a medium was primarily used by 21st-century "millennial feminists" to start a new debate about the various types of oppression that women in India face.

Tella (2018) claims those campaigns such as the "Slut Walk" in 2011 and the "Bekhauf Azadi" campaign in 2017 evolved from being just a social media movement to a grassroots feminist movement. In 2017, the List of Sexual Harassers in Academia (LoSHA), also known as "The List," published by Raya Sarkar, was used to "call out" sexual abusers in India's academia.

#MeToo gained momentum when multiple women came forward in October 2018 with their accounts of sexual assault, harassment, rape, and misconduct. This was a significant turning point in Indian history. Women called and shamed their perpetrators, the majority of whom occupied high-ranking positions in fields such as politics, Bollywood, journalism, and the media.

Jain (2020, para 6) opines that the #MeToo movement in India had an impact on both the positive and negative work culture. It sparked an open discussion about what constitutes inappropriate behaviour and harassment. It compelled businesses and institutions to reflect, form an Internal Complaint Committee (ICC), and adhere to the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013, also known as the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013. Nevertheless, a section of feminists critique the movement for its non-inclusivity. They assert that elite, urban women have been vocal through social media but the movement lacks discussion on the issue of sexual abuse and harassment in the daily lives of Dalits, trans women, women of lower caste and class, and other marginalised and gendered communities. They highlight that a global movement like #MeToo should fight all perpetrators, regardless of communitarian or nationalistic affiliations.

Intersectionality

Kimberle Crenshaw, an American law professor who coined the term in 1989 defined Intersectionality as, "a prism for seeing how various forms of inequality frequently operate together and exacerbate each other". Intersectional feminism centres the voices of those experiencing overlapping, concurrent forms of oppression in order to understand the depths of the inequalities and the relationships among them in any given context (www.unwomen.org). It is a form of critique and resistance against oppressive social, political, and economic structures that includes all forms of oppression, including casteism (O'Connor,2020).

Banerjee and Ghosh (2018) point out that within the feminist movements various power imbalances including sexual identity, caste, age, and other variables exist. They argue that Dalit Bahujan and other minority activists have exposed the power imbalances between savarna and Dalit, Bahujan and Adivasi feminists, taking the caste issue to the forefront of feminist movements and forcing participants to engage with it. Hence, the feminists movements have also witnessed a creation of a Dalit feminist perspective as a criticism of the Dalit's masculinization and the woman's savarnization.

Highlighting the #WhyLoiter movement, O'Connor (2020) says that the movement became famous in India as a means of protesting the country's rape culture and lack of judicial deterrence for sexual assault. As the hashtag gained momentum, the deep seated issue of casteism came in to the picture. Critics argued that the movement should go beyond the socioeconomic factors that made Dalit women more vulnerable to sexual assault. They stated that middle-class participation, in particular, accounts for the majority of social media activism, despite Dalit women's increased vulnerability to sexual harassment and assault.

These critical viewpoints within the #WhyLoiter movement lead to a push for an intersectional approach to the feminist social media campaign. The founders of the campaign themselves accepted criticism and admitted the need for a more intersectional approach (O'Connor,2020). Citing the case of Mayawati, the prevalent Dalit female politician, O'Connor claims that many Dalit women are reclaiming their voices through social media. "The waves of social media admiration and rallying of Dalit women in support of Mayawati serves as a foundational example of digital Dalit feminist activists. Mayawati has become an icon for the general Dalit movement, Dalit feminism, and general feminist movements, unifying the social justice causes and furthering Dalit activism's place in intersectional India" (O'Connor,2020, p.150).

Conclusion

The issue of a "digital divide" remains a source of concern for cyberfeminism. Feminists aim to bridge the gap between feminist movements and internet rights movements by looking for intersections and strategic opportunities to collaborate as allies and partners. Social media has shown an optimistic future for Dalit feminists, marginalised and women at the grassroots through inclusivity. More and more women are increasingly able to rewrite their own narratives.

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Marital Adjustment in Relation to Area and Education

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Abstract:

Marital adjustment can be defined as the mental state among couples in which there is an overall feeling of happiness and satisfaction with their marriage. The prime aim of the study was to identify marital adjustment in relation to area and to identify marital adjustment in relation to education. 30 Urban and 30 rural area People in relation to Marital Adjustment. 30 graduate people and 30 above graduate people in relation to Marital Adjustment. All this information was collected by creating an online Google form according to marital adjustment questionnaire. The marital adjustment questionnaire developed by Dr. Pramod Kumar and Dr. Kanchana Rohatagi. Mean scores were computed and 't' test was applied to find out the differences between the groups. The interpretation of the results indicated there was insignificant mean difference between relations to their area and education regarding the marital adjustment.

Key Words: Marital Adjustment, Area, Education

Introduction

Eysenck & others defined adjustment as "A state in which the needs of the individual on the one hand and the claims of the environment on the other hand are fully satisfied or the process by which this harmonious relationship can be attained."

Landis writes, "Marriage and family are not optional; they are necessary. They meet men's deepest needs." Marriage provides a person an opportunity for a secure and protected satisfaction of his needs for companionship, affection and sexual expression. It involves the most intimate type of emotional relationship between two individuals (Coleman, 1964). Many marriages suffer because the two partners fail to develop a relationship which is characterized by mutual acceptance, trust, care, concern love, admiration and sharing of role responsibilities.

The success in marriage is said to depend partly on finding the right person (Ruch, 1970). But the mere fact that two persons are suited to each other does not guarantee that they will make a successful marriage. They must learn to live together-to share, accommodate, compromise, adjust and plan together. One is required to develop a proper attitude, skill and temperament to be successful in marriage. Ruch (1970) rightly says that being the right person is more a matter of becoming the right person. This implies considerable change in their personalities they bring with them at the time of marriage. In short, a good marriage does not simply happen, it has to be worked out (Stone & Stone, 1967).

Objectives of the Study

The present investigation was carried out to accomplish following objectives

- To identify Marital Adjustment in relation to Area.
- To identify Marital Adjustment in relation to Education.

Hypothesis

1. There is no significant difference between Urban and Rural area People in relation to Marital Adjustment.
2. There is no significant difference between Graduate and Above Graduate People in relation to Marital Adjustment.

Method

Sample

The present study was carried out on Marital People live in Gandhinagar, Ahmedabad and Mahesana district of Gujarat state. 30 Urban and 30 rural area People in relation to Marital Adjustment. 30 graduate people and 30 above graduate people in relation to Marital Adjustment. All this information was collected by creating an online Google form according to marital adjustment questionnaire.

Tools

Personal Data Sheet:

A Personal data sheet developed by investigator was used to collect information about Gender, Area and Types of Family, etc.

Educational Adjustment Inventory

The marital adjustment questionnaire has been developed to provide a handy tool to identifying couples who are making poor marriage and need psycho diagnostic help. Further, the questionnaire is developed in a way as to provide a more meaningful single composite marital adjustment score for the couple unlike other available scales which give separate marital adjustment scores for the two. The marital adjustment questionnaire developed by Dr. Pramod Kumar and Dr. Kanchana Rohatagi. In this questionnaire total 25 Sentence under the three options, viz. Always, Sometimes and Never. These options indicate the level of marital Adjustment. The Test-retest reliability for this questionnaire is 0.84. The face validity of the questionnaire appeared to be fairly high.

Statistical Analysis:

In this study ‘t’ test was used for statistical analysis.

Results and discussion

As pointed out previously that the prime aim of the study is to identify Marital Adjustment in relation to Area and Marital Adjustment in relation to Education. Here further I would like to mention that the score obtained on Marital Adjustment has been developed by Dr. Pramod Kumar and Dr. Kanchana Rohatagi. It can be stated that the result in general reveals that the ‘t’ value of the total two table is not found to be significant level.

As reported in table 1 Rural Area exhibits lower mean score (M=40.4) then the Urban (M=40.57) and ‘t’ value of 0.11 clearly indicate that the differences between the two groups in Marital Adjustment level is find to be statistically insignificant. The mean score of two groups of areas says that the urban have slightly higher mean score than rural area; it means that urban and rural have same adjusted with especially marital adjustment.

Table 1: Shows Mean, SD and ‘t’ value on Marital Adjustment between Urban and Rural Area.

Area	N	Mean	SD	‘t’	Significant
Urban	30	40.57	6.66	0.11	NS
Rural	30	40.4	4.95		

*Significant level of ‘t’ value:0.05 level 2.00 (df=58), 0.01 level 2.66 (df=58)

Table 2 reveals results obtained by the group of education graduate and above graduate on marital adjustment. As reported table 2 Graduate group shows lower mean score (M=39.77) then the above graduate (M= 41.2) but ‘t’ value of 0.97 indicate that the differences between the two groups in marital Adjustment level is find to be statistically insignificant.

Table 2: Shows Mean, SD and ‘t’ value on Marital Adjustment between Graduate and Above Graduate Education.

Education	N	Mean	SD	‘t’	Significant
Graduate	30	39.77	5.32	0.97	NS
Above Graduate	30	41.2	6.29		

*Significant level of ‘t’ value:0.05 level 2.00 (df=58), 0.01 level 2.66 (df=58)

Conclusion:

From the data available in tables 1 to 2 it is easily come to concludes that the urban-rural and graduate-above graduate both are two groups of marital adjustment in relation to area and education are not significant. In this covid-19 situations there is no difference in marital adjustment in relation to area and education.

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Education Reform Movement for Empowerment of Women in 19th Century India: A Study of Savitribai Phule

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Abstract

Savitribai Phule was a pioneer in the schooling of girls and ostracised sections of Indian society. In 'Dark Age' she went to the Nobel teaching career and became the first lady teacher and began the first female school in India. She has been fighting not only for education, but also for the right to equality of women with undesirable births, unwed and unwed mothers. Her thesis was groundbreaking in the nineteenth century. Indeed, it is a measurement of the ruthlessness of elite regulated intelligence – a figure as significant as Savitribai Phule is not mentioned in modern India's history. Its life and struggle merit appreciation for the broader spectrum and awareness among non-Marathi and others, not only in India, but also all over the world.

Keywords: first woman teacher, female education, caste discrimination, womenliberation.

Savitribai Phule: Early Life Struggles

Savitribai was born in Maharashtra district in Naigaon on January 3, 1831. In those days, marriage girls were used to it in an early era. She married Jyotirao Phule at the age of 9, despite the need to graduate. Jyotirao has begun to teach his wife home as a pioneer and firmly believe that every woman needs to be taught. In this interview with Dyananodaya on 15 September 1853 he showed his firmness in education for women. "It happened to me that the improvements made by a mother in a child are really necessary and healthy. Therefore, if you wish to make change in the world, those who concern the country with their happiness and welfare should pay heed to their plight and make every effort to share information with them. With that in mind, I first began the girls' kindergarten. But I didn't like the way my caste brother educated girls and my own dad threw us from the house. We didn't have funds to develop it or someone was willing to give the school space. People were not able to take their children to school but Lahuji Ragh Raut Mang and Ranba Mahar persuaded their classmates the advantages of learning." Savitribai had under his guidance the mission of her life was women's education and her release from the cultural patterns of the masculine culture. Jyotirao began a girls' school on January 14th 1848, Savitribai began teaching at this school and thus became India's first teacher. But a woman's teaching was not a simple feat, since girls' education was seen as a sin. On her school visit, she was harassed by a group of orthodox men, who followed her and abused her in obscene words. When she went, she was flung by stones, mud and gravel. She began to wear an additional sari at school with her. Yet all this she met with great bravery. This pair was enthusiastic about their mission and did not interrupt their efforts to educate girls in any area of society. She has developed many new ways to teach girls how to make school more fun, to play sports, to recite their own poetry

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before the girls. Her first poems 'Kavya Phule' was written in 1854 and highlighted the need for education and English. When people look at their love for education, they began taking their girls themselves to college. In the period 1849-50, the number of girls rose from 25 to 70. Education for her therefore was a way of inflaming the mind and personalities of women and others rather than only alphabetical study. Her teaching method was very plain, participatory and active. We are talking today about the psychological philosophies of Talim Gandhiji, the study of the Zakir Hussain Committee on Education etc. But none of our philosophers ever looked at the Phule pair's educational patterns to make schooling a common reality. The government's current schemes, including the right to an education service, midday meals scheme etc., which gives priority to education may seem new, but Savitribai even set a precedent in 184 yrs. Instead of giving a donation, she was the teacher who encouraged young students to request a school library during the prize ceremony. In order to help parents recognise the value of education and to inspire their daughters, she has also held a parental-teacher reunion at regular intervals. She knew very well the relationship between hunger and education as a visionary. She took great care of every child's wellbeing at school.

Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Phule

- As all people are equal, access to education has to be consistent. Education monopoly restrictions must be limited.
- There must be universalization of opportunities and obligatory schooling.
- Faith, race, caste and sex should not be taken into account when teaching individuals. The development of educational ideals should be humanistic.
- Education must be a focus for the establishment of social justice to the women and other disadvantaged classes. Education can act as a socially binding power.
- An instructor at the elementary school must be a trainee and an adequate wage is payable.
- The curriculum must be realistic and useful to address society's needs.
- The study should provide preliminary knowledge of agriculture and wellbeing.
- The education in rural and urban schools can be distinguished.
- Educational values should be established that are testing time such as liberty, democracy, brotherhood, compassion, self-reliance, loyalty to the country, and internationalism.
- The development of professional capacity and productivity should allow for adequate linkage of expertise.
- Lord Macaulay's principle of downward filtration is not philosophically correct, because the masses are ignored.
- Practical experience is higher than books. Therefore primary knowledge, history, grammar, agriculture ethics, and health should be imparted in Marathi.
- While quantitative growth is necessary in primary schools, it should not be at the expense of the quality of growth.
- The government must devise a system of bursaries and awards for worthy and supportive students.

Mother of Modern Girls' Education

We may claim she was one of the earlier girls' education crucifiers. Savitribai Phil's husband Jyotirao Phule, impressed by her hunger for learning, taught her how to read and write. As a nurse, she graduated in Ahmednagar at the Ms Fararar Institute and in Pune at Ms Mitchell's School as the first teacher. In her day, she encouraged young girls to study. When women's

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rights almost existed, she began the first woman's school at Bhide Wada in Pune in 1848 along with her husband. There were only eight girls of various castes from that grade. Education for girls was then a sin and a journey to school. Orthodox men used to repeatedly insult her. These men who hurled bricks, mud, red eggs and tomatoes, dung and soil at her. They were Orthodox. Because of this issue, she also had an additional sari. She also founded other women's schools in 1848. Training, for her, has been a development of the mind itself, not just alphabetical study. She wanted the girls not only to learn reading and writing, but to improve the level of their minds. Her revolutionary ideas have also influenced girls and women. Her creative educational techniques gradually tied the people together. This led to a considerable increase in the number of girls in school in 1849-50. Her thoughts about education are reflected by one of her poem.

Go, Get Education
Be self-reliant, be industrious
Work—gather wisdom and riches,
All gets lost without knowledge
We become animal without wisdom,
Sit idle no more, go, get education
End misery of the oppressed and forsaken,
You've got a golden chance to learn
So learn and break the chains of caste.
Throw away the Brahman's scriptures fast.
Poem by Savitribai Phule

Of about 150 pupils, she was running three colleges. She has given scholarships to avoid kids leaving colleges. Instead of girls, she might also have encouraged a young student to ask the school for a library at an award ceremony. The young girls were encouraged to do drawing, writing and other work. A young girl's thesis, Mukta, became Dalit literature's face at that time. Savitri writes in another poem 'English the Mother' that learning English is necessary for the annihilation of caste system. She also denounces Peshwa [the dynasty which ruled the main parts of Maharashtra in the 1700s and 1800s] and reflects the view of Jyotiba who considered it autocratic, responsible for the perpetuation of caste systems.

“English Language, our English mother
with verse and zeal sets us yonder.
Mother English is not of a Mughal
A Peshwa Brahman or the gullible.
Mother English imparts true wisdom
with love revives the oppressed one.
Mother English embraces the downtrodden
Caressing and bringing up those are fallen.
Mother English breaks shackles of slavery
Replace bestiality with the glory of humanity.”

Savitribai has also written essays on alcohol dependence and debt traps. She vigorously condemned in "Karz" [Essays] the tradition of borrowing money for festivals, which resulted in mass debt. She wrote about the imperfect persuasion of the weak.

Her life was full of obstacles, but with the objective of educating girls she faced them. We can call it the “Mother of modern education system”.

Writing and Contributions

Poems and other texts from Savitribai Phule continue to inspire many and remain a leader in the fight against the education and caste system of India. She's made some precious writings together.

1. Kavyaphule- Collection of poems, 1854
2. Jyotirao's Speeches, Edited by Savitribai Phule, 25 December 1856
3. Savitribai's Letters to Jyotirao
4. Speeches of Matoshree Savitribai, 1892
5. Bavankashi Subodh Ratnakar, 1892

These works have been collected together in a 194-page volume 'The Complete Works of Savitribai Phule' edited by Dr M. G. Mali.

Conclusion

Savitribai Phule, who fought and endured in the same way with her egalitarian partner, remains overshadowed by caste and sexism. In addition to her identity as the wife of Jyotirao Phule, even academically it is little understood. Modern India's first feminist teacher, a militant missionary and women's education exponent, a proponent of emancipation for women, a pioneer of committed poetry, a brave master who took on caste and patriarchy powers definitely had their independent personality and commitment. Indeed, a figure as important as Savitribai Phule cannot find any mention in modern India history as a measure of the ruthlessness of elite-controlled intelligence development. Her life and suffering should be understood by a broader range of non-Marathi people.

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WOMEN, COLONIAL MEDICINE AND HEALTHCARE IN UNITED PROVINCES (1885-1940)

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Abstract

In the due course of time, the area of the social history of medicine has been expanded widely and feminist historians brought new discourses in the medical intervention of the colonial state. Colonial intervention in women's healthcare extends an opportunity to gain an insight into the broader public health policy of colonial state. Using archival data, the paper explores the policy, motivations and reforms that gave colonial state access to the body of Indian women with special reference to United Provinces

Keywords: women, healthcare, western medicine, doctors, midwives, United Provinces.

Reproductive health in colonial India is thus a recent area of research not only among feminist historians but also social historians. From the 1980s, the scholars have discussed the social aspect of women medical professionals, the medicalisation of childbirth and motherhood in colonial India. Recent scholarship throws light on- birth control and female sexuality, politics of reproductive health, the contributions of Christian female missionaries who were devoted to the cause of women's health unlike their male counterparts and the female professionals in British India.⁶⁴

The prime areas of intervention by colonial state in India were army, jails, and hospitals. These were dominated by males only. It was in the late eighteenth century, women healthcare attracted attention of the colonial state. This step was motivated by the rising problem of venereal diseases among the British soldiers. Thus, the Contagious Disease Act of 1868 gave the power to the colonial state to control the body of women (specifically prostitutes). However, the motive with regards to the Act should not be exaggerated, as it was designed to address the problem of British soldiers rather than focusing on women only, however, it cannot be denied that through the legislation colonial state reached the untouched territory.

Missionaries played a significant role in spreading the western medicine through medical relief to women and children. In the United Provinces, the chief societies which undertook the medical work under missionaries were American Episcopal Church, the Women Union Missionary Society, and Zenana Bible and Medical Mission. They established hospitals, sanatoriums and centres to deliver medical aid. In 1889, American Episcopal Church started working in Bareilly and Bridaban. The other American Societies were at Jhansi, Fatehpur Lucknow, and Jaunpur. When medical care was added to the missionary repertoire, the Indian

⁶⁴ Indira Chowdhury, *Delivering the 'Murdered Child' Infanticide, Abortion, and Contraception in Colonial India*, pp-275-298, in Deepak Kumar and Raj Shekhar Basu (ed.), *Medical Encounters in British India*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013). Aparajita Dhar, *Western Approach to Infantile Mortality and Delivery Deaths* pp-255-264, in Chittabrata Palit and Achintya Dutta (ed.), *History of Medicine in India The Medical Encounter*, (Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2016).

custom of *purdah* aroused a demand for women doctors.⁶⁵ This eagerness towards penetrating into *zenanas*, later became chief area focused by the colonial state to colonize reproductive health.

The first effort directed towards women healthcare by colonial state started in 1885 with the establishment of National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India or Dufferin Fund (DF). Maharani of Punna was the prominent figure behind the realization of the colonial state's responsibility.⁶⁶ She requested Miss Elizabeth Bielby (medical missionary practiced in Lucknow since 1875) to describe the conditions of women healthcare in India to Queen of England. Consequently, when Lady Dufferin was leaving for India in 1883, the Queen instructed her to initiate some plan for providing medical aid to the women of India. The Fund thus focused on to provide medical training to women and organize medical relief for women.⁶⁷ It was organised to penetrate into the elite class women or the *pardanashins* of the society. Thus, it was deemed necessary to set up hospitals especially for women and staffed by female doctors and midwives exclusively Indian women.

Providing medical care to women and maintain their seclusion was challenging for the state. However, the government of North Western Provinces (NWP) and Oudh was the steadfast supporter of the 'female hospital movement' acknowledging the necessity of special arrangements to accommodate practices of female seclusion even before the initiation of Dufferin Fund.⁶⁸ In 1884, NWP and Oudh made arrangements to provide separate arrangements for females and children in the hospitals and dispensaries. What the administration failed to acknowledge was that women were always accompanied by the male members of their family to the hospitals.⁶⁹ Even of the fact, the Inspector General of Civil Hospitals (IGCH) concluded that the attendance in the dispensaries would increase when separate hospitals for females constructed in the Province along with the female staff and doctors.⁷⁰ However, it was the British women doctors who practised in these hospitals. But this professional monopoly was challenged by the Indian women doctors in the early nineteenth century. Together with Indian women, who aimed at reforming midwifery and conditions of birth in India, they argued that British women were more interested in their careers as doctors or official wives and ignorant of the needs of Indian mothers. Consequently, Indian women and nationalists depicted colonial health policy for women and children as proof of imperial ignorance and incompetence.

The most discussed issue among medical historians is the encounter of midwifery or dhais on the advent of western medicine. Dhais, were considered by the Europeans, solely responsible for the high maternal and infant mortality rate in India. Thus her position underwent substantial transformation by the introduction of western medical practices. As Geraldine

⁶⁵ Geraldine Forbes, *Managing Midwifery in India*, in 'Women in Colonial India: Essays on Politics, Medicine and Historiography', (New Delhi: Chronicle Books, 2005), p-104.

⁶⁶ Balfour and Young, *The Work of Medical Women in India*, London, Humphery Milford-Oxford University Press, 1929, p-107.

⁶⁷ Geraldine Forbes, Medical Careers and Healthcare for Indian women: Patterns of Control, *Women's History Review*, 3(4), 1994, pp.15-30.

⁶⁸ Uttar Pradesh State Archives (hereafter UPSA, Lucknow), Notes on the Annual Returns of the Dispensaries and Charitable Institutions of the NWP and Oudh, December 1891, Allahabad, 1892.

⁶⁹ UPSA, Notes on the Annual Returns of the Dispensaries and Charitable Institutions of the NWP and Oudh, December 1887, Allahabad, 1888.

⁷⁰ UPSA, Report on the Dispensaries and Charitable Institutions of the NWP and Oudh, December 1886, Allahabad, 1887.

Forbes puts it “hegemony operated, not to change the system of health care, but to describe the *dhai* as a social pathology.”⁷¹ Using the census reports, David Arnold criticizes the low priority given to the maternal health and infant welfare activities by the government officials who rely extensively on local bodies and private organizations.⁷² Though these studies raise questions about the intentions of the colonial government, few works comes up with a new approach and insight for the study of women’s health in colonial era.⁷³ In 1903, Lady Curzon organized the Victoria Memorial Scholarship Fund for training midwives in western medical education. The fund was an effort to improve the conditions of childbirth which the DF and other organizations had revealed to be in such a bad state. However, the purpose failed to achieve its objectives as the midwives after some classes returned to their traditional methods along with their demand for high fees, especially in rural areas. Officials and the training centers lamented that the *dhais* were hostile and refused to attend the classes. In the United Provinces, the government for reducing the infant mortality focused on strengthening the scheme for the training of indigenous *dais*. The Maternity Supervisor and Resident Midwives for the same purpose delivered lectures by visiting the mothers of newborn child in the large municipalities and like always the rural areas left at their own fate. The foundation of the training of indigenous *dais* in United Provinces was laid by the Central Committee of the Victoria Memorial Fund, under the supervision of Dr Gertrude Campbell in 1917. Six centers at Lucknow, Allahabad, Cawnpore, Benaras, Fyzabad and Bareilly were chosen for the activity. The scheme was decided to be financed partly by the Victoria Memorial Fund and partly by the local government.⁷⁴ The villages were left practically untouched. This was natural because women doctors were hard to find in villages, and *dhais* could not travel to the nearest town for a lesson when that involved time and money. But it was a tragic irony too, for the village women, who were left at their own fate without skilled help and therefore were dependent on the *dhai*’s. Contrarily, Amritsar, Hyderabad, and Bombay were far ahead of the United Provinces, in village administration of maternity health. One important thing to notice here is that the government had no role to play in the healthcare of women, were all individual or voluntary organization efforts. The schemes for the improvement of the indigenous *dais* and the training of *dhais* taken over by the All India Lady Chelmsford League for Maternity and Child Welfare, United Provinces branch from January 1924. Later, the few institutions in United Provinces were recognized for the diploma in midwifery at Lucknow, Cawnpore, Allahabad, Benares, Agra and Aligarh. The centres at Moradabad, Gorakhpur, Meerut, Bareilly and Fyzabad were also formerly recognized for the *dais* certificate only.⁷⁵ A scheme of Maternity and Child Welfare launched at Allahabad in a more concentrated form.⁷⁶ However, a concern was raised that the success of the scheme was hampered owing to the ignorance of *dhais* and the apathy of the people.⁷⁷ The training of

⁷¹ Geraldine Forbes, *Managing Midwifery in India*, p-100.

⁷² David Arnold, *Official Attitudes to Population, Birth Control and Reproductive Health in India, 1921-46*, pp-22-49. in Sarah Hodges (ed.), *Reproductive Health in India, History, Politics, Controversies*, (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2006).

⁷³ Mousumi Bandyopadhyaya, *Indigenous approach to Delivery Deaths in Colonial Bengal*, pp-235-254, in Chittabrata Palit and Achintya Dutta(ed.), op.cit. Sean Lang, *Drop the Demon Dai: Maternal Mortality and the State in Colonial Madras, 1840-1875*, *Journal of Social History of Medicine*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 2005, pp-357-378.

⁷⁴ UPSA, *Fifty- First Annual Report of Sanitary Commissioner of United Provinces of Agra and Oudh*, 1918, Allahabad, 1919.

⁷⁵ UPSA, *Annual Report of the Director of Public Health (DPH) of United Provinces of Agra and Oudh* 1926, Allahabad, 1927.

⁷⁶ UPSA, *Annual Report of the Civil Hospitals and Dispensaries of United Provinces* 1923, Allahabad, 1924.

⁷⁷ UPSA, *Annual Report of the DPH of United Provinces of Agra and Oudh* 1921, Allahabad, 1922.

probationer midwives was started at the Provincial Training Center in Lucknow but the training of candidates in the women's hospital and MCW centers were discontinued from 1932.⁷⁸ By 1930s, AIWC were determined to abolish *dhais* and replace them with midwives trained in western techniques. In All India Women's Conference passed a resolution at its annual meeting calling for legislation requiring the "compulsory registration of dhais and midwives".⁷⁹

The international lobby for women's health was most active with regard to women and children in an organized economic sector. The debate on maternity benefit and maternity leave was initiated by the Convention of International Labour Conference which met in October 1919 in Washington.⁸⁰ Throughout the 1930s the convention remained unrecognised in Indian presidencies. In 1930, Royal Commission on Labour in India recommended in the interest of mothers and children that in order to encourage delivery of women by the trained dais, a small bonus should be given to the women concerned, if her delivery was effected by a trained woman instead of the ordinary untrained dhai. As an effect of these recommendations, Bombay, Madras and Bengal presidency passed maternity benefit laws. Consequently, in the Legislative Assembly of United Provinces, a member criticized the working of the government where the bill was pending for last two years in comparison to the provinces of Bombay, Madras and Bengal, where the act was already implemented. However, a bill was introduced and passed by the Congress government of the United Provinces in 1938.⁸¹ This was named as '*United Provinces Maternity Benefit Bill*' which provided to every woman working in factories a maternity benefit at the rate of 8 annas a day for the four weeks. Further, maternity benefit was decided to be provided for 8 weeks to those women workers who availed the service of a qualified midwife or a trained woman health visitor. Additionally, she was to be provided with a bonus of five rupees. Further, every factory employer was to establish a crèche with a female attendant, qualified midwives and a trained women health visitor to take care of the children of the factory women. The Act passed by the government under the Congress not only laid the vision of foundation of maternal and pediatric policy in post-colonial government but also proved that child health and welfare too was part of nationalist movement in the country. Even though the Act was beneficial for both the women and children, this act benefited the women in the factories and mills only but this act was not extended to the working women in municipalities, local bodies or at agricultural farms etc. However, the implementation of this Act was not full-fledged. Many times employer refused or did not give the amount to the women. Reforms and debates were thus politically significant with regard to the British effort to contain the nationalist movement and to prove the wholesome effect of British rule in India to the international community.

The colonial administration for delivering healthcare for women was a monolithic structure. Sensibilities of high mortality rates were evident from official correspondences yet initiation a full-fledged comprehensive policy failed to see the light of the day. To achieve the mission, they targeted *purdahnashins*, indigenous dais and social prejudices of the population. However, on their part, the State failed to undertake the responsibility by outlining the measures to combat maternal mortality, promoting research into the causes of high death-

⁷⁸ UPSA, Annual Report of the DPH of United Provinces of Agra and Oudh 1933, Allahabad, 1934.

⁷⁹ UPSA, Annual Report of All India Women's Conference, 1934, Calcutta..

⁸⁰ The Draft convention suggested a six week leave before and after childbirth, accompanied by sufficient benefits, for women in commercial and industrial undertakings. On resuming work women should be entitled to two extra breaks of thirty minutes each during their working hours while they were breastfeeding their babies.

⁸¹ UPSA, File No. 120/1930, Legislative Department, 1930.

rates, drawing specific policy for women-oriented. The State government on the other hand, focused singularly on the issue of childbirth. Yet the MCW too had serious drawbacks such their work was unorganized and uncoordinated and records were not kept properly so that future policy provisions could be outlined. No sincere effort was made on the part of the government, not only to attract the medical women of United Provinces in medical arena but also to encourage them to continue the profession in the preposterous environment. DF initiated to reduce this gap but with no promising results in the absence of handsome funding from the government and local bodies except false promises. Thus urban-centric and restricted approach of the government became a major setback in the women healthcare policy of colonial medical care.

Rani Gaidinliu; The Naga Freedom Fighter of North East India.

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Abstract:

This article examines the significant role and contribution made by Rani Gaidinliu, the lone women freedom fighter of the Nagas against colonial rule. She started the non-cooperation movement with the support of the Zeliangrong community to destabilize the British administration. She was a political and spiritual leader who campaign to revive the traditional religion, identity and culture of the people. She projected herself as the follower of Gandhi and often used Gandhi's name in her political propaganda. She often people that British rule would come to an end and a new King named Gandhi would rule the people. Rani Gaidinliu revolted against British rule with her followers and attacked the Assam Rifles outpost. She, along with some of her followers, was captured and sentenced to life imprisonment in 1932. Pandit Nehru bestowed her the title "Rani" and "daughter of the hills" for her courage and contributions towards the struggle against colonial rule. The courage and valour shown by her struggle against colonial rule have been neglected for years. This article will also examine the efforts made by Rani Gaidinliu in preserving the identity and culture of the Zeliangrong Nagas.

Keywords: revolt, anti-colonial, identity, religion, culture.

Introduction

Rani Gaidinliu was a socio-religious reformer, political leader and freedom fighter of the Zeliangrong Nagas- the cognate tribe of the Zeme, the Liangmei and the Rongmei. She was on January 26, 1915, at Nungkao village in Tamenglong district, Manipur, India. At the age of 13, she became a follower of Haipou Jadonang and joined the Heraka movement, a religious movement, later gained political momentum as a struggle against British rule in Zeliangrong inhabited areas in Assam, Manipur and Nagaland. She was keen to preserve the traditional religion, culture and identity of the Zeliangrong community. She reorganized Heraka followers and challenged the British Empire. Rani Gaidinliu convince people to move forward by her skill and spiritual strength. The movement's objective was to defend the indigenous religion and protect her motherland from foreign rule. After the death of Jadonang, she became the successor of the movement. She wanted to bring reforms in the Zeliangrong society's socio-religious practices; she organized a religious congregation, the performance of dances, and singing songs and hymns. She opposed the oppressive policies of the British, especially forced labour.

She revolted against colonial rule and insisted the people not to pay taxes to the government. She has linked her spiritual role as a leader of the socio-religious movement to her role as a nationalist and constantly evoked Mahatma Gandhi's efforts at the national level to inspire her people to rebel against the British. She was considered the most charismatic, patriotic and spiritual freedom fighters. Her contribution and dedication towards the preservation of old

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traditional culture and identity were remarkable. It was believed that she was born with supernatural powers. Since childhood, she used to go into trances and had visions influenced by God (Tingkao Ragwang). She got enlightenment from God (Ragwang) and spread the divine message of God. She worked for the amelioration of the Zeliangrong people; however, she became unpopular among many Naga groups, especially the Christian and supporter of NNC. The Christians perceived the Heraka revival movement as anti-Christian.

The Heraka Movement

Heraka means pure; it was a monotheist religion, believed in the worship of one God, "Tingkao Ragwang". It was a movement started by Haipou Jadonang to resist the infiltration of the British and Christian missionaries. It was a reform movement for the revival of the traditional religion and culture of the Zeliangrong Nagas. He was on a mission to end British rule and establish the Naga Raj of self-rule. He started an armed rebellion against the repressive and oppressive British policies of forced labour, ruthless oppression and forceful collection of house tax. In the year 1931, he was arrested and hanged for his activities against colonial rule. It was a religious movement to revive the traditional religion Zeliangrong Nagas. The Heraka reformist religion believed in God's supremacy, who created nature, earth, water, and air. After the death of Haipou Jadonang, Rani Gaidinliu became the leader of the Heraka movement. She became a spiritual and religious heir. Gaidinliu described the movement's aim as "to reform old religious practices to strengthen the movement aimed at ousting the British". Heraka was a socio-religious movement that began in the early 1920s in the Zeliangrong dominated region.

Non-Cooperation movement

The Zeliangrong tribe, under the leadership of Rani Gaidinliu, started to resist colonial rule and repressive measures undertaken by British officials. She obstructed the British administration; she told all households not to pay house tax to British officials. She was also against the porter services to the British officials. This could be seen as the own version of the non-cooperation movement in the Zeliangrong country. She began her non-cooperation movement among the Nagas and started guerrilla attacks on British officials. She rebelled against British rule. She received donations from the locals; many of them became her followers. She called on people to join the non-cooperation movement against British expansionist forces and not pay house taxes and other taxes. She toured all around the Zeliangrong villages in Naga Hills, Assam and Manipur to intensify the non-cooperation movement.

Revolt against the British

She organized and trained youth called Riphens (soldier). The British forces launched a search for her, so she went underground, moving across Assam, Nagaland, and Manipur villages. At Pulomi, under her direction and supervision, the whole villagers were engaged in constructing the wooden fortress, which can accommodate 3000-4000 soldiers for protection and defence against the British forces. While the construction was underway, the Assam rifles contingent led by Captian MacDonald launched a surprising attack. Her forces engaged in armed conflicts against the Assam Rifles in the North Cachar Hills on February 16 1932, and at Hangrum Village on March 18 1932. She decided to attack the Assam Rifles outpost of Hangrum. The Zeme warriors, under the leadership of Heungchang Zeme, attacked the Assam Rifles post. Six Assam Rifles soldiers were killed, and eight Zeme warriors were shot dead, and many were injured. After the attack on Assam Rifles post in Hangrum, the British

sent troops and spies in all the Zeliangrong dominated areas in Naga Hills, North Cachar and Manipur. Several outposts were set up at strategic points, patrol and searches were carried out in several villages to capture her and subdue the movement.

Her movement posed a severe threat to the government whereby the British government declared monetary awards of Rs. 500 and ten years tax break for the informant to facilitate her arrest. As her movement grew more substantial, the British troop under Captain MacDonald's command arrested her in a Pulomi village on October 17, 1932. She was sentenced to life imprisonment while her followers were either executed or sent to prison. Thus the movement came to an end. Following the arrest and imprisonment of Gaidinliu, there were still growing tension in many villages of Assam and Manipur. In 1937, Jawaharlal Nehru met Rani Gaidinliu at Shillong Jail and promised to persuade the British government for her release. Nehru also requested Lady Nancy Astor, the first lady member of the House of Common, to discuss the parliament to release her. Nehru, in her letter to Lady Astor, on May 27, 1939. She was released from Tura jail when India became independent in 1947.

Post-Independence period

After being released from jail, she demanded a separate administrative unit for the Zeliangrong people living in the adjoining areas of Assam, Manipur and Nagaland within the ambit of the Indian constitution. Her movement was seen as a roadblock to the Naga National Council's (NNC) demand for sovereignty and independence of the Naga region from the Union of India. She worked to revive the traditional religion of animism or Heraka. Ideological differences grew up between her and the NNC (the Naga rebels). She was in favour of the preservation of ancestral religion and culture while NNC stood for the spread of Christianity. She received "Tamra Patra Freedom Fighter Award", an award bestowed upon distinguished individuals for their contribution in 1972, and the Padma Bhushan in 1982 by the Government of India. In the year 1993, at the age of 79, on February 17, Rani Gaidinliu passed away. In her honour, the Indian government released a postage stamp in 1996 and a commemorative coin of her honour in 2015. She died in disappointment; the Government of India could not fulfil the promise of creating a separate administrative unit for Zeliangrong under the Union of India. Even today, her courage, valour and sacrifice remain almost unknown to the people.

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AWARENESS OF AVAILABLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SELF-EMPOWERMENT!

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Abstract

Government, Private Organisations, NGO's all are striving for making our Indian women strong, getting self-empowered, but researcher felt let's take a small initiative by a smaller study on just forwarding checklist and gauging how far the women of our Indian society are aware of available facilities for their self-empowerment.

Key Words: self-empowerment, provisions, schemes, legislations, acts

INTRODUCTION

Women's empowerment is the process of empowering women. Empowerment can be defined in many ways, including accepting women's viewpoints or making an effort to seek them, raising the status of women through education, awareness, literacy, and training. The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. And for this, government, Private Organisations, NGO's all are striving for making our Indian women strong, getting self-empowered, but researcher felt let's take a small initiative by a smaller study on just forwarding checklist and gauging how far the women of our Indian society are aware of available facilities for their self-empowerment.

Sampling: Convenience sampling, Snow ball sampling

Tool /Checklist

Researcher self-made the checklist tool to gather the information. Researcher collected inputs for the statements from Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment Government of India and many other sites as well. Simple Yes/Somewhat/No were the three options made for clear picture of women current update with regards to available opportunities for their self-empowerment.

Data Collection And Data Analysis

For gathering data, online google form was created after showing tool to experts and taking suggestion on it. Link of google form - Tool on Women Empowerment to be filled by Women only. Kindly fill/forward to other friends to fill the same <https://forms.gle/nRQSKjAZcyJ72dPD7>. Data was gathered from 100 participants (Age-18

+) and simple percentage graph was used for analyzing the data and interpreting the findings of the study.

Checklist

Sr.No.	Statement	Yes	Somewhat	No
A	PROVISIONS/ SCHEMES			
1	Scheme – Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme	50%	50%	0%
2	Policy – LIC Kanyadan Policy	50%	40%	10%
3	Sukanya Samridhhi Yojana (SSY)	30%	30%	40%
4	Balika Samridhhi Yojana	30%	30%	40%
5	Mahila E-haat	30%	10%	60%
6	CBSE Uddan Scheme	30%	40%	30%
7	One stop centre scheme funded through Nirbhaya fund	50%	40%	10%
8	Pradhan Mantri Aawas Yojna -Homeownership	50%	30%	20%
9	Bharatiya Mahila bank schemes	50%	20%	30%
10	Divyang Swavalamban Yojana or Other such schemes for Divyang Applicable to men /women/children with disabilities	60%	10%	30%
11	Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana	50%	20%	30%
12	Stand up India	20%	40%	40%
13	Mahila Udyam Nidhi Yojana	30%	20%	50%
14	Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY)/Mudra Yojana for Women	30%	30%	40%
15	Entrepreneurs from micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) / state-run ecommerce portal government e-marketplace (GeM).	30%	20%	50%
16	Cent Kalyani Scheme from Central Bank of India	10%	30%	60%
17	Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme	40%	30%	30%
18	UJJAWALA : A Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of trafficking and Rescue, Rehabilitation and Re-integration of Victims of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation	40%	30%	30%
19	Swadhar Greh Scheme	10%	40%	50%
20	Get recognized through National Award in recognition for exceptional work for women empowerment / Zila Mahila Samman/Rajya Maila Samman like Awards.	40%	30%	30%
21	Mahila Police Volunteers (MPVs) Scheme.	40%	10%	50%
22	Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme for the Children of Working Mothers.	40%	20%	40%
23	Organisations working for Women Empowerment like – ALL INDIA WOMEN’S CONFERENCE,JAGORI, Lawyers Collective Women’s Rights (Domestic Violence Cases) , NARI RAKSHA SAMITI, Pratidhi (Legal help), SAARTHAK	30%	40%	30%
24	Working women hostels	60%	0%	40%
25	Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP) Scheme	60%	20%	20%
26	Ladli Laxmi Yogana	20%	40%	40%
27	National Scheme of Incentives to Girls for Secondary Education	60%	30%	10%
28	Compensation Scheme for Women Victims/Survivors of Sexual Assault/other Crimes - 2018	40%	40%	20%
29	Aware of Women Helpline Schemes - Women Helpline facilities / women helpline numbers, women commissions in state.	40%	40%	20%

30	Awareness of many social networking sites /platforms to empower self which are available like https://www.womansdivorce.com/ https://www.legalzoom.com/country/in https://www.mytherapist.com/advice/ https://feminist.com/	40%	30%	30%
B	ACTS/LEGISLATIONS			
31	The Protection of Women From Domestic Violence Act, 2005.	80%	10%	10%
32	Dowry Prohibition Act	80%	10%	10%
33	Immoral Traffic Prevention Act	30%	50%	20%
34	The Maternity Benefit Act 1961	60%	30%	10%
35	Muslim Women (Protection of rights on divorce) Act	60%	20%	20%
36	The Indecent Representation of Women	50%	30%	20%
37	The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (PREVENTION, PROHIBITION and REDRESSAL) Act, 2013	60%	30%	10%
38	Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, 1994	50%	40%	10%
39	Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act	70%	20%	10%
40	Equal Remuneration Act, 1976	30%	50%	20%
*	I hope this checklist must have sensitized you to read, know more about these schemes /legislations beneficial for women empowerment!	80%	20%	0

Findings from the Study

It's found most of the women population were unaware of various schemes available for their empowerment and its benefit if taken by all surely it will lead to WOMEN EMPOWERMENT as a whole. It's rightly said Every Drop Counts.....Still, why there is lack of unawareness among the women community. It's not a question –who to create awareness, its why self-awareness and self –responsibility or self-anxiety is not there to get self-updated.

Significance of the Study

Researcher: Helped to know the status of awareness / Gauging awareness of available schemes /acts/legislations for self-empowerment

Participants : To sensitize women participants to get self -sensitized to read and know more about these schemes, acts, legislations

Thus study made a minute attempt by just like adding a small drop of water to ocean , short initiative for sensitising women for women empowerment.

Conclusion

Women empowerment is self-empowerment. Self-alertness is very important for getting empowered. No doubt awareness is to be created among women but of course, let's take advantage of the opportunities available and at hand and reach the goal of empowerment. Get self-empowered by getting self-aware and communicating the women community around the available opportunities. If done so, whole of Indian women will get empowered SOONER and FASTER!!

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Socio-economic and Religious life of the Meitei Women in the 18th Century

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Abstract

Manipur is one of the eight north eastern states of India. The people of Manipur can be broadly classified into two groups namely i) the Meitei and ii) the tribal people. The Meiteis are the inhabitants in the valley areas. Traditional Meitei society is a patriarchal society even though there are myriads of notable contribution by Meitei women on the social, cultural, religious, political and economic dimensions of Manipur history. The two Nupi Lan and Ima Keithel are some notable examples. Their role before the 19th century is, however, somewhat scanty in academic arena. This paper seeks to examine the socio-economic and religious life of the Meitei women during the 18th century. Its main focus is to explore the position of Meitei women in the mentioned period.

Keywords: - Meitei woman, Position, Socio-economic, Religion.

Introduction

The people of Manipur can be broadly classified into two groups namely i) the Meitei and ii) the tribal people. The Meiteis are the inhabitants in the valley areas. Traditional Meitei society is a patriarchal society even though there are myriads of notable contribution by Meitei women on the social, cultural, religious, political and economic dimensions of Manipur history. The two Nupi Lan and Ima Keithel are some notable examples. The British Colonial administrator Hudson opined that women of Manipur held a high position in society. In history, the kingdom of Manipur fought many wars with neighbouring polities. Women never stepped back when it was their turn to defend their society. The courageous historical account of queen Linthoigambi who fought against the hill tribes in the absence of her husband can be mentioned. In 1709, king Pamheiba became the first monarch to convert the traditional Meitei religion to Hinduism. Many constraints and restrictions were introduced in Manipur society from Hinduism. This paper seeks to examine the socio-economic and religious life of the Meitei women during the 18th century. Its main focus is to explore the position of Meitei women in the mentioned period.

Social life

During this period, the parents allow the children to choose their mate, but invited groom's family for the arrangement of the marriage. The boys and the girls had the chance to meeting each other at state level festivals, Lai haraoba, games like Likon, Baruni Kaba etc. The custom permitted the visit of the adolescent boys to the residence of the girl and allowed them to sit in the porch of the house. The girl provided them with fruits, smoke etc. and had the chance to talk and their love affair started. Thus the girl had also the chance to choose her

mate. Pre marital sex was prohibited at that time if the parent ever detected the case; the daughter was turned out from the family. They have little chance of marriage.

The present form of society is based on a patriarchal structure which is the heritage of the 17th and 18th century A.D. Before the introduction of the present system there was a heritage of matrilineal form of society in which polyandry was a form of marriage. The system of polygamy was in Manipur from the very beginning of her history. Introduction of Hinduism in the 18th century encouraged the system especially in royal family. King Garibaniwaz had ten queens and Bhagyachandra had 94 queens. So from the 18th century polygamy became a fashion among the officers. Another system of polygamy that was practiced by the royal family was the "Sana-Mityengtaba" under this system, whenever the king saw a beautiful girl by chance or on any occasion, he managed to meet the girl anyhow and reserved her for him. Such a girl might be left untouched throughout her life. Such sort of polygamy under Sana-Mityengtaba was one of the major factors for immorality amongst the women of the state. But in common people, suppression of a wife without any reason was against law. If the wife was truthful and well behaved, the women had the right to demand Nupamamal or to confiscate all the properties of the person except a drinking jar and a piece of cloth on his loins. So polygamy in Manipur was a dangerous family war.

The caste system was brought in Manipur by Hindus in 18th Century. The intermarriage between the high and low clans was very rare unless the bride or the groom was specially qualified in respect of money, beauty or education. Inter-marriage between a Brahman bridegroom and other castes is allow, and provided the marriage in the form of Gandharba marriage but such marriage between Brahman bride and groom of other castes is strictly prohibited. If done they are made outcaste.

Widow and remarriage of divorcee was prevalent in that period. But, by the coming of Brahmins in Manipur Sati system was practice among them. It is recorded in the royal chronicle that Bamon Narakhyan died along with his two wives. And a Meitei who must have taken hindu religion died and his wife performed the same. It might be an attempt to introduce the practice of sati.

Economic Life

Meitei women contributed much to the earning of living and economic affairs of the house besides, the household works and looking after the family. Economically, women were not dependent upon the men. But, on the contrary, some men were dependent upon their wives. Agriculture was the main occupation of the traditional Meitei society. Women along with the male participated in all works of agriculture. Transplantation, weeding, harvesting, winnowing in all these works women equally shared with men. In some works like transplantation and winnowing women were more expert than the men. So, all the works of agriculture except the ploughing and thrashing, were done by the women. Besides, they work in other's field as wage labourer. In leisure time, women used to spin the yarn from cotton and silk and prepared all kinds of clothes required for the family and also for sale. Almost Meitei women know the art of weaving and embroidery. The girl at the age of puberty were send to the expert women to leant the art of spinning, weaving, song, dance, yumbanlol (household work and discipline) as a part of education of that period. Manipuri Phanek mapal naiba and other works of embroidery are famous for its extraordinary art. A bride before leaving her parents house prepared all the clothes required for her new family. The groom's family used to provide the cotton required for its preparation. The practice is still continued in

some villages like Andro. Another important role of the women in the economy of the state and family was internal trade and marketing. The internal trade of the country was carried on by the women only and the market is called Ima Keithel(mother market), men seldom appeared in the market. According to R.Brown, “Many of them walk miles in the morning and buy the things from distant villages and sell it again in the capital. In the evening the women were hurrying along with their wares on their heads and little baby slung on their backs. In the bazaar the women sat in long row raised on earth without any covering in the rainy season, then a large umbrella”. Thus, the women earned the additional income of the family in the midst of the sun and rain besides the care of the baby. So, Brown has rightly remarked that, it will be difficult to find out such industrious women in any part of India.

Political Life

In the political life too, the role of the Meitei women was not less. They join the administration of the state and even went to battle field and earned fame. The heritage of women participation in the war continued up to the 18th century. There are several references for such achievements of the queens and princesses in royal chronicle like Ningthourol Lambuba, Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba and Khuman Ningthourol Lambuba. Women of the common people too indirectly helped the armies against the foreign invasion. During the reign of Garibaniwaz (18th century A.D) when there was a combined attack of the Burmese and Tripuris, the women captured ten of the Tripuri armies by striking over their head by Phishatem(A wooden instrument for weaving) . Again the name of Leima Linthoingambi is still remembered for her presence of mind and courage in dealing with the Kongjai tribes during the absence of the king. Such rare qualities of the Meitei women and their active participation in the war were also among wang or wang-ste tribes of Yunam. In the administration of justice also the women were given equal right with the male. In the traditional society there was a separate court for the women called “Pacha”. The judges of the court were all women presided over by the chief queen of the reigning king. But after Hinduization, the role was held by a male. However, the way of submission before the presiding officer was never changed.

Religious life

The religion of the Meitei is the worship of the Ancestors and Sanamahi as the supreme god. However, since the beginning of the 18th century, this state witnessed the influence of Hinduism. The spread of Hinduism was achieved only by a compromised with the ancient faith. The traditional gods were brought into Hindu pantheon and Hindu deities were absorbed into the Meitei culture. Therefore, in the religious matter also the women equally participated with the male. The post of priestess (Maibi) and its institution (Maibi Loisang) clearly indicate that the women have equal status with male in the religious matter. In the Lai Haraoba (marry making festival of god), ritual, almost all the items of the ritual were conducted by the Maibi. Items like Leima Jagoi were exclusively reserved for the women. In all the life circle ceremonies like birth, marriage and death, the women played some specific roles. In meitei traditional society delivery of child was conducted by the local expert women Maibi and Mayoknabi (assistant). Maibi performed the ritual of Ipanthaba (birth ceremony in the morning). Similarly, in the marriage ceremony too, certain rituals like chiruk Nungshang, Ngamuthaba (divination) were conducted by the women. In the death ceremony during the early time, the song for Mangkumba (going to crematorium) and Mangkaba (back from crematorium) was used to sing by the old women of the locality. Thus women in the 18th century played an important role in the Meitei society. Heritage of the traditional culture was

quickly adapted to the Hinduism of the 18th century. Manipuri Rasha Leela was exclusively played by the women; women began to join Kritan, Sankritana and even formed an independent Pala (Rasheswari Pala) for themselves. There was also women front for Khubak Eshei and Basok. Nowadays the women have Holipalas and even serve as drummers.

Conclusion

From the above discussion we find that the positions of women in Meitei society clearly show the independent status and distinctive characteristics of the Meitei women. But from the coming of Hinduism, caste system was brought in Manipur which became factor for choosing a girl. But love marriage or marriage by personnel intimacy was a common form of marriage even today. Another impact of Hinduisation was in the dress of the marriage especially for the bride. A new lower garment known as potloi which was specially used in the rasha dance began to be introduces as the dress of the bride from the last quarter of the 18th century A.D. The birth ritual was known as Ipanhaba. After Hinduisation the name changed to Swasti puja and hindu ritual was also added. In the early days, the ritual was held on the 5th day for the girl and 6th day for the boy. But later the ritual began to be performed on the 6th day regardless of gender. The practice of burial for the disposal of the dead body was prevalent in Meitei society but after Hinduisation crematory process was started. With this process if a family member died (father or mother) women are not allow to light the pyre. Throughout the process or Saradha, women play a very important in showing pain and sorrow for the demise. Therefore, in the 18th century with the coming of Hinduism there were some changes in the religious and social life of the women.

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Historical Perspective of Christian Woman's Right to Divorce

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Abstract

Indians, generally and Christians particularly frown on divorce, citing culture, tradition and the Bible to be against it. This is more censorious when the initiative for divorce comes from the woman. Till today, the catholic church does not permit a divorced couple to remarry in the church. Fortunately, legislation has been more progressive, though at a snail's pace. This paper traces the right to divorce under the Act of 1869, and the subsequent amendments in 2001 and 2019. It makes a few suggestions to ameliorate the condition of unhappy couples, especially women who may be trapped in an unhappy or violent marriage.

Introduction

Traditionally marriages in India were perceived as very stable with negligible number of people opting for divorce⁸² Social conditioning, wherein girls are taught that their forever home is the husband's house, and boys are taught to shoulder financial responsibility of the marriage is a main reason for this stability⁸³.

Christians historically view marriage as a sacrament and one that is perpetual. Many biblical quotes are cited to discourage and condemn divorce, for example, Luke 16:18 "Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery."

The First Step: Indian Divorce Act, 1869

The earliest statute dealing with divorce in India is the Indian Divorce Act (Act IV of 1869)⁸⁴. This Act applies to Indian Christians. This Act had only one ground for divorce, adultery, probably based on the biblical verse, Matthew 5: 32, "But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery." The Act as originally drafted provided for different grounds of divorce for men and women.⁸⁵ Thus the husband could cite wife's

⁸²Dommaraju, P. (2016). Divorce and Separation in India. *Population and Development Review*, 42(2), 195-223. Retrieved April 1, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44015635>

⁸³SRINIVASAN, K., & JAMES, K. (2015). The Golden Cage: Stability of the Institution of Marriage in India. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 50(13), 38-45. doi:10.2307/24481745

⁸⁴CHATTERJEE, N. (2010). Religious change, social conflict and legal competition: The emergence of Christian personal law in colonial India. *Modern Asian Studies*, 44(6), 1147-1195. Retrieved April 1, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40926527>

⁸⁵10. When husband may petition for dissolution. - Any husband may present a petition to the District Court or to the High Court, praying that his marriage may be dissolved on the ground that his wife has, since the solemnization thereof, been guilty of adultery. When wife may petition for dissolution. When wife may petition for dissolution.- Any wife may present a petition to the District Court or to the High Court, praying that

adultery simpliciter as a ground for divorce, but the wife had to prove adultery with concruelty with adultery to entitle her to a divorce. Moreover, the adulterer would be a correspondent in such a case.⁸⁶ Further the adulterer would be liable for damages and costs.⁸⁷The Court also had the power to settle the property of such wife on the husband and children.⁸⁸The Bombay High Court in *Mrs. Pragati Varghese v. Cyril George Varghese*, struck down S.10 of the Act as violating Articles 14,15 and 21 of the Constitution, and recommended speedy amendment by the legislature.⁸⁹ **The Second Step - The Indian Divorce (Amendment) Act, 2001**

It was only in 2001 that other grounds for divorce were inserted in pari materia with the other personal laws.⁹⁰ Thus Christians could now divorce on grounds on adultery simpliciter,

her marriage may be dissolved on the ground that, since the solemnization thereof, her husband has exchanged his profession of Christianity for the profession of some other religion, and gone through a form of marriage with another woman; or has been guilty of incestuous adultery, or of bigamy with adultery, or of marriage with another woman with adultery, or of rape, sodomy or bestiality, or of adultery coupled with such cruelty as without adultery would have entitled her to a divorce a mensa et toro, or of adultery coupled with desertion, without reasonable excuse, for two years or upwards. Contents of petition. Contents of petition. -- Every such petition shall state, as distinctly as the nature of the case permits, the facts on which the claim to have such marriage dissolved is founded.

⁸⁶ 11. Adulterer to be co- respondent. - Upon any such petition presented by a husband, the petitioner shall make the alleged adulterer a co- respondent to the said petition...

⁸⁷ 34. Husband may claim damages from adulterer. - Any husband may, either in a petition for dissolution of marriage or for judicial separation, or in a petition to the District Court or the High Court limited to such object only, claim damages from any person on the ground of his having committed adultery with the wife of such petitioner.

35. Power to order adulterer to pay costs. - the Court may order the co- respondent to pay the whole or any part of the costs of the proceedings:

⁸⁸39. Power to order settlement of wife' s property for benefit of husband and children. - Whenever the Court pronounces a decree of dissolution of marriage or judicial separation for adultery of the wife, if it is made to appear to the Court that the wife is entitled to any property, the Court may, if it thinks fit, order such settlement as it thinks reasonable to be made of such property or any part thereof, for the benefit of the husband, or of the children of the marriage, or of both. Any instrument executed pursuant to any order of the Court at the time of or after the pronouncing of a decree of dissolution of marriage or judicial separation, shall be deemed valid notwithstanding the existence of the disability of coverture it the time of the execution thereof. Settlement of damages. Settlement of damages.- The Court may direct that the whole or any part of the damages recovered under section 34 shall be settled for the benefit of the children of the marriage, or as a provision for the maintenance of the wife.

⁸⁹AIR 1997 Bom 349

⁹⁰ 10. Grounds for dissolution of marriage. - (1) Any marriage solemnized, whether before or after the commencement of the Indian Divorce (Amendment) Act, 2001, may, on a petition presented to the District Court either by the husband or the wife, be dissolve on the ground that since the solemnization of the marriage, the respondent-

(i) has committed adultery; or

(ii) has ceased to be Christian by conversion to another religion; or

(iii) has been incurably of unsound mind for a continuous period of not less than two years immediately preceding the presentation of the petition; or

(iv) has, for a period of not less than two years immediately preceding the presentation of the petition, been suffering from a virulent and incurable form of leprosy; or

(v) has, for a period of not less than two years immediately preceding the presentation of the petition, been suffering from venereal disease in a communicable form; or

(vi) has not been heard of as being alive for a period of seven years or more by those persons who would naturally have heard of the respondent if the respondent had been alive; or

conversion, etc. The Amendment sought to put the husband and wife on the same plane, thus corresponding sections were also amended making them applicable in the same manner for both parties. A very modern provision of divorce by mutual consent was also introduced.⁹¹

Third Step – Unconstitutionality of Section 497 of Indian Penal Code, 1860

At this point we may also cite that until very recently adultery was a crime under the Indian Penal Code.⁹² Thus a man was also entitled to penal redressal if a man committed adultery with his wife without his consent. In *Joseph Shine v. Union of India*, while striking down the provision as unconstitutional, the Supreme Court observed, that this provision originates from “romantic paternalism which stems from the assumption that women, like chattels, are the property of men.”⁹³

Fourth Step – The Personal Laws (Amendment) Act, 2019

Deleted virulent and incurable form of leprosy as a ground of divorce.⁹⁴

Way forward

Removal of restitution of conjugal rights

In *Smt. Saroj Rani v. Sudarshan Kumar Chadha*, the Supreme court held, that restitution of conjugal rights is inherent in the marriage and is not violative of Articles 14 and 21.⁹⁵ Earlier, in *T. Sareetha v. T. Venkata Subbaiah*, the Andhra Pradesh high court had held that, legal provision of restitution of conjugal rights is irrational and arbitrary and violates Article 14.

(vii) has wilfully refused to consummate the marriage and the marriage has not therefore been consummated; or

(viii) has failed to comply with a decree for restitution of conjugal rights for a period of two years or upwards after the passing of the decree against the respondent; or

(ix) has deserted the petitioner for at least two years immediately preceding the presentation of the petition; or

(x) has treated the petitioner with such cruelty as to cause a reasonable apprehension in the mind of the petitioner that it would be harmful or injurious for the petitioner to live with the respondent.

(2) A wife may also present a petition for the dissolution of her marriage on the ground that the husband has, since the solemnization of the marriage, been guilty of rape, sodomy or bestiality.”.

⁹¹10A. Dissolution of marriage by mutual consent.- (1) Subject to the provisions of this Act and the rules made thereunder, a petition for dissolution of marriage may be presented to the District Court by both the parties to a marriage together, whether such marriage was solemnized before or after the commencement of the Indian Divorce (Amendment) Act, 2001, on the ground that they have been living separately for a period of two years or more, that they have not been able to live together and they have mutually agreed that the marriage should be dissolved.

⁹²Section 497. Adultery. — Whoever has sexual intercourse with a person who is and whom he knows or has reason to believe to be the wife of another man, without the consent or connivance of that man, such sexual intercourse not amounting to the offence of rape, is guilty of the offence of adultery, and shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to five years, or with fine, or with both. In such a case, the wife shall not be punishable as an abettor.

⁹³2018 SCC OnLine SC 1676.

⁹⁴(iv) has, for a period of not less than two years immediately preceding the presentation of the petition, been suffering from a virulent and incurable form of leprosy;

⁹⁵1985 SCR (1) 303

Providing irretrievable breakdown of marriage as a ground for divorce In a plethora of cases,⁹⁶ very recent being, *R.Srinivas Kumar v R.Shametha* the Supreme court has used Article 142⁹⁷ to give relief to parties, “Once the marriage has broken down beyond repair, it would be unrealistic for the law not to take notice of that fact, and it would be harmful to society and injurious to the interests of the parties.”⁹⁸

Providing for Settlement of spousal property

Legal luminaries propose achieving some sort of equality between the spouses by dividing the matrimonial assets or property equally between the spouses on divorce.⁹⁹

Uniform Civil Code

Code without discrimination on grounds of religion or gender. In *Jose Paulo Coutinho v. Maria Luiza Valentina Pereira*, “whereas the founders of the Constitution in Article 44 in Part IV dealing with the Directive Principles of State Policy had hoped and expected that the State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a Uniform Civil Code throughout the territories of India, till date no action has been taken in this regard.”¹⁰⁰

Conclusion

The Indian Divorce Act was enacted by the British to regulate divorces among Indian Christians, it can be safely said that it has outlived its purpose.¹⁰¹

Equality is a dynamic concept with many facets and dimensions, and is definitely violated when women are discriminated from each other on grounds of religion and from men on grounds of gender, with respect to civil status such as divorce.¹⁰²

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⁹⁶Durga Prasad Tripathy v. ArundathiTripathy (2005) 7 SCC 353; Naveen Kohli v. Neelu Kohli (2006) 4 SCC 558; Sanghamitra Ghosh v. Kajal Kumar Ghosh (2007) 2 SCC 220; Samar Ghosh v. Jaya Ghosh (2007) 4 SCC 511; K. Srinivas Rao v. D.A. Deepa (2013) 5 SCC 226; and Sukhendu Das v. Rita Mukherjee (2017) 9 SCC 632.

⁹⁷ Article 142 in The Constitution Of India 1949 - Enforcement of decrees and orders of Supreme Court and unless as to discovery, etc (1) The Supreme Court in the exercise of its jurisdiction may pass such decree or make such order as is necessary for doing complete justice in any cause or matter pending before it, and any decree so passed or orders so made shall be enforceable throughout the territory of India in such manner as may be prescribed by or under any law made by Parliament and, until provision in that behalf is so made, in such manner as the President may by order prescribe

⁹⁸CIVIL APPEAL NO. 4696 OF 2013on 4 October, 2019

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Reservation And The Journey of Women In Politics in India

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Abstract

Political empowerment should always start at the grassroots level. Which is why the local self-government today make the primary political space in the society. It is interesting to note that women's reservation or empowerment issues were not born in the 1990s with the 73rd and 74th amendments; it was there even before independence. The 73rd and 74th amendment came as an expected landslide victory for the feminists who were working on the persistent issue of absence of women at political and decision-making levels in India. The reservation of one-third of seats in all categories and at all levels of the grassroots institution for women has raised the expectation among all sections of society that this group of women would create a 'critical mass' which in turn would leave an indelible mark on the management of these institutions at the grassroots.

The issue of making women a part of politics in India has been an age-old issue/political debate, which has revived itself at many levels from time-to-time giving rise to multivariate political debates. In the account of parliamentary debates, it was noticed that the women issue was always accepted and acknowledged by the male parliamentarians. However, the vitality of making them a part of politics and policy-framing was acknowledged internationally since historic times.

When it comes to understanding empowerment or more specifically the position of women in India, it is important to locate that the idea was conceived from historic time when this definition of 'gender' was related with only understanding of women. The change of solely understanding women in gender relations has changed only recently, but the location of the position of women in the society was researched in detail by J.S Mill back in 1870 in the 'Subjection of Women'. The ideals of political empowerment and participation in political front is always associated with each other as they share a close symbiotic relationship. Mill observed the condition of women and compared it to their proven capability and chosen purposeful exclusion. Mill observed the Indian front carefully and mentioned it in his writings. History has witnessed very minimum number of queens compared to the number of kings, but even with such sparse number of queens, they have shown their natural flare. Many of them have occupied the throne in very difficult times. During their reigning times they proved their capacities as exactly opposite to what the society had conceived of them, the vigour, firmness and intelligence often superseded that of the kings who had ruled. Mill even drew the attention towards Asia and Europe.

"If a Hindoo principality is strongly, vigilantly and economically governed; if order is preserved without oppression; if cultivation is extending, and the people prosperous, in three

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cases out of four that principality is under a woman's rule. This fact to me is an entirely an unexpected one, I have collected from a long official knowledge of Hindoo governments. There are many such instances: though by Hindoo institutions, a woman cannot reign, she is the legal regent of a kingdom during the minority of the heir; and the minorities are frequent, the lives of the male rulers being so often prematurely terminated through the effect of inactivity and sensual excesses. When we consider that these princesses have never been seen in public, never conversed with any man outside their own family except from behind the curtain, that they do not read, and if they did even read there was no book in their language which can give them the smallest instruction on political affairs; the examples they cite of the natural capacity of women in government is very striking"¹. The entry of women in sphere of governance, popularly the public sphere was a deliberate space of exclusion.

Although the study of Mill is conducted mainly under the context of Europe, but his generalizations and observations can be contextualized in general for women across the world. The general tendency was to omit women from the role of governance. Now from the above study or excerpts of his writings might suggest that his opinions are restricted to the observations of females from reigning families, but he himself points that out in his books:

“The ladies of reigning families are the only women who are allowed the same range of interests and freedom of development as men; and it is precisely in their case that there is not found to be any inferiority. Exactly where and in proportion as women's capacities for government have been tried, in that proportion have they been found adequate.”²

This comment is suggestive of the fact that, even the most privileged women were tried in their capability. Woman in general has always been kept in an unnatural state, that their nature has been greatly distorted and disguised. So no one can tell that what would have happened if women were left to choose as freely as men had been allowed. Mill, hence, has concluded that the least differences which now exist have merely been produced out of circumstances and not out of any disability. On the contrary, Mill draws attention towards special qualities which women possess, which are borne out of their speculative minds and their natural flare in dealing with groups better than individuals. Mill even doubts the larger claims that has been medically propagated that men are cleverer than women, he finds this claim absurd. The large mental capacity of men, according to him has been a purposeful claim by the society in order to subside women and this has been proven wrong over ages.

Much later, the 1974 report 'Towards Equality' by the Center of Women Development Studies, shocked the country as the statistics did not look believable or ignorable to parliamentarians/politicians/policy framers. The world was already shifting its attention to women welfare, and the process of decentralization was also gaining momentum. So, everything converged, and India could not ignore 50% of the population being absent from any form of policy-framing position. The result was expected to yield empowerment, but again the term was taken as a zero-sum game or an end in itself. The decentralization was a part of Indian culture since pre-historic time. Still, the lack of constitutional binding and adequate importance made this an ornamental traditional local feature, left at the discretion of

state governments to care. The regularization of elections and simultaneous entry of women as active elected representatives have turned the direction and dynamics of Indian politics to a different approach and also increased the level of vitality and importance. The rising discontent of the women even showed in women of Indoli, a small village in Satara District of Western India, where the women had put up an 'all-women' panel for local elections in 1985. They lost the elections overwhelmingly, and the political bosses challenged the husbands of the candidates by saying "why don't you put on bangles?"³The reservation policy was taken up in other South Asian countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal. It was only in 1976 that women were selected to be members of Union Council in Bangladesh and 1997 Local Government Union Parishad Act felicitated the entry of three quota seats for women in Union Parishads. In Pakistan, the Devolution of Power Plan was adopted in March 2000, reserving 33% seats for women at the local, tehsil, municipality and district level. In Nepal, 20% of seats are reserved in local institutions for the women by the Local Self-government Act of 1999 in municipalities and wards and has resulted in catapulting about 40,000 women in political activities. Sri Lanka made repetitive demands for quotas but was never implemented. Sri Lanka at present has the least number of women representatives. In 2000, only 4% of women participation could be recorded at provincial councils.⁴

The issue of making women a part of politics in India has been an age-old issue/political debate, which has revived itself at many levels from time-to-time giving rise to multivariate political debates. In the account of parliamentary debates, it was noticed that become convinced that quotas serve an essential political goal in a democratic environment. The Indian experience of reserving seats at the women issue was always accepted and acknowledged by the male parliamentarians. Still, nothing much was done when the reservation bill of 81st Amendment did not get passed in Rajya Sabha and was returned to the Lok Sabha. The 81st Amendment dealt with reserving seats in the State and Central legislative assemblies, where the participation rate of women recorded a dismal 9% even in 2016. The 81st amendment has become a decade long campaign, which has been unable even to have the issue debated in Parliament. The question of formal participation and voluntary entry of women in formal politics is an established myth. This has never happened even internationally. The cultural factors partially explain the varying degrees of woman representation from region to region. Following this logic, the women in the Nordic and Northern Europe with long traditions of gender equality, have been the most successful in breaking through traditional resistance and increasing representation to participation. But even by this logic, the women in the United States or Great Britain accounted for less than 7% of all parliamentarians even as late as 1987. Whereas, the legislatures of Syria and Indonesia, which were considered relatively undemocratic, composed of 10-12% women. Even the Muslim society, which was supposed to be most conservative produced leaders like Benazir Bhutto and Khaleda Zia in Pakistan and Bangladesh. The quota system is another surest way to achieve an increased number of women in national legislatures as nominated or elected. Quotas account for high levels of female representation in Nordic countries and quota law in Argentina increased the women in its house of representatives from 4% in 1991

to 16% in 1993 and 28% in 1995. In Brazil, when quotas were used in the 1997 congressional elections, the number of women legislators increased by nearly 40% since the last elections. Despite the controversy, they have become popular not only because women have organized to push for them but because more men have the local urban and rural levels of governance has yielded more positive than adverse outcomes.⁵ However, a cynical observation contest this opinion on the ground that men 'allow' or encourage these local level reservations over the national level as 'real power' is concentrated at the national level and women are mostly kept out of the actual governance. As the quotas increase visibility, the reality that has been seen in other countries tends to convey a different message as they claim that the real participation in politics at the local level has been seen, well even without the quotas. Till the 1980s the municipal councils of Turkey showed an increasing percentage of women because the routines of municipal politics fitted well with their domestic duties and also because the women's sections of political parties started becoming influential in election primaries.

In 1980, when the activities of women sections of political parties closed down, the participation of women in institutional politics diminished, as women could only participate if they competed with men. The numbers decreased increasingly, but those who remained started to behave more independently and addressed the women issues with more calibre than before. Even in Israel, without the quotas, the number of women as participants at the local level has been increasing more steadily than the national level.

The reason which has initiated the process of championing decentralization although it has not always yielded the desired outcome is because that the centralized governments have not always succeeded in the desired outcome. The conventional growth-oriented top-down development strategy has not accomplished the desired trickling down of the benefits of development to the marginalized sections. The primary focus on decentralization in the recent years can also be located in the shift of the ideas from 'effective government' to 'effective governance'. There was a rise in the global discourse to transform the governance structures within nation-states. The drives to increase efficiency and transparency was not that new, but the global discourse was changing towards a minimalistic states and optimizing the accountability of the government and integrating 'local needs' and 'local people'.⁶ The 1990s was the time the global discourses were making serious shift towards altering the traditional governance structures and making strong cases for questioning the failures of traditional systems towards eradication of poverty, causes for social movements like women's movement, anti-caste and anti-racist movements. Most importantly the exclusions of the global subalterns' were addressed very seriously and the process of democratization, decentralization and inclusion of the historically marginalized groups were given the utmost importance in the renewed structure of governance.

Decentralization is also connected with development and inclusion. The concept of good governance concerns itself with the extent to which power and authority should be dispersed through the geographical hierarchy of the state and the process through which this dispersion

should take place. The people-centered development is the form of development in which public control will be exercised through decentralized decision-making at all levels.

In India decentralized government is not a very new syndrome of the 1990s, the custom of village government of little republics have been a part of the culture since ancient times. In India, across the states the local governments are known by the name of 'Panchayat'. Hence the three-tier system of Panchayat is known as Panchayati Raj in India. Panchayats as traditional institutions were seen in India as almost sacred with their '*panchas*' (an Indian word meaning members) referred to as '*Pancha Parameshwar*' (member as God) with expectations of fairness and justice in their role of settlement of local interpersonal and community disputes. The idea of Panchayats has been central to the core feelings of Indian villagers since long time. The proverbs used by them recorded 'Panch mane Khuda, Khuda mane Panch' (meaning: God is with the Panchayat, and Panchayat is with God).⁷ The Cambridge History of India stated, "It is in the villages where the great mass of the people live that there has existed for centuries a simple system of local self-government on which all advance may be based."⁸ The history of Panchayats are not so recent, in the work of Altekar, titled 'Village communities in Western India' he has stated that the inscriptions in Gujarat, Kathiwar and other places in western India of the fifth and seventh centuries A.D. show that village communities then possessed a council, which used to be appointed by the elders of the village, forming a general body, and the well-known South India inscriptions of the Chola times, twelfth century A.D. also talks about a detailed description of highly organized villages with select groups and committees/councils dedicated towards various services. The effect of the Muhamedan rule had actually weakened the village communities and arrested their development, this syndrome continued till the British rule. However, the Mukhiya/Chaudhri culture, left deep imprints in the Indian culture, even in the literatures of 1870s mentioned the presence of such village councils in northern/western India. The headmen of these councils would identify to be the most powerful person in that village without fail.⁹ Although the presence of mutual mistrust/mistrust in capabilities of local administration led to disappearance of local councils with much prominence, but it resurfaced with the Famine Commission Report of 1880, where Sir Richard Temple mentioned the ancient Village councils as efficient institutions as precaution against famine. The report of the commission commented For the future progress of the country the encouragement of the principle of local

self-government, by which the business of all kinds should be left more and more to local direction, is of much moment, and nowhere more so than in dealing with local distress; and however great be the difficulties in the way of its early practical realization; it will be never to lose the opportunity of taking any step that may lead to it.¹⁰

The 73rd and 74th amendment facilitated the entry of women into the periphery of grassroots politics in India, but it also was a voluntary effort to revitalize local democracy and decentralize administration and make the rural politics/administration more inclusive. It was an effort to fight the social stigmas like caste-ism, gender-oppression which is believed to be present in rural areas manifold and bring into the inclusive fold of politics and administration.

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This amendment also mandated that the presidents of village councils, to conduct a ‘village assembly’, popularly known as ‘gram sabha’ in consultation with Election Officer once in a while.¹¹ This will ultimately help all adult members within the jurisdiction of that Panchayat to participate in the pertaining matters of that Panchayat. The whole amendment was focused at enhancing the process of evaluation involving ordinary people to participate with a weightage attached to their participation, ensuring proper power devolution within the bureaucracy, elected political structure and elected representatives at the district/block/village levels and ensuring mass participation through the councils of people.

The amendment was an effort to ensure real participation and also the way the participation had been regularized by assigning fixed tenures in office, ensuring free and fair elections and most importantly allotment of necessary finances to execute the local developmental projects. Although at present, with the amendments, PRIs are considered as new spaces of governance, but the existence predates even British era or the colonial period. As village republics, PRIs dealt with custom and religion and these bodies primarily concerned themselves with family, marital conflicts, caste and social customs. The Mughals introduced an elaborate bureaucratized hierarchy of officials but the basis was the village Panchayat system. The British could rightfully inherit the existing caste-based system which was feudal in structure, therefore helped them expand the empire by playing divisive politics at a much decentralized level. The first efforts of British decentralization did not encourage any decentralization of real administrative of decision-making power to the locals.

The above measure of reservation was revolutionary as it ensured the presence of 1.2 million women representatives at the local level governance in India. On the one hand it is treated as exemplary initiative on the part of the state, to not only constitutionally recognize and revive decentralized administration with a renewed vigour, but also to ensure entry of the absent and marginalized section of one half of the total population. The trend of local governance is universal but India as the largest democracy of the world, by the virtue of one amendment ensured 66% of the total population (rural population of India is about 66% according to 2001 census) to come in direct politics and administration of the state and raising the challenge of renewing community politics under the face of globalization which was forcing the economies to open up their states and make matters local. Moreover although India has always been gender neutral and non-discriminatory in terms of framing constitutional laws, the absence of women from the sphere of politics both in local/state and center level has been a constant feature associated with the Indian state.

The amendment brought about significant change in the overall structures of the state. The amendments were not uniform across all states. Different States made different arrangements in their respective state laws. The overall democratic structure underwent a change from two-tier to a multi-level federation and the participation went up from 4963 elected members to about 30,00,000 members across all levels ensuring a projected revolution.

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Dowry, A Compensation for Hindu Woman's Denied Rights.

Rapti Dhar

Abstract

Hinduism is India's major religion, and Hindu women have been deprived of different rights for decades, one of which is a share of her paternal property, which is accomplished by the ritual of dowry or marriage gifts with great pride. Looking closer, it can be found that dowry itself was not a tradition in ancient India, but that, later took a fragile form, advocating compensation in place of the legal rights of women in their parental share. The paper discusses how this dowry tradition is alluded to as an alternate method of parental sharing and how its initial concept of religious scriptures redirected.

Keywords: Dowry, Marriage, Rights, Women.

Introduction:

Hindu weddings in India are the most vibrant of all the festive occasions, with a number of ceremonies, foods, decorations, rituals, and customs. Along with all of these fascinating events, the practise of dowry is the oldest and most deeply rooted evil in Hindu weddings in India. The most insecure of all the discriminations faced by women in our society is dowry. Forceful demands, domestic abuse, bride deaths, mental and physical tortures are all common occurrences in our daily newspapers, all of which are encouraged by dowry. The key reason for the emergence of dowry is the disinheritance of daughters by their natal families and the lack of ownership rights over anything she earns from her married kin (Kishwar, 1999). Dowry has become a requirement for a woman to be married off by her parents, who provide a large sum of money, as well as movable and immovable property. Women's reputation is harmed as a result of this, and it is a curse for her. The source of all questions is a discussion of the initial definition of gift giving in Hindu marriages. Therefore, laws of religious scriptures are the main sources as marriages are incomplete without the religious intervention.

Review of literature:

Marriage was a well-established institution in the Rig Vedic period, and it was a social and religious responsibility that had to be fulfilled. Marriage is defined as a ceremony in which the groom holds the bride's hand accompanied by prayers for offspring, health, and long life in the tenth book of the Rig Veda in the hymn of Surya's bridal (Griffith, 1897, p. 501). The only gift transfer is found in the hymn of Surya's marriage, where the bride was given some woollen robes as her wedding procession left her parental home, despite the fact that it was winter (p. 504). The original Vedic definition is that holy worship should be done by a married couple, with the husband serving as officiating priest and the wife assisting. The dowry system was generally unknown in early societies and also with ancient Hindus. It has even no mention in the *Smritis* or *Dharmasastras* of Hindus (Altekar, 1938) that can be related to the modern idea of dowry that we see today. *Srutis* and *Smrities*, as well as their commentaries, are the original authorities on Hindu Law. Marriage rules in Hinduism are thus closely linked to numerous *smritis*, one of which is *Manusmriti*. *Brahma, Daiva, Arsha,*

Pragapatya, Asura, Gandharva, Rakshasha, and Pishacha are the eight forms of marriage given by Manu, who is considered the first law giver. The first four were *Dharmya*, or socially appropriate, while the last four were *Adharmya* or contrary to social norms. The most notable feature of *Dharmya* marriages was a greater focus on the bride's parent, who was expected to arrange the marriage and bestow the gift of a daughter, known as *Kanyadana*, according to prescribed rituals for each type. The marriage customs specified the gift of the bride and gift giving in the form of ornamenting the bride but not on the demand of the groom's hand. Anything offered to the bride as a sign of love by her relatives was referred to as her separate property, or *Stridhan* (Buhler, 1886, pp. 370-371) and have no negative effect on the bride's family nor was seen as a burden to get a daughter married. Based on who supplies it, *Stridhan* is classified into six types. The female has complete control over the *Stridhan* since it is her sole possession. This means she will sell, donate, borrow, lease, and share her property at her leisure. The description of *Stridhan* varies by *smriti*, but the majority of them are identical. We first see gifts given to bridegrooms in our epics of Mahabharata or Ramayana, along with gifts given to the bride by her family.

Methodology:

Hindu regulations today are adapted versions of religious scriptures' original codes. As a result, it is important to understand what the scriptures have to say in order to distinguish between doctrine and reality. In order to discuss and grasp scriptural prohibitions and laws, historical and analytical approaches have been used.

Results and Discussions:

In her book Hooja (1969), provided some historical history on the dowry system, where she mentioned that some knowledge can be obtained from the *Rigveda* and *Atharvaveda* marriage hymns. These hymns begin with an allegory of Surya, the Sun's daughter, marrying Soma, the Moon. Surya, clad in an eye-catching robe and a coverlet eyes daubed with unguents, with her head dressed in the *Opasa* or *Kuriya* theme, rode to her husband's house in a canopied chariot followed by her bridal procession. Her dowry was also carried in her chariot in the form of a treasure chest (*kosa*). In *Draupadi's* marriage also we see *Pandavas* received all sorts of presents to weddings. These are not offered on the demand of the groom but may be classified as gifts of love for the son in law. As for *Ramayana*, *Sita* is adorned with ornaments and after her bridal procession different kinds of nuptial gifts are presented, neither of which have been offered to the groom.

In conventional culture, no scandal was attached to practising gift transfers to a girl at marriage, as can be seen from references in *Vedas*, *Smritis* or *Epics*. This was one of the 'authorised' marriage styles. The price requested by father for marriage was extremely "disapproved" regarded as bride-price. *Manu* says, "accepting the price out of greed, he (the Father) becomes the seller of children". The marriage ceremony includes *Kanyadana* or the bride's father's gifting his daughter as a bride. The presentation of the gifts accompanying the *Kanyadana* was the *Dakshina* which grants the holiness of the marriage and improved social standing and the dignity of the family of the bride. Dowry and *Dana* is not the same thing. Unlike Dowry, *Dana* is the voluntary gift giving, a mean to earn spiritual and religious merit that symbolizes expression of love and affection of the giver towards the daughter. Therefore, whatever a woman gets from her relations like father, mother, brother, husband, father-in-law, mother-in-law, sister-in-law or from maternal family or from other strangers are all together

constitute her *Stridhan*. *Stridhan* is given only to the bride, not to the groom. There is no universal general number for *Stridhan* forms and none of the smritis has a proper constant number of *Stridhan* classifications. So, if we try to describe *Stridhan* in its etymological context, we might claim that it has no resemblance to the above texts since etymologically, *Stridhan* would mean that every property that belongs to a woman is her *Stridhan*. It can be seen however that it only relates to presents of marriage, other gifts or any other property, whether mobile or immovable, that are earned outside the purpose of marriage, not counts as *Stridhan*. The word *Stridhan* may also be extracted from its technical importance. So, in general it can be said that any gift obtained by a woman from any relation of hers what serves the marriage purpose is her *Stridhan*. So, it may be said that, regardless of who gives a bride, it's her *Stridhan* that varies entirely from Dowry today. In today's world, dowry is all about meeting the expectations of the bridegroom, which the bride's family must meet, otherwise domestic abuse, such as beatings and burnings, will occur. In the epics also, we barely notice any gifts which the bridegrooms were offered on their requirements. The Hindu Personal Law says that *Stridhan*'s heirs are the beneficiaries of a dead woman, but the dowry is not passed as *Stridhan* to them. *Stridhan* is the asset of women, but dowry gives the woman a feel of responsibility to her parents because it's not her fair share that is deliberately granted. Today's dowry is for the welfare not of the bride, but of the groom and his kin. *Stridhan* improves the economic situation of the Hindu woman, as relief during financial difficulties. However, women do not have recourse to dowry. Changes in the state of the economy were made as industrialisation progressed. Different industrial goods were then also introduced on the market. Thus, marriage was the shortest and easiest way of getting them (Basu, 2001). Ethnographers ignore how the transition came about by displacing of the original *Stridhan* formulation, but one cause is the lack of adequate historical analysis "to show how *Stridhan* was transformed into dowry payment gifts. all we know is that there is little mention of exorbitant dowries causing the ruin of families in the literatures of the pre-British India. Ruin due to exorbitant dowry payments became a major theme in nineteenth century literature." (Kishwar, 1999, p. 22). But the fundamental changes in the British era have been blamed. (Oldenburg, 2002, p. 20). This was because men were made possessors of the land in order to bring them to court or imprisonment in the event of theft, because women were still bound to the custom of seclusion and veil which used to prevent interactions with the outside world. Thus, their male counterparts and male kin quietly took the charge of their rights too. When the registry of property began as the first phase of privatisation, the agriculture centric economy became more patriarchal. Women lost possession of property rights regardless of area, class, or caste, and became reliant on the wishes of their male counterparts (Oldenburg, 2002, pp. 102-103). In that time, the destruction of traditional crafts forced the farmers to rely on small farms. Many who owned land in this case got a special status and control. Rural artisans were so impoverished that the idea of *Stridhan* became a burden for them (Kishwar, 1999, p. 23). Since *Stridhan* was a woman's property with an inheritance vested in her female descendants, the inheritance control was stripped away from women with the arrival of male land ownership. Previously, women's labour was critical for her family's economy, which is why a bride-price was paid to the bride's family as reward for taking the woman, who was a source of labour power and economy for her natal family during the marriage. When land was granted to the man alone, women became responsibility and liabilities. They were resourceless and landless, resulting in a lack of jobs and labour. As a result, bringing a woman through paying a bride-price became a futile economic hardship for the groom's family. In the other hand, when a female worker was unable to get the bride price, a woman who had little economic worth in her family became a liability to be excluded and the

households of the girls sought to acquire best grooms. During nineteenth century, new jobs and opportunities were introduced by the British. That brought economic upliftment. These new careers offered husbands a high salary as well as income from their land and a better standing in society. This influence and revenue were his own, as opposed to the income from the farm, where his wife's work was noticeable (Kishwar, 1999, pp. 24-25) . Getting such work holders as sons-in-law meant forming a relationship with a wealthy family, which would provide the daughter and her family with access to different economic opportunities and political authority. So, all those job holders whose power invites huge bribes were offered the biggest dowries.

Conclusion:

Today, a Dowry is not what the Bride happily takes into marriage, but what the family of the bridegroom demands or extorts her and her family. Her *Stridhan* was granted out of love by the meritorious act of "Kanyadan" and "Varadakshina" or the gifts given to the daughter during marriage by her parents, family and friends. Both of these elements became interwoven and eventually developed into the transfer of property or money, which reflects the modern dowry. Eventually, most marriages were a bargain that ensnared certain non-dowry receiving communities as well. The Hindu Women's Rights to Property in 1937 included widow, widow of a previous parent, widow predecessor of the predecessor, who had a share in the property of the male they survived, as a first rule paving the road towards the rights of women to the inheritance. The Hindu Succession Act 1956 then abrogated all existing legislation. Despite the fact that it makes no changes to the legislation on joint family and partition. This only revised and codified legislation about the indigenous succession and affected equal treatment to both men and women. It provided the law that female's property would be her absolute property (Hindu Succession Act 1965). Before the arrival of the Hindu Succession Act a woman's right to her property was understood depending upon her status as a maiden, married woman or widow. Section 14 overrides the old law possessed by woman and declares that all such property shall be held by her as a full owner. The 1961's Dowry Prohibition act was amended in 1985 but that too provides provision of providing dowry to grooms that has nothing to do with the ancient religious laws. Laws also suggest that in certain cases all the properties must be reverted back to the certain relatives of the bride as we have seen in the case of *Stridhan*. So basically, there are everything in the law that is needed to make a healthy transfer of gifts that is quite similar to the technical rules of *Stridhan* too but due to lack of awareness and proper implementation of the aforesaid acts women in our society is in darkness and they face such cruelties that led them to vulnerability making them commit extreme ways to end their lives. This is solely due to a lack of understanding of their own influence, which has always existed and has always attempted to give them authority over their rights, whether by religious scriptures or modern-day jurisdictional actions. The only way is to disclose these properly and make women understand about their potential regarding their rights then only her marriage gifts would let them feel safe and powerful without making them feel subordinate to her male counterpart in her marital family.

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Gender, Identity And The Historian's Dilemma: Women In The Santal Rebellion (1855-56)

Disha Ray

New discourses in the discipline of history have developed in the last century as a response to postmodern critiques of grand singular narratives, demands for democratizing 'history' and incorporating the voices of those who were hitherto excluded from the mainstream. Writing histories of 'subaltern groups' has raised many new questions and necessitated several paradigmatic shifts in the discipline. The limitations posed by sources and their dogmatic interpretations still remain as the fundamental challenges in history writing.

Hegemonic modes of knowledge production have conspicuously left out certain voices from their domains. This trivialization of certain narratives and homogenization of others is not an inadvertent process – a proposition which has made scholars realize that the essential question was not '*Can the Subaltern Speak?*' but whether they can be heard?¹⁰³ In this essay, I will focus on the question of gender and its dynamics during the Santal rebellion of 1855-56, placing it in the larger context of the gender relations within tribes. In the second part of my paper, I shall analyze the cleft between the Santal understanding of *Thakur* and the historian's interpretation of the supernatural and its agency in history. Finally, I will end with a discussion on the challenges of writing subaltern histories in the postmodern world.

In 1855, thousands of Santals participated in a *hool* (rebellion) that developed in the Santal pargana and spread as far as Birbhum, Bankura and Hazaribagh. The uprising sparked with an unusual occurrence when two Santal brothers Sidhu and Kanhu, received a divine message from their god, *Thakur Bonga* urging them to lead the movement.¹⁰⁴ Until recently, it was assumed that men and women contributed equally in their participation in the *hool* of 1855. Judicial records, colonialist writers and later historians accepted this as a fact to amplify the subaltern protest against colonial oppression. But this argument is problematic on two crucial grounds. First, the subaltern was never a homogenous entity and consisted of complex social structures of its own. Second, the historian's understanding of the genesis of the rebellion was much different than the Santal understanding of it. I will discuss the second issue in that latter half of my paper.

¹⁰³ The question was the title of Gayatri Spivak's phenomenal essay which later became a classic work within Subaltern Studies. See G. C. Spivak, (1988). *Can the Subaltern Speak?*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

¹⁰⁴ Abha Xalxo. (2008). "THE GREAT SANTAL INSURRECTION (HUL) OF 1855-56." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 69, 732-55.

The colonial government's administrative records after the rebellion have revealed that though several women were arrested for their participation in the uprising, most of them were found innocent and released after the trial. Ata Mallick's reading of the memoir of Chotrae Deshmanjhi, a participant in the rebellion, has revealed that on the eve of the rebellion, numerous Santal women were being persecuted by (Santal) male leaders on the account of witch-hunting. Later, women were charged for having acted as spies and suppliers of daily goods like tobacco, salt etc. Colonial officials noted that wives of the rebels were also involved in plundering and setting fires to villages.¹⁰⁵ Thus, women were suffered not just in the hands of the colonialists but also their own community members.

Chotrae Deshmanjhi's memoir recounts that Seedo and Kanhu had ordered that at least one member from each household must join the *war* or else they shall be killed. Other sources also corroborate the fact that the leaders were sometimes, at a disagreement with other members of the community, which at occasions led to murders of their wives and children. Even the women who participated or assisted other rebels did not meet a better fate. Many of the pregnant women were falsely accused and put behind the bars - forced to even give birth in the inhabitable atmosphere. The women who were arrested and imprisoned had to subject not just themselves but also their children to the harsh conditions of the jails. Many of these children died due to malnutrition, dropsy and cholera outbreak within the jail premises.¹⁰⁶

Mallick summarizes the witch-hunting patterns "Chotrae Desmanjhi testifies that a number of Santal girls and women were slain by rebels under the pretext of witch-hunting. Women were arbitrarily suspected and recognized as witches and eventually killed. By the orders of Seedo and Kanhu, suspected women, especially married women, were forcibly detached from their husbands and even husbands were threatened by the rebels. They were warned that if they did not set free their witch wives, they would be killed. The rebels forcefully separated her from her husband and even beat her until she fainted, and then they took her away from her husband and killed her. Chotrae Deshmanjhi recalled that they were afraid of seeing such cruelty. He testified, 'My two brothers suggested that we should leave the place immediately because we too have women and girls. They might be identified as witches.'¹⁰⁷ Other leaders at various occasions styled themselves as thakurs and arbitrarily denounced women as witches and killed them. The men in the families of these so-called 'witches' were threatened to be slain if they protested against the witch-hunting acts.

¹⁰⁵ A. Mallick, (2017). "Santal Women and the Rebellion of 1855 in Colonial India". *ANTYAJAA: Indian Journal of Women and Social Change*, 2(1), 11-13.

¹⁰⁶ A. Mallick notes these details from the Sanitary Reports from the jails. See A. Mallick, (2017). "Santal Women and the Rebellion of 1855 in Colonial India."

¹⁰⁷ For a detailed study on witch-hunting among Indian tribes, see Sinha, S. Sinha (2006). Adivasis, Gender and the 'Evil Eye': The Construction(s) of Witches in Colonial Chotanagpur. *Indian Historical Review*, 33(1), 127-149.

The fear of getting killed or losing your loved ones was therefore not just present within the women but even the men who could not grapple with the presented realities of supernatural forces as reflected within their mortal neighbours. It has been argued that such actions were a part of the larger attempt of fusing political and religious leadership in order to hold control over the uprising. But accounts of other participants show us that there was at least a small proportion (if not more) of Santals who were “critical of their leaders’ decisions, particularly when such decisions were directed against their own kith and kin”.¹⁰⁸

Though historians have analyzed the sources and their limitations in order to study the rebellion and laid emphasis on the ‘unbelieved entities’ (Thakur) and their roles in the uprising, very often the dynamics, intricacies and convoluted realities of the subaltern groups have been ignored. It had been taken for granted that Santal women were as enraged by the conditions created by *mahajans*, zamindars and British officials as the Santal men. Furthermore, it is assumed that all members of the community were equally invested in the rebellion and its outcomes. If the character of the *Thakur* has to be understood and taken into account by historians, one cannot simply rely on the words of the Santal leaders like Kanoo and Seedo. There is an urgent need to understand the supernatural from the perspective of those who did not experience it but were told and made to believe in its existence. Our discussion also brings us to another sidelined entity of the ‘witch’. If the rebellion has to be understood from the perspective of different genders, we must add the character of the witch into the amalgamation of various supernatural entities that go unaccounted for in the discourse of history.

The definition of ‘tribes’ has been the matter of debate among social anthropologists. Andre Béteille understands ‘tribes’ as those outside the state and civilization.¹⁰⁹ Virginius Xaxa argues that living outside of state and civilization, does not protect tribes from the influence of the civilization. Advent of the British rule led to the incorporation of tribes into the state society through administrative, legal reforms, war and annexation.¹¹⁰ In the 19th century, ‘tribe’ was understood not just as a particular type of society but also stage of evolution which assumed that the ‘tribe’ was an isolated self-contained and primitive social formation.¹¹¹ Biswamoy Pati propounds that although the postmodernist approach labels the concept as ‘colonial construct’, its creation would not have been possible without the

¹⁰⁸ A. Mallick, (2017). “Santal Women and the Rebellion of 1855 in Colonial India.”. *ANTYAJAA: Indian Journal of Women and Social Change*, 2(1), 21-23.

¹⁰⁹ André Béteille, “The Concept of Tribe with Special Reference to India.” *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes De Sociologie / Europäisches Archiv Für Soziologie*, vol. 27, no. 2, 1986, pp. 299–302.

¹¹⁰ Virginius Xaxa. “Politics of Language, Religion and Identity: Tribes in India.” *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 40, no. 13, 2005, pp. 1363–1370.

¹¹¹ Prathama Banerjee, “Writing the Adivasi: Some Historiographical Notes.” *The Indian Economic & Social History Review*, Vol. 53, No. 1, 2016, pp. 131–153.

participation and collaboration of the upper caste, Brahmanical order at every stage of knowledge production. Pati asserts that in order to study tribal society, one must take into account not just the western theories of race and socio-cultural evolution but also the pre-colonial ideas and institutions of India, their interaction with other complex agrarian interventions and their impact on production process and existing social structures.¹¹² These ideas will be vital in understanding the genesis and course of the Santal rebellion.

It must be noted that the socio-economic causes of the rebellion have been invoked by colonial writers and later historians to justify the rise of the rebellion. Ironically, the Santals in their statements spoke about the orders of their *Thakur* as the primary reason behind their actions. This paradox necessitates a discussion on the limitations of writing subaltern histories. Ranajit Guha argues that historians have failed to consider the ‘consciousness of the peasantry’ while writing the histories of their struggles. Scholars have looked into the socio-economic background of the revolts or have characterised them as sudden, spontaneous uprisings and in doing so they have considered the rebellion as “external to the peasant’s consciousness”. Guha asserts that the fundamental problem with the existing historiography of peasant rebellion is that “cause is made to stand in as a phantom surrogate for Reason, the logic of that consciousness.”¹¹³

Guha examines this historiographical lacuna by studying the corpus of historical writings on peasant insurgency in colonial India, which he divides into three main types of discourses according to their time and filiation. The first discourse is of primary sources which are generally official in character, written with an objective of administrative use. The distinctive feature of such sources is their immediacy as they are recorded concurrently or soon after the event and often include statements and observations of the participants and witnesses of the rebellion. The secondary discourse draws on primary sources but transforms it, thus turning an *event* into *history*. This discourse includes both memories of participants and works of administrators. Guha explains that though the authors are clinically separated from the site, time and subject of diagnosis, their accounts are not written from a realm ‘neutrality’. Finally, the tertiary discourse, which is farther removed from the event in time includes non-official scholarly works. Unfortunately, the tertiary discourse also fails to account the significance religious/supernatural element in the insurgency.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Biswamoy Pati, (2011). *Adivasis in Colonial India: Survival, Resistance, and Negotiation*. New Delhi: Indian Council of Historical Research, 6-9.

¹¹³ Guha, Ranajit. (1993). ‘The Prose of Counter-Insurgency’. In Guha, Ranajit (Ed.). *Subaltern Studies II*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 5-7.

¹¹⁴ Guha, Ranajit. (1993). ‘The Prose of Counter-Insurgency’. In Guha, Ranajit (Ed.). *Subaltern Studies II*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 8-9.

According to Guha, while the colonialist discourse has articulated the insurgency as a purely spontaneous act against the State, the bourgeois-nationalist discourse has moved towards the theory of elite consciousness, attributing rebel consciousness only to a few leaders. The Marxist historiography has also remained stringently attached to the traditional conception of religious belief as ‘displaced consciousness.’ Thus, even the radical tertiary discourse has interpreted the rebellion as a ‘mutual concurrence’ of socio-economic factors. Moreover, historiography has failed not just in incorporating the religious element in rebel consciousness but also neglected the numerous contradictions in rebel solidarity.¹¹⁵ This is clearly evident in the imperative role attributed by scholars to Santal women through their reading of the judicial accounts of their arrests. However, as discussed earlier, Ata Mallick has shown that most of these women were released after being found innocent. The memoir of Chotrae Deshmanjhi recounts how Santal women were persecuted under the pretext of witch-hunting by the very orders of Santal leaders.¹¹⁶ Hence, former discourses saw the Santals as a homogenous group and the insurgency as a generalised movement while ignoring the heterogeneity of the group and complexities within the solidarity.

Dipesh Chakrabarty reminds us that scholars of subaltern studies aimed at making the “subaltern the sovereign subject of history, to listen to their voices, to take their experiences and thought (not just their material circumstances) seriously.” The essential argument here is that the Santal rebel is the subject of the ‘subaltern history’ but denies to be the subject of ‘his own history’, ascribing agency to a supernatural - *Thakur*. Chakrabarty explains eloquently that a historian can give the supernatural a place in someone’s belief system but can neither give it the agency that the subject ascribes to it nor use it to explain an event. Thus, he asserts that the Santal’s belief that *Thakur* instigated the rebellion has to be ‘anthropologised’, in order to effectively understand the subject and her history.¹¹⁷

Historians work with provable truths. The sources and methods of history writing make it impossible to prove the motives or actions of God, thus making it difficult for scholars to accept the role of the supernatural as a historical actor.¹¹⁸ There is an urgent need to examine the dogmatic secularism of the discipline and the power exercised by it diminishing the validity of other epistemologies. There remains a lot to understand about the world of humans and the world of the *unbelieved* (monsters, demons, gods and angels etc.), their relationships and interactions in order to make history more comprehensive and inclusive than it has ever been. As Chakrabarty reminds us, our “secular universals” should also be open to accept “their own finitude”. Subaltern pasts undeniably play the dual role of enabling history while also reminding the discipline of its limitations. The discourse, thus, helps in “distancing

¹¹⁵ Guha, ‘The Prose of Counter-Insurgency’, 34-39.

¹¹⁶ A. Mallick, (2017). “Santal Women and the Rebellion of 1855 in Colonial India”. *ANTYAJAA: Indian Journal of Women and Social Change*, 2(1), 11-23.

¹¹⁷ Dipesh Chakrabarty, (2009). *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton, NJ Princeton University Press, 105.

¹¹⁸ R. Clark, Clossey, L, Ditchfield, S, Gordon, DM, Wiesenthal, A, Zaman, TR. (2017). “The Unbelieved And Historians, Part III: Responses And Elaborations”. *History Compass*, 596.

ourselves from the imperious instincts of the discipline—the idea that *everything* can be historicized or that one should *always* historicize.”¹¹⁹

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¹¹⁹ Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, 112-115.

The Role Of Nadar Women In Socio-Religious Reform Movement In Kerala

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores and analyses the role of Nadar women's in socio-religious reform movement in Kerala. Nadar is a Tamil and Kerala caste of India. Nadars are predominant in the districts of Kanyakumari, Thoothukudi, Tirunelveli, Virudhunagar and Thiruvananthapuram. Nadar women plays a vital role in the history of Kerala. The socio-economic development achieved by the Nadars in southern India has elicited academic interest. Nadars are classified and listed as an Other Backward Class by the governments of both Tamil Nadu and India. The Channar Lahala or Channar revolt, also called Maru Marakkal Samaram, refers to the fight from 1813 to 1859 of Nadar climber women in the present day Kanyakumari district of the Travancore kingdom of India for the right to wear upper-body clothes to cover their breasts. The Breast Tax was a tax imposed on the lower caste and untouchable Hindu women by the Kingdom of Travancore if they wanted to cover their breasts in public, until 1924. All this will be discussed in detail in the paper.

Key words: Channar revolt, Maru Marakkal Samaram, Channar Lahala

The Nadar community was not a single caste, but developed from an assortment of related subcastes, which in course of time came under the single banner Nadar. Nadar climbers were the largest subset of today's Nadar community. A few subsets of the Nadar community, such as the Nelamaikkarars, were traditionally wealthy landlords and money lenders. Historically, most Nadars were cultivators of palmyra trees and jaggery and a few were also involved in the toddy trade. Nadar climbers had faced discrimination from major upper castes in some regions.

In 19th century Travancore, baring of one's chest to higher status people was considered a sign of respect by both males and females. Thus, those of the lower status castes, such as the Nadar climbers and Ezhavas, had to bare their chest in the presence of members of the higher-ranked Nair caste, who in turn had to do so in the presence of the still higher ranked Nambudiri Brahmins. The Brahmins, being at the pinnacle of the Hindu ritual ranking system known as varna, bared their chest only in the presence of a deity. Lower-caste women who wore clothes that covered their breasts had to pay a punitive breast tax to the state. Uneasy with their social status, a large number of Nadar climbers embraced Christianity, and started to wear "long cloths," strengthened by their new belief system, which offered equal rights to all men (and women). When many more Nadars turned to Christianity, many Nadar women started to wear the Nair breast cloth. The Nadar women successfully campaigned to be allowed to cover their breasts. In 1813, Colonel John Munro, British *dewan* in the Travancore court, issued an order granting permission to women converted to Christianity to wear upper cloth. The order was withdrawn when *pindakars*, members of the Raja's council,

complained about this, arguing that this right would obliterate caste-differences, and lead to widespread pollution in the state.

In 1858, new violence broke out in several places in Travancore. On 26 July 1859, under pressure from Charles Trevelyan, the Madras Governor, the king of Travancore issued a proclamation proclaiming the right for all Nadar women to cover their breasts, either by wearing jackets, like the Christian Nadars, or tie coarse-cloth around their upper-body, like the *Mukkavattigal* (fisher-women). Yet they were still not allowed to cover their breasts in the style of the higher-class Nair women. This solution was not satisfactory to the missionaries, who regarded all men and women to be equal. Nadar women continued to ignore the restrictions, developing an upper-wear style that resembled the style of the higher-class Hindu women, but offended some Hindus as a provocation by the missionaries. The code was still discriminatory until 1915–1916, and the challenge was supported by Ayyankali. After the revolt, pamphlets appeared putting forth the claims of Kshatriya status of the Nadars. Members of the caste claimed the right to wear the sacred thread and to ride palanquins to wedding ceremonies. By 1891 at least 24,000 Nadars had given their caste to the census enumerator as being *kshatriya*.

The village-legend Nangeli is about a woman who lived in the early 19th century at Cherthala in the erstwhile princely state of Travancore in India and supposedly, cut off her breasts in an effort to protest against the caste-based breast tax. The village officer of Travancore, came to her home to survey her breasts and collect the breast tax. Nangeli revolted against the harassment; cutting off her breasts and presenting them to him in a plantain leaf. She died soon from loss of blood. According to local villagers, Nangeli's husband, Chirukandan, seeing her mutilated body was overcome by grief and jumped into her funeral pyre and committed suicide. Following the death of Nangeli, a series of people's movements were set off. Soon the place she lived had come to be called as *Mulachiparambu*. However, the story is not officially recognized in any of India's historical accounts and its authenticity is debatable. Manu Pillai argues that covering breasts was not the norm in Kerala's matrilineal society during Nangeli's life-span. Victorian standards of morality penetrated into the society decades later under British colonial influence, which led to subsequent class-struggles for the right to wear upper cloth. He believes Nangeli to have protested against an oppressive tax regime that was imposed upon all lower castes, which got appropriated with the passage of time, in pursuit of a different patriarchal fight for the preservation of female dignity.

The social and economic development achieved by the Nadars have evoked academic interest. According to N.S. Ramnath, of Forbes, the Nadars are a close knit, powerful community. The legend of the origin of the Nadars tell of the birth of seven sons; with the death of two, the remaining five father the separate divisions of the community. There were five major divisions among the Nadars. The Nadar community was not a single caste, but developed from an assortment of related subcastes and classes of different origins, which in course of time, came under the single banner Nadar. Nadar climber was the largest subset of today's Nadar community.

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Lakshmi Swaminathan: Participation of Women In Freedom Struggle and Politics.

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ABSTRACT

The history of Indian freedom struggle would be incomplete without mentioning the contribution of women. The sacrifice made by the women of India newline will occupy the foremost place. The history of freedom struggle is replete with the saga of sacrifice, selflessness, bravery of women. Many of us don't know that there were hundreds of women who fought side by side with their male counterparts. They fought with true spirit and undismayed courage. The Indian women broke away from various restrictions and got out of their traditional home-oriented roles and responsibilities. So, the participation of women in the freedom struggle and National awakening is simply incredible and praiseworthy. However it wasn't easy for women to fight shoulder to shoulder with men in the patriarchal society. These women tried to change the perception of such orthodox people who thought women are meant to do only household chores. Dr. Lakshmi Sahgal was one of such women who fought against British rule by mitigating all odds, hence this paper entitles to highlight the role that women and particularly Lakshmi Sahgal played in the history in the freedom movements and politics. Each stage of the life of this extraordinary Indian represented a new stage of her political evolution – as a young medical student drawn to the freedom struggle; as the leader of the all-woman Rani of Jhansi regiment of the Indian National Army; as a doctor, immediately after Independence, who restarted her medical practice in Kanpur amongst refugees and the most marginalised sections of society; and finally, in post-Independence India, her life as a member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA), years that saw her in campaigns for political, economic and social justice.

Objective of this Paper:

1. To study the freedom movement in India in general.
2. To explore the role played by women freedom fighter in freedom movement in India.
3. To study the role of Dr. Lakshmi Sahgal in the freedom struggle of India.

Research Methodology:

To write this paper, the data has mainly concentrated on textual approach, books written by eminent scholars and articles, papers written on various National and International Journals has been considered to do the framework of this paper. Thus, secondary data has been used to write this paper.

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INTRODUCTION

The position of women in the pre independence era was very in a very worse state. They did not have any freedom of doing anything. Married at an early age they were expected to perform their duties as a housewife such as taking care of the family, perform household chores, bear children preferably sons. It was impossible to think about women's education during that period by the Maximum Indians who were orthodox. The period when Sati¹, polygamy, child marriage were prevalent, women education and movement of women outside the house were prohibited, some Indian legendary women broke these age old shackles and stepped on the field to fight for their motherland's independence. Many social reformers such as Raja Ram Mohan Rai, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Jyotiba Phule had undergone numerous challenges that were associated with bringing about changes in the status of women within the Indian society. Women's participation in India's freedom struggle began as early 1817 when Bhima Bai Holkar fought against Britishers. Madam Bhikaiji Cama, the first Indian women socialist who fought for her motherland's freedom after the 1857 uprising. Other women freedom fighters like Begum Hazrat Mahal, Queen Lakshmibai, Kamala Nehru, Sarojini Naidu, Annie Besant etc left indelible mark for their contribution in the Indian freedom struggle and politics. The role of Lakshmi Sahgal who was the leader of the Rani Lakshmibai Regiment of Indian National Army is certainly applaudable. Lakshmi Sahgal was born as Lakshmi Swaminathan on 24th October 1914 in Madras to S. Swaminathan, a talented lawyer, and A.V. Ammukutty, a social worker and freedom fighter (and who would later be a member of independent India's Constituent Assembly). She was a revolutionary of the Indian independence movement. Each stage of the life of this extraordinary Indian represented a new stage of her political evolution – as a young medical student drawn to the freedom struggle; as the leader of the all-woman Rani of Jhansi regiment of the Indian National Army²; as a doctor, immediately after Independence, who restarted her medical practice in Kanpur amongst refugees and the most marginalised sections of society; and finally, in post-Independence India, her life as a member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the All India Democratic Women's Association³ (AIDWA), years that saw her in campaigns for political, economic and social justice.

EARLY LIFE

Sehgal was born as Lakshmi Swaminathan in Madras⁴ on 24 October 1914 to S. Swaminathan, a lawyer who practiced criminal lawyer Madras High court and A.V. Ammukutty⁵, better known as Ammu Swaminathan, a social worker and independence activist from an aristocratic Nair family known as "Vadakkath" family of Anakkara in Palghat, Kerala. She is the elder sister of Mrinalini Sarabhai⁶.

After high school in Madras, Sehgal studied in Queen Mary's College and then she studied at the Madras Medical College, from where she took her MBBS in 1938. . A year later, she received her diploma in gynaecology and obstetrics . She worked as a doctor in the Government Kasturba Gandhi Hospital located at Triplicane Chennai. The intervening years saw Lakshmi and her family drawn into the ongoing freedom struggle. She saw the transformation of her mother from a Madras socialite to an ardent Congress supporter, who one day walked into her daughter's room and took away all the child's pretty dresses to burn in a bonfire of foreign goods. Looking back years later, Lakshmi would observe how in the South, the fight for political freedom was fought alongside the struggle for social reform.

Campaigns for political independence were waged together with struggles for temple entry for Dalits and against child marriage and dowry. Her first introduction to communism was through Suhasini Nambiar⁷, Sarojini Naidu's sister, a radical who had spent many years in Germany. Another early influence was the first book on the communist movement she read, Edgar Snow's *Red Star*⁸ over China. Lakshmi later recalled her first rebellion as a child against the demeaning institution of caste in Kerala. From her grandmother's house, she would often hear the calls and hollers from the surrounding jungles and hills, of the people who in her grandmother's words were those "whose very shadows are polluting." The young Lakshmi one day walked up to a young tribal girl, held her hand and led her to play. Lakshmi and her grandmother were furious with each other, but Lakshmi was the one triumphant.

As a young doctor of 26, Lakshmi left for Singapore in 1940 after the failure of her marriage to pilot P.K.N. Rao. Three years later she would meet Subhash Chandra Bose, a meeting that changed the course of her life. During her stay at Singapore, she met some members of Subhash Chandra Bose's Indian National Army.

The Azad Hind Fauj

In 1942, during the surrender of Singapore by the British to the Japanese, Sehgal aided wounded prisoners of war, many of whom were interested in forming an Indian independence army. Singapore at this time had several nationalist Indians working there including K. P. Kesava Menon, S. C. Guha and N. Raghavan, who formed a Council of Action. Their Indian National Army or "*Azad Hind Fauj*", however, received no firm commitments or approval from the occupying Japanese forces regarding their participation in the war. It was against this backdrop that Subhas Chandra Bose arrived in Singapore on 2nd July 1943. Lakshmi, who had far been on the fringes of the INA, had heard that Bose was keen to draft women into the organisation. She requested a meeting with him when he arrived in Singapore, and emerged from a five-hour interview with a mandate to set up a women's regiment, which was to be called the Rani of Jhansi regiment. There was a tremendous response from women to join the all-women brigade. Dr. Lakshmi Swaminadhan became Captain Lakshmi, a name and identity that stayed with her for life. The march to Burma began in December 1944 and by March 1945, the decision to retreat was taken by the INA leadership, just before the entry of their armies into Imphal. Captain Lakshmi was arrested by the British army in May 1945. She remained under house arrest in the jungles of Burma until March 1946, when she was sent to India – at a time when the INA trials in Delhi were intensifying the popular hatred of colonial rule.

Lakshmi married Prem Kumar Sahgal in March 1947 in Lahore. After their marriage, they settled in Kanpur, where she continued with her medical practice and aided the refugees who were arriving in large numbers following the Partition of India. They had two daughters, Suhasinii Ali and Anisa Puri. Subhashini is a prominent Communist politician and labour activist. According to Ali, Sahgal was an atheist. The filmmaker Shaad Ali is her grandson.

Later years-

By the early 1970s, Lakshmi's daughter Subhashini had joined the CPI(M). She brought to her mother's attention an appeal from Jyoti Basu⁹ for doctors and medical supplies for Bangladeshi refugee camps. Captain Lakshmi left for Calcutta, carrying clothes and medicines, to work for the next five weeks in the border areas. After her return she applied for membership in the CPI(M). For the 57-year old doctor, joining the

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Communist Party was “like coming home.” “My way of thinking was already communist, and I never wanted to earn a lot of money, or acquire a lot of property or wealth,” she said.

In 1971, Sehgal joined the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and represented the party in the Rajya Sabha. During the Bangladesh crisis, she organised relief camps and medical aid in Calcutta for refugees who streamed into India from Bangladesh. She was one of the founding members of All India Democratic Women’s Association in 1981 and led many of its activities and campaigns. She led a medical team to Bhopal after the gas tragedy in December 1984, worked towards restoring peace in Kanpur following the anti-Sikh riots of 1984 and was arrested for her participation in a campaign against the Miss World competition in Bangalore in 1996. She was still seeing patients regularly at her clinic in Kanpur in 2006, at the age of 92.

In 2002, four leftist parties – the Communist Party of India, the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the revolutionary Socialist Party, and the All India Forward Block – nominated Sahgal as a candidate in the presidential elections. She was the sole opponent of A.P.J. Abdul Kalam who emerged victorious.

Death- On 19 July 2012, Sahgal suffered a cardiac arrest and died on 23 July 2012 at 11:20 A.M. at the age of 97 at Kanpur. Her body was donated to Ganesh Shankar Vidarthi Memorial Medical College for medical research.

Awards- In 1998, Sahgal was awarded the Padma Vibhushan by Indian president K.R. Narayanan. In 2010, she was bestowed with honorary doctorate by University of Calicut.

Conclusion- Captain Lakshmi had the quality of awakening a sense of joy and possibility in all who met her – her co-workers, activists of her organisation, her patients, family and friends. Her life was an inextricable part of 20th and early 21st century India -- of the struggle against colonial rule, the attainment of freedom, and nation-building over 65 tumultuous years. In this great historical transition, Captain Lakshmi always positioned herself firmly on the side of the poor and unempowered. Freedom fighter, dedicated medical practitioner, and an outstanding leader of the women's movement in India, Captain Lakshmi leaves the country and its people a fine and enduring legacy.

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1. Sati-Sati is a practice among the Hindu communities where a recently widowed woman, either voluntarily or by force, immolates herself on her deceased husband’s pyre. The woman who immolates herself is hence called Sati which is also interpreted as a ‘chaste woman’ or a ‘good and devoted wife’.
2. Indian National Army- The Indian National Army was an armed force formed by Indian collaborationists and imperial Japan on 1st September 1942 in Southeast Asia during World War II. Its aim was to secure Indian independence from British rule.
3. All India Democratic Women’s Association- All India Democratic Women’s Association is a women’s organization committed to achieve democracy, equality and women’s emancipation.
4. Madras- Madras is a city in Tamil Nadu. The Tamil Nadu government has changed the name of the city to Chennai in 1996.
5. A.V. Ammukutty- A.V. Ammukutty was an Indian social worker and political activist during the Indian independence movement and a member of the Constituent Assembly of India.

6. Mrinalini Sarabhai6-Mrinalini Vikram Sarabhai was an Indian classical dancer, choreographer and instructor. She was the founder and director of the Darpana Academy of performing Arts, an institute for imparting training in dance, drama, music and puppetry, in the city of Ahmedabad.
7. Suhasini Nambiar7-Suhasini Chattopadhyay (also known as Suhasini Nambiar) was an Indian communist leader and freedom fighter. She was the first Woman member of the Communist Party of India.
8. Red Star Over China8-This book was written by Edgar Snow. It is an account of the Communist Party of China that was written when it was a guerrilla army and still obscure to Westerners.
9. Jyoti Basu9- Jyoti Basu was an Indian politician who served as the Chief Minister of West Bengal state from 1977 to 2000.

A Historical Analysis on Shanti Devi- Prominent Women Leader And Social Reformer, Rayagada District, Odisha

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ABSTRACT

The lives of women in History in almost all countries and times have been hovering between dominance and subservience. India is no exception to this. In the whole course of our history there are burning instances of outstanding women like Gargi, Lopamudra, Razia Sultana, Nurjahan, Mira Bai, Laxmi Bai, Kasturba Gandhi, Sarojini Naidu, , who distinguished themselves in the sphere of literature, art, philosophy, administration, and warfare. Odisha has enriched the history of India , by playing a prominent role in the freedom struggle of our country.under the leadership of Madhusudan Das, Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das, Pandit Nilakantha Das, Harakrushna Mahtab etc. But participation of women in the freedom struggle forms an important chapter in the history of Modern Odisha. The arrival of Gandhi, in Odisha, created a tremendous enthusiasm among the women. Out of the prominent women, now we are going to discuss about “ Shanti Devi”, popularly known as Koraputia Gandhi is one of the social activist, who engaged for social justice and upliftment of downtrodden.

Key words: Women, Gandhi, Shanti Devi, Koraputia Gandhi, social justice, Downtrodden.

MAP OF RAYAGADA DISTRICT, ODISHA



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Women Movement in India :

The Indian women's movement was influenced by western ideals and the main focus areas of women's movements in India as well as the west largely remained the same. While the ultimate goal which is the upliftment of women is the same for feminists from both parts, the obstacles faced by the Indian reformers and the issues that needed their attention differed. Aspects like education and equal rights were common to both, however; Indian reformers paid special attention to local issues like sati and dowry related harassment. The basic message of this movement was to prevent the ill-treatment of women, maintain dignity and raise the status of women (Gandhi, 2019). By the 1920's however, the movement had gained impetus and different rationales were being expressed. Reformers argued that "women's rights should be recognized because of women's socially useful role as mothers." They also said that "women have the same needs, desires and capacities as men and were thus entitled to the same rights" (Gandhi, 2019). This was one of the first movements that saw a large number of women coming together and fighting for their rights. It saw women from all strata of society participate and included the participation of rich, poor, young, old, tribal women among others. This period also saw the emergence of a number of local women's organizations like the Women's Indian Association (WIA), the National Council of Women in India (NCWI) and the All India Women's Conference (AIWC). Organisations like these worked towards the welfare of women and played an important role in the movement. The social reformers focused on issues like eradication of Sati, promotion of widow remarriage, ending polygamy, abolishing child marriage among others. They also focused on promoting women's education (Gandhi, 2019). Post-independence however, the campaign for women's rights and issues took a back seat. The women had to go through heavy trauma and were left with tragic experiences from the independence struggle. It was also assumed that independence and development would automatically lead to changes in the social order of the nation and women's issues would be tackled. Women's groups were divided and it was mainly the middle-class and elite educated women doing most of the activism. It was only after the 1970's that the movement was considered a legitimate one. The women's movement in India is therefore commonly divided into three phases- the first phase (1850–1915), the second phase (1915-1947) and the Post-independence phase.

It was only in the Post-Independence phase that the movement was taken seriously and was given due importance. Due to the efforts of the reformers, the Constitution of India made provisions for equality of women and freedom from discrimination based on gender. The women's movement in India had a significant impact in education, employment and [1].

Women Movement in Specially South Odisha:

India witnessed a relentless struggle and strife for years together preceding the attainment of its independence from the shackles of colonialism. The people of India had to overcome a long way to get India free from the clutches of British predominance. History of our country is the mute spectator of those people who have shown their valour and unfathomable love and dedication to their

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motherland. The Indian freedom movement is glorified singing the story of those valiant warriors. Since it was the participation of all sections of the society the movement was termed as 'mass movement' which could be possible only after the appearance of Mahatma Gandhi in the freedom movement. The clarion call of Mahatma Gandhi gave an impetus to the people in every nook and corner of India. People of Odisha also had significant role in the freedom movement. Although initially it was confined only to urban educated class, royal and educated families, but the Gandhi's inspiration worked like a magic wand that allured the people of the whole of India. At that time how could have women kept confined them inside the four walls of their home? They responded to Gandhiji's call in huge number by directly or indirectly participating and it was turned into a mass movement[2].

South Odisha has its own contribution to this momentous struggle for independence. . Cultural profile of South Koshal depicts its rich history and culture. **Rayagada** is a district in southern Odisha, a state in India, which became a separate district in October 1992. Its population consists mainly of tribes, primarily the Khonds and the Soras. In addition to Odia, Kui and Sora are spoken by the district's indigenous population. It was founded by Maharajah Vishwanath Dev Gajapati of the Suryavansh dynasty of Jeypore.[3].

Objectives Of The Study:

- To study the life history of Shanti Devi.
- To acquire knowledge on reforms activities of Shanti Devi.
- To analyze the contributions and achievements of Shanti Devi.
- How Shanti Devi regarded as the Koraputia Gandhi of Odisha.

Scope of The Study:

The contribution of Shanti Devi towards downtrodden people of undivided Koraput District is indeed a landmark in the pages of Odisha History. A conscious and concerted effort to empower women with equal rights, education, training, and involvement at all levels of decision-making, would in the long run bring around sustainable development and raise the status of women.

Shanti Devi- Prominent Social Reformer :

The Padma Shri Award is one of the highest civilian awards given to the extraordinary gems in India who must always be remembered for their spontaneity and dedication towards the welfare of humankind. Today, we are going to talk about one of those extraordinary humans, 87-year-old Shanti Devi from Odisha, who had been conferred the Padma Shri award for her exceptional contribution to social service since 1951[4].

About Shanti Devi (Life and Career) Shanti Devi is a social activist and a Gandhian leader residing in the Rayagada District of Odisha. She has sought to become a woman fully committed to social service which has led her towards becoming a recipient of the Padma Shri Award. She was born on April 18, 1934, in the Balasore district of Odisha and got married at the age of 17 to Ratan Das who was a follower of Mahatma Gandhi. Her career in social work began from Gobarapalli in Rayagada where she founded an ashram and started working for the welfare, education, and development of Tribal Girls. Shanti Devi has worked not only for the development of women but also in different sectors for human welfare! She founded an ashram for treating leprosy patients at Jabarguda, Rayagada District. Later when she shifted to Gunupur, she established Seva Samaj Ashram in the year 1964 so as to provide the right to education to the Tribal girls. Shanti Devi says that the main motive throughout her life has been to focus on making the women "self-sufficient" so that they can have self-respect in

society and contribute to the development of the Nation. Shanti Devi has also been working with an aim to restore peace in the Maoist affected areas of Odisha. She was born on April 18, 1934, in the Balasore district of Odisha and got married at the age of 17 to Ratan Das who was a follower of Mahatma Gandhi. Her career in social work began from Gobarapalli in Rayagada where she founded an ashram and started working for the welfare, education, and development of Tribal Girls[5].

Contributions to the Society:

1. Working towards the upliftment for the orphans and destitute children in India, Shanti Devi set up an ashram in Gunupur for providing education and vocational training for their skill-building.
2. Being a Gandhian leader, Shanti Devi has been associated with a number of Gandhian organizations working for the welfare of people.
3. She established many day-nurseries/creches towards the care for students and also introduced nutritional breakfasts in schools for children.
4. She has also worked with Acharya Vinoba Bhave and rendered her support for the Bhoo-Daan Movement.
5. Shanti Devi is highly inspired by Acharya Vinoba Bhave, and hence, she has written a book on his life titled “Ahinsara Anvesana”.
6. With her team of 50 social workers and 500 volunteers, she is currently managing three child care institutions, an educational complex for girls belonging to the Scheduled Tribes community, and several creche centers in southern Odisha.
7. Shanti Devi has also contributed to the marriage of many orphan girls. Because of her moral teachings, many children have grown up in life and have been well placed in different organizations today[6].

Achievements of Shanti Devi :

1. Shanti Devi bags many awards and accolades to her side. In 1994, Devi received Jamunalal Bazaz Award. She is also a recipient of the Radhanath Rath peace award and many state-level and national-level awards.
2. Shanti Devi also became the President of the Odisha Prohibition Congress.
3. Shanti is the vice-president of Agramamee’s governing body since its establishment.
4. As Shanti is influenced by the principles of Gandhi, she has received an appellation of “Koraputia Gandhi” which means “Koraput’s Gandhi”.
5. Shanti Devi has also been recognized with the first Woman Peacemaker Award, instituted by the Odisha-based foundation named ‘Maa Ghara’.
6. In the year 1994, Shanti was conferred with the Jamnalal Bajaj Award for her contribution towards the development of women and children.
7. Shanti Devi has also bagged Radhanath Rath Peace Award, instituted in the year 2002.
8. In the year 2021, Shanti Devi has been honored with one of India’s highest Civilian Awards– the Padma Shri Award for her distinguished service in the field of social activism. Shanti Devi also became the President of the Odisha Prohibition Congress.

Being a Gandhian leader, Shanti Devi has been associated with a number of Gandhian organizations working for the welfare of people. NewsGram – Shanti Devi’s Words and Vision “There is a strong need to empower women and making them more courageous. They must be taught to raise their voices against the injustice that is happening. Women must become independent and educate their families too! The people must also become more humane and tolerant by following the principles given by Mahatma Gandhi and Acharya Vinobha Bhave. People must also be aware of the fact that women are meant to be respected. I am grateful for the recognition given by the state and the central governments but I believe there is no need for the people to remember me, rather, the cause that I am working for must always be carried forward.” [7]

Shanti Devi, a grassroots level social worker from Odisha who has been serving humanity for the last seven decades, has won Padma Shri, India’s fourth-highest civilian award, for her commendable social works. The couple dedicated their lives for betterment of orphaned children and distressed women. She still stays in Gunupur town. And she has founded an orphanage named Seva Samaj. Here tribal orphaned children and their education are taken care of. As of now, she is running four girls’ Ashrams at Limapada, Jabharaguda, Gunpur and Rayagada town in Rayagada district [8].

Conclusion:

Thus, the women played a glorious and heroic role in all the phases of History. Hence, all their names are written in the golden letters, in the golden history for all time to come. She will have an identity of her own, that of an individual apart from being someone’s wife, someone’s daughter, and someone’s mother, all the time. A Panchayat member aptly describes the hidden power of today’s women as “lull before the storm” and also several reports indicate that women today are ready to face and walk this storm with the firm belief that one day their efforts would usher in not only sunshine, but a long awaited development.

PHOTO COPIES OF SHANTI DEVI:



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ରାୟଗଡ଼ା ଜିଲ୍ଲା ପାଇଁ ଗର୍ବ ଓ ଗୌରବ ଆଣିଦେଇଥିବା ରାୟଗଡ଼ା ମାଟି ର ସନ୍ତାନ ଗାନ୍ଧୀ ବାଦୀ ନେତ୍ରୀ ସେବା ସମାଜ ର ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠାତା ଶାନ୍ତି ଦେବୀ କୁ ପଦ୍ମଶ୍ରୀ ପୁରସ୍କାର ପାଇଁ ମନୋନୀତ ହୋଇଥିବାରୁ ବିଜୁ ଜନତା ଦଳ ରାୟଗଡ଼ା ଜିଲ୍ଲା ତରଫ ରୁ ଅଭିନନ୍ଦନ ଓ ଶୁଭେଚ୍ଛା ପ୍ରଦାନ ।



ରାୟଗଡ଼ା:- ଅଧ୍ୟୁଷିତ ରାୟଗଡ଼ା ଜିଲ୍ଲାରେ ଜନଜାତିଙ୍କ ସେବା ବିଶେଷ ଭାବରେ ଅନାଥ ଶିଶୁ କନ୍ୟା ଓ ଅସହାୟ ମହିଳାଙ୍କୁ ସାହାଯ୍ୟରେ ନିଜକୁ ବ୍ରତୀ କରିଥିବା ଗାନ୍ଧୀବାଦୀ ନେତ୍ରୀ, ଗୁଣ୍ଡପୁର ସେବା ସମାଜର ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠାତା ଶାନ୍ତି ଦେବୀ ସଶକ୍ତିକରଣର ପ୍ରକୃତ ଉଦାହରଣ । ଶାନ୍ତି ଦେବୀ କୁ ପଦ୍ମଶ୍ରୀ ପୁରସ୍କାର ପାଇଁ ମନୋନୀତ ହୋଇଥିବାରୁ ଆଜି ରାୟଗଡ଼ା ଜିଲ୍ଲା ଥେରୁବାଲି ସ୍ଥିତ ଇମ୍ପା କମ୍ପାନୀ ର କର୍ମକର୍ତ୍ତାଙ୍କ ପକ୍ଷରୁ ଶୁଭେଚ୍ଛା ଓ ଅଭିନନ୍ଦନ ଜଣାଇଛନ୍ତି ।

👍 Udaya Naik and 356 others

👍 357

💬 10

➦ 4



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MALNUTRITION IN WOMEN: A MALADY IN INDIA

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It has always been a mystery to me how men can feel honoured by the humiliation of their fellow beings

Mahatma Gandhi

Introduction

The status of women in modern India is a paradox, on one hand Indian scriptures treat women like Goddesses and on the other she is a victim of oppression and tyranny at the hands of men who have since time immemorial dominated the Indian society. The position of Indian women is no better as compared to their counterparts spread across the globe and this has been evident for years that women have not only been deprived of their basic rights but have also been victims of domestic violence, indecent representation , rape, sexual harassment at workplace, gender inequality and so on and so forth. It is pertinent to note that the major fallout of gender inequality is deprivation of a woman of her 'Right to Health' giving birth to the problem of malnutrition.

Concept of Malnutrition

Malnutrition occurs when one's body does not get enough nutrients causing considerable damage to health and thereby violating a woman's right to health and ultimately her right to food which is a basic human right. In many parts of India especially the mofussil areas ,women are the ones who eat the least after feeding their entire family resulting in intake of food with no or less nutritional value . It has been observed that poverty also is a major factor which often deprives women from having an access to substantial and nutritive food . The UNICEF report clearly states that South Asian women are deprived of good care resulting in high level of malnutrition amongst them. This nutritional deficiency has two consequences firstly they become anaemic and secondly their body fails to achieve full growth and development leading to malnourishment and such women cannot give birth to healthy children

Right to Health

Right to food is said to be a basic human right which protects the right of every individual to be free from hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. There are many national and international instruments which recognize right to food as a part of right to adequate standard of living and freedom from hunger. Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its General Comment 12 of 1999 stated core elements of right to food by declaring that " The right to adequate food is realized whenever man, woman and child alone or in community with others

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has physical economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement” Special Rapporteur¹ on Right to Food 2008 defined the right to food as “ The right to have regular, permanent and unrestricted access either directly or by means of financial purchases, to quantitatively and qualitatively adequate and sufficient food corresponding to the cultural traditions of the people to which the consumer belongs and which ensure a physical and mental, individual and collective, fulfilling and dignified life free of fear.² According to the General Committee the core essence of right to food implies ‘The availability of food both in terms of quality and quantity must be sufficient to satisfy the dietary needs of individuals , must be free from adverse substances and be acceptable within a given culture The accessibility of food that is sustainable and does not interfere with the enjoyment of other human rights including economic and physical accessibility’³ . This also imposes an obligation on the state to protect, respect and fulfill the right to food .

International Instruments

Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 provides that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedom set forth in the declaration without any discrimination⁴

Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 provides for both right to food and enforceability of this right through judicial means⁵

The International Convention on Economic , Social and Cultural Rights 1966 states right to adequate food and freedom from hunger⁶

UN Committee on Economic , Social and Cultural Rights adopted General Comment 12 in 1999, deals with this right

Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women provides for measures to be taken by the state to ensure adequate nutrition to women during pregnancy and lactation⁷

Constitutional Provisions

The framers of the Indian Constitution have ensured the inclusion of various articles for protection of the rights of women namely

Article 14 deals with Right to Equality which guarantees equal treatment to both men and women thus making them entitled to the same nutritious diet as men

Article 21 deals with Right to Life and Personal Liberty. The Supreme Court of India has declared that life does not mean living like animals but to live with human dignity and one such right is right to health and an individual can exercise this right only if he is in a position to have an access to nutritious diet and so if there is a violation of this right to food , then right to health and ultimately right to life will be violated

Article 39a imposes an obligation on the state to ensure adequate means of livelihood

Art 47 provides that the state shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health as one of its primary duties.

Judicial Response

Even though directly the Constitution of India does not provide right to food, the Supreme

court in a number of cases has recognized it and enshrined it in **Article 21A**

In Chameli Singh V State of UP the Supreme Court held that the fundamental right to life under Art 21 incorporates right to food⁸

In PUCL V Union of India and Ors the SC held that obligation includes ensuring that poor, destitute and weaker sections of the society do not suffer from hunger and starvation⁹

In Kishen Patttnayak & Ors V State of Orissa the SC recognized the right to food under right to life stipulated in Art 21 of the Constitution of India¹⁰

In Shantistar Builders V Narayan Khimalal Totame the SC held that “the right to life guaranteed in any civilized society would take within its sweep the right to food”¹¹

Conclusion and suggestions

In a country like India achieving complete gender justice is a far fetched dream and this is clearly evident from the rigid customs and traditions followed since time immemorial , deep rooted patriarchy , poverty, lack of education, lack of awareness amongst women and lastly poor implementation of laws. Though the Government has implemented policies to curb the menace of malnutrition in women it hasn't really succeeded and has resulted in depriving women of their basic human right to food which is guaranteed by the Constitution of India. After a detailed study on the International instruments , the constitutional provisions and the response of the judiciary we can infer that the legislators have undoubtedly come up with a very comprehensive framework which guarantee women their basic human right to food and are taking efforts to put an end to the menace of malnutrition . So with regards to that I would like to suggest the following recommendations to curb this malady and ensure that there is no denial of rights to women

- 1) Effective implementation of government introduced schemes for eradication of poverty is necessary
- 2) Policies introduced for improving the health of women should focus more on economically backward women and their needs must be monitored regularly
- 3) Person appointed to work on the schemes must be penalized in case of indulgence in any corrupt practices which deprive women of their needs and benefits offered under such schemes
- 4) Awareness programmes must be conducted in rural areas, towns as well as educational institutions in order to give an insight about the importance of nutrition and supplements to be taken to treat deficiencies
- 5) NGOs must work towards creating awareness against social evils like child marriage, early marriage, dowry, gender inequality and most importantly against the tradition of women eating the least after feeding the entire family
- 6) There should be celebration of special days like International Women's Day in order to create awareness about their importance and rights

3

Thus, I would like to conclude that with the incorporation of the recommendations suggested and continuous endeavours, the government and the legislation will contribute in improving the health conditions of women because if a woman is healthy our coming generation too will be healthy.

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भारत के स्वतन्त्रता संग्राम में महिला सेनानी का योगदान

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सारांश

जैसा की मेरे शोध विषय से इंगित होता है भारत की स्वतन्त्रता संग्राम में भाग लेने वाली नायिकाएँ मैंने अपने लेख के माध्यम से उन सभी नायिकाओं को दृश्य में लाने की चेष्टा की है जो पुरुषों के समकक्ष कन्धे से कन्धा मिलाकर लड़ी। स्वतन्त्रता आन्दोलन का पूरा इतिहास बहादुरी की गाथा के साथ त्याग व बलिदान में परिपूर्ण है। आन्दोलनों में सैकड़ों और हजारों महिलाओं ने भाग लिया पर इतिहासकारों की लेखनी में अनुपस्थित रही। परन्तु इतिहासकारों के एक वर्ग में नये सरोकार और नयी इच्छा शक्ति के तहत विद्वानों से अलग होने का प्रयास किया तथा उन्होंने लिंग भेद को विश्लेषण की एक श्रेणी के रूप में सूत्रबद्ध किया। भारतीय महिलाओं ने विभिन्न प्रतिबन्धों के त्याग कर तथा अपनी पारम्परिक छवि के विपरीत जाकर आन्दोलनों का नेतृत्व किया। इस शोध पत्र के माध्यम से कुछ चर्चित व अचर्चित महिलाओं के चहरे उभर कर आये, जिन्होंने चुनौतियों से गुजरकर अपने विचारों और दृष्टिकोणों की अभिव्यक्ति से भारत के स्वतन्त्रता संग्राम में महत्वपूर्ण भागीदारी दर्ज कराई। भारतीय स्वतंत्रता-आन्दोलन का इतिहास स्वतंत्रता के लिए भारतीयों के संघर्ष की अद्भुत गाथा है। इस संघर्ष में पुरुषों और महिलाओं ने समान रूप से भाग लिया। भारतीय महिलाओं का योगदान इसमें इसलिए भी महत्वपूर्ण हो जाता है कि उनका सामाजिक उत्थान हुए बहुत लंबा समय व्यतीत नहीं हुआ था। घर का मोर्चा हो या राजनीति का रणक्षेत्र, महिलाओं ने जिस साहस, सहिष्णुता और वीरता से स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन में अपनी भूमिका निभाई, वह इतिहास की धरोहर है। सन् 1857 का विद्रोह भारतीय स्वतन्त्रता संग्राम का पहला ऐसा विस्फोट था, जिसकी नायक एक महिला थी, जिसने अद्भुत वीरता, पराक्रम और दिलेरी का परिचय दिया।

मूलशब्द: भारतीय महिला, स्वतन्त्रता आन्दोलन, समाज।

प्रस्तावना

भारतीय स्वतन्त्रता संग्राम का इतिहास महिलाओं के योगदान का उल्लेख किए बिना अधूरा होगा, उन्होंने सच्ची भावना और अदम्य साहस के साथ लड़ाई लड़ी और हमें आजादी हासिल कराने के लिए विभिन्न यातनाओं, शोषण और कठिनाइयों का सामना करना पड़ा पर महिलाओं की भूमिका पर चर्चा नहीं हुई। पिछले कुछ एक दशकों से इस अभाव को दूर करने हेतु महिला अध्ययन केन्द्रों, इतिहासकारों ने अनेक शोध किये तथा स्त्रीवादी दृष्टिकोण को शामिल करते हुए इतिहास का पुनर्लेखन का कार्य शुरू किया। इतिहास में महिलाओं की भूमिका का दस्तावेजीकरण करना आसान नहीं है।¹²⁰ महिलाओं की अदृश्यता से सम्बन्धित ही जानकारी प्रदान की गई है।¹²¹ नारीवादियों के सकारात्मक हस्ताक्षरों व महिला अध्ययन केन्द्रों की सहायता से अदृश्य महिलाओं को दृश्यता में लाने का कार्य किया जा रहा है। जिसमें विभिन्न

¹²⁰ IGNOU-MHI 03, Unit 5

¹²¹ Ibid, Unit 7

पत्र-पत्रिकाओं में लिखे महिलाओं के द्वारा लेख, आत्मकथाएँ, व्यक्तिगत दस्तावेज, प्रकाशित और अप्रकाशित, अभिलेख दस्तावेज, समाचार पत्र आदि की महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका है।¹²²

नये लेखन में लिंग भेद सम्बन्धी मुद्दों को आत्मसात करना होगा। महिला अध्ययन भारत में अनुसन्धान का एक नया क्षेत्र है जो समाज के उपेक्षित हिस्सों पर ध्यान केन्द्रित कर रहा है। इसकी नयी रोशनी में अब एक लिंग भेद सम्बन्धी इतिहास की संभावना शुरू हो गई।¹²³ भारत की आजादी के लिए राष्ट्रीय आन्दोलन में महिलाओं की भूमिका को विद्वानों ने विशेष रूप से उपेक्षित किया है। ब्रिटिश हुकूमत से भारत की आजादी के लिए संघर्ष एक लम्बा खिंचता रहा। इन झड़पों में जहाँ जात चली गई और कुर्बानियाँ दी गई, वहीं महिलाओं ने भी प्रमुख भूमिकाएँ निभाई। पारम्परिक इतिहास का ध्यान मानवीय गविविधि के क्षेत्र पर रहा है, जिसमें पुरुष, युद्ध, राजनीति और कूटनीति जैसी वर्चस्व वाली भूमिका निभाते रहे। हालांकि इनमें से कई महिलाओं को इतिहास में जगह मिली है लेकिन उन्हें देश के लिए उनके योगदान का श्रेय नहीं दिया गया है। हालांकि उनके नाम पर पार्क, सड़कें और स्मारक हैं, लेकिन उनके प्रयासों पर काफी हद तक किसी का ध्यान नहीं गया है।

गर्डा लर्नर¹²⁴ ने सर्वप्रथम यह कहा कि “स्त्रियों का इतिहास है तथा स्त्रियाँ इतिहास में हैं।” उनके कथनानुसार सामाजिक वैज्ञानिकों के लिए एक घोषणा पत्र बन गया तथा जेंडर के बारे में विमर्श का एक नया रास्ता मिला। “स्त्री पहचान” को स्वाभाविक तथा आवश्यक के बजाए कृत्रिम माना गया। स्त्रियों के असमान स्थिति के बारे में प्रश्न होने लगे।¹²⁵

1974 भारत में “कमेटी ऑन द स्टेट्स ऑफ वीमेन” की रिपोर्ट जारी की गई, जिसका भारत में जेंडर आधारित भेदभाव बहुत अधिक है तथ इसमें न सिर्फ महिलाओं के जीवन की गुणवत्ता को प्रभावित किया है बल्कि उनके अस्तित्व को भी चुनौति देती है।¹²⁶

उद्देश्य

प्रस्तुत शोध के निम्नलिखित उद्देश्य इस प्रकार हैं:

1. भारत के स्वतन्त्रता आन्दोलन में महिलाओं की भूमिका का सामान्य रूप से अध्ययन करना।
2. विभिन्न महिला स्वतन्त्रता सेनानियों के बारे में जागरूकता पैदा करना।
3. भारतीय स्वतन्त्रता आन्दोलन और राजनीति में महिलाओं के योगदान का मूल्यांकन करना।

शोध प्रविधि

¹²² Ibid, Unit 9

¹²³ Ibid

¹²⁴ Geradine Fobes, Women in Modern India, India: Cambridge University Press, 1998 (1), p. 2.

¹²⁵ Ibid, p. 2

¹²⁶ Leela Kasturi and Vina Mazumdar, Women and Indian Nationalism, New Delhi, Vikash Publication House Pvt. Ltd., 1994, p. 6.

वर्तमान अध्ययन ऐतिहासिक वर्णनात्मक और विश्लेषणात्मक है। अध्ययन मुख्य रूप से द्वितीय स्रोतों पर आधारित है। इस पत्र को लिखने के लिए मुख्य रूप से शाब्दिक दृष्टिकोण, प्रख्यात विद्वानों द्वारा लिखी गई पुस्तकों और विभिन्न राष्ट्रीय और अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय पत्रिकाओं पर लिखे गए लेख, कागजात की संरचना पर विचार किया गया है। वर्तमान अध्ययन में इंटरनेट में उपलब्ध अनुसन्धान सामग्री का भी उपयोग किया गया है।

अज्ञात बहादुर महिलाएँ

भारत की कुछ स्वतंत्रता संग्राम बहादुर महिलाएँ सेनानी जिन्होंने स्वतन्त्र भारत को आकार देने में महत्वपूर्ण योगदान दिया निम्नलिखित हैं:

मातांगिनी हाजरा: इन्हें गाँधी बरी के नाम से भी जाना जाता है। मातांगिनी हाजरा ने भारत छोड़ो आन्दोलन और असहयोग आन्दोलन में भाग लिया। एक जुलूस के दौरान, उसने तीन बार गोली चलाने के बाद भी भारतीय ध्वज के साथ नेतृत्व करना जारी रखा।

कनकलता बरुआ: इन्हें बीरबाला के नाम से भी जाना जाता है। वह असम की एक भारतीय स्वतन्त्रता सेनानी थीं। उन्होंने 1942 में बारंगबाड़ी में भारत छोड़ो आन्दोलन में एक प्रमुख हिस्सा लिया और अपने हाथों में राष्ट्रीय ध्वज के साथ महिला स्वयं सेवकों की कतार में खड़ी थीं। उसने अंग्रेजों के वर्चस्व वाले गोहपुर पुलिस स्टेशन पर झंडा फहराने का लक्ष्य रखा और ब्रिटिश साम्राज्यवादियों को वापस जाना चाहिए आदि नारे लगाए।

रानी लक्ष्मीबाई: हमारे यहाँ युद्ध में अनेक देवियों ने शत्रुओं के दाँत खट्टे किए हैं। 1857 के स्वतन्त्रता संग्राम में अनेक वीरांगनाओं ने देश के लिए प्राणों का उत्सर्ग किया। देश के लिए प्राणों को उत्सर्ग करने वाली वीरांगनाओं में झाँसी की रानी लक्ष्मीबाई का नाम अग्रण्य है। जिन नारियों ने भारत माता के गौरव को ऊँचा किया है उनमें महारानी लक्ष्मीबाई महान थी। यह वह महिला थी, जिसने भारत की स्वतन्त्रता की मशाल लेकर, भारत की स्वाधीनता के लिए हँसते-हँसते अपने प्राणों का उत्सर्ग कर दिया। उनका शौर्य, साहस और बलिदान हमेशा भारतीय महिलाओं को वीरता की प्रेरणा देता रहेगा। हिन्दी के अनेक कवियों ने रानी की वीरता का गुणमान किया है।

अरुणा असिफ अली: वह स्वतन्त्रता आन्दोलन के ओल्ड द ग्रेंड ओल्ड लेडी के रूप में लोकप्रिय है। यह एक भारतीय स्वतन्त्रता कार्यकर्ता और स्वतन्त्रता सेनानी थीं, जिन्हें भारत छोड़ो आन्दोलन के दौरान बॉम्बे के गोवालिया टैंक मैदान में भारतीय राष्ट्रीय कांग्रेस का झंडा फहराने के लिए जाना जाता है। उन्होंने नमक सत्याग्रह आन्दोलन के साथ-साथ अन्य विरोध मार्चों में भी भाग लिया और उन्हें जेल में डाल दिया गया। उसने राजनीतिक बन्धियों को संगठित किया और भूख हड़ताल शुरू करके जेलों के दिए जाने वाले दुर्व्यवहार का विरोध किया।

भीकाई कामा: भारतीय राष्ट्रवादी आन्दोलन के एक प्रख्यात व्यक्तित्व, उनका जन्म 24 सितम्बर, 1861 को बम्बई में एक पारसी परिवार में भिकाई रूस्तम कामा के रूप में हुआ था। खैर, हम मैडम कामा के अलावा किसी और के बारे में बात नहीं कर रहे हैं, जो एक प्रसिद्ध स्वतन्त्रता सेनानी हैं। वह एक अच्छे परिवार से आती हैं और उनके पिता सोराबजी फ्रामजी पटेल पारसी समुदाय के एक शक्तिशाली सदस्य थे। उन्होंने पुरुषों और महिलाओं के बीच समानता पर जोर दिया। उसने युवा लड़कियों के लिए एक अनाथालय की मदद करने के लिए अपनी सारी सम्पत्ति दे दी। भारतीय राजदूत के रूप में, उन्होंने 1907 में भारतीय राष्ट्रीय ध्वज फहराने के लिए जर्मनी की यात्रा की।

बेगम हजरत महल: 10 मई, 1857 को मेरठ में विद्रोह के आरम्भ होने के बाद 30 मई, 1857 को अवध में विद्रोह की घोषणा की गई। अंग्रेजों के विरुद्ध इस विद्रोह की नेता अवध के नवाब वाजिद अली शाह की बेगम, हजरत महल थीं। बेगम हजरत महल एक नर्तकी थी। अपने सौन्दर्य व गुणों के कारण वह अवध के अन्तिम नवाब वाजिद अली शाह की बेगम बन गई। मई, 1857 के अन्त में अवध में विद्रोह को भड़काने में बेगम हजरत महल ने महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका अदी की। शीघ्र ही विद्रोह की चिंगारी अवध के अन्य प्रदेशों में भी फैल गई। जून, 1857 के अंत तक लखनऊ की रेजीडेंसी, जहाँ अंग्रेजों ने शरण ली थी, शहर के अन्य भागों पर विद्रोहियों का अधिकार हो चुका था।

मूलमती: उनके नाम से उन्हें कोई नहीं जानता लेकिन उन्होंने राम प्रसाद बिस्मिल की माँ के रूप में स्वतन्त्रता संग्राम में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई। राम प्रसाद 1918 के प्रसिद्ध मैनपुरी षडयंत्र केस और 1925 के काकोरी षडयंत्र में शामिल एक क्रान्तिकारी थे। 19 दिसम्बर 1927 को गोरखपुर जेल में, उन्हें गिरफ्तार किया गया और उन्हें फाँसी दे दी गई। मूलमती एक साधारण महिला थीं, जिन्होंने अपने बेटे को आजादी के लिए संघर्ष करने में मदद की। इसके अलावा, वह अपने बेटे को फाँसी देने से पहले गोरखपुर जेल गई थी। राम प्रसाद अपनी माँ को देखकर टूट गए, जो अछूती रह गई। वह अपनी प्रतिक्रिया में दृढ़ थी और उसे बताया कि उसे उसके जैसा बेटा होने पर गर्व है। एक सार्वजनिक सभा में एक भाषण में उनकी मृत्यु के बाद, उन्होंने अपने दूसरे बेटे का हाथ उठाया और उन्हें स्वतन्त्रता आन्दोलन की पेशकश की।

लक्ष्मी सहगल: एक पूर्व भारतीय सेना अधिकारी थीं जिन्हें कैप्टन लक्ष्मी भी कहा जाता था। उन्होंने नेताजी सुभाष चन्द्र बोस द्वारा स्थापित इंडियन नेशनल आर्मी के लिए एक गन उठाया और स्वतन्त्रता के संघर्ष में एक बाधिन की तरह इसका नेतृत्व किया। वह झाँसी रेजीमेन्ट की रानी की स्थापना और नेतृत्व करने की प्रभारी थीं। जिसमें महिला सैनिक भी शामिल थीं।

कमलादेवी चटोपध्याय: एक समाज सुधारक के साथ, वह एक प्रतिष्ठिता थिएटर अभिनेता थीं और उन्होंने भारत की आजादी की लड़ाई में बहुत महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई। वह देशभक्त नेता के रूप में सक्रिय भूमिका के लिए ब्रिटिश सरकार द्वारा गिरफ्तार होने वाली भारत की पहली महिला बनीं। वह एक उल्लेखनीय व्यक्ति थीं, जिन्हें एक समाज सुधारक, निडर और प्रतिबद्ध स्वतन्त्रता सेनानी के रूप में संदर्भित किया जाता था। उन्होंने भारत में महिलाओं की सामाजिक-आर्थिक स्थितियों में भी सुधार किया, हस्तशिल्प और थिएटर को पुनर्जीवित और बढ़ावा दिया। उन्होंने 1930 के गाँधी जी नमक सत्याग्रह में भी भाग लिया। विधानसभा के लिए वह पहली महिला उम्मीदवार थीं। अखिल भारतीय महिला सम्मेलन की स्थापना में उनका महत्वपूर्ण योगदान था।

तारारानी श्रीवास्तव: तारारानी ने तिरंगे के साथ मार्च को जारी रखा था जबकि दूसरी ओर पुलिस उनके पति को मार रही थी ऐसा नहीं है कि सिर्फ यह स्वतन्त्रता की लड़ाई एक वर्ग, समुदाय तक ही सीमित हो इसमें मुस्लिम महिलाओं का भी योगदान रहा जैसे कि अबादी बानो बेगम, पहली मुस्लिम महिला जो बुर्का पहनकर राजनीतिक सभा को सम्बोधित करती थी। सरला बेन यह एक विदेशी महिला जो भारत की आजादी के लिए जेल गई थी।

कीट्टूर रानी चीनमम्मा: वह कर्नाटक में रियासत की रानी थी। उन्होंने 1824 में 33 वर्ष की आयु में बहादुरी से सेना के विद्रोह का नेतृत्व किया। राष्ट्र के लिए अपना जीवन देने के लिए प्रतिरोध समाप्त हो गया। उनकी वीरता आज भी महिलाओं के लिए एक प्रेरणा साबित होती है।

प्रस्तुत शोध में राष्ट्रीय आन्दोलन में महिलाओं की भागीदारी के स्वरूप पर प्रकाश डाला गया है लेकिन आज इतिहासकार केवल सहयोग के स्वरूप को देखने में संतुष्ट नहीं है। वे जानना चाहते हैं कि राष्ट्रीय आन्दोलन में पुरुष कार्यकर्ताओं का महिला कार्यकर्ताओं के प्रति क्या रवैया था? वे यह भी जानना चाहते हैं कि राष्ट्रवादी विचारधारा में सामाजिक लिंग भेद की क्या भूमिका थी? इस क्षेत्र में कुछ नए शोधों में सामाजिक लिंग भेद को राष्ट्रीयता का एक बुनियादी और महत्वपूर्ण पहलू माना जा रहा है। शोधों में यह दिखाने की कोशिश की जा रही है कि राष्ट्रवाद अंग्रेजों के विरुद्ध केवल राजनीतिक जंग नहीं थी वरन् वह भारत और इंग्लैण्ड के बीच एक सांस्कृतिक और वैचारिक जंग भी थी। राष्ट्रीय संस्कृति की आकृति, स्वरूप तथा पहचान बनाने की हर कोशिश में हम महिलाओं का वर्णन हो पाते हैं।¹²⁷

निष्कर्ष

भारतीय राष्ट्रीय आन्दोलन में महिलाओं की भागीदारी के सन्दर्भ पहले के स्वदेशी आन्दोलन से ही प्राप्त किये जा सकते हैं। बीसवीं शताब्दी के आरम्भिक दशक में महिला शिक्षा, महिला संगठनों के गठन और भारतीय राजनीति में महिलाओं की बढ़ती भागीदारी ने महिलाओं के जीवन को पूरी तरह से परिवर्तित कर दिया। भारत की आजादी की लड़ाई में महिलाओं की भागीदारी की कहानी एक दृढ़ विकल्प तैयार करने की कथा है। महिलाओं का घर की चारदीवारी से बाहर निकलकर सड़कों पर आना, उनका जेल जाना और विधायिका में उनका प्रवेश करना, इन सब ने मिलकर जीवन के हर क्षेत्र में उन्हें सशक्त बना दिया। अहिंसक आन्दोलन, जिसने भारत को आजादी दिलाई, ने न केवल महिलाओं को साथ लिया बल्कि उन्हें अपनी सक्रिय भागीदारी की सफलता के लिए आत्मनिर्भर होना भी सिखाया। राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर हम सरोजनी नायडू, विजयलक्ष्मी पंडित, कमलादेवी चटोपध्याय और मृदुला साराभाई से शुरुआत करते हुए प्रान्तीय स्तर पर केरल में ऐनी मैसकरीन और ए0वी0 कुट्टी मलुअम्मा, मद्रास प्रेसीडेंसी में दुर्गा बाई देशमुख, यू0पी0 में रामेश्वरी नेहरू और बी0 अम्मन, दिल्ली में सत्यवती देवी और सुभद्रा जोशी, मुम्बई में हंसा मेहता और ऊषा मेहता तथा कई दूसरी महिला नेताओं की बात कर सकते हैं।

¹²⁷ Sadhna Arya, Nivedita Menon and Jini Loknita, *Nariwadi Rajniti: Sangharsh awam Mudde*, Delhi University, 2001, p. 170.

Women Empowerment Through Economic Means

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Abstract:

Economic empowerment is the thought to allow poor people to think beyond immediate daily survival and to exercise greater control over both their resources and life choices. Economically empowering women can not only benefit them but also the society. A woman is empowered economically, when she has both the ability to succeed and advance economically and power to make economic decisions. Economic empowerment is the most powerful routes for women to achieve their potential and advance their rights. For the accelerated socio-economic development of any country, the active participation of women is essential. In a social set up like India's, their participation has to be ensured through tangible measures taken at various levels, which result in their empowerment in the real sense. The present paper highlights the role of economic means in women empowerment, which includes higher literacy levels, better health care, equal ownership of resources, increased participation in economic and commercial sectors.

Women Empowerment Through Economic Means

Many women live in a world where their economic rights, contributions and priorities have been largely overlooked. Most of the world's poorest people are women who face unequal access to the resources needed to improve their economic and social status. Economic empowerment is a critical means of righting the imbalance between men and women that have so far marginalized the welfare of half of the world's population. Women economic empowerment is a process that at its core has two dimensions: resources and opportunities. Productive resources are all the assets women need to achieve economic advancement. These range from tangible assets such as financial resources and physical resources to intangible assets such as skills, technique, expertise and social standing. But even when women are equipped with productive resources, this does not mean that they are economically empowered. They must also have the opportunity to those assets in anyway that they choose. Opportunity refers to woman's power to make and act on decisions that would allow her to obtain valuable outcomes from economic activity. It is clear that productive resources and opportunities make up two sides of the same coin. With greater control and access to assets, a woman has more power to make decisions that will positively impact her well being. At the same time, greater opportunity to make choices in relation to the economy would allow her to accumulate more resources to secure her sustained economic success. When a woman is economically empowered, she can contribute and transform her prospects in all areas of her life including employment, education, health, political and social participation and physical security. Women empowerment through economic means is transforming unfair power dynamics and providing women with the tools and opportunities to economically succeed.

Objective of the study:

*NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
"Dynamics of Women's Movement in India: Historical Legacy and Contemporary Challenges"
Supported By ICHR*

The objective of the study is to evaluate how economic means can result in women empowerment. The study is based on secondary sources like books, journals and newspapers.

Economic Empowerment of Women:

Economic empowerment is the thought to allow people to think beyond immediate daily survival and to exercise greater control over both their resources and life choices. A woman is empowered economically when she has both the ability to succeed and advance economically and power to make economic decision. For the accelerated socio-economic development of any country, the active participation of women through tangible measures which includes literacy level, health care, equal ownership of resources, increased participation in economic and commercial sectors, has to be ensured. Woman's economic empowerment is prerequisite for sustainable development, pro-poor growth and the achievement of development goals. Women perform 66% of world's work, and produce 50% of food, yet earn only 10% of the income and own 1% of the property. Gender equality and empowered women are catalyst for multiplying development efforts. Of the over 1.2 billion people living in extreme poverty on less than \$ 1 a day, the majority are women.¹ Even more worrying: The gap between men and women caught in poverty's cycle is widening, a phenomenon commonly referred to as the "feminisation of poverty." An extensive 2001 World Bank report found that countries with smaller gender gaps in areas such as education, employment, and property rights have lower poverty rates.

Education and women empowerment:

Education is the most powerful instrument for changing woman's position in society. Investing in woman's and girl's education is the most effective way to reduce poverty. Education is important for everyone, but it is a critical area of empowerment for girls and women. This is not only because education is an entry point to opportunity but also because women's educational achievements have positive ripple effects within the family. The development of women's skills, knowledge and technical expertise through education and training plays a key role in women's empowerment. Cross country studies have found that every additional year of primary school for a girl has a direct impact on her future, raising her potential wages, lowering the number of children she will have, and reduce the likelihood of her marrying during adolescence. There have been major advances in women's education over the past 25 years. The obstacles to school entry for millions of boys and girls have lowered in many parts of the world and more women are literate today than ever before. Between 1950 and 2012, the average years of schooling for adult women in low income countries increased from 1.5 years to 6.5 years. Gender inequalities are even more pronounced within developing countries between rural and urban areas. According to 2011 census, literacy rate in India is 74%, in rural areas it is 68% and in urban areas it is 85%. Whereas in rural areas, 78.57% males are literate and 58.75% females are literate. In urban areas, 89.67% males are literate and 79.92% females are literate². For each year of secondary education, a girl's future earnings increase by 15 to 25%. Well designed vocational training leads to better paid work, and does not concentrate women on low wage and low skill work or reinforce occupational segregation between woman and man.³

Health and empowerment:

In developing countries, deficiencies in public health services have disproportionate consequences for girls and women. Deterioration of health services weighs heavily on productivity of women and men. Poverty fosters conditions conducive to ill health as it forces people to live and work in environment that make them sick. Women are overrepresented among the world's poor and the unregulated informal sector, they are especially vulnerable to illness and are unlikely to be able to afford private health care treatment.

Income growth in most developing countries has had only modest impact on female mortality rates. AIDS is the leading cause of death for women in their reproductive years.⁴ A large percentage of female mortality is driven by risks associated with pregnancy and child birth. Every minute, a woman dies from complications in pregnancy and child birth.⁵ The health of women is a necessary precondition to their economic empowerment. A woman who is sick is unable to effectively obtain productive resources or take advantage of any opportunities from economic activities occurring around her. Equally important is the impact of economic empowerment on woman's health. Increases in woman's income translate into greater investment in her and her family's health.⁶

Land and Productive Resources Ownership and Empowerment:

Land makes up the largest share of household assets and can offer a safety net in times of financial hardship for the unemployed. Women are much more dependent on agriculture than men. In 2008, women's labour contribution in Asia and Africa to food production was 43 and 50 percent respectively. If female – run farms are given equal access to resources such as improved seeds and fertilisers, there will be 100 million less people without food in the world.⁷ Despite the importance of land to women's livelihoods, in many parts of the world women do not own land or property and those who do generally command smaller landholdings than men. The factors contributing to these inequalities are myriad and include discriminatory inheritance practices, unequal access to land markets and gender biased land reforms.⁸ They stand in the way of women's capacity to ensure agricultural productivity and food security and protect the livelihoods of herself and her family. Women still lack equal access to housing and have limited access to technologies that could alleviate their work burdens. All these inequalities culminate to undermine a woman's power to secure aspects of her well-being including health, education, employment and physical security. When women share in assets and land ownership there are positive correlation with higher food expenditure and rural productivity. Ownership rights of women have a powerful influence on their ability to control their environment and contribute to economic development which is their empowerment.⁹ The problem is more acute in countries like India, despite the fact that women's labour makes a critical contribution to the economy. This is due to the low social status and lack of access to key resources. However, compared to men, women operate smaller farms, keep fewer livestock, typically of smaller breeds, and earn less from livestock they do own. They have a greater overall work load that includes low productivity activities like fetching water and firewood, they have less access to innovation and productive assets and services, they have weaker property rights and tenure security and reduced incentives to invest in their land. If they are employed, are more likely to be in part-time, seasonal and low-paying jobs, receive lower wages for the same work, even they have the same experience and qualifications. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, closing the Women face gender specific barriers to access education, health, employment etc. Micro finance deals with women below the poverty line. Micro loans are available solely to this group of women because among the poor, the poor women are the most disadvantaged, they are characterised by lack of education and access of resources, both of which is required to help them work their way out of poverty and for upward economic and social mobility. Access to all financial products and services including savings, insurance and credit, is an additional way for women to assert their role in economic decision-making. These product & services provide them with the money to meet basic needs in the short term and allow them to invest in productive resources that can shift them away from subsistence living in the long run.¹

⁴Dodd, Rebecca, and Andrew Cassels, 2006 "Health Development and the Millennium Development Goals", *Annals of tropical medicine and Parasitology*. 100(5) Washington, D.C.

⁵World Bank 2012, *World Development Report: Gender Equality and Development*, World Bank

⁶UKFID 2007, (Department for International Development) *Gender Inequality at the Heart of Development: where the role is crucial to ending world poverty*, Glasgow, DFID.

⁷FAO, 2011. "The Role of Women in Agriculture." *Agricultural and Development Economics Division Working Paper* 11-02, Rome: FAO.

⁸Biswas, Tiyas, *Women Empowerment Through Micro Finance: A Boon for Development*

⁹Sen, A (1999) *Development as Freedom*, Oxford.¹⁰ Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2010) Improving opportunities For Women in Smallholder based Supply Chains: *Business case and practical guidance for international food companies*, Gates Foundation, Seattle.

Employment and Empowerment:

Earning an income is the primary way that many of us meet our daily needs. A woman's paid work is critical to her survival and an important means by which she can escape poverty. The importance of women's income is even greater in families where they are the sole breadwinners. Expanding economic activity has allowed a growing number of female workers to access paid employment in the labour market. Between 1980 and 2008, the global rate of female labour force participation rose steadily while the male rate fell over the same period.¹² The fact that women's participation is increasing is not in itself evidence of their economic empowerment. While more women are employed, they own just one percent of the world's wealth and earn only a 10 percent share of global income.¹³ The seeming disconnect between these two trends is explained by the fact that women are disproportionately represented in jobs that are not regulated by their country's laws. Referred to as "informal employment", these jobs lack secure employment contracts, worker benefits or social protections.¹⁴ The fact that it is women that are more likely to find informal jobs reflects direct discrimination, their disadvantage in education, lack of organized bargaining power, and their relatively high involvement in part time and temporary jobs.¹⁵ While women's work in the informal economy is by no means uniform, since these jobs operate outside of the regulatory reach of national governments, they are generally poorly paid and unprotected by labour legislation or social norms. Women are a valuable resource for economic growth. They represent more than 40% of the global workforce, 43 percent of the agricultural workforce and the majority of the world's university students.¹⁶ Sustained worldwide economic growth will rely on maximizing the input that women are able to offer. Conversely, the denial of equal economic opportunities to half of a country's population not only fairly marginalises women's position in the economy but also represents a waste in human potential. Women experience barriers in almost every aspect of work including whether they have paid work at all, the type of work they obtain or are excluded from, the availability of support services such as child care, their pay, benefits & conditions of work, the insecurity of their jobs and access to vocational training. Almost two-thirds of employed women in developing countries are in vulnerable jobs, as own-account or unpaid family workers¹⁷ as casual agricultural labourers at the bottom of a global value chain, as workers in urban factories and workshops or as domestic servants. There are initiatives in a number of countries to regulate and professionalise domestic work as a means of ensuring decent work. Domestic workers who are mainly women, are not recognised properly and protected workers. A study by OECD, 2011 highlights that if India's female to male worker ratio rose by 10% there will be 8% increase in India's Gross National Product.¹⁸ In most parts of the world, women assume a disproportionate burden for unpaid work in the home, including child care, food preparation, fuel and water collection and tending to the elderly and sick.

Economic activities outside the home rely on unpaid domestic work to fulfil a substantial share of human needs and sustain a country's labour force. The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development estimates that if unpaid domestic work were assigned a monetary value, it would constitute between 10 percent and 39 percent of GDP. Gendered division of work results in men receiving the majority of income and recognition for their economic contribution, and women's work remaining unpaid, unrecognised and undervalued. Two-thirds of women's total work time is already spent on carrying out unpaid work. These obligations pose a serious obstacle to increasing women's labour force participation and have a major impact on their well-being.

Conclusion:

Every day, women make significant contributions to the world's economy. A woman's wage contributes to her household's income and on an average she invests a higher proportion of her resources in her family's welfare than her male counterpart. Woman's unpaid work within the home – taking care of children and assisting the elderly and sick, provides an invaluable, yet unmeasured, good to any economy. While one woman is a powerful force for development, women acting together can exert much more pressure, when addressing structural barriers to their economic advancement. Women's ability to gain secure incomes and better working conditions in labour market is undermined by their disproportionate responsibilities for unpaid work. Tackling the discriminatory social norms that perpetuate the gendered division of work is one step to reducing and redistributing women's unpaid work. Equally important are investments in infrastructure such as water and sanitation in addition to greater public services such as health clinics and child care that can reduce the burden that women face in their daily routine.

Women's empowerment can be increased by educating the girls. Education provides women with knowledge, skill and confidence. Removing school fees and providing financial incentives for girls to attend school have proven to be effective for increasing girl's enrolment and competition rates. Access to health services can be improved by reducing user costs, providing transport and strengthening the accountability of service providers, by providing skilled health staff and proper information and knowledge about reproductive and maternal services. To graduate women's income generating activities from survival level into strong and viable businesses, women need to the full range of credit, banking and financial services. Through better jobs, more options to start viable businesses, greater access to land education and skill development and more opportunities to participate in decision making, women can pull themselves out of poverty and improve their quality of life and the level of their families and communities. No single initiative alone can independently fulfill conditions for empowerment, and not all the strategy will fit to all contexts. Economic,

Political, Social and legal strategies need to be adopted for empowerment of women. It means transforming unfair power dynamics and providing women themselves with the tools and opportunities to economically succeed.

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Social Legistalations And Women Emancipation In Colonial India: A Contemporary Critique

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ABSTRACT

The colonial rule led to rapid transformation in social cultural spheres of colonies. Influence of utilitarianism forced many Indian officials to act as agents of modernity. Unlike the orientalists, the utilitarian administrators wanted to civilize the barbarians who knew little about civilized life. The reformist fervor instilled among Indians through education prompted many of them to work for reform of religion. Interestingly major emphasis was laid on emancipation of women folk. Age old practices like Sati and child marriage enjoyed wide currency among native population especially among caste Hindus. Early reformers made use of scriptures to supplement rational criticism levelled against inhumane and orthodox customs and practices. Rationality and religious universalism served as a criterion of social reform in the early phase. In the second phase of 19th century there emerged a tendency to give a Semitic character to Hinduism. The high priests of this thought defended traditional customs and practices against government efforts to reform religions it would be a encroachment into the private sphere of life. Postcolonial India inherited this legacy of placing scriptural sanction over rationality . To meet the challenge deliberate efforts should be taken to cultivate critical thinking scientific temperamentat grass root level.

Keywords: Communalism. Modernity, culture, public sphere.

INTRODUCTION

Colonial rule in India commenced with the establishment of English rule in Bengal. The early orientalists like Hastings had great respect for orientalist culture and preached that English rule should not disturb the native life. However the Evangelist and Utilitarian scholars who succeeded the orientalist intellectuals found that Indian culture is barbarous and need reforms. The high priests of Utilitarian school believed that modernity can only be introduced through progressive laws. Indian liberal intellectuals like Ram Mohan Roy acted as staunch protagonists and clamored for English intervention through education and social legislations. The print culture gained popularity in 19th century. Intense public debates emanated in regard to desirability of reforms in the cultural sphere. Sumit Sarkar argues that “with public and written protests print was helping to bring into existence, even in colonial conditions, some limited forms of what Habermas has termed the modern public sphere”¹²⁸. The debates in public domain over the issues like gender inequality mainly centered around scriptural sanction for such inequalities. Surprisingly British Indian Administration intervened in such issues only when it gets explicitly demonstrated that existing practices have deviated from norms laid by religion. Hence the debates in public domain over emancipatory laws largely centered around scriptures and popular traditions. Even liberal reformers like Roy

¹²⁸From the chapter ‘Imperial Structure, Policies and Ideologies’ S. Sarkar, (2014) *Modern Times: India 1880s-1950s (Environment, Economy, Culture)*, New Delhi, Permanent Black

used to supplement his rational arguments with scriptural evidences. In the second half of 19th century many reformers and feminist organizations came out in protest against legislations like Widow Remarriage act and Age of Consent act as they thought it is an encroachment into the private sphere of Hindu life. The debates over social legislations even contributed to spread of communal consciousness. Postcolonial India inherited this legacy of colonial period. Orthodox sects had it their habit to challenge constitutional morality and emancipatory laws under the pretext of religious taboo. Often legislations and judicial interventions invited widespread agitations from part of fundamentalist groups and orthodox groups. Unfortunately such agitations like those over Shah Bano case and Hindu code bill led to the spread of communal politics. In this study only legislations pertaining Hindu women are considered as a comprehensive coverage of reforms requires a larger canvas.

PROPHETS AND REFORMERS: THE DEBATE

Colonial modernity experienced by educated Indians gave them the inspiration for emancipating the women from chains of oppression. Practices like Sati and child marriage was alien and hitherto unknown to orientalists who romanticized Indian past. They represented Indian women as embodiment of virtues like innocence, who silently suffered in patriarchal social structure. The politically awakened Indians realized that this lowly representation of femininity in Indian culture is in turn an attempt to legitimize the subordination of effeminate Indian culture to masculine English culture. The reformers searched for alternative accounts to prove that position of women folk not originally inferior to man. Roy, who championed women emancipation movements during his days argued that Sati was not mentioned in *Manusmriti* and is hence not an essential ingredient of Hinduism. Similarly, instead of rooting his arguments in favor of widow remarriage on western liberal philosophy he laid stress on scriptures like *ParasharaSmriti*. The effort of these men were to create an alternative sense of modernity. However it does make little sense in arguing that these reformers were free from the colonial world view. Although it seems that it is possible to argue that they are “grounded in reinterpreted sacred texts but in reality dependent on core values borrowed from the colonial world view and then legitimized according to existing concepts of sacredness”¹²⁹. This reveals that the reformers of early phase gave due regard to scriptures out of their cultural pride and not out of deep faith and commitment.

Many colonial intellectuals were highly critical of this notion of critical Hinduism. Bankimchandra Chatterji, was one among the forerunners of this class. They strongly defended traditions and practices and objected to the state intervention in private life of Indians. Interestingly they even criticized abolition of Sati. Men like Radhakant Deb organized public protests against the law. Efforts even were taken to glorify the sanctity of such practices. This tendency can best be manifested through analysis of controversy pertaining to the amendment of Age of Consent act. The infamous Rukmabhai case and death of 11 year old girl out of marital rape led to intense debate in public domain regarding the proposal to amend Age of Consent act. The bill introduced by Sir Andrew Scoble proposing to raise the age of consent to have sexual intercourse from 10 to 12 for Indian girls. Violation of the law even within marriage would invite severe punishments like imprisonment for life

¹²⁹From the chapter ‘The Psychology of Colonialism: Sex, Age and Ideology in British India’ A.Nandy, (1983) *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, p.23

and deportation. Once enacted the revivalists politicians launched an all out attack on the law. Leaders like Tilak openly protested against the law. The antagonists of the law argued that Right of husband to cohabit with his wife. The “opponents of the Bill tried to dignify opposition to the Bill as a sign of national independence”.¹³⁰ Unfortunately in the second half of 19th century rationality and religious universalism lost its significance and gave way to religious particularism. The political activists who drew inspiration from glories of ancient India acted as staunch supporters of Indian traditions and strongly resisted ‘civilizing mission’.

Perusal of existing literature convincingly proves that in the last quarter of 19th century there emerged a controversy in connection with state intervention the private sphere of life. The organizations like Arya Samaj took all efforts to organize Hinduism in Semitic line and stood for conserving traditions of ancient India. They treated western modernity as a contaminator of culture and wanted to keep Indian institutions away from its influence. The debates over the feasibility of state intervention led to the emergence of two warring camps which were polar opposite to the other. The first group emerged as champions of critical Hinduism who wholeheartedly welcomed reforms. They had little regard for preserving traditions as they gave primacy to reason. On the hand critics of reforms propounded a Semitic model of Hinduism. These competing models of Hinduism led to division in nationalist politics also.

The Apostles of critical Hinduism like Gandhi fought for emancipation of women from the clutches of patriarchal social structure. He is often credited for opening up political space for women thus freeing up themselves from chains of domesticity. The effort of these leaders who have internalized western ideas was to re-define gender role and to create an Indian identity. Even while acknowledging need for social change prophets of other school resisted state intervention. Attention was here given to preserve the Hindu identity. The Hindu identity for them was a popular mobilizing agent. The emergence of the idea of ‘exclusive nationalism’ and downward infiltration of communal consciousness is closely associated with this Semitic model of Hinduism. The latter model became popular and former gradually lost currency.

SCENARIO IN POSTCOLONIAL INDIA

The colonial masters who chose to introduce personal laws to govern private sphere of social institutions noted earlier gave primacy to religious scriptures in order to appease fundamentalist groups. However government that succeeded colonial rule had many ideals like equality and liberty which they cherished during the heydays of national movement. Progressive laws and judicial interventions of emancipatory nature attracted widespread protests. Religious leaders and political groups of fundamentalist nature looked upon such interventions with much suspicion and condemn. Both Nehru and Ambedkar were staunch supporters of the idea of common civil code, as they thought that continuance of personal laws would only help to ignite communal consciousness. However pressure from religious and caste organization coupled with right wing support made the continuance of personal laws possible. Hindu chauvinist organizations criticized the Hindu Code Bill introduced in parliament on the ground that it went against scriptures. The bill recognized the proprietary rights of widows to inherit property of deceased husband in equal terms with male heirs, right of wife who chose to live separately from husband to claim maintenance, right to claim

¹³⁰From the chapter ‘Potent Protests: The Age of Consent Controversy, 1891’ M. Sinha, (1995) *Colonial Masculinity: The Manly Englishman and Effeminate Bengali in the Late Nineteenth Bengal*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, p.172

divorce and many other provisions which the feminist scholars considered inadequate. Although modernists among Hindu community supported the bill, “the Ant Hindu Code Bill committee held that the Constituent Assembly had no right to interfere with the Hindu laws of Hindus which are based on Dharma Shastras”¹³¹. Hindu organizations even fielded a candidate against Pundit Nehru in protest. Withstanding pressure from chauvinist groups the bill got enacted, although it met with many deadlocks. Effective political communication that organizational machinery of Indian National Congress and propaganda of reformers over previous decades became crucial in overcoming the challenges posed by these organizations.

Communal forces gathered strength in the post Nehruvian era. In the present post-truth era, judicial interventions and emancipatory laws can lead to chaos and disturbances. Groups struggling gender equality today taken the place of protagonists of critical Hinduism. Feminist organisations and the public intellectual unlike their predecessors attach little or no significance to scriptures. The arguments of such groups are being criticized by fundamentalist groupson the ground that it pays no respect for Indian culture. However it is been argued that these scriptures are products of Brahmanical patriarchy and it doesn't accommodate the aspirations of women who forms half of humanity. Post colonial discourse on struggle for gender equality is largely the record of judicial confrontations and popular movements sponsored by these warring groups. Religious sentiments of masses gets easily exploited and can result in mass agitations even when cause for agitation is irrational. Ironically women themselves comes out in protest against emancipatory intervention as in the case of recent Sabarimala agitation. In most cases propaganda from part of radical groups and misinformation plays a vital role.

CONCLUSION

The tussle between supporters and opponents of emancipatory legislators have invited interest of academic world. It is evident that the debate over emancipatory legislations commenced during the colonial period. To escape from the hostility of conservative groups colonial rulers introduced personal laws after consulting popular scriptures and customary practices. Even the liberal reformists like Roy used to justify their arguments on the basis of scriptures. Although it is possible to argue that these men were actually giving currency to modernity introduced by colonialism through an re-interpretation of scripture, it in turn played an instrumental role in cementing the primacy of scriptures. The legislations like Age of Consent act excited the sentiments of revivalists and in turn stimulated communal consciousness of masses.

Conflict over reforms in personal laws continued in postcolonial period. In the last few decades the debate got transformed into an tussle between modernity and conservatism. Chaining women with mind forged manacles of tradition is not desirable in a democratic society. Gender equity and equality is a need of our time. Government through its agencies should play a lead role to inculcate scientific temperament, critical thinking and constitutional morality among masses. The development and ogress of society largely depends upon the equality of opportunity available for its members. The largest democracy in world should hence endeavor for guaranteeing equality and equity. In order to facilitate this it is

¹³¹From the chapter ‘Law and the Prophets’ R. Guha, (2017) *India after Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy*, New Delhi, Picador India, p.228

essential to uncolonize the colonized minds of Indians through complex process of unlearning which may last for decades

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Women's Participation in Freedom Movement & Politics

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THE QUEEN OF KITTUR, RANI CHENNAMMA



INTRODUCTION

Kittur is a small town, situated in Belgaum Dist of Karnataka. Not many people outside Karnataka know about the glorious role played by this little town which was the capital of a small princely state for nearly 164 years, belonging to a Kannada dynasty, which had a continuous history of more than two centuries.

Queen Chennamma was the very first head of a princely state in India to rise against the mighty British empire and hold her own, even though for a brief period. Rani Chennamma, though a queen of a little state, was a woman of indomitable courage and patriotism. She loved the land and her people so much that she was prepared to sacrifice anything to preserve its freedom. She was endowed with intellectual abilities equal to any emergency, be it a political crisis or a war strategy. She fought against the mighty British army and there was much bloodshed. For once the British floundered before the fierce onslaught and were completely vanquished. This was the first ever victory of an Indian freedom fighter against the mighty British empire. It is an inspiring story which will thrill freedom lovers in any country. It will be my immense privilege to narrate the legacy of this brave queen in accordance with evidence and records, based on both history and folk-literature in the hope that future generations will accord due recognition and pay homage to this brave queen of Karnataka.

RISE OF RANI CHENNAMMA AS QUEEN

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On 23 October 1778, Chennamma, Queen of Kittur, was a princely state in the present Karnataka was born in a small village called Kakati in Belagavi District, Karnataka. At the age of 15, she became the queen of Kittur (a taluk in present Belgavi) when she married the king of Kittur, Raja Mallasarja.

Her husband died in 1816 leaving her with one son and heir to the throne. Unfortunately, the boy died in 1824. Chennamma adopted another boy Shivalingappa and made him the heir to the throne of Kittur. The British East India Company did not take it lightly to Chennamma's act and disapproved Shivalingappa's heir to the throne to the kingdom. This was done under the pretext of the Doctrine of Lapse, according to which adoptive children of native rulers were not allowed to be named their successor and if the native rulers did not have children of their own, their kingdom would become a territory of the British Empire. The Doctrine of Lapse was officially codified between 1848 to 1856 by Lord Dalhousie.

Rani Chennamma rejected this illegitimate doctrine of lapse and refused to accept British sovereignty. Kittur Chennamma, however, defied the British order. She sent a letter to the Governor of Bombay to plead the cause of Kittur, but Lord Elphinstone turned down Chennamma's request. The state of Kittur came under the administration of Dharwad collectorate in charge of Mr. Thackeray, and Mr. Chaplin was the commissioner. Both men did not recognize Chennamma as the regent and Shivalingappa as the ruler and apprised Rani Chennamma to surrender her kingdom, but she again defied the British order. This led to the breakout of a war.



FIRST WAR AGAINST THE BRITISH OCT 1824

As she was trained in sword fighting, archery and horse riding since her childhood, she started a war against the company in 1824. In the first battle between the British and Kittur, on October of 1824, The British attacked Kittur with more than 20000 men and about 400 guns. They attempted to raid Kittur and take its jewels and treasures (valued at Rs.15 lakh) but failed. British forces faced heavy losses. St. John Thackeray, the British collector and political agent, was also killed during this first battle by the Kittur forces. Rani Chennamma's lieutenant, Amatur Balappa, was mainly responsible for Thackeray's death and the losses faced by the British forces. Two British officers, Sir Walter Elliot and Mr. Stevenson, were also taken hostages by Rani Chennamma's forces. The British contingent had been completely crushed and humiliated by Rani Chennamma in the battle of Kittur on 23 October, 1824. Some of the fleeing officers and soldiers reached Dharwar to convey the news of the defeat of the British garrison.

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There was a sizeable number of British military and civilian officers stationed at Dharwar. The news of the defeat was received with stunned disbelief. An European officer of the decimated horse artillery, Dr Turnbull, arrived at about 6 o'clock in the evening, and conveyed the bad news to Mr Musgrave Harris, the civilian officer stationed at Dharwar. Harris promptly sent a note to Lt. Col. W. Durand, commander of the army at Dharwar.

To avoid further destruction and war, Rani Chennamma negotiated with the British Commissioner Mr. Chaplin and the Governor of Bombay, under whose regime Kittur fell. She released the hostages owing to the British promise that the war would no longer be continued. However, the promise turned out to be only an act of deception. Humiliated by their first defeat at the hands of a small Indian woman ruler, Mr. Chaplin treacherously returned with much larger forces from Mysore and Sholapur to attack Kittur once again.

SECOND WAR AGAINST THE BRITISH DEC 1824

Rani Chennamma fought the second battle fiercely with the aid of her lieutenant Sangoli Rayanna and Gurusiddappa. During this second round of war, the Sub-collector of Sholapur, Mr. Munrow, nephew of Sir Thomas Munro, was also killed. For 12 days, Chennamma and her soldiers relentlessly defended their fort, but yet again, Chennamma was made prey to deceit. Two soldiers of her own army, Mallappa Shetty and Vankata Rao, betrayed Chennamma by mixing mud and cow dung with the gunpowder used for the canons.

IMPRISONMENT

Ultimately, Kittur Chennamma and her forces were outnumbered by the large strength of the British forces. Rani Chennamma was defeated in her last battle and captured by the British, who imprisoned her at the Bailhongal Fort for life. Rani Chennamma and Veeravva, the widow of Shivalingarudra Sarja, and Janakibai, the widow of her late son Shivabasavaraj, were detained in the Kittur palace for about a week thereafter. They were forced to sign a document conceding the Kittur kingdom to the British. They were then sent under heavy escort to the heavily fortified fortress of Bailhongala and kept as political prisoners. A pension was fixed for all the three ladies of the Kittur ruling family, amounting to a total of about ` 40,000 per annum.

Rani Chennamma spent most of her time in *pooja* and spiritual pursuits. Her constant dream was the liberation of Kittur for which she pined hope day and night. She hoped against fate, but nothing came to pass. In the dark and dingy cell of Bailhongala fort, the sorrowing Chennamma sat dreaming of the day when she would lead another fight against the British, and when her beloved people of Kittur would be free and her state restored to independence. Rani Chennamma thus withered away, day by day. After nearly five years of confinement in the Bailhongala fort, she died on the 2 February, 1829. Within a few months, on 20 July, 1829, her daughter-in-law, Janakibai also died, still in prison. Thus ended the life of the great queen, Rani Chennamma, who had blazed a glorious trail of revolt in the gloomy dark hours of slavery towards the dawn of a full-fledged rebellion against the British rule in India. She was buried at Bailhongala with full military honours. A tomb has been erected on her *samadhi*.

RANI KITTUR CHENNAMMA' LEGACY

Kittur was a tiny state when compared with most other Indian states that existed before India's independence. Many of these states and jahagirs which were allowed to continue, their existence prolonged because they either helped the British to build up their empire in India or made compromises with the British and bartered away their freedom. In the wake of India's independence, they were wiped out of existence, and today most of them have been completely forgotten. But unlike these 600 and odd states, the name of Kittur is today alive not only in our history books but in the innumerable ballads, folk-songs, plays, poems and other writings, as in the minds and hearts of the people. The story of the gallant fight of Rani Chennamma is on the lips of hundreds of villagers who sing the songs of her glory; and her heroic deeds are, on many occasions, vividly brought to life on the stage and on the screen, inspiring people all over Karnataka.

Kittur is immortal today because of Rani Chennamma's everlasting contribution to the glorious heritage of freedom struggle in India. It suffered a crushing military defeat in its fight against the British. So did many other states in India. However, the greatness or splendour of any state is not judged by its success or defeat in the battlefield. The spirit that animated the gallant soldiers of Kittur, the noble ideals that inspired them, are what constitute their greatness. Kittur's efforts to keep the torch of freedom burning, its splendid example of courage and determination to stake everything to preserve its liberty, have made it immortal. The patriotic fervour and the love of freedom among the people of Kittur was inspired by Rani Chennamma whose name is remembered with great respect and admiration.

Rani Chennamma, although a queen of a small state, had great qualities of leadership, such as statesmanship, indomitable courage, keen political acumen, an uncanny judgement of men and affairs, a presence of mind in keeping with any emergency, and a deep knowledge of military strategies. She was a skilful administrator and resourceful diplomat. She could take decisions at the spur of the moment, and once she took a decision, she was firm in executing it. More than all these, she loved Kittur, the land and its people. All these qualities made her almost a legend in her own lifetime. Her actions always spoke of these great qualities. She had the courage to defy the British by holding a durbar and declaring the continuity of the state. She tried her utmost to avoid war, if she could do it without compromising the independence of her state. She negotiated with the British with great dignity, firmness and equanimity, displaying remarkable qualities of statesmanship in these negotiations. She was firm in her demand of autonomy for the state. But she knew what to concede, and when negotiations failed and war became inevitable, she could rouse the conscience of her people.

The people of Kittur rose as a courageous and committed lot in response to her clarion call. She was profoundly humane and magnanimous at the time of her victory. She forgave the prisoners and released them. She protected and sent back the captive women and children of the British army officers, in the true tradition of Indian kings in the treatment of their prisoners. But when it was a question of the freedom of Kittur, there could be no compromise. She was prepared to die fighting for it. It is because of these qualities that she could infuse such loyalty and patriotism among her people. They were prepared to lay down their lives at her bidding.

The fight the Kittur soldiers gave to the British in spite of their meagre strength in arms and equipment, is a rare instance of such a small force holding at bay a much superior, mighty army, by sheer strength of courage and determination. Even the British officers,

who witnessed the fight, have described their spirit in glowing terms. Chaplin, Commissioner of the Deccan, speaking about the courage, valour and determination of Kittur soldiers, said, “They have drawn the sword and thrown away the scabbard.” Stevenson, political agent to Chaplin, in one of his letters, has made a mention of “the ungovernable spirit and fury” of the Kittur rebels. The finest tribute, however, was paid by Chaplin while reporting the final victory over Kittur. He has recorded that “the strong fort of Kittur was defended by a garrison of an unusually determined character for its spirit and energy.” For many years after the defeat of Kittur, there were occasional sporadic attempts to revolt against the alien rule, and to instal the rightful heirs on the throne. This displayed a unique and implicit loyalty of the people for the region to the Kittur ruling family. The battle of Kittur was the first ever Indian battle for freedom, against the British. The 23rd of October, 1824, will, therefore, go down in history as a great day of victory for a tiny state against the imperial might of the British. It is, therefore, a day of great significance, as it were, the great war of independence of 1857 and of the freedom movement headed by Mahatma Gandhi, culminating in the Quit India movement of 1942. The noble example, the relentless spirit, the courage and valour of Rani Chennamma and her patriotic followers, who smilingly laid their lives, fighting for the freedom of their motherland, will continue to shine across the corridors of history. The figures of that heroic era have gone, but they will live long in our memory.

A statue of Kittur Chennamma was unveiled in September 2007 at the Indian Parliament Complex by Pratibha Patil. The statue was donated by the Kittur Rani Chennamma Memorial Committee and was sculpted by Vijay Gaur. There are other statues in Bangalore and Kittur as well. Rani Chennamma’s samadhi is maintained by the government in a park in Kittur.

Ballads and songs describing her valour are sung in Kittur even today. The Kitturu Utsava is held in Kittur from 22 October to 24 October every year to commemorate Chennamma’s first victory over the English.

Rani Chennamma’s samadhi (burial place) is in Bailhongal taluk, under the care of Government agencies. However, sadly, the burial place of this valiant queen lies neglected, in a state of poor maintenance. The only time the place is looked after is during the ‘Kittur Utsava’ and ‘Kannada Rajyotsava’. Commemorations.

Kittur Rani Chennamma is still remembered for her valour. Even though she couldn’t win the war against the British, she became an inspiration for India’s freedom fighters and a lesson for the British government that Indian rulers will not accept their enforced laws without a good fight.

During the freedom movement, her brave resistance against the British forces became the theme of several inspirational plays, folk songs (Lavani) and stories. Rani Chennamma’s first victory against the British forces is still honoured annually in October during the ‘Kittur Utsava’, held in Kittur.

A historical-drama film called Kitturu Chennamma was produced and directed by B. R. Panthulu about the life and times of Kittur Rani Chennamma. A popular daily Indian Railways train that connects Bangalore and Kolhapur was also named after her as Rani Chennamma Express.

Despite leading one of the first rebellions in India against the British, Rani Chennamma of Kittur remains relatively unknown

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- 2 Veera Rani Kittur Chennamma by A N Krishna Rao (Kannada Language)
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Educational status of women in India: History to current scenario.

Ms. Manju Kundu, Ms. Neharika Sharma

Abstract

It is very important for women to be empowered and for this woman has to be educated. To understand the status of literacy among females in India it is necessary to analyze the history of our nation in terms of women education. Women has gone through the different phases since ancient period till existing time with lot of ups and downs, it was an unsteady journey for female to gain knowledge in comparison with male population of our society. Therefore, to provide better condition and literacy to women it is important to put ourselves in their shoes. This paper is an effort to capture and show the picture of status and revolution in women's education in India to society

Key Words: Women, Education, Historical status, schemes for women education

1. Introduction

Every nation runs in the race of the development, and in the development of the society and country women play a very important role. In order to make country successfully developed it is necessary to educate women with men. Education is one of the milestones for women empowered because it enables them to respond to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their lifestyle¹³². Education is the right of each and every individual. With education one can improve his or her job opportunities and men and women both should work together to contribute to the nation and with this also women get empowered.

It has been observed that there is lots of difference in every era since ancient till present in terms of women education. If we look back improvement in the socio-economic position of a nation is also because of the women education. Women had suffered a lot in history in terms of getting education, as time passes there are many famous reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar etc. who put forward their steps towards the upliftment of the women. Many studies shows that there are ample of benefits in educating and empowering women for example high literacy rate in women leads to increased life hope, reduced child death, and cultured children. Considering all the above facts and figures, this study has been taken up with an objective to analyze the revolution in women education.

2. Education in India

Education plays very important role in every nation in order to contribute in human resource of the country. It is not only helpful in the development of human resources but in improving the quality of life at home and outside¹³³. The Indian education system consist of various categories i.e. formal education and non- formal education. There are many schemes,

¹³² Jadon(2018),Women education in India: An Analysis. Research on Humanities and Social Sciences Vol.8. No 13,2018

¹³³ Saguna M(2011). Education and Women Empowerment in India . International Journal of Multidisciplinary VOL. I issue 8.

platforms and many other formulated programs to motivate women education such as online education and distance education. The main objective of the entire education is to make every girl educated. During this COVID -19 period our nation has stepped into the technological era to prove that education is never ending in any of the situation.

2.1 Women Education in India

Whenever it comes to understand the status of women education it is necessary to comprehend the condition of women's education before and after the British arrival which will help us to reveal the state, progress and revolution occurred in women education over the period. There are three ideals of womanhood controlled Indian Society at different eras to the education of women of Indian includes, Vedic, the Muslim, and the Christian or western¹³⁴. Let's have a look on the history of women's education. Factually women had very low literacy rate than men in India but from ancient period till extant there is an evolution in the education of woman.

2.2 Women education in Ancient period

In the ancient period specifically during Vedic period women had access to education, but gradually they had lost this right. There are many Indian scriptures like Rig Veda and Upanishads which mentions about the education provided to the women, also it tells us about various women sages and seers. When it comes to early Vedic period it can be mentioned that women enjoyed equivalent position and rights. Historically women have taken part in all spheres of life with courage. Indian mythology is rich in stories of highly educated women. A woman was highly responsible and carried out the duty of whole family on her shoulder. They were permissible to attend the meetings and social gathering as well¹³⁵. In the Ancient period boys and girls began their education with Upanayana Ceremony which introduce them to the home of the preceptor. Women attended Gurukulas to get highly educated¹³⁶. Study of religious texts, cultural study and knowledge all were the part of the curriculum. Some women choose to be unmarried lifelong and pursuit their study and were known as Brahmana vadinis¹³⁷

Unfortunately, the status of the women started declining and affected badly from the later Vedic period. Gradually freedom of women was snatched which made the situation worst. With the time in this period women completely became dependent on men for each and every thing. The custom of sati, child marriages and prohibition of widow remarriages became common in those days.¹³⁸ due to which women education completely vanished from the society and culture of that time. The bias ideologies against women's education became solid within the society.

2.3 Women education in Medieval Period

Women education had gone through various changes when entered into the medieval period. At the time of medieval period Islamic education was at heights in which Education was must for every man and women in the Muslim society. There were separate schools for the Muslim

¹³⁴ Minna G. Cowan(1912). The education of Women in India. New York

¹³⁵ Shashri S.R(1960). Women in the Vedic Age, Bombay

¹³⁶ Pradhnya M Prabhu (2019). Women 's Education In India : History Overview. History Research Journal Vol 5.

¹³⁷ Altekar.A.S(1987). The position of women in hindu civilization. Delhi

¹³⁸ Altekar.A.S(1987). The position of women in hindu civilization. Delhi

girls¹³⁹. From the writers it was found that Muslims rulers encouraged the education including Women's education during their rule¹⁴⁰. Though according to some writers "Purda" became a barrier for women to get educated but on the other hand it was also found that rulers of medieval period in India took interest in educating girls for which many educational institutions were established for girls. There are many examples of women who were educated, names are mentioned as Sultana Razziya, Gulbadan Begam, author of Humayun-Namah, NurJahan, and many more¹⁴¹. Though main aim of providing education to the women were to give them knowledge about *Holy Quran* and to make them able to manage accounts in the absence of their husbands. It was much easier for the women of royal families to receive education as compared to the women of poor families.

2.4 Women education from British Raj to India's Independence

Since history till present literacy rate of women is much lower than men in India. From the British rule till independence, 2-6% of total female population are only literate¹⁴² after independence the government of India had focused on the importance of women education. Cited by Velkoff (1998) found that India's female literacy rate reached 22% in 1971, these figures reached 39% two decades later, despite of increase in the level of literacy rate among women, gap between male and female literacy rate persists. In 2001, among all the literate women, almost 60% of them only received primary education and very minimal percentage of females received higher education (Tan's). Women faced ample of problems which act as an obstacle in receiving education, the same is discussed below.

3 Factors resisting women education

Many researches have been done to find and analyze the factor causing obstacles in the path of women's education in India. According to Velkoff (1998) poverty, negative attitude of parents, improper school facilities and gender-biased curriculum are the factors that resist women education. Also, it was found that rural poverty acts as a main cause of the problem "as a push factor for women's education rather than as an obstacle to women's education"¹⁴³. Due to the poverty child marriages, child labor, early post puberty practices also lead to decrease in literacy rate among females.

Historically at some places women has to face discrimination in the society. It was mentioned in the research paper #3 of Sierra Tan that K.M Banerjea wrote (1841) that Bengali women "drag on lives of the utmost wretchedness and degradation, and are regarded only as servants of the household, and ministers of carnal gratification to their husbands". With this quote we can understand that discrimination was done at various level i.e. parents would prefer to send their son to the school as compared to daughters it can be due to poverty or due to the thought that daughters has to be married. Not only this but also it was believed that men are more intelligent than women and females are only meant for the household activities and children upbringing activities. As it was stereotype that women had to live within four walls of house therefore there is no need to be educated or become skillful. With this the fear of not getting groom for the educated girl also acted as a barrier to gain

¹³⁹ Law.N.N(1916). Promotion of learning in India during Muhammadan Rule.Calcutta.

¹⁴⁰ Jaffer.S.M(1972) Some cultural aspect of muslimruler in India.

¹⁴¹ Krishnalal Ray(1984).Education in medieval India.

¹⁴² Raman, S A(2006) Women's Education .Encyclopedia of India .

¹⁴³ Sharmila,N.,& Dhas, C.A.(Feb 16,2010). Development of women education in India, In Munich Personal RePEc Archive.

education. Body structure and basic sanitation need of women are always considered a topic of hesitation which again contributed in the list of resistant. One among the reasons of not sending girls to school is lack of sanitation facilities, common washrooms, improper facilities, Co-education and lack of female teachers. To increase women literacy rate and to vanish above mentioned causes of resistance to women education various efforts and schemes has been proposed by government of India some of them are discussed below.

4 Schemes to promote women education

Government of India had initiated with lots of schemes and working hard to educate women of the nation. Following is the brief of the schemes for women's education.

4.1 Mahila Samakhya programme

It was launched in 1998 under New Education Policy of 1986. Its aim is to benefit women of all ages, especially socially and economically backward women. It seek to provide both formal as well as non-formal education for girls, vocational training for girls and also it provides various education schemes for adult women. Mahila samakhya scheme is also known as 'The Education for Women's Equality Scheme'. This scheme was launched as a pilot project in 10 districts in 1988, it also covered 9000 villages in 60 backward district in 10 states till year 2000. 0.2 Million women had been mobilized.

4.2 Balika Samridhi Yojana

Balika Samridhi Yojana was started on 2 October 1997 and was revised in 1999. This yojana basically focused and targets girls and daughter of rag pickers, vegetable/fish sellers, pavement dwellers etc. To avail the benefits of this scheme one has to apply for aganwadi. This yojana provides scholarships under various scheme annually to the unmarried girls, this is to encourage the retention of girls in school and to avoid child marriage.

4.3 Kishori Shakti Yojana

This yojana is the redesigned version of Adolescent Girl's Education scheme under ICDS. Kishori Shakti yojana mainly works to provide benefit to girls of age 11 to 18years. Its main objective is to develop the status of the adolescent girl in the society, improve their health and hygiene. Also to send they back to the schools through bridge courses and non-formal education channels n as well as imparting vocational training and sex education.

4.4 National Programme for Education of Girls at an Elementary Level (NPEGEL)

NPEGEL was started in September 2003 as an integral component of sarva shiksha abhiyan. Its main aim is to distribute textbooks for girls till class VIII, construct separate toilets for girls, and to get girls back to school. This scheme was essentially meant for girl child only. Under this scheme appointment of various female teachers held. There are many more schemes set up by the government. MHRD is the one responsible for the elementary education and literacy of girl, it had given various schooling projects to achieve the goal of educating girls. *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* is one the umbrella scheme under MHRD which serves the girl education directly or indirectly. Not only this, other MHRD schemes include *Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs), Mid-Day Meal scheme, and scheme for adult literacy*. It was also found that every state provides various financial schemes like *Ladli Yojana (Haryana,*

Delhi), Dhanlakshmi yojana (Madhya Pradesh), Bhagya Lakshmi scheme Karnataka) etc. which ensures equality and equity in the nation in terms of gender.

5. Recommendation

From history till present time women had to face various problems and God grace India leads to find solution to windup these problems by providing various schemes. With all the above facts and figures it would be recommended that it is good to have schemes but the important of it is to have awareness campaign for parents and to be parents to make them aware about the importance of girl child and also about the schemes from which they can avail benefit. Thoughts and mentality of the society matters a lot in the development of the nation, it is necessary to work on the thought process and mentality of the people to make them realize the evilness of gender-biasness and importance of girl education. Education is the lifelong process and can be gained anywhere from anybody. The very important education that should be passed on to one generation to other is that to educate child whether it is girl or boy. Only formal type of education is not enough for individual both formal and informal education should work hand in hand then only the equality will exist.

6. Conclusion

Education of women is a very crucial discussion, and every one of us should work together on it so as to develop our nation. As overviewed the revolution in women education it was found that women enjoyed good status at times during every phase of history but there existed the evils at the same time which tried to drag down women and stop their education. It started to change for the better slowly with advent of the British education system (H.C.Upadhyay, 1991). Education is considered as the key tool to women empowerment. However there is good progress made with respect to the literacy, education and status of women but overall status is still uncomplimentary for women.

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Political Participation and Representation in Parliament and Legislative Assembly: A Case study of Mizo Women

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Abstract:

Present paper on participation of Mizo women in elections is a study of women representation in assembly and parliamentary elections. The study further reveals that women voters outnumbered men in the electoral rolls in Mizoram but few females featured in the candidate lists of political parties, only 15 candidates for 40 Assembly seats in 2018 and one for Parliament in 2019. Up to 2018 Assembly elections only four have become MLAs since the first in 1972. It will be worthwhile to discuss the patriarchal nature in general and relates it to the tribal society in the study area. In politics the participation of Mizo women is low. They are yet to deliver its substantial contribution in the decision-making of the state through electoral politics. This paper is an attempt to discuss about the position of women in the electoral politics of Mizoram along with their nature of political participation in Parliament and Legislative Assemblies since statehood.

Key words: electoral rolls, elected, patriarchal, tribal, political participation

A democratic country must be open, accountable and participatory. The Constitution of India has provided equal rights and equal protection to all its citizens and prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender, religion, race, language, class and caste. According to the census 2011 almost half of the population is constituted by the females but even after 71 years of Indian independence, women have not been regarded as the significant part in the sphere of politics. Hence an attempt has been carried out in this paper to study the role of women in Mizoram as candidates in Parliamentary and State Legislative Assembly.

Social factors and Electoral Behavior

In order to have a better understanding of electoral politics in Mizoram, it is important to know the geo-political and ethnic structure of the north eastern state of Mizoram. Mizoram means the land of Mizos, who are the native inhabitants. Its geographical borders with Assam, Manipur and Tripura extended over 123 km, 95 km and 66 km respectively. As per census 2011, Mizoram has population of 10.97 lakhs almost half of it are females. Literacy rate of the state is 91.33%, male literate is 93.35% and female literacy rate is 89.27%. Till 1972 Mizoram was the part of Assam and became the 23rd State of India. Mizoram is the homeland of variety of tribes mainly the Lusais, Pawis, Pang, Himars, Kukis etc. A beautiful land of hills, rivers and several other water bodies, 80% of Mizo people are Christians. Society is basically patriarchal in nature. However, women undertook all responsibilities but without any authority. Decisions are meant to be taken by men and followed by women. Majority of the Mizo population depends upon agriculture and allied activities. Due to the prevalence of tribal and indigenous culture it is perceived that women here are relatively much liberal in northeast India. And general presumption is that women here are equal in every sphere of the

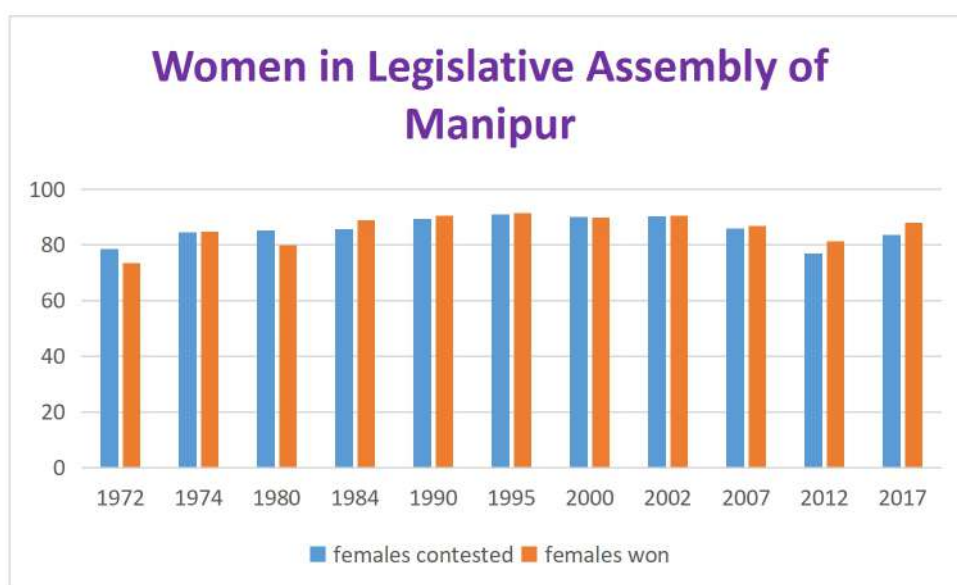
life. Sex ratio in this area of India is in Manipur its 987, Meghalaya 985 and Mizoram it is 975 higher than the national average of 940 but still it is not favorable to women in this region.

The first session of Legislative Assembly of Mizoram was held in 1972 with 30 elected and 2 nominated seats. The status of territory was upgraded to statehood in August 1986. With that the strength of the Assembly have also been increased to 40 elected seats. For Lok Sabha 1 seat was fixed and one seat for Rajya Sabha. It is observed that every successive election in Mizoram generates more awareness and participation among the electorates. Participation of women in political system can help increase the women’s representation in decision making and can pave the way for empowerment. Absence of women from the political process would mean that the concerns of half of the population of a country cannot be sufficiently attended. The situation in India is complex as there are women in top position and women also running successfully the grassroot organisations.

Women in Legislative Assembly of Manipur

Assembly	Total SEATS	Women CONTESTED	ELECTED	Polling % men	Polling % women
1972	60	3	0	78.41	73.52
1974	60	3	0	84.40	84.80
1980	60	0	0	85.12	79.91
1984	60	5	0	85.66	88.94
1990	60	6	1	89.33	90.57
1995	60	11	0	90.87	91.41
2000	60	14	1	89.99	89.75
2002	60	7	1	90.27	90.49
2007	60	12	0	85.88	86.73
2012	60	15	3	76.94	81.36
2017	60	11	2	83.65	87.99

Source: Election Commission of India



Manipuri society is matriarchal but politics is still a male domain. Women in Manipur entered into electoral politics since the first Assembly and Parliamentary elections. Smt. Ishwari Devi contested from Inner Manipur Parliamentary constituency in 1952, as an independent candidate. She got only 11,809 votes and was not elected. For territorial elections Smt. Sabi Devi contested in 1956 elections but she was also defeated. Under the Union Territories Act 1956 two women members were nominated R.K. Mukhara Devi and Akim Annal in 1957, in 1962 R.K. Mukhara Devi and Lhingjaneng Gangte and in 197 A. Bimola Devi and R.T. Shinny were nominated. First woman who elected to Manipur Legislative Assembly was Hangmila Shaiza from Ukhru (ST) constituency in 1990. For 18 long years from 1972 to 1990 Manipur had to wait for first ever MLA. Again in 2000 and 2002 only one female could see the floor of the state Assembly. In 2012 in a remarkable first in 10th Assembly that 3 females elected in 60 members State Assembly. In 2017 Manipur Assembly only 11 candidates contested elections, out of these only 2 could secure wins. It means only 3% of women are part of the State Assembly even when the state has more women voters than men (9,68,312 women against 9,25,413 men). For 2017 Assembly a well-known name civil rights activist Irom Sharmila fought the elections from Thoubal constituency but secured only 90 votes she even lost her deposit of Rs 10,000, a rule for all candidates who get less than one-sixth of votes in a constituency. Irom Sharmila ended her 16 years fast to demand the repeal of the AFSPA 1958, to enter into politics and become Chief Minister and work for the people of Manipur. Women in Manipur mostly contested elections under the legacy of their powerful husbands in politics. Hangmila Shaiza elected in 1990 joined politics after her husband and former minister died, similarly Apabi Devi who elected in 1992 by election was wife of MLA K. Bira Singh died in plane crash clearly both benefited from sympathy votes. Wahengbam Leima Devi won in 2000 was the wife of Angou Singh who elected as an MP. Landhoni Devi, wife of then Chief Minister Ibobi Singh elected in 2007 and 2012.

Indian democracy unfortunately lacks the effective participation of all its citizens. Constitutionally and legally no barrier exists. There are 2 Parliamentary seats Inner Manipur and Outer Manipur for Lok Sabha and 1 seat for Rajya Sabha. In Manipur the population of women may be just a few thousands less than men but the representation looks lopsided in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. Kim Gangte of the TMC was the first women who elected to Lok Sabha in 1998 as a Communist Party of India (CPI) candidate. Two women Kim Gangte and Indira Onam contested for 2014 Lok Sabha elections but failed to make it to Parliament. Clearly females are in forefront of social and political activism in Manipur but women haven't got their share in power yet. No Manipuri woman was sent by any party to the Rajya Sabha till 2016 when present Government nominated Boxing Champion M.C. Mary Kom as one of the 12 nominated members. In 2014 Parliamentary elections for Inner Manipur 9 parties and 8 candidates contested the elections in which 1 contestant was woman. It had 4,38,257 (four Lakh thirty-eight thousand two hundred fifty-seven) female voters. Total turn out of them are almost 76%. From other Outer Manipur constituency out of total 909,496 female voters are 464,639. Here another irony, female voters have outnumbered male voters in both the constituencies a large number of women came out of their homes but the truth remains even women voters lack confidence in women candidates. Women in northeast may be widely thought to be more empowered than their counterparts in other Indian states. Infact many Northeastern states have never elected a woman either to the Lok Sabha or the upper chamber Rajya Sabha or both. Out of total 518 MLAs across the eight northeastern states

only 28 are women. However, for 16th Lok Sabha total 668 females contested the election but only 62 elected thus makes only 9.3%.

The first election under the Manipur Panchayati Raj Act 1994 was held in 1997. The Manipur Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 paved the way for introducing a two-tier system with Zila Parishad at the district level and the Gram Panchayat at the village level. representation of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions has improved with the 73rd amendment. State allows reservation of one third of the seats for women. This was clearly the first step to ensure equal participation in decision making. 33% reservation for women ensured greater participation at grassroot level in Manipur. In 2017 Panchayat elections for total 1784 of total elected representatives 868 are women taking the percentage to almost 49%. But Manipur has the least percentage of women sarpanches with just 2% representation. In many of the reserved panchayats, husbands or any other male members of the family actually run the everyday affairs on behalf of their wives or any women relatives Former President Pranab Mukherjee said that “Women empowerment is impossible in the absence of their representation in legislative bodies.”

In the present BJP led Biren Singh government the only woman Minister is Nemcha Kipgin. Nazma Haptulla is the 18th Governor of Manipur however the first woman governor of Manipur. The concept of Ima market, the whole women market is unique, almost 3000 women run this market and earn livelihood for themselves and families. This market is a society, an institution, a way of life. A number of educated Manipuri’s women are working in government departments and in teaching. Women have been playing an important role in the economy of Manipur for both organized and unorganized sector. Women have been contributing in agriculture, weaving, small business, handicrafts etc. This undying spirit of local Manipuri’s women holds them together in solidarity for a better future. Women in Manipur have thus contributed immensely in the socio-economic transformation and upliftment of the society.

Gender Parity in Politics: Some Solutions

UN advocates for legislative and constitutional reforms to ensure women’s fair access to political spheres as voters, candidates, elected officials and civil society members. Only two

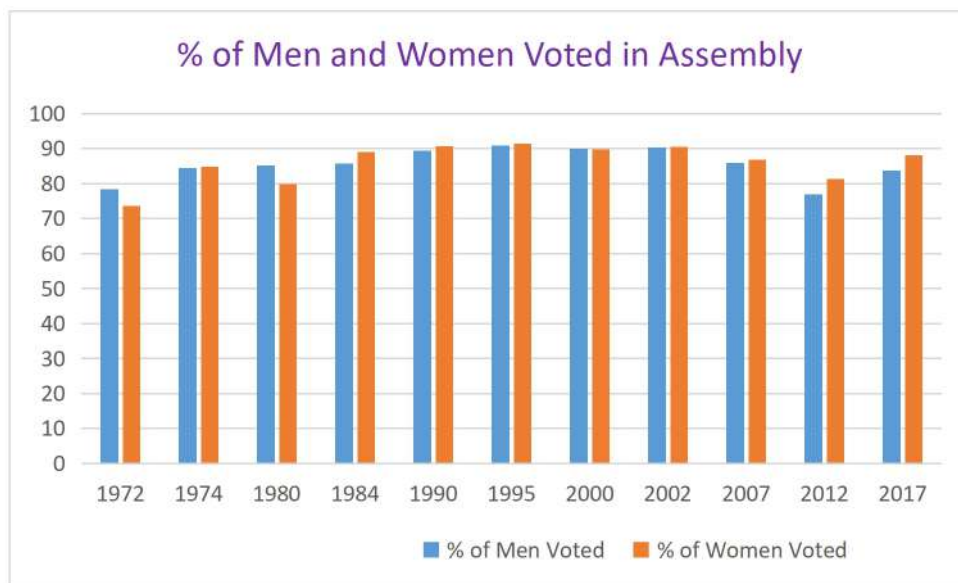
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2012	60	76.94	81.36
2017	60	83.65	87.99

Source: Election Commission of India

countries have 50% or more women in Parliament in single or lower houses- Rwanda with 61.3% and Bolivia with 53.1%. But a greater number of countries have reached only 30%. Out of total 542 MPs only 64, 11.8% in Lok Sabha and 27 from 245, 11% are women. Out of total 4,118 MLAs across the country only 9% are women. The 2017 edition of the women in Politics Map (Published by Inter- Parliamentary Union) shows India placed at number 148(in

a list of 193 countries) in the number of women parliamentarians and 88 ranked in the number of women ministers with 18.5% in the cabinet.

There is no denying of the fact that Manipuri’s women are politically aware as female voters have outnumbered male voters in almost every Manipur election, but due to the patriarchal families and male dominated structures women in decision making process are less in number. Only one-woman MP, 6 MLAs, only 1 Minister, after 68 years of independence first woman Governor, and only 2% sarpanch statistics shows a wide gap between the goals specified very clearly in the Indian Constitution and related mechanisms on the one hand and the reality on the other.



Overtime the patriarchal notion of womanhood became engraved in the social perceptions and its relegated women to subservient position in a hierarchically gendered social order. It suggests betrayal of the expected trust towards the other half of the population constituted by women. The structural bias prevents the women from full growth of their physical and intellectual temperaments.

Majority of tribal women in Manipur is not aware of the opportunity of equal access to political structures provided in the Indian Constitution. Change in these traditional political institutions is important for the political empowered women of Manipur tribal society.

Women Reservation Bill already passed in Upper House will be turning point in the quest for gender equality but it is yet to see the light in lower house. When women avail 33% reservation seats in Assemblies and Parliament. There will be more women participation in politics and society and their political, social and economic condition is expected to improve drastically. The reservation will politically benefit the matrilineal tribal societies of Garo, Khasis in North East India.

Mirabai and Nemcha are the only women made mark in mainstream Manipuri politics without any patronage. For so long almost 65 years National parties are contesting elections but women are treated as second class citizens in politics of Manipur. Irom Sharmila’s 16

years old fast is iconic but not enough to win an election. People of Manipur feel women are not committed to politics and their focus should be family.

Access to education, employment and health are other enabling factors which may guarantee the achievement towards the goal of more representation in political bodies of women.

Political parties should be encouraged to remove all barriers to the participation of women and develop their capacities to analyses issues from a gender perspective.

Efforts should be made in arousing women's political consciousness, for that political parties should take a lead and field more women as candidates.

AFSPA has made women of Manipur aware of their rights and consequently more politically assertive. The modern state apparatus has given women rights and education but that is a very long road to go for that more and more women are required to contest elections and fight for their rights.

The state needs to hear civil society voices as the reconstruction of society is a shared responsibility by doing this, they will automatically come on the forefront of decision making.

Equal participation of both the genders is prerequisite for justice and democracy. Women political empowerment and equal access to leadership positions at all levels are fundamental to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and a fairer world.

Former Secretary General of UN Kofi Annan said "Study after study has taught us, there is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women. No other policy is as likely to raise economic productivity or to reduce child and maternal mortality. No other policy is as sure to improve nutrition and promote health. No other policy is as powerful in increasing the chances of education for the next generation".

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Hidden from History: Singing Heroic Deeds of Seven Women Freedom Fighters of Indian Freedom Struggle

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Abstract

It is noteworthy that during a time when it was not even easy for women to venture out of homes on their own and when the shackles of patriarchy held women tightly, some women had the courage to stand against the evils in their own traditions as well as drove British out of India. It is an interesting endeavour to look into the contribution of some of these women to present a brief description of their indomitable spirit and passion to free their country from the foreign clutches. This paper is an attempt to explore the struggles and successes of some women whose contribution played a major but less acknowledged and least popularized role in gaining freedom for India. The heroes of Indian freedom struggle are often worshipped like gods in the Indian patriotic culture. Their names are often used to ignite the patriotic sentiments of the majority of Indians and their heroic deeds are made known to every generation. However, the bravery of a majority of women freedom fighters remains unsung as compared to their fellow men freedom fighters. This paper further intends to revisit history to once again bring into discourse the hidden contribution of women in the Indian freedom struggle.

Keywords: British, Freedom, History, Movement, Struggles, Warriors, Women

To break the shackles in which the British chained the Indians, the freedom struggle of India is a world known act of unity and retaliation. The heroes of Indian freedom struggle are often worshipped like gods in the Indian patriotic culture. Their names are often used to ignite the patriotic sentiments of the majority of Indians and their heroic deeds are made known to every generation. However, the bravery of a majority of women freedom fighters remains unsung as compared to their fellow men freedom fighters. This paper attempts to revisit history to once again bring into discourse the hidden contribution of women in the Indian freedom struggle.

A large number of women have made significant contributions in the Indian freedom struggle. Among these some prominent names are Madam Bhikaji Cama, Captain Lakshmi Sehgal, Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay, Kasturba Gandhi, Aruna Asaf Ali, Hansa Mehta, Pritilata Waddedar, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Kamla Nehru, Sucheta Kriplani, Dr Annie Besant, Vijya Lakshmi Pandit, Usha Mehta, Durgabai Deshmukh and Kalpana Datta. But only a few of freedom fighters' names such as Rani Lakshmi Bai and Sarojini Naidu find a suitable place of description in the history books that are made accessible to the people and especially children.

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It is noteworthy that during a time when it was not even easy for women to venture out of homes on their own and when the shackles of patriarchy held women tightly, some women had the courage to stand against the evils in their own traditions as well as drove British out of India. It is an interesting endeavour to look into the contribution of some of these women to present a brief description of their indomitable spirit and passion to free their country from the foreign clutches.

This paper is an attempt to explore the struggles and successes of some women whose contribution played a major but less acknowledged and least popularized role in gaining freedom for India. Simultaneously, the challenges of hypocrisy of Indian society and the conservative patriarchal ideology that restricted Indian women are also brought into the concern. These challenges are still prevalent to a large extent and need to be questioned and remodelled for a more gender-balanced description of women in history and society.

Among a plethora of women freedom fighters, Madam Bhikaji Cama (1861-1936) was a Parsi woman who played a very important role in the foundation of the Paris Indian Society that was founded in 1905. The Society established close links with other such societies of the world and staunchly supported self-rule in India. It later played a crucial role in integrating and saving the Indian revolutionaries multiple times. Madam Cama also wrote “Bande Mataram” in 1909 and *Madan's Talvar* that were aimed to add on to the nationalist unrest in India. Her work “Bande Mataram” was written as a savage response to the British Government following the ban over Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's “Vande Mataram”. Whereas her periodical “The Talwar” that was earlier known as “Madan's Talwar” instigated the British Indian Sepoys to give up their loyalty for the British government. Although she couldn't see the fruits of her struggles, Madam Cama did a great deal to bring India closer to its freedom.

A doctor, a revolutionary, an officer, a minister, and a Padma Vibhushan recipient, Lakshmi Sehgal (1914-2012) earned the accolade ‘Captain’ after she fought bravely during the Second World War. After her meeting at Singapore with Subhas Chandra Bose in 1943, she told Bose her plan of establishing a women Regiment of the Indian National Army, that later came to be known as Rani of Jhansi Regiment. Around one hundred and seventy women joined the army and Capt. Lakshmi Sehgal bravely led it.

Bharat Ratna Aruna Asaf Ali (1909-1996) was associated in many ways with the Indian Freedom Movement. During the Salt Satyagraha that was a crucial part of the Civil Disobedience Movement, Aruna actively participated in many processions and got arrested many times. As a political prisoner, she had to suffer a lot in the hands of British but they never got success in breaking her indomitable revolutionary spirit. She took up courage to go on a hunger strike in Tihar jail, demanding the improved prisoning rules for the political prisoners. When the Freedom Movement faced a difficult situation as the Quit India Resolution was passed, Aruna played a historical role. As the members of Congress Committee were arrested by the British Government, she commenced the movement by hoisting the Congress flag. The risk at such time earned her many names as ‘Heroine of the 1942 Movement’ and ‘Grand Old Lady of the Independence Movement’. She even had to go underground for the cause of freedom and worked many years for an underground movement in contribution to the cause of India's freedom.

A versatile personality Hansa Jivraj Mehta (1897-1995) was inspired a lot by Sarojini Naidu and Mahatma Gandhi. She has done amazing works as a social reformer while actively

engaging herself in the freedom movement. She was also a strong supporter of gender equality. In 1948, Hansa Mehta proposed a revolutionary change in a critical feature of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. She made a remarkable claim to replace “All men are born free and equal” by “All human beings are born free and equal”. Mehta’s ideas on gender equality are revolutionary in the Indian context if one looks back to the 1940s. She also showed resentment against the use of foreign products and joined the Non-Cooperation and Swadeshi Movement for which she got arrested many times by the British army. At the moment most awaited by the Indians i.e. August 15, 1947, she was Mehta who presented the national flag on the behalf of the Indian women .

A strong opponent of British rule in India, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur Ahluwalia (1887-1964) equally worked hard to eradicate the inherent evils of Indian culture such as practice of Purdah, Child Marriage and Devdasi system. She was also one of the founding members of All India Women’s Conference (AIWC) that aimed to improve the education of women. Kaur enthusiastically participated in the Dandi March and got imprisoned by the British officials. Even when the British appointed her as a member of the Advisory Board of Education, she withdrew from the position, because for her it was more important to serve the Quit India Movement rather than British Government.

Better known as India’s first woman Chief Minister, Suchita Kripalani’s efforts as a freedom fighter are often overlooked. After witnessing the horrific events such as the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre and forced imprisoning of Indians, Suchita developed a sense of rebellion against the british government. She joined the Quit India Movement and worked in close association with Mahatma Gandhi. She played many significant roles in the success of nationalist movement but appeared triumphant most of the time. She participated in the Satyagraha marches and was also working for an underground movement that played a vital role in gaining freedom. When India finally got freedom, she was Sucheta who sang Vande Mataram, Sare Jahan se Acha and the National Anthem as a tribute to all the freedom fighters.

When the Non-cooperation movement was on the peak, Durgabai Deshmukh (1909-1981) a freedom fighter and a renowned lawyer came in contact with Mahatma Gandhi and walked with him in many campaigns and movements without being afraid of getting arrested. She vehemently protested against the colonial education and even quit school to start Balika Hindi Paathshala. Deshmukh also volunteered in exhibiting 'khadi' when the country was running the Swadeshi Movement. Considering her instrumental role in Salt Satyagraha and Civil Disobedience Movement, British Government imprisoned her for around three years but even then she used the prison space to motivate herself to study law and improve the laws for women.

The lack of historical knowledge about the women freedom fighters and their scarce representation in several medias is a crucial cause of their unsung glory and efforts. In the contemporary scenario, it is pertinent to understand that any discourse about Indian Freedom Struggle is incomplete until an equal description of the contribution of women freedom fighters is made accessible to the general folk. Even history books have been very discriminative in mentioning women freedom fighters. It seems as if the efforts of these women freedom fighters are lost somewhere in the pages of history.

The present situation necessitates transparency about the life and efforts of many women freedom fighters whose struggle has only been scarcely described so far. No doubt their names are mentioned in empty spaces of some books but they are not given equal weightage

as their men counterparts. The amount of historical awareness that is given towards the women freedom fighters is not sufficient in comparison to the abundance of efforts that are done by them to free India while coming out of repressive societal and cultural structures of that time. Much discourses await and much documents need to be uncovered to reflect upon the glory of women warriors without whose contribution the idea of freedom of India would not be made practical early. To revisit the history of women's contribution in India's freedom struggle is a significant way to capture and locate the empty space in our historical understanding that needs to be filled by this knowledge. Such an attempt to again make visible the names of these women freedom fighters who have ignited social change, fostered freedom movement and strengthened other women, is a satisfactory task in itself. These heroines laid the foundations on which our nation rests today and the present and future generations need to know 'who' did 'what' for them. However, this knowledge should be gained from the sources that make equal description of the efforts of everyone despite the gender. With such an aim of envisioning, the pages of history should be turned again to read and sing the glories of women freedom fighters whose struggles echo their own stories.

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Protagonists of Colonial India: Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Begum Rokeya and Rani Kittur Chennamma

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Introduction

The British came to India in the 1600s with the sole motive of trade but in the middle of the 18th century they began to meddle in the internal affairs of India. The British set their political foothold after the Battle of Plassey in 1747 and ruled for nearly 200 years. The independence from the colonial rule was achieved in 1947 as a result of concerted efforts by thousands of individuals. The freedom fighters sacrificed their lives for a common goal which was 'freedom of India'. Patriots from all over the country fought in their own way to liberate the country from the foreign rule. Women equally participated in the freedom movement and it was their contributions to the society that brought to the forefront the determination to work against the evil customs of the society. Women like Rani Laxmi Bai and Rani Chennamma of Kittur have demonstrated their courage in the battle field and fought fearlessly with the British. Women like Sarojini Naidu, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Begum Rokeya, Savitri Bai Phule, Annie Besant and many others worked their entire life reforming the society and liberating the country. The laudable works of women freedom fighters remain shrouded and their unsung stories remain ignorant. An effort should be made to remember the greatest women stalwarts who sacrificed for their motherland with ultimate grace, grit and prowess.

Rani Chennamma

Rani Chennamma was born on 23rd October, 1778, to Dholappa Gouda Desai and Padmavati. She was born in a small village, Kakati, in the present Belagavi District of Karnataka. Rani Chennamma at a very young age was competent in horse riding, sword fighting and archery and was acknowledged for her bravery and courage. She, at a very tender age of 15, was married to the King of Kittur, Mallasarja Desai. Mallasarja Desai was the eleventh ruler of Kittur and served under the Peshwa Baji Rao II. His untimely death in 1816 led to adverse conditions in Kittur. His son, Shivalingarudra Sarja, succeeded him to the throne but unfortunately died in 1824 without an issue. It was in these circumstances that Rani Chennamma of Kittur adopted Shivalingappa and made him the heir of Kittur. The deed of Rani Chennamma was refuted and abhorred by the British East India Company. The Company refused to accept the adopted son as the heir under the "Doctrine of Lapse". The 'Doctrine of Lapse' was put forward by the then Viceroy, Lord Dalhousie, according to which adopted son of any native princes would not be recognised as the heir and successor of the throne. The native rulers who died without a natural heir, their kingdoms would be annexed by the British East India Company. The 'Doctrine of Lapse' was officially codified in 1848 to 1856 by Lord Dalhousie. Kittur Chennamma opposed the British order and solicited to the Governor of Bombay, Lord Elphinstone, to accept the adopted son of Shivalingarudra Sarja as the heir and successor of Kittur. The plea of Rani Chennamma went unheard and the state of Kittur went under the administration of Mr Thackeray, collectorate

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of Dharwad, and the commissioner, Mr Chaplin. The British no longer recognised Rani Chennamma as the regent and the adopted son as the successor of Shivalingarudra Sarja. The kingdom of Kittur was to be annexed by the British and this finally led to the conflict between Rani Chennamma and the British East India Company.

The revolt between Rani Chennamma and the company became inevitable. On 22nd October, 1824, the brave Rani refused to surrender and fought a decisive war with the British. Rani Chennamma of Kittur was victorious and inflicted a heavy loss to the British. The British collector and political agent, St John Thackeray was killed in the war. Rani Chennamma also took two British officers, Sir Walter Elliot and Mr Stevenson, as hostages. In spite of a decisive win over the British, Rani Chennamma wanted to mediate with the British and keep Kittur secured. She released the hostages as arbitration and with the anticipation to discontinue the war. The British initially honoured the decision of Rani Chennamma only to entrap her later on. The British were unable to accept defeat and humiliation at the hands of a small Indian ruler and therefore, under Mr Chaplin returned back to attack Rani Chennamma. She fought the second battle vehemently with the aid of her lieutenant Sangoli Rayanna and Gurusiddappa. Despite of a stiff skirmish Rani Chennamma lost the battle as she was deceived by her own men, Mallappa Shetty and Vankata Rao. She was defeated and captured by the British forces who imprisoned her at Bailhongal Fort for the rest of her life. Rani Chennamma died on 21st February, 1829 and is still commemorated for her gallantry.

Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain

Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, popularly known as Begum Rokeya was born on 9th December, 1880, into an aristocratic family of Pairaband in Rangpur, then in the British Bengal Presidency. Rokeya's father, Zahiruddin Abu Ali Haider Saber, was of an orthodox mindset and denied Rokeya and her sister formal education but allowed informal education at home under strict Purdah (veil from head to toe). On the other hand, her brothers were sent to Saint Xavier's College, Calcutta. Muslim women during the time were denied education as the Muslim society feared the corruption of women minds with non-muslim ideas if sent to educational institutions. Begum Rokeya at a very young age inferred the inequality prevailing in the society. Even though, Begum Rokeya received no formal education she was well acquainted with both Bangla and English. She got married in 1898 to Syed Sakhawat Hossain, an Urdu-speaking man from Bhagalpur in Bihar. Syed Sakhawat Hossain was a deputy magistrate and a liberal and progressive man. He encouraged his wife, Begum Rokeya, to study both Bangla and English and galvanized her to read literary works from home and abroad. Unfortunately, the happiness of her conjugal life was diminutive as she lost her husband on 3rd May, 1909 and also her two infant daughters. Begum Rokeya accepted her destiny and very soon realised that education of women was the only way to break away from the shackles of the orthodox society. On 1st October, 1909, she established a school, 'Sakhawat Memorial Girls' School', for Muslim girls in Bhagalpur but later shifted it to Calcutta. In 1917 the school was upgraded to Middle English Girls' School and later to High English Girls' School in 1931. Begum Rokeya ran the school for nearly twenty-four years working tirelessly and dedicating her entire life for the amelioration of Muslim women. In 1919, her repeated insistence to the government led to the establishment of the 'Muslim Women Training School' in Calcutta. In the late 19th and early 20th century she began propagating women's rights and soon became an activist advocating for women's education and equality in the society. She is renowned for her literary and social works in awakening

the consciousness of the downtrodden muslim women of her time. Through her enormous works she tried to break the taboo of the society and continuously encouraged the education of muslim women and their economic independence. She criticised the patriarchal system in the society which deprived women of its privileges and rights. She also organised a social movement during her lifetime to emancipate the status of women in the society. She founded an organisation in 1916 called the 'Anjuman-e-Khawatin-e Islam' also known as the Muslim Women's Society to spread awareness about women's rights. The society advocated women's education, employment and fought for their legal and political rights. It also provided shelter to the distressed women of the society and helped them to be economically independent.

Begum Rokeya through her literary works tried to alter the discriminating attitude of the society towards women. She wrote numerous short stories, poems, essays and novels instilling among the women the courage to be independent and to breakaway from the shackles of the orthodox society. Her famous work is 'Abarodhbasini', The Secluded Women, in 1931 which brings to the forefront the adverse condition of Purdah system in the society. Her other famous works are Matichur, Sultana's Dream and Padmarag. It was through her works that she tried to transform the pitiful condition of the women and made the society a better place for them to survive. Begum Rokeya worked her entire life fighting against the social evils and despite of facing flak from the society she continued her fight for the women-folk of her time. She died on 9th December, 1932 and is still commemorated for her contributions to the society.

Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay

Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay was born on 3rd April, 1903, in a middle-class Brahmin family in Mangalore. She did her schooling from Mangalore and also had a diploma in Sociology from Bedford College, London and was motivated by her mother to read Tamil, English, Hindi and Marathi. She was married at a very young age to Sarojini Naidu's brother, Harindranath Chattopadhyay. In the initial days of her marriage she spent time travelling all over India and was also engaged in theatres. In her younger days she read works of Lokmanya Tilak and was deeply influenced by her meetings with Annie Besant, Pandita Ramabai and Ramabai Ranade.

Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay in 1926 contested in the elections of Madras Legislative Council but lost the seat narrowly. She considered her candidature as the beginning of women's fortitude to enter the political arena seriously. In 1927, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay was urged by Sarojini Naidu to become the organising secretary of the All India Women's Conference. She took the opportunity and made herself competent for the post. She worked closely with the women labourers and campaigned for their legislative rights. In 1928, Kamaladevi was elected to the distinguished 'All India Congress Committee' (AICC). In 1929, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay became the chairman of the Youth Conference and called for complete Independence for India. In 1930, she joined the Civil Disobedience Movement and appealed to Gandhi to allow women to participate in the Salt Satyagraha. She breached the salt law herself and was arrested for her act. The 'Congress Socialist Party' was formed in 1934 and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay was an active member of the party advocating the rights of workers and peasants. In 1936, she became the President of the Party and was deeply involved in the women's movement campaigning for enhancing the working conditions of women in factories and farms and their right to paid maternity leave. In 1942, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay was arrested for participating in the Quit India Movement and spent nearly a year in jail. In 1947, India finally won its Independence but she continued to work for the

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society. She represented India at many International conferences and was also the official delegate to UNESCO and UN Human Rights Commission. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay dedicated her time in reviving and promoting the rich and varied craft traditions. She also established the “All India Handicrafts Board”. She conceived institutions like the National School of Drama, the Sangeet Natak Akademi and the International Centre. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay died on 1988 and is acknowledged for her incomputable contributions to the society.

Conclusion

India won its independence from the colonial British in 1947. The sacrifices made by the Indians were exemplary. Women equally participated in the freedom movement and proved to be equal in every aspect than their counterparts. Despite of their admirable courage and valour they are lost in the pages of history. The women freedom fighters have selflessly sacrificed their lives for the nation and its independence. A revival of the study of women freedom fighters is essential for the society and particularly women to instil among themselves a sense of pride and honour.

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Reproductive and Sexual Rights of Women in India-A Socio Legal study

Dr.Vrinda Mohan P

Abstract:

Violations of women's sexual and reproductive health rights are often deeply engrained in societal values pertaining to women's sexuality. Patriarchal concepts of women's roles within the family mean that women are often valued based on their ability to reproduce. The research paper examines women's right to sexual and reproductive health especially to Indian context.

Introduction

Gender equality is much attracted concept all over the world and is very at the heart of human rights and values, it still remains as a myth irrespective of all initiatives. Women throughout the ages remained marginalized and oppressed .Women around the world have been fighting for a stronger voice for getting equal status or repected at par with their male counter parts who enjoys more freedom and rights . In spite of increased cognizance and mobilization at the local and international levels, women and girls in conflict continue to face multiple challenges. In all most all societies though they remained principal providers of care and support to the families, yet every social indicator shows a fundamental social bias and inequality.

Irrespective of the fact that United National Charter adopted in 1945 recognizes “equal rights for men and women” thereby establishing protecting and protecting women’s human right as the responsibility of all state, Yet, according to the United Nations, Human Rights millions of women around the world continue to experience discrimination in various forms the prohibition of women from equal access to land , property and housing .Further the economic and social discrimination which exists results in less life choices for women making them vulnerable for trafficking and gender based violence which affects at least 30 % of women globally.

Moreover, in addition to their gender some groups of women face compounded forms of discrimination; due to their age, ethnicity, disability, or socioeconomic status .With respect to women’s sexual and reproductive autonomy discrimination is evident that usually the patriarchal nature of societies often denied their sexual and reproductive health rights .Women and their human rights defenders are ostracized by their communities and seen as a threat to religion, honour and/or culture .It is a fact that though women’s sexual and reproductive health is related to various human rights aspects which includes -right to life, free from torture, right to education, prohibition from discrimination repeatedly it is seen that not adequately handled as it need to be addressed. Even in Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) have indicated that women’s right to health includes their sexual and reproductive health. This action suggests that States have obligations to respect, protect and fulfill rights related to women’s sexual and reproductive health.

Despite all these international obligations and guidelines still violations of women's sexual and reproductive rights are so redundant that urges the need for effective interventions and implementations. These violations are existing in various arenas which includes the denial of access to services that solely women need or caliber of services subjecting women's access to services to third party authorization and performance of procedures associated with women's reproductive and sexual health where not even woman's consent is not taken for forced sterilizations, virginity examination and forced abortion.

Women's sexual and reproductive health rights are also at risk when subjected to female genital mutilation (FGM) and early marriage. Women, especially those living in poverty, face restricted or no access to information and services about their reproductive health and rights. Stigma, Discrimination, restrictive law and policies along with entrenched traditions which exists in various culture are some of the factors that acts as a obstacle to sexual and reproductive health and rights. Progress remains slow despite the evidence that these rights can have a transformative effect, not only on individual women but on families, communities, and national economies. To drive equality, we all must commit—fully and actively—to the sexual and reproductive health and rights of all women, girls, and trans women. Reproductive rights were established as a subset of the human rights. Access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights is a fundamental human right. However, the global status of women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights is disturbing: 214 million women worldwide want, but lack access to, contraception; more than 800 women die daily from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth; and same-sex relationships between consenting adults are still illegal in 76 countries globally.

Violations of women's sexual and reproductive health rights are often deeply engrained in societal values pertaining to women's sexuality. Patriarchal concepts of women's roles within the family mean that women are often valued based on their ability to reproduce. Often the preference for male offsprings along with early marriage and pregnancies or repeated pregnancy spaced closed together has adverse impact on women's health leading to fatal consequences. Women are also often blamed for infertility, suffering ostracism and being subjected to various human rights violations.

International Perspective on Reproductive Rights:

In the era of globalization, societies need their own solutions, grounded in a vision of justice and gender equality and consistent with their cultures and conditions, to provide a better life for both women and men. But often it is a sad reality that these rights usually remains only on guidelines and lack proper implementation.

Maternal mortality rates remain at alarmingly high in many countries, along with the low nutritional status of women throughout their reproductive cycles. This maternal mortality is not evenly distributed in different parts of the world. For example, women in Bangladesh face a risk of dying that is 400 times greater than that of women in Scandinavia and 50 times greater than that of women in Portugal¹⁴⁴.

Reproductive healthcare is defined as the constellation of methods, techniques, services, goods and facilities that contribute to reproductive health and well-being by preventing and solving reproductive health problems. It also includes sexual health, the purpose of which is

¹⁴⁴ <https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1011&context=nrs>

the enhancement of life and personal relations, and not merely counselling and care related to reproduction and sexually transmitted diseases.

When it comes to World Health Organisation (WHO), identifies five key components with respect to Reproductive and Sexual health of women namely as follows

- Ensuring contraceptive choice and safety and infertility services;
- Improving maternal and new born health;
- Reducing sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, and other reproductive morbidities;
- Eliminating unsafe abortion and providing post-abortion care; and
- Promoting healthy sexuality, including adolescent health, and reducing harmful practices.¹⁴⁵

Besides above mentioned Reproductive and Sexual health rights prevailing in various populations regardless of socioeconomic level it is also observed that right to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion and violence and other issues pertaining to reproductive rights are vigorously challenged throughout the world.

An Expert body of United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against women (CEDAW) established in 1982 keeps a keen observation over the progress for women made in those countries that are the States parties to the Convention of the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women have certain guidelines related to Reproductive and Sexual health rights of women through its (article 10) specify women's right to education includes "access to specific educational information to help to ensure the health and wellbeing of families, including information and advice on family planning" and equal rights in freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights to women were guaranteed through the article 16(1) CEDAW. The CEDAW Committee's General Recommendation 24 recommends that States prioritise the "prevention of unwanted pregnancy through family planning and sex education." In this regard the role of CEDAW in recognizing the Reproductive and Sexual rights cannot be neglected.

Reproductive health and right to reproductive health always remained significant as it is not only a women centric problem as it is related to family health and thus becomes a social issue as ultimate aim of right to reproduction is the overall well being of the family and its individuals. It is thus the responsibility of governments to provide quality reproductive health care facilities along with various laws that enhance reproductive justice system.

Women's health movements in various countries, along with international networking all over the world made tremendous impact on national and international policy making on women's health resulting in holistic view of women's reproductive health. A series of human rights treaties and international conference agreements forged over several decades by governments; increasingly influenced by a growing global movement for women's rights — provides a legal foundation for ending gender discrimination and gender-based rights violations. Access to abortion is one of the most ardently disputed issues worldwide, and the

¹⁴⁵ <https://www.ohchr.org/documents/publications/nhrihandbook.pdf>

argument is apprehensive by fabrication about the true consequences of limiting access to this basic healthcare service.

African countries have some of the most restrictive abortion laws in the world, with serious consequences for women's reproductive health and rights, such as increased numbers of unsafe abortion and maternal death and disability. Even with respect to Ireland a highly restrictive abortion law existed but through various interferences of the international organization in 2019 abortion was legalized in Ireland.

Canada is one of the few countries in the world where termination of pregnancy is not illegal. Abortion rates are now midst the lowest anywhere and are decreasing. With better access to better contraception, unsafe abortion has been virtually eliminated. The Society has always been united in its determination to improve the health of women by addressing the tragedy of unsafe abortion. In 1969, the Criminal Law Amendment Act legalized contraception and opened the door to legal abortion provided the mother's life was endangered. However, universal access to timely, safe abortion was, and continues to be, a challenge.¹⁴⁶

In the process of decriminalization of abortion in Nepal in 2002, the provision of "spousal consent requirement" was debated amongst the Nepal's women rights group and was then rejected. However, the petition attempted to overturn the country's abortion law, which allows women to seek safe and legal abortion up to 12 weeks on their voluntary consent. By terminating the case, Nepal's Supreme Court reaffirmed abortion as women's reproductive choice and overturned the barriers that a provision on spousal consent requirement could create in Nepali women's access to safe and legal abortion services.¹⁴⁷

When the reproductive and sexual rights in USA is taken into consideration it can be noticed that in recent years, policies affecting women's reproductive rights have considerably changed at both the federal and state levels. In the United States, the 1973 Supreme Court case *Roe v. Wade* recognized the legal right to abortion. In 2013 and 2014, a broad range of legislation was announced and accepted, including bills demanding women to have an ultrasound before attaining an abortion, severe monitoring measures targeting abortion providers, bans or restrictions preventing women from obtaining health insurance coverage for abortion, and bans on abortion at later stages of pregnancy.¹⁴⁸

Hence it can be noted that every country have its own strategies for promoting reproductive and sexual rights of women according to their socio economic and political context.

Understanding of Reproductive Rights in Indian Context

India, initiative related to Reproductive and sexual health rights can be traced back to country's signatory to the International Conference on Population and Development. The Indian perspective on reproductive rights has additionally taken account of several other inequalities and contradictions in society. On one hand, traditional feudal society has sought to regulate every aspect of women's lives. India's initiatives related to reproductive rights in the beginning focused on population control rather than enhancing women's autonomy and

¹⁴⁶ [https://www.jogc.com/article/S1701-2163\(19\)30365-](https://www.jogc.com/article/S1701-2163(19)30365-)

¹⁴⁷ <https://uniteforreprorights.org/resources/achyut-prasad-kharel-v-government-nepal/>

¹⁴⁸ <https://statusofwomendata.org/explore-the-data/reproductive-rights/>

removing structural barriers to reproductive health services. The National Population Policy, 2000, affirms the right to voluntary and informed choice in matters related to contraception.

In the absence of comprehensive sex education there existed several misinformation related to sexual and reproductive health coupled with the role of religion, caste and cultural values in controlling women's fertility led to several inequalities which have a direct adverse impact on women's health. Even in patriarchal nature of cultural context India has a surplus of strategies, guidelines and laws which are capable of bringing changes directly or indirectly with respect to sexual and reproductive health and rights, lacunae can also be noticed. Often the speed of development in India's sexual and reproductive health condition is adversely affected by various demand-side hindrances and inadequate distribution of resources, along with narrow reach and eminence of program conveyance. In numerous occasions it can be noticed that usually goal established and policies recognized were short of inadequate political obligation, leading to lack of perfect roadmap for accomplishment. With changing Priorities, there's a risk that Reproductive and Sexual health rights are overshadowed by presently declared priorities as insurance, cleanliness, and open voiding free drives, the national nutrition mission, and even a recent improvement of issues regarding "population explosion" and therefore the have to be compelled to disincentives those with over two children.

Though there are many contemporary challenges which acts as a threat to Women's Reproductive and Sexual rights, Indian constitution recognizes many of these rights as Fundamental rights with Governments obligation to uphold it. Following articles in Indian constitutions can be related to reproductive and sexual rights of women –

- i) Article 14 (Equality before Law),
- ii) Article 15 (Prohibition of discrimination)
- iii) Article 21 (Protection of life and personal liberty),
- iv) Article 42 (Provision for just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief).

Besides these there are also various legislations related to Reproductive Rights includes:

- i) Maternity Benefit Act, 1961
- ii) Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971
- iii) pre-conception and pre-natal diagnostic techniques act 1994 also we also have The
- iv) Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) Bill, 2017 that ensures prevention of misuse of ART and ensure the safe and ethical practice of ART services, so and so forth.

Interventions of judiciary in this regards cannot be neglected. Indian courts played a significant role in this regard by declaring the denial of reproductive rights as violations of women's and girls' fundamental and human rights. The Puttaswamy judgment specifically recognized the Constitutional right of women to make reproductive choices, as a part of personal liberty under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. In another judgment in Sandesh Bansal v. Union of India, explicitly rejected financial constraints as a justification for reproductive rights violations, and established that government obligations under Article 21 require immediate implementation of maternal health guarantees in the National Rural Health Mission.

In the case of Laxmi Mandal vs Deen Dayal Hari Nager Hospital & Ors Justice Court found the Respondents in violation of Shanti Devi's right to life and health, reiterating that her death

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was preventable. This judgement ensures the fundamental and human right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution. In another caselaw of *Jaitun V Maternity Home* High Court directed the Municipal Corporation of Delhi and Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi to pay Rs 50,000 compensation to Fatima for the violation of her fundamental rights on account of the denial of basic medical services. These two case laws can be related to reproductive rights of women.

Conclusion

Reproductive rights—having the capacity to decide whether and when to have children—are vital to women’s socioeconomic well-being and overall health. As reproductive period is intimately related to health status of women, women’s reproductive rights cannot be viewed in isolation. Though we have certain rights and privileges related to reproductive rights women are not aware and they are not free to enjoy these rights. Gender stereotyping limits the accessibility of women authority in rights to dignity, autonomy, and bodily integrity in reproductive health related laws and policies. However it is evident that judiciary played a crucial role in addressing the legal and practical barriers which operate to deny women and girls their reproductive rights. But it is as reality that women’s reproductive health exists within a larger socio-cultural framework that is often ignored and hence there is need to explore the issues and concerns related to reproductive health and promoting reproductive health rights among women with more effective strategies

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Indian Women Into Writing: An Overview of their Historical Legacy, Literary Contributions and Contemporary Challenges

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Abstract

The proposed research seeks to briefly draw out the historical legacy of Indian women into writing, constructing a rough sketch of their contributions in the backdrop of their socio-political environments. Unlike the typical approach of seeing Indian women writers as flag-bearers of women's issues solely, it is imperative to observe that women writers overtime did not obsess over issues concerning with women alone. They were agile to the political and societal transitions of their times, often experimenting with their fertile imaginations to address poignant issues. The research aims to break the prejudicial view of seeing women writers into straitjacketed categories of traditionalists, mere 'feminists', rebels, and such other manufactured designations, but rather urges one to see them simply as 'writers' who were living and writing in their specific socio-political milieu. Lastly, the research acknowledges its limitation of having to compress such a vast topic into the constricted space of this paper, and thus endeavors to simply initiate a rich discourse on the theme to help develop inclusive spaces as well as a stable historiography of women's writing in the sub-continent.

Keywords: Indian women writers, feminism, history of women writers, literature, patriarchy, social history, culture, identity, status of women, literary transition.

Historical Legacy and Literary Contributions

Women, across timelines in history, had to struggle to make their mark in human societies, be it in any field. From the earliest women reformers to the suffragettes who struggled to wrest equal rights to vote, women had to fight long battles in order to claim agency in public spheres. Indian history presents us with great examples of women who lifted their heads high in the face of orthodox societies that shunned their talents and relegated them to lives of dependence and obscurity.

Historically, India has had a rich literary tradition. Although we have excellent examples of women scholars like Gargi Maitreyi, and others in the Vedic sources, unfortunately no available literature produced by these women have come down to us. Interestingly, the earliest women writers in recorded Indian history were the Buddhist nuns, called *theris*, who composed the *therigathas* of the Buddhist canonical literature in Pali, in the 6th BCE. These *gathas* often recorded the transitions that their lives underwent after embracing Buddhism. One may recall the famous one by Amrapali - a rich courtesan from Vaishali, who reflected on the impermanence of her physical beauty in one of her celebratory *gathas*.

Thereafter, the period between the 8th-10th centuries witnessed great religious and cultural activity, especially in South India. Southern India developed flourishing religious cults of Shaivism and Vaishnavism. The devotees of these cults began producing eulogizing verses for their patron gods and many famous men and women rose to prominence for their vibrant literary contributions. One such name among them was Andal, the only woman among the twelve Alvar saints, who lived around the 8th-9th CE. Also known as goddess Godadevi in the South, she is greatly revered for her poetic verses in praise of Lord Krishna, enshrined in her master work, *Tirupuvvai*.

With changing political scenarios and the advent of the Muslim rulers in the 11th CE, literary scene of India, too underwent sweeping shifts. Persian as a court language got crystallized overtime and histories came to be commissioned by the ruling regimes in the said language. However, this was also a time when vernacular literature in different parts of the country was prospering alongside. The Bhakti and Sufi movements of the 15th-16th CE, only added momentum to this growing literary repertoire. Writings came to be composed by women outside the mainstream society, mostly by women mystics who were wandering in remote Indian lands. Some of them earned massive popularity on account of their superior literary compositions. Mirabai went on to compose mystic verses in the Rajasthani and Braj dialects, while Lal Ded of Kashmir became the initiator of mystic verses called *vatsun* or *vakh* that eventually became significant literary contributions to early Kashmiri literature. The writings of Habba Khatoon in Kashmiri also deserve particular mention for their sheer poetic finesse. Coming back to chronicling court histories, although the literary landscape in this genre was dominated by men, there were few exceptions too. Royal ladies of the 16th CE like Gulbadan Begum, authored the *Humayun Nama*, while Empress Noorjahan was an accomplished poetess too. Later, Jahan Ara Begum, the Mughal Princess, went on to produce mystic verses under the *nom de plume* “*makhfi*”, meaning hidden. It is no surprise that royal ladies had access to education as much as their male counterparts, but many of them rarely exercised their agency to undertake writing, though there were some notable anomalies.

The last four centuries have clearly been a watershed moment in the history of women’s writing in the subcontinent. Women like Tarabai Shinde and Savitribai Phule produced some strong literary works in Marathi that questioned women’s subordinate and decadent status in the society. In the early 19th CE, Tarabai Shinde penned what was perhaps the first modern feminist text, the *Stree-Purush Tulna* - a searing critique of patriarchy and secondary position of women in the traditional Indian society of the time. Likewise, Savitribai Phule, braved the naysayers and oppressors of her time, championed girl child education, and eventually produced two works in Marathi, titled *Kavya Phule (1854)* and *Bavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar (1892)*. She is also said to have composed a poem “*Go, Get Education*”, in which she urged the disadvantaged sections of society to liberate themselves with learning. Another celebrated reformer, philanthropist and woman writer of the time was Pandita Ramabai, who penned down *Stri Dharma Niti (1882)*, and later, one of her most notable works, *The High-Caste Hindu Woman (1888)*. Originally written in Marathi but translated into English the very next year of its publication, the work brought to the fore, the dark realities of a high-caste Hindu woman’s life. These early writings peculiarly demarcate the new found voice that women had acquired in the public sphere and marked a revolutionary change for the Indian society.

In the second half of the 19th CE, English education was becoming widespread and women too were reclaiming their space in the educational field. The first women novelist from India

to write in English was Krupabai Sathianadhan (1862–1894), who successfully explored themes like gender, caste, ethnicity and cultural identity in her writings. In what was to be the first autobiographical work to be produced by an Indian woman in English – *Saguna: A Story of Native Christian Life (1887)* – Sathianadhan’s work became the talk of the town soon after its publication, and even reached the then Empress of India, Queen Victoria. The book reconnoitered the life of a typical young woman of the time, consigned to an existence of subjugation and oppression even in her own home.

Moreover, Bengali art and literature was flourishing in 19th century India, and two most prolific female writers who made their presence felt in literature then, was Mahasweta Devi and Ashapura Devi. While Ashapura Devi focused on the life of the typical Bengali woman of the time, Mahasweta Devi maneuvered a large spectrum in her writings. Her writings were no doubt regarding women, but they were also deeply embedded in the social realities that she encountered around her. A committed leftist, she became a vociferous and lifelong defender of tribal rights, continually voicing the miseries of the indigenous people through her writings. Her works like *Rudali*, *Draupadi*, *Hazar Chaurashir*, among others, are a testament to her perennial commitment to the cause of the downtrodden sections of society. Mahasweta Devi fearlessly lambasted the government’s acquisition policy to snatch away tribal lands, much like what Arundhati Roy championed with her writings in recent times. Rokeya Sakhawat Hossein (1880-1932) was another leading Bengali feminist, active at the turn of the 20th century, whose science-fiction novelette, *Sultana’s Dream (1905)*, was decades before her time.

The 20th-21st Century: An Era of Transition

The 20th century women writers were markedly different than their predecessors. They were fearless in exploring those themes that were considered otherwise forbidden territories in the conventional literary world of the time. Often dealing with the woman’s body and her sexuality, societal repressions and woman’s hidden aspirations, life of prostitutes, and such other themes, these writers also lent voices to the gory details of the partition era in the subcontinent from the women’s lens. Some names that stand out for their literary contributions in the last century include Amrita Pritam, Razia Butt, Ismat Chughtai, Mahadevi Verma, Manu Bhandari, Krishna Sobti, Kamala Das, Fehmida Riyaz, Kishwer Naheed, and numerous others, writing across genres and languages. Literary compositions by these women, such as *Pinjar*, *Bano*, *Lihaaf* and *Trishanku* still resonate deeply with the general populace in today’s time.

Attiya Dawood is yet another peculiarly feminist voice that rose up in the subcontinent in the post-modern era. Though she writes in Sindhi, her English translations are such profound intimations into the landscape of woman’s selfhood that they leave the reader with deep anguish and agony. *Raging to be Free (1995)*, her collected poems in English, ravishingly highlights the tormented female self, raging to claim her identity in a man’s world. Her poems explore themes like love and longing, breaking away from the shackles of tradition and society, personal agency and freedom to be what a woman wants to be. Some of her acutely reflective poems like *My Hands Reach the Door Latch*, *A Narrow Bridge of Respectability*, and *Un-house*, bring out the woman’s age-old contest with the self that she actually is, as opposed to the self that society wants her to be. The writings of Attiya like *Sindh Ki Aurat – Sapne Se Sach Tak*, are profound in their portrayal of women’s predicament in a society that is constantly seeking to crush her freedom under the guillotine and push her down the dungeons of submissiveness and obscurity.

Likewise, in the English language, names like Nayantara Sehgal, Shashi Deshpande, Uma Chakravarti, Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai and Jhumpa Lahiri, emerged as very powerful pens in making Indian literature scale global recognition. Kiran Desai, in her outstanding work *Inheritance of Loss* (2006), enchantingly presents the vast canvas of contemporary society in the broad perspective of globalization, with themes of alienation, cultural clashes, displacement and exile. While Sehgal in her work *Rich Like Us* (1985), documented the reaction of the Indian elites in the partition and post-partition era, Shashi Deshpande lent voice to many a women's marital troubles in her novel *That Long Silence* (1988).

Arundhati Roy, with only four books to her credit in her decades long writing career, stands as perhaps the most courageous and nuanced voice in Indian literature today. With both her fiction and non-fiction writings, Roy has overtime unveiled several layers of Indian society at all levels. She essentially draws from the paradoxes that India as a country seems to be sheathed in, and tries to articulate the complexities that she observes around her through her work. Her writings delve deeply into exploring caste, class, gender, privileges and inequalities, environmental issues, and in general rests on the complex interplay of society, politics and the state. They also explore individualism within the collective, identity, social relationships, and is more than often an inextricable mix of the writer's imagination and experiences as part of the society. Both her fiction novels, *The God of Small Things* (1997) and the *Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) seem to be brimming with all these intricate complexities. At the same time, her difficult political positions and intrepid opinions on burning issues, form some significant themes in her non-fiction compositions like *The End of Imagination* (1998), *Walking with the Comrades* (2011), and *Capitalism: A Ghost Story* (2014). Her recent collection of essays titled *AZADI: Freedom, Fascism, Fiction* (2020) offers intensely critical insights into the current Indian socio-political landscape.

The 21st century writings by women have continued to keep women issues at the center, but the themes have become more nuanced, given the many complexities of life in a globalized world. Women writers today, more vocal and bold in their writings than ever before, are exploring newer themes and genres, trying their hands on almost everything possible. Be it self-help books, novels, short stories, children's book, or religion and mythology, their themes rest on the inter-sectionality of politics, gender, environment, modernity and lifestyle, identity and social relationships, education, caste-class and immigrant issues, sexuality, besides culture and morality.

In the last decade, authors like Anita Nair has produced some interesting novels like *Ladies Coupe* (2001), *Mistress* (2005), *Eating Wasps* (2018), amongst others, and has even authored a crime series and several children's books. In addition, she has written a collection of essays titled *Goodnight and God Bless* (2008). Another contemporary female writer, Manju Kapur has explored themes like immigrant issues in several of her works. Her famous novels include *Difficult Daughters* (1998) and *Custody* (2011). Meena Kandasamy's works are a rich portrayal of life in contemporary times, and her literary basket include gems like *Touch* (2006) and *When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife* (2017). Bharati Mukherjee, Madhuri Vijay, Shubhangi Swarup, Avni Doshi are all making their mark in the literary landscape of contemporary India. Judy Balan, formerly a blogger, emerged as a popular name in the comedy writing genre. She penned her first novel, the best-selling *Two Fates: The Story of My Divorce* (2011), a parody of Chetan Bhagat's *Two States: The Story of My Marriage* (2009). Likewise, Indu Sundaresan is producing interesting works as a historical fiction

writer, carefully exhuming the lives of Mughal consorts and princesses with her ingenious imagination. Her books like *The Twentieth Wife* (2002), provide a peek into the romantic era of the past - an age of courtly intrigues and power struggles. Thus, from the earliest times down to the 21st century, the literary pursuits of Indian females has travelled a long and arduous journey of exciting explorations.

Contemporary Challenges

Although writing by women writers emerged against the backdrop of the injustices imposed by the grossly traditional society, women writers overtime, explored uncharted territories in their literary journeys without any hesitation. Their writings are both set within and without the conceptual framework of feminist approaches. Today, the literary space to fearlessly place one's views and opinions comes with a price of its own. This is especially in sync with the rise of right-wing ruling regimes across the globe, deeply rooted in chauvinism and orthodoxy. Writers, and women writers particularly, are standing on the brink of the same 19th century opposition which their forerunners braved to carve their own niches in a parochial society.

The foremost challenge for women writers to flourish unimpeded is greater politicization of every aspect of human life. The open holders who are exposing the deep hollowness that our society is steeped in - such as the massively widening rich-poor divide and unequal distribution of wealth, the crackdown on environment by big corporate projects or the onslaught on free speech and expression in the 'world's largest democracy' - are being persecuted, legally harassed and even silenced in dire ways. Of course international media and the world is closely watching these transitions in the Indian writing and journalistic world, but the clampdown on dissent, the rise in hate speech, the deeply communal environment, are all serious impediments that litterateurs and writers of the time need to wrestle with, to stand relevant and make themselves heard.

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The Meira Paibi Movement: A Feminist And Educative Perspective

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Abstract

The main aim of feminist writers is to stress upon the plight of women in a patriarchal society and work on their empowerment. The gender violence pertaining to drug addiction, sexual violence and alcoholism are a part of the society. Under these circumstances, the Meira Paibi movement of Manipur, a state in Northeast India became a symbol of resilience fighting against the social evils of the society like drug addiction, sexual violence and alcoholism. The Meira Paibis are a group of women particularly belonging to the Meitei community of Manipur who work for the upliftment of the people in the society. The paper aims to explore the feminist perspective of the Meira Paibi movement. It also looks at how the Meira Paibis contribute to the informal education system of the society. Butler (1988) asserts that gender is related to performance. Butler's ideas are influential as the Meira Paibis as conditioned by their gendered roles in the society comes forward towards a resistant and a nonviolent movement making them a force to reckon with. The educational institution they have built to fight social evils is an informal one, nevertheless, they have struck a chord with the members of the society.

Keywords: Education, Feminism, Gender, Meira Paibi Movement, Social evils

Introduction

In Northeast India, women are endowed with a rich history of collective contribution and participation in organized movements for any common cause in the society. Women in Manipur, a state in northeast India, play an equal role in economic and social activities as the male members in the society and they have been bestowed with a high status. However, there are many instances where the Manipuri women face sexual violence and human rights violations both at home and outside. The gender issue might have attributed to their subdued state. There have been historical accounts of women's strong social status in the patriarchal Manipuri society. In the present times too, many women's group have contributed to various protest movements against political and social issues concerning Manipur. The Meira Paibis (literally translated as 'Women torch bearers') are one such group which play a pertinent role in the social movement of Manipur. They are a group of women particularly belonging to the Meitei community of Manipur who work for the upliftment of the people in the society. The Meira Paibi is an informal group formed in each locality to fight against the social evils of the society like drug addiction, sexual violence and alcoholism in Manipur (Arambam, 2016). Slowly, they also extend their activities to air political and social grievances and to safeguarding human rights (Arambam, 2016). They are the 'women guardians of the civil society' guarding through the streets at night patrolling against all the inhuman injustice and

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atrocities meted out to individuals in the society. Their only weapon is the bamboo torch lighted with rag dipped in kerosene.

Feminism as a movement aims to enlighten and inform people with a common goal to improve social, cultural, economic or political status of sexes. Feminism covers all ideologies, policies and activities with the basic aim to get rid of unequal treatment against women and male domination in the society (Lovenduski and Randall, 1993). The main aim of feminism as a literary movement is to revolt against the patriarchal society where the term 'feminine' is related to passivity, weakness, inferiority and obedience and, 'masculine' is associated with the words, domination, strength, superiority and action (Bhat, 2017). Feminist writers aim to stress upon the plight of women in a patriarchal society and work on their empowerment. It also espouses that a sense of rebellion, self-identity and self assertion will enable women to liberate them from the extremely rooted patriarchal society. Manipur is a patriarchal society. Like any patriarchal society, women in Manipur too faced repressions in private as well as public domain. The gender violence pertaining to drug addiction, sexual violence and alcoholism are a part of the society. Under these circumstances, the Meira Paibi movement became a symbol of resilience fighting against the atrocities meted out to individuals. They contributed a vital role in maintaining and advocating peace. So, they became a visible force in the public domain socially, politically and economically in the patriarchal society. The paper aims to explore the feminist perspective of the Meira Paibi movement of Manipur. It also looks at how the Meira Paibis contribute to the informal education system of the society.

Understanding Feminism

Feminism as a movement strongly advocates protesting against male domination. It aims to look at and understand women's oppression pertaining to gender, race, class and sexual orientations. It also devises ways to uplift this oppression and empower them to equal rights in the male dominated society. In modern feminism, a significant phase was observed when Kate Millet in her *Sexual Politics* (1970) used the term 'patriarchy' (rule of the father) to describe the cause of women's oppression. Patriarchy is a cardinal concept of the radical second-wave feminists, who defines it as "a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (Walby qtd. in Wilson, 2000, p. 1493). The concept of patriarchy leads to the development of many pertinent feminist ideas and programmes (Wilson, 2000). Millet (2000) is of the view that an objective assessment of a sexual relationship should look at the situation between the sexes at the present time and throughout history in a subordination and dominance relationship. The social order with the belief that females are ruled by males often goes unexamined (Millet, 2000) and forms a kind of "interior colonisation" (Millet, 2000, p. 24-25). This becomes more rigid than any form of class stratification. Millet (2000), thus, contends that sexual dominance, though muted is widespread in any culture and this forms the basis of the concept of power. The sexual dominance Millet believes is because "our society, like all other historical civilisations, is a patriarchy" (2000, p. 25). The reason is that all kinds of institutions in the society like, universities, technology, political office, science, finance, police force, industry, etc. is in the hands of males (Millet, 2000). Therefore, the above discussions allude to the belief that, patriarchy is taken as a reason for female oppression. Furthermore, gender "is real only to the extent that it is performed" (Butler 1988, p. 527). Butler's idea of gender as performance exists only because of the role of the gender. Her contention is applicable to argue the performance centric movements as put forth by the gendered members in the society.

Objective

The paper aims to explore the feminist perspective of the Meira Paibi movement of Manipur. It examines how women in Manipur have contributed to equally take part in the political, social and economic activities as their male counterparts. The paper further looks at how the Meira Paibi movement contributes to the informal education system of the society.

Methodology

The study adopted an analytical method. For this, the readings of primary, secondary sources, research journals and online sources have been taken up.

Findings and Observations:

Feminist perspective of the Meira Paibi movement

The Meira Paibi movement have built an alternative institution accorded to ward off and protect against any kinds of misdoings and crimes in the society. The movement started in the 1970s to fight social evils like drug addiction, alcoholism and sexual violence. However, it can be traced way back to the *Nupi Laan* (Women's war) of 1904 and 1939. The Meira Paibi movement originated way back in 1904 with a public demonstration against the British colonial administration. Women in large groups protested against *lalupkaba* (forced labour) of Manipuri men where they succeeded. The British withdrew the practice in that same year. In 1939, women protested against *chaktangba* (a rise in food prices, for example the rise of the price of food items like rice). They protested against the oppressive policies of the colonial government and the movement came to be known as *Nupi Laan*. These movements were successful in getting their voices heard and impacted the economy of Manipur. Then, in the 1970s, women started a mass movement called Meira Paibi movement to maintain peace and social order in Manipur. The 1970s saw a marked rise of drugs and alcohol users especially among young boys and men leading to addiction which further gave rise to an increase in crimes such as wife-beating, public disorder and various forms of gendered violence (Singh, 2019). So, the movement was formed to curb these social evils. The movement started anti-liquor movement called *Nisha bandh* which greatly assisted in educating the alcoholics and the drug addicts of the menace of substance abuse.

The Meira Paibis are not only involved in gender issues but also various other social and political issues in the society. They have been actively involved in the resistance and nonviolent movement since the 1970s when the counter-insurgency started its operations in Manipur. They have successfully contributed many powerful nonviolent actions to confront the rising insurgency in Manipur in the last seven decades. The draconian Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) was put in certain parts of northeast region in 1958. This act violates the Constitution of India and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as it provides complete impunity to the Indian military forces while operating in these regions which include a large part of Manipur and the northeast region. The Meira Paibis have launched powerful protests against the AFSPA. They have also successfully worked at the ground level with assistance from the local youth clubs to develop a system aimed at

preventing youth arrests, disappearances and deaths. *Meira shangs* (bamboo huts) are built where the women took turns to guard the locality against the unjust atrocities of the armed forces personnel. On July 15, 2004, in front of Kangla Fort (the capital of the erstwhile Manipur Kingdom, and at the time the headquarters of the Assam Rifles, a unit of the Indian Army) in Imphal, a unique protest was launched. Twelve mothers of Manipur disrobed themselves in front of the main paramilitary headquarters. They used their nakedness as a weapon against political oppressions. This protest was to denounce the rape and extra-judicial killing of a 31 year old woman named Thangjam Manorama. In doing so, they have protested against years of discrimination, atrocities, human rights violation and sexual violence by members of the Indian army. The twelve mothers courageously challenged the entire nation to the gendered violence and human rights violation of the woman. This became a powerful movement of the Meira Paibis. Such are the brave and stellar acts of the Meira Paibis of Manipur. A month after this protest, the state government withdrew the controversial AFSPA from seven constituencies in Imphal area. The Meira Paibi movement, therefore became a precedent of women empowerment in the deeply rooted patriarchal Manipuri society. Millet's assertion that patriarchy is the root cause of women's oppression is weaved throughout the fabric of the Manipuri society. The Meira Paibis successfully protested and liberated against the menace in the society mainly related to issues pertaining to the power play of male dominance. In the deeply rooted patriarchal society of Manipur, the Meira Paiba as a women movement epitomizes women empowerment and shows that women occupy a pertinent role in the society (Singh, 2019). In this regard, Butler's idea of gender as performance is weaved throughout its narrative. Butler (1988) asserts that gender is related to performance. She further affirms that gender and doing gendered acts go hand in hand. Gender as identity exists because of performing the gendered acts. Butler contends that, "identity is assured through the stabilizing concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality" (1999, p. 23). This identity is in reference to gender performativity. The gendered performance of the Meira Paibis ranges from being a mother, wife, daughter, daily wage earner, political activist, professionals besides being the 'Meira Paibis'. Butler's ideas are influential as the Meira Paibis as conditioned by their gendered roles in the society comes forward towards a resistant and a nonviolent movement making them a force to reckon with.

Meira Paibi: Educating the masses

Relatedly, one can see that education is a process where values are inculcated to endow a person to lead a peaceful and harmonious life in the society. The Education for Values in Schools – A Framework mentions that in India educationists, philosophers and spiritual leaders in their various capabilities have highlighted the significant role played by education in character development and developing the inherent potential and an integrated personality of an individual in the society. So, the Meira Paibis with their zeal to safeguard the interest and well being of the people in the society have successfully created a space of a continuous education process to enlighten the people and guide them with values to lead a peaceful and harmonious life in the society. Concurrently, the Meira Paibis have played a pertinent role in building alternative institutions guarding against the evils of the society. Their role in the informal education of the society has been tremendous. They are in continuous fight handling crimes against women including girl and women trafficking, ill treatment of women in the society, family disputes, providing shelter to many destitute women, etc. The Meira Paibis also significantly played a crucial role in fighting the anti-liquor and anti drug movements or *Nisha bandh*. They continue organising campaigns

against gender violence, drug addiction and alcoholism. Gradually, they started playing vital roles in safeguarding human rights and even aired political grievances.

Conclusion

The preceding deliberations, thus, bring out the fundamental roles played by the Meira Paibis in safeguarding the ill doings and the unjust atrocities subjugated to the members of the society. The roles of the Meira Paibis in their quest to bring social change created a narrative of a gendered performance thereby contributing to the social, economic and political upliftment of the society. The gendered performance of the Meira Paibis became successful in establishing a paradigm of bringing a positive change in the patriarchal society of Manipur. Conversely, the vast expanse of the educational process attributed by the Meira Paibis to the members of the society is monumental. The educational institution they have built to fight social evils is an informal one, nevertheless, they have struck a chord with the members of the society. As the Meira Paibis have been working relentlessly to cleanse all the evils in the society, the local youths and elders alike gave their full support. They work under a novel objective to unitedly fight against the unjust and inhuman law like AFSPA, alcohol and drug menace, society evils like ill-treatment of women and sexual exploitation. The Meira Paibis, have therefore succeeded in creating its own space of a continuous educational institution contributing immensely to the people of the society. The 'Meiras' or the torch, they carry have become an epitome of peace and love. Thus, 'the Meira Paibis' or 'the Torch Bearers' as the name signifies are indeed the torch bearers who inspire and lead the people in the society towards a valued goal of peace, hope, love and work towards an evil free society.

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Nationalist Discourse: Women Emancipation through Participation, Arrest, and Imprisonment.

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Abstract:

While the present-day global discourses on women focus on women's overall emancipation in all aspects; we cannot negate the complete eradication of women's significance throughout history. The Indian Freedom Struggle, which ultimately paved the way for Indian Independence, remains a watershed in the paradigm of world history. However, looking back at Indian history, one may evidently note the uncontestable (mis)representation of men as the force behind the freedom struggles, denying any focus on other communities such as women. In the above context, the paper tries to bring forth the incontestable and active participation of women, their subsequent imprisonment while also attempting to lay forward their marginalized representations in the historical documents and the new woman's context. For this present study, selected books have been taken up and critically examined with regard to their respective historical contexts. Through this reading, the paper ventures into identifying and acknowledging the active role of women in the Indian Freedom Struggle and their lived experiences of imprisonment in different Indian jails during colonialism. The reading offers to decipher how women transcended their domestic spaces or constructed identities to confirm their clouded existence amongst the fellow men in the political struggle. This study unveils the patriarchal history and divulges into portraying how women folks engendered themselves in public by participating in various anti-British activities such as mass mobilization, picketing foreign clothes and liquor shops, organizing meetings, thereby establishing active political support and affirming their undisputable contributions in the Indian nationalistic struggle.

Keywords: women, political prisoners, imprisonment, punishment, national struggle

Introduction

Gerda Lerner rightly addressed in *Why History Matters: Life and Thought* that women have a history and women's are a history (207). A contemporary critic of a liberal opinion such as Suruchi Thapar, accentuated women's absence from the history of Indian freedom struggle and records the experiences of the women political prisoners in Jail. The insertion of women's role in the history of penology is essential to make them a part of common discourse. Women were equally a part of the history in which men such as Mahatma Gandhi, Subhas Chandra Bose, and Jawaharlal Nehru, had marked their contribution in the Indian National struggle. Women were considered central in the construction of the cultural society in the wake of colonization; they created history yet have been kept deprived from occupying prominent roles in history. There is a considerable transformation in the British approach towards women's active participation in the nationalist struggle which vividly elucidates the cause for women's arrest and imprisonment.

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The gender dichotomy amongst the political prisoners is evident in the historical textbooks that cites the memoirs, diaries, autobiographies of the male political prisoners and make them widely accessible whereas women's entry into the domain was /subsequently-with initial hesitation- acknowledged and encouraged by selected liberal-minded political and social leaders (Gandhi, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, and Vidyasagar). Women became a savior of the nation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century India when colonialism was blooming with all its might. Women's emancipation became significant in the nineteenth century, elevating their status in the society or social development became a part of nationalistic goal. This sudden realization was dawned not because India had an overnight transformation in its tradition or culture but because Indians were alleged/ accused of administering barbaric practices against women. Various social reforming activities accelerated to dispel the accusation of being uncivilized. The nationalist leaders worked for necessary reforms to foster the nation's social and cultural development remote from the West's perception. This could mean that India was far from imitating West and its culture yet the foundational material beliefs were imitated to defeat the British power. The nationalist leaders made it lucid that material advancement of the West will be imbibed and imitated but the line was clearly drawn in traditional/cultural change or reformation (Chatterjee, 120). The force from the material world- the outer world/West- is the external force which when applied was ought to practically and technologically enrich India with power to overthrow British Imperialism. Spiritual changes were expected to remain uninfluenced by such western beliefs thereby confirming to changes that will bring a difference in the revolution (Chatterjee, 120). The connotation of the external world directs a domain reigned with practical interests, especially designed and structured by men, whereas the spiritual or inner world denotes home mostly associated with women. The British criticized the Indian social custom shaped by religious tradition, and launched the civilizing mission thereby attacking Indian tradition as degenerate and savage. They registered atrocities conducted on Indian women from times immemorial by the entire religious and scriptural practices in India (Chatterjee, 118). Hence, it can be said that the edifice of imperialism, colonialism, and its entire discourse was primarily situated upon the project- the civilizing mission (Chatterjee, 119). The Indian nationalists launched into reforming their people's culture and tradition but strictly rejected any resemblance with the West. Therefore, the Indian Nationalists made a selective analysis of techniques to be incorporated in their culture, which would rather be useful in overcoming the West's domination. In this process, they also made the list of undesirables to be profusely forsaken, for it might contaminate the indigenous tradition of Indian people. Nevertheless, the task of adaption of techniques was also applicable to the women's question of development and emancipation but the principle of selection was operational precisely to safeguard the cultural tradition of India. In other words, the new nationalistic project was to transform the visage/ outlook of the Indian women while retaining the non-material essence of Indian tradition and culture. Thus the new woman was shaped and constructed by the new patriarchy. Nationalism was concerned with the reformation, reconstruction and formulation of identity on native indigenous lines and depicts development to waver the charges of degeneration and barbarity. Thus, women were given an opportunity to be a part of the freedom struggle. The new women participated in the Indian national battle with intact spiritual and traditional values contrary to men's participation in the movement. Women's traditional role was ingrained into their consciousness to the extent that it is reflected in their autobiography, memoirs, or letters. The urge to go back to tradition from the forefront political position was prominent in Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit's autobiography *The Scope of Happiness*. The autobiography is partially a confession of her

indulgence that testifies her inclination to adhere to India's cultural tradition, to be a part of the home- the inner and spiritual existence. She writes:

“... I suffered because of what I had done to the children. To this day I cannot forgive myself.”(133)

Gradually, the engagement of the women political leaders challenged the spaces and dissipated the stereotypical notion of an Indian woman as perceived by the British imperialists. Women transcended the domestic space or the constructed identity to confirm their existence amidst the fellow men in the political struggle. They engendered themselves in public by participating in various anti-British activities such as mass mobilization, picketing foreign clothes and liquor shops, organizing meetings, etc., thereby establishing active political support in the Indian nationalistic struggle. Historically, the radical participation of women in diverse anti-British activities, both from inside and outside the domestic sphere is a significant milestone in the struggle for independence movement. The *prabhat feris*- musical processions- were repeatedly practiced by the womenfolk to mobilize the masses and impregnate nationalistic sentiments amidst people. Besides the active participation of women in public sphere, few women utilized the domestic space to spin and wove khadi, preached the women in the locality the importance of nationalistic sentiments and the formation of nationalistic literature. Apart from being leaders in the nationalist activities, the womenfolk actively embraced imprisonment, punishments, and afflictions on par with the fellow political leaders. The active engagement by women reshaped the constructed identity and emancipated the condition of women in society, thereby signifying the advent of modernization remote from the influence of the West.

Nevertheless, a clear perspective of women's contribution in the freedom struggle is absent from the historical canons because women did not fight for their rights and equality; rather, their entire focus was directed towards protecting culture and integrity of the nation. In most cases the women were underprivileged to testify/record their experiences in the movement considering Kasturba Gandhi's instance. Her exemplary contribution in the freedom struggle deserves recognition, acknowledgment, and reputation in national movement history. Mahatma Gandhi being the designer of the freedom movement received deserving accolades owing to his prodigious contribution in freedom struggle. Yet, his wife, Kasturba Gandhi is partially referred to have a subordinate role in the frame where Gandhi's involvement and contribution is analyzed. She had been jailed numerous times for her commitment towards the freedom movement but couldn't successfully own a place in popular history books written at home and abroad. Undoubtedly, Mahatma Gandhi encouraged women's participation in the wake of his philosophy of non-violence along with/besides the new cultural wave that broke in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century India. Gandhi's unabating/unrelenting support to Kasturba's will of engagement in the struggle was commendable, and had never failed to acknowledge her support in his autobiographical writings. In the journal "Harijan" he acknowledged Kasturba's role in shaping his ideas and principles of non-violence. He wrote in 1938 the initial lesson of non-violence he learnt from Kasturba Gandhi when he desired to dominate his wife or force submission:

Her determined resistance to my will on the one hand, and her quiet submission to the suffering my stupidity involved on the other, ultimately made me ashamed of myself, and cured me of my stupidity in thinking that I was born to rule over her, and in the end she became my teacher in non-violence. (Gandhi, 89)

Mrs. Gandhi's emancipatory notions were seen as a threat to the Empire. She was equally efficient in mobilizing the women of the nation by touring from one village to another in order to stimulate the idea of nationalism. The situation demanded her forefront/vanguard position in the struggle for democracy, revealing her zeal and determination to be a part of the project. Compared to her contribution, biographical sketches are reduced in number leading to her absence in the historical canon expect in reference. Aparna Basu and Sushila Nayar are considered to be widely read following their contribution in foregrounding Kasturba Gandhi's unmatched spirit in leading a revolution that was not only designed for women emancipation but also for the Indian freedom struggle. Though she was a cultivated product of India's cultural tradition yet her unparalleled leadership quality elevates her position from the otherwise stereotypical women. On presiding over a meeting as a substitute to Gandhi at Shivaji Park, Mrs. Gandhi was arrested along with Sushila Nayar- the companion to Gandhian family, a political leader, a doctor at the same time- and taken to Arthur Road Prison. The British official who arrested Mrs. Gandhi from the meeting ridiculed her involvement in the anti-British struggle. The British official was startled to witness a disposition/an impression quite contrary to the initial accusation of barbaric practices as underscored by Partha Chatterjee in *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Post Colonial Histories*. Nayar had gained a place of prominence due to her authentic narration in *Kasturba-A Personal Reminiscence* considering her corporeal presence with *Ba* in prison. On the way to prison, she notes Mrs. Gandhi's withered condition:

Ba's face looked drawn and haggard with sorrow and fatigue. There were tears in her eyes. "Why are you worried, Ba?" I asked her. She did not reply. I took her hand in mine. It was hot. She had fever. I tried to comfort her. "They won't let us out alive this time," she spoke at last. "Don't you see this Government is the very incarnation of evil?"(26)

Kasturba Gandhi displayed a distinctively composed demeanor in prison, which influenced many distressed souls and kindled an atmosphere of hope. Nayar highlights the disturbing influence of prison upon individuals convicted for various involvements against the British. The resistance she portrayed was less oriented by cultural changes and more by her ingrained principles which Mahatma later imbibed in his formulation of non-violence policies.

Conclusion:

The colonial history documents the domination perpetuated and the counter resistance by the section of population which were assumed to be voluntary victims of tradition. The resistance to imbibe the western form of life-apart from material techniques- was also a form of resistance that aspires to protect national tradition and culture. The British authorities believed that by arresting the women activists, they would instill fear or smash their nationalistic zeal to be an active participant in the anti-British struggle. They were keen to arrest the forefront political leaders and thrust them in jail, conferring different categories to the political prisoners to execute the divide and rule policy. The unprecedented/relentless atrocities committed by the British authorities in prison and at the time of arrest did not waiver the spirit of nationalism brewing amidst the political prisoners. Male political prisoners remained behind bars thence permitting women to be greatly part of the revolution and change India's cultural history. Gradually, women seeped into the male territory -prison-

thereby challenging the space that traditionally belonged to the patriarchal world. The upheaval was witnessed in different parts of the country besides the center, states like Assam- a sidelined existence- participated in the struggle headed by the women and students of the region. Chandraprabha Saikiani, an archetype of women emancipation, gained prominence by actively participating in the movement and in the course courted arrest and documented her experiences in her incomplete autobiography *Jail Kahani* which is currently available in Tezpur University.

Women's engagement in the anti-British struggle is a recent interest of research that foregrounds women's active participation from both the public and domestic sphere. Women from the varied backgrounds took a frontline position in the struggle against the British and efficiently disintegrated the stereotypical notion of Indian Women traditionally associated with customs, fragility, marginality, et al. Imprisonment of women during the political/national struggle became a common phenomenon during the early twentieth century in India. They fought shoulder to shoulder with men in the Indian national struggle and thus have earned the title of political activists. The historical and social context was challenged to transform the face of the future.

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Attingal Queen of Travancore :

Maharani Sethu Lakshmi Bai's contribution towards women's education

Nidhi Patel

Introduction :

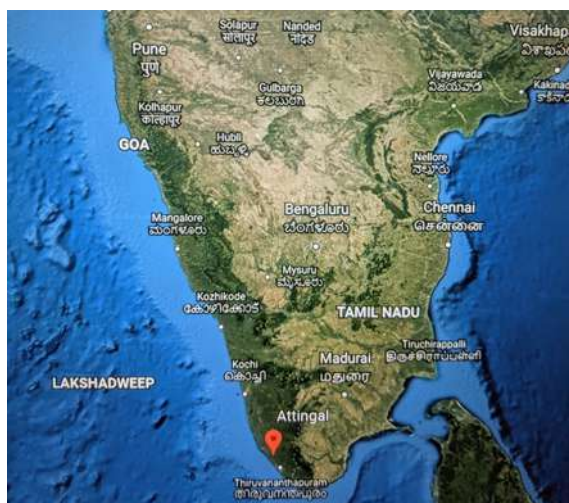
Travancore was southern most state of British India and comprised the present day lands of Kerala. Status of women has been changed since independence (Mary, 2018). Women in Travancore were considered as a secondary citizens. Travancore was dominant by upper class society and conditions of women were miserable (Santosh, 2017). Despite the poor condition of women, the state witnessed the rule of three maharanis distinctively known as Attingal Queens (T,2018).

This paper focuses on one of the Attingal Queens, Maharani Sethu Lakshmi Bai's contribution towards women's education in Travancore.

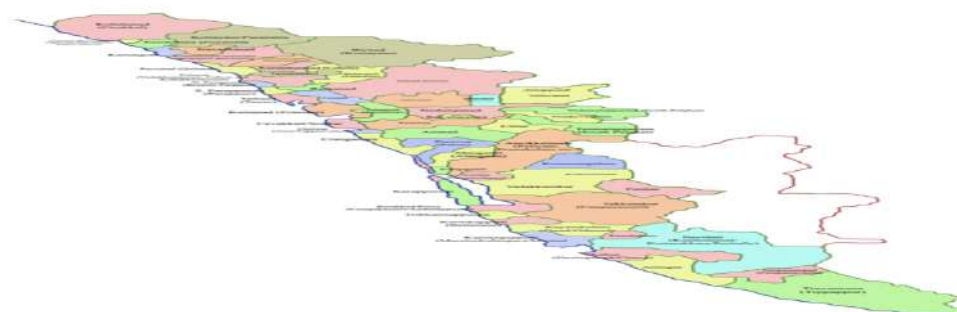
Geographical Location :



Map 1 : location of Kerala in India



Map 2: Location of Attingal in Kerala



Map 3 : Map of Kerala showing the Kingdom of Travancore and Attingal Queendom

Attingal is located 32km north of Thiruvananthapuram, capital of Kerala. It is located at 8.68°N, 76.83°E. It has an average elevation of 23m. Attingal is said to be built 800 years ago. Previously it was known as ‘Chittattinkara’ as it is surrounded by river on three sides which is Mamom river and Vamana puram river (latlong.net,2021). Attingal historically has been the residence of women of Venad Royal family (The Hindu, 2020).

History of Attingal Queens :

Kerala has an identity as *pennu Malayalam* or the kingdom of women. *Marumakkathayam* or inheritance through female was followed in Travancore. Properties and surnames were inherited through the mother, making the society matrilineal (Gupta, 2019). There are three significant characteristics of matrilineal system viz. family name through mother, matrilineal residential system and inheritance of property by female. Any society follow these is called matrilineal society (Das, 2001). In India matrilineal system was followed by Nairs and Mappilies in Kerala, tribal groups of minicoy Island and the Khasis and Garos of Meghalaya (Kapadia, 1966).

In 1677, the king of Travancore Aditya Varma died, the matriarchs of Attingal decided the matters regarding succession. Umayamma Rani also known as Ashwathi Thirunal Umayamma Rani. She became the regent queen to minor prince Ravi Varma till he ascended the throne in 1684 (DNA, 2017). Umayamma Rani gave British the permission to do trade in Kerala. Trade flourished during her reign (Nayar, 2020). The first anti- British revolt took place during her rule known as ‘Attingal revolt of 1721’ (Gopalkrishnan, 2017). The queen adopted entire family from the house of Kolatbhunad, the Koil Thampuras of Kilimanoor – 3 men and 3 women after the death of her 6 sons (Pillai, 1996).

Since the family followed the matrilineal inheritance, there were two senior princesses of the Royal House, first the mother of the Maharaja who was considered as the Senior Rani of Attingal and her sister was known as Junior Rani (guidetowomenleaders, 2011).

The next Attingal queen who came to power was Maharani Gowri Lakshmi Bayi who was a regent queen from 1810-1815 for her son Swathi Thirunal Rama Varma (Menon, 1878). The queen was succeeded by her sister Gowri Parvathy Bayi (Aiya, 1906). Later came the rule of Maharani Sethu Lakshmi Bayi who ruled from 1924 to 1931 as a regent queen who was also the last queen of Travancore (The Mint, 2019).

List of Rulers of Travancore and their period of reign :

Rama Varma	1663 - 1672
Aditya Varma	1672 - 1677
Umayamma Rani	1677 - 1684
Ravi Varma	1684 - 1718
Aditya Varma	1718 - 1719
Unni Kerala Varma	1719 - 1724
Rajah Rama Varma	1724 - 1729
Marthanda Varma	1729 - 1758
Dharma Raja	1758 - 1810
Balarama Varma	1798 - 1810
Gowri Lakshmi Bayi	1810 - 1815

Swathi Thirunal	1829 - 1846
Uthram Thirunal	1846 - 1860
Ayilyam Thirunal	1860 - 1880
Visakham Thirunal	1880 - 1885
Sethu Lakshmi Bayi	1924 - 1931
Chithira Thirunal	1931 - 1949

*red text highlights the regent queens

Maharani Sethu Lakshmi Bayi :



Sethu Lakshmi Bayi was Raja Ravi Varma's granddaughter. She was born on 19th November, 1895 at Utsavamadhom Palace in Mavelikara and was adopted by the royal family of Travancore in 1900 (The Tribune, 2016). Sethu Lakshmi Bayi's mother was from *Kolathunad* Royal family which had settled in Travancore during the late 18th century and was daughter of Raja Ravi Varma. Senior Rani Lakshmi Bayi and Kerala Varma Valiyal Koyil Thampuran of Travancore had no children of their own. In 1900, the senior rani had applied for the adoption of her grandnieces. Sethu Lakshmi Bayi along with her younger sister Sethu Parvathy Bayi was adopted. This adoption was the 6th in Travancore. The women play an important role to continue the Marumakkathayam (matrilineal system). Later Sethu Lakshmi came to known as Thirunal Sethu Lakshmi Bayi and *Sree Padmanabhasevini Pooradam* (Pillai, 2015).

At the age of 6 Sethu Lakshmi Bayi became senior Maharani of Attingal and was married at the age of 10 to Sri Rama Varma. (Ann, 2017). Rani Sethu Lakshmi Bayi failed to give birth to heir while her sister Sethu Parvathy Bayi gave birth to Sree Chithira Thirunal. there were conflicts between the sisters because Sethu Lakshmi Bayi became regent queen to

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minor prince who was 12 years old in 1930 which was unacceptable to the Junior Rani (Raghunandan, 1995).

Rani Sethu Lakshmi Bayi was stripped of from her powers and honors by Chithira Thirunal on Parvathy Bayi's insistence. In 1958, she moved to Madras and then Bangalore where she spent her final days with her oldest daughter Indira. She passed away in 1985 (Fountain ink, 2016).

Contribution of Rani Sethu Lakshmi Bayi :

Maharani had started various reforms for the welfare of the women. Education got importance under her rule (T, 2018). While looking at the history of women's education in Travancore, during Sangam age the education was parted to the women which we can witness through the Sangam Literature and ancient Tamil anthologies. There are reference of 15 poetesses including Auvvayyar, Adi mandiyaar, Vellividyar. Kakkai Padiniyar. These gives us information about women's status in ancient time (Menon, 1967). By 8th century the condition in Travancore began to deteriorate. Women were restricted from getting education and this practice continued till 19th century (Mateer, 1883). Lack of education was the main root cause for the down trodden condition of women in Travancore. Ignorance of women made a way for other social evil practices in society (Santosh, 2017).

In 1927, Rani Sethu Lakshmi Bayi upgraded the women's college in Trivandrum from second grade to first grade. Before the upgrade the college used to teach 'ladylike' but professionally useless courses according to the reports. The upgrade was done with the intention of amalgamation of University of Madras and starting classes on history, geography, natural science, languages and mathematics (The better India, 2016). The Maharani encouraged the girl guide movement with Mrs. Thackwell who was the organizer. The main purpose of this project was to develop citizenship by helping to form character, giving the girls interests by teaching them handicrafts and arts, promoting the physical development and knowledge of basic laws of health and including the ideal of service for others (Raghunandan, 1995). 40% of the budget was invested in education during her reign (The Hindu, 2006).

Maharani had appointed Dr Mary Poonen Luckose who was Travancore's first woman graduate and a medical surgeon as the head of the Medical department of Travancore and she was also nominated by Maharani as a member of the legislative council, making her the first woman in India to reach the council, also the first instance of a 'lady legislator' (ONmanorama, 2020). In 1927, Maharani opened admissions or women in the Government Law college, despite the opposition. Anna Chandy, who belonged to Syrian Christian family enrolled for a post graduate degree in law and was the first woman in Kerala to do so (Shah, 2017). Anna Chandy became India's first woman judge. Soon there were 232 women going to college in Travancore and over 9,500 girls going to English schools. 15 women were studying medicine and two women were undertaking legal studies (The Hindu, 2015).

Prior to rani's reign, there weren't any women administrators. The years 1928 to 1931 have witnessed immense growth in education of women. Maharani was also nominated five women in the Shri Moolam Popular Assembly (Shah, 2021). Rani Sethu Lakshmi Bayi initiated many other social reforms for the development of society. She spent nearly a fifth of

her revenue on education which elevated Kerala's high rate of literacy (Indian memory project). The period witnessed particularly in primary schools. Girl's schools rose up in many parts of Nagercoil and Alappuzha. A new college hostel was opened giving admission to all students irrespective of caste. The provision was sanctioned regarding the noon day meals. 22.02% of the total revenue of the state was used for education (Maheshwari, 2013). About 500 women were employed by Rani in her administration. Sethu Lakshmi Bayi was nominated for the legislative council. During her time women were employed in various fields like accounts and revenue department, clerks, typists and secretaries as well as in High Court and government (Pillai).

Conclusion :

Some of the women rulers are well known in history but others got lost in the folklore. One of the common factor that binds these women is that they didn't became rulers due to natural succession. They sat on the throne due to specific circumstances, such as young age of the male heir or absence of the heir. There have been many women rulers in Indian history, also in world history, but that still leaves many of women rulers's stories behind which is still waiting to be told.

The purpose of this paper was to highlight the contribution made by the Maharani Sethu Lakshmi Bayi towards the education of women. Women began to experience the impact of education and modernity during this period. One of the impact that women could feel the change was in social realm. Emergence of women's education resulted in new social order in Travancore which paved a way for the formation of civil society.

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Appendix :



Image 1 : Bharani Thirunal Lakshmi Bayi (senior queen)



Image 2: Mahaprabha, Sethu Lakshmi Bayi's mother .



Image 3 : (left) Sethu Lakshmi Bayi, standing and Sethu Parvathy Bayi with Rani Lakshmi Bayi before their adoption in house of Travancore.



Image 4 : Sethu Parvathy Bayi and Sethu Lakshmi Bayi.



Image 5 : Sethu Lakshmi Bayi with her husband Rama Varma, the Valiya Koil Thampuran on their wedding day.



Image 6 : Sethu Lakshmi Bayi after the installation as the Rani of Attingal.



Image 7 : Sethu Lakshmi Bayi with her daughter .



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Image 8 : Sethu Lakshmi Bayi and Valiya Koil Thampuran.



Image 9 : Rani Sethu Lakshmi during her final days.



Image 10 : Anna Chandy, India's first female judge.



Image 11 : Mary Poonen Luckose, first 'female legislator' and first Surgeon General in India.

Sati : A Colonial Construct

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The custom of sati, the practice of immolation of widows on their husband's funeral pyre, has a long history that dates back to the second half of the first millennium AD. It began as a ritual confined to the Kshatriya caste (composed of rulers and warriors) but over time, it penetrated the other section of society. It became so common and prevalent that sati became the focal point of representation of the East by the West. The practice of sati was made illegal and punishable by the Bengal Sati Regulation 1829 during the governorship of Lord William Bentinck. This paper is an attempt to analyze how the historical constitution of sati as a Hindu religious tradition was used by the British to transform it into the site of exercising power and politics.

Keywords: sati, women, culture, British, hegemony, body.

“The female body plays no active role in the political skirmishing but is nonetheless the site of justificatory discourses.”

The popular story of sati goes by how Sati, the consort of Shiva on hearing insults heaped upon her lover by her father, Daksh, sets fire to herself.

It is significant to note here that Sati does not jump into the sacrificial fire, but immolates herself using her strong yogic powers. The act thus is impelled by anger and not a sacrificial tendency.

The leap made from this Sati immolating herself for her lover to the modern sati immolating herself at her husband's funeral pyre in ultimate testimony of her inseparability from her husband is a great leap in the cultural imagination.

The history of sati in India has been shaped by two very important factors, the colonial rule, and the official pundits aiding the colonial rulers.

Sati as a practice did not emerge during the colonial period. It existed much before it though there is no conclusive evidence for dating its origins. Romila Thapar¹⁴⁹ sees it as emerging in the second half of the first millennium A.D, among the Kshatriya castes, when the wives of slain or defeated warriors were expected to follow their husbands to heaven, the very picture of the heroic female counterpart.

Thapar even suggests a relation between the growing penetration of sati with the dying practice of *niyoga*, when the widow would be married off to someone from the same family,

¹⁴⁹ Romila Thapar, 'Traditions Versus Misconceptions', in *Manushi*, no. 42-43, 1987, p . 8.

most preferably one of the brothers. *Niyoga* would however raise complications with the laws of inheritance due to which it might have effaced with time.

In a startling revelation, Dorothy Stein¹⁵⁰ even goes on to place sati in a universal context by stating that it was a practice followed among most cultures such as the “Scandinavians, Slavs, Chinese, Greeks, Finns...’

The assent of Edward Thompson with Stein’s view is of particular importance since it takes us straight to my main theme, the fact that he subscribed to the idea of a globally shared and primitive past from which Europe had emerged and from which England could liberate India too.

This directs us to what my paper begins with, the unobtrusive first line at first glance but conspicuously non-discreet in its intentions. Coined by Janet Price and Margarit Shildrick¹⁵¹ the line outlines what I had previously said that sati was a colonial construct. The way it originated may have nothing to do with the colonizers but the way it shaped up and assumed gigantic proportions post-colonization made it so.

Lata Mani explains this further when she says that tradition and orthodoxy are reconstituted under colonial rule. Women, according to her become “emblematic of tradition”, as tradition is reworked around their rights and status in society. However, this was largely illusionary as women per se were never the main focus of the debate though the debate did seem to revolve around them. They were about what cultural traditions, or more accurately what constitutes ‘authentic’ cultural tradition.

The authenticity for this came from the court pundits that the British employed to understand the act of sati. The ‘colonial discourse’¹⁵² that invariably followed was dependent on two things, the court pundits who sought to justify the scriptural text and the officials who interpreted it in the way they saw fitting.

What often occurred was that though the pundit accepted to have derived the scriptures according to “to the best of his knowledge”, it was often regarded as authoritative by the officials. What followed was heterogeneity between texts by different pundits with the officers choosing to marginalize certain texts and selecting the ones that seemed most pliable for their use.

Official discourse on sati rested on three interlocking assumptions: the hegemony of religious texts, a total indigenous submission to their dictates, and the religious basis of sati.

The assumptions often ignored facts such as enormous regional variations in the practice of sati, the fact that religion was not hegemonic owing to factors like the prevalence of sati around the area of Calcutta rather than every place, and officials seeing women as subjected no matter their initiative to jump into the fire moderated by either coercion or willingness.

¹⁵⁰ Dorothy K. Stein', *Women to Burn: Suttee as a Normative Institution*, *Signs*, 4 : 2, 197

¹⁵¹ Janet Price and Margarit Shildrick, 'Mapping the Colonial Body: Sexual Economics and the state in Colonial India', *Feminist Theory and the Body: A reader*, Edinburgh University Press, pp388-398

¹⁵² Lata Mani, 'Contentious Traditions', *Debates on Sati in Colonial India*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1998, p.125

What is of particular relevance here is the fact that contrary to popular notions the British act of prohibiting sati had little to do with the barbarity of the act. Indeed, there is little evidence of them seeing women as central to the entire process of prohibiting sati, hinting at sublimated negotiations instead. While the British supposedly made a distinction between "good" (voluntary) and "bad" (coerced) sati, they were mostly interested in what served Britain's material interests. Mani shows how British officials claimed to be making their decisions based on the pronouncements of Hindu pundits and to be upholding the Hindu tradition against corrupt Brahmins. These claims, however, actually effaced three imperialist moves: turning Hinduism into a monolithic religion based on scripture, deciding which pundits' interpretations to accept (which made the British the final arbiters of "correct" Hinduism), and defining a "tradition" of sati.

As Gayatri Spivak puts it succinctly what mattered, in the end, was that the abolition of sati should be seen as 'White men saving the brown women from brown men'.¹⁵³

Thus, for Mani, the discussion over sati is a debate about the extent of control the British were able to exert over India through constructions of Hinduism by using women's bodies as the 'site' where tradition was reformulated.

The glorification of the body, particularly the female body, and its usage is an old concept. Of prominence here is Michael Foucault's idea that body and sexuality are cultural constructs rather than natural phenomena. Janet Price and Margarit Shildrick take his argument further by attempting to find out why was it that it was the female body and not the male's that became the ground for colonial state power.

The repressive force that constituted the colonial force was altered into dominance based on moral rights and enacted through the bodies of women. This force was now channeled along with missionary discourses, where the issue became not of rescue and reform but discourses where women were cast as victims of sati, child marriage, etc. thus forming the basis for the need for colonial discourses of reform.

Clara Midgley details how women were roped into to lead these missionary discourses, appealing British women into empathy for, and sympathy with, Indian women following their same maternal feelings. Important missionary activity was the spread of education and British women were soon given the mantle of 'tutors and guardians' for actively guiding the suffering Indian women.

Throughout the 1820s, support for female education was presented as a vital complement to the evangelical campaign to get the British government to ban sati. Women were further seen as central to the role of helping the Indian women by showing them the stark contrasts between the lives of the two countries, giving them a chance to convert and escape the hardships that their religion provided them.

There was however nothing radical about it. Indian women were advised to fit into the mold of a Christianized family, fulfilling the role of a proper wife and other. There is not even the slightest challenge being posed to patriarchy, indeed Indian women are showed that their love and duty for their children should override their love and duty for their husbands.

¹⁵³ Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak',

Neither was the entire exercise an act or a result of benevolence. What was often marked was the cultural superiority that the English women showed in comparison to the harried Indian women. The development of the identity of the English women in their estimates was thus connected to the creation of a victimized Indian woman.

Gayatri Spivak raises the question, can the subaltern speak? While many native, colonial, and scientific meanings have been produced to justify, condemn, or explain sati, Spivak shows that these victimized women themselves have been denied the meaning of their death. They remain voiceless. Subalternism is then conceptualized as the dialectic position of those reduced to a voiceless or silenced body. The absence of their voice is thus indicative of the violence of colonialism and indigenous patriarchy.

Mani, Spivak, Midgley and Price & Shildrick all talk about how women's bodies were brought under the colonial radar to suit the needs and the means of the colonial government. There was a shifting of control, from the indigenous patriarchal stronghold to the colonial fold where the movement, bodies, and the language of women were brought within a disciplinary power regime.

Within the missionary was a series of institutions to regulate the women, where the female body could be manipulated and organized. Foucault has studied the practice of such discipline and training applied subtly at first and later directly to the body, as can be seen in the case of the Indian women, where such practices subject bodily activity to a process of constant surveillance and examination that enables continuous and pervasive control of immediate conduct.

Widow Immolation has thus been the ground for violence, the contesting ground for various forms of internal or external patriarchy. The representation ground has obscured the varied economical, social, and cultural differences which lay just beneath the surface of each sati. Instead, the victim becomes a symbol of death and all that was cruel, and at the same time a figure of awe, of undying love and the true harmony of the institution of marriage. Thus, as Lata Mani has pointed out, even in the accounts of the staunchest abolitionary of sati there is a reluctant, almost unconscious praise for the willing, beautiful bride burning at the pyre with her husband, fulfilling the vows of marriage to the very end of their lives. And this is the paradox that clouds the discussion of sati, from its beginning to the end.

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Supernatural Women in Enslaved India

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The Women took part in the Battle of Freedom was believable by looking at history of the 19th century. In the year of 1817 itself Woman's participation took place in our Nation's struggle. The Supernatural Women mentioned in history and their dedication, sacrifice and devotion to the service are undying. Their contributions, exploitation, achievements, hardships and struggles to gain us success and freedom. Those extraordinary women faced various agonies and fought with British with great courage, braveness and true spirit. Let us commemorate, worship and pass news about these Supernatural women to young generation of great, future India to create awareness of how to be more brave, how to lead a life with courage and face problems with true spirit without selfishness and fear.

Women: in view of Mahatma Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi said "I would boycott that legislature which will not have a proper share of women members". According to Mahatma Gandhi woman is companion of man and gifted with equal rights of freedom and liberty. Woman is better half of humanity, not the weaker sex. Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi was the first man to encourage participation of women in politics.

Women in Politics

Once there were a few women Parliamentarians in India. But gradually the number has been increased. It shows that Gandhi's ideas about women and their role in political life was a departure from those of the 20th century reformers. For the success of democracy, active participation of women is essential. Women play a dual role in politics – voters and political representatives.

Sarojini Naidu

Sarojini Naidu was a nominated delicate, Gandhiji heaving a humorous sigh of relief remarked: "Thank God! The women there did not put forward a claim either for separate electorate or for reservation of specific number of seats in Legislatures!" (Gandhiji's address to women at Santiniketan in 1940).

Gandhian Movement

Kamala Nehru, Sarojini Naidu, Anasuya Sarabhai, Sushila Nayyar and Miraben are a few of the illustrious women associated with the Gandhian movement. Gandhi played an important role in motivating women to participate in the freedom movement and in politics.

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Bhima Bai Holkar

As early as in 1817 Supernatural Woman's participation took place in India's freedom struggle. In Guerilla warfare, Bhima Bai Holkar fought courageously against the British colonel Malcolm and defeated him.

Rani Chenamma

Rani Chenamma , the widowed queen of Raja MallaSarja Belgaum District of Karnataka fought against the mighty British army and scored initial success.

In the 19th Century

In the 19th century that is 30 years before the "First War of Independence 1857" many women including Rani Channama of Kittur, Rani BegamHazratMahal of Avadh fought against British East India company.

The Great Revolt of 1857

In the war of Independence in 1857 was creditable. The part played by women was supernatural. Some of the leaders of the revolt were Rani of Ramgarh, Rani JindanKaur, Rani TaceBai, BaizaBai, Chauhan Rani, TapasviniMaharaniled their armies daringly into the warfield.

Heroism of Rani Lakshmi Bai

Her excellent leadership, braveness and courage show us her real, actual patriotism. She was also one of the supernatural Indian women from Jhansi who took part in freedom struggle movement and joined the national movement belonged to educated and liberal families, as well as those from the rural areas and from all walk of life, all castes, religions and communities. She showed the embodiment of patriotism, self-respect and heroism. She was the queen of a small state, but the empress of a limitless empire of glory.

BegamHazratMahal

BegamHazratMahal was a great Indian freedom –fighter who played a major role during India's First War of Independence.

Madam Cama

Madam Cama fought for the freedom of the country till the last in her own way and helped many revolutionaries with money and materials.

In the 20th Century

In the 20th century , the names which are remembered even today for their singular contribution both in political and war field. The notable personalities are Sarojini Naidu, Kasturba Gandhi, Vijaylakshmi Pundit and Annie Besant.

Annie Besant

Annie Besant an Irish Lady , the leader of the Theosophical Society joined the National Congress and gave it a new direction. She was the first women president of the congress and gave a powerful lead to Women’s movement in India.

Vijay Lakshmi Pandit

Vijay Lakshmi Pandit is a daughter of Motilal Nehru, entered the Non Co-operation Movement to fight against the British rule.

Indira Gandhi

Indira Gandhi was a most remarkable woman in Modern India. She was the first women prime minister of our country. She fought boldly and vigorously against communalism, obscurantism, revivalism and religious fundamentalism of all types.

The First War of Independence

The First War of Independence took place in the year of 1857-1858. It was the first general agitation against the rule of the British East India Company. As a result of this agitation the East India Company was brought under the direct rule of the British Crown. Rani Lakshmi bai was the great heroine of the First War of India Freedom.

Non-Violent Movement

Sarla Devi,Muthulakshmi Reddy, Susheela Nair, Raj kumari Amrit Kaur, Sucheta Kripalani and Aruna Asaf Ali are some women who participated in the Non-Violent Movement.

National Movement

Kasturba Gandhi, the wife of Mahatma Gandhi and the women of the Nehru family, KamlaNehnu, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit and Swarup Rani also participated in the National Movement.

Movement in Lahore

Lado Rani Zutshi and her daughters Manmohini, Shyama and Janak led the Movement in Lohore.

Quit India Movement(1942)

In August 1942, the Quit India Movemen was launched. The Quit India resolution taken against British directly addressed women “as disciplined soldiers of Indian Freedom”, required to sustain the flame of war.

Voice of Freedom

Usha Mehta, a committed patriot set up a radio transmitter, called the “Voice of Freedom” to disseminate the “mantra” of freedom-war. News of protest and arrests, deeds of young nationalists and Gandhi’s famous “Do or Die” message for the Quit India Movement were circulated amongst the masses. Usha Mehta and her brother persisted with their task of broadcasting until their arrest.

Conclusion

As per modern theory, both men and women are integral parts of social, economic and political set up of a state. Democracy implies equality for all men and women. Mahatma Gandhi wrote in *Young India* in 1921 that the female sex is the nobler of the two, as it is the embodiment of sacrifice, silent suffering, humility, faith and knowledge. He said that women have the right to participate in all the activities of life and like men have equal rights of freedom and liberty. He realized that the backwardness of woman was a stumbling block in the path of progress.

Gandhiji said: “In my opinion, it is degrading both for man and woman that women should be called upon or induced to forsake the hearth and shoulder the rifle for the protection of that hearth. He also called upon women to enter the legislatures with the idea of serving the people and not politicking on party-basis. Hence every man must have faith in women and respect her in all walks life.

The women shouldered critical responsibilities in India’s struggle for freedom. Women freedom fighters bravely faced the hardships for obtaining freedom of their motherland. Hundreds and thousands of Indian women dedicated their lives for obtaining freedom.

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Voices from Margins: Gender, Empire and Nationalism in the first war of Independence, 1857.

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ABSTRACT

Women in History writing are either made 'invisible' (Basu&Taneja, 2002) or been used as mere 'subjects' on which histories are written. Same was the case in the War of Independence, 1857. Women's role in the revolt had been missing/ unaccounted for some initial sixty to eighty years in the mainstream history writing. History writing has always been compartmentalized, and when the women of certain race and class which were fitted into these constructed compartments – which existed for the 'respectable' High class women or the 'mother'- 'motherland, mother –hood, Bharat- Mata discourse. further led to certain picturesque for the formed cultural representation of these women. These Cultural representations were by products of the intersections of race-gender –caste- class dominated parameters which these Male writers- with their gazed masculine representations, stereotypical picturesque, made on these bodies to avenge the atrocities vented on the community, or to safeguard the honour and pride of the community. A major chunk of Indian Women participation and tales of atrocities who predominantly belonged to the margins was deliberately silence and overlooked, as they did not fit into these constructed notions. This paper attempts to examine 1) Unearthing role of Marginalised women who participated in the 1857. 2) Engendering the Empire: Deliberating on the Intersections of Gender: Empire and placing the missing women's question. 3) Deliberation on these Cultural Representations and Identity formations of Women: strengthening the Nation 4). Last part of the paper attempts to highlight those lost voices of women, from predominant peasant communities of Jaat & Gurjars using Oral and memory studies and the historical methodology.

Voices from Margins: Gender, Empire and Nationalism in the first war of Independence, 1857.

1. Introduction

Indian struggle for independence is of tremendous importance in the history of Anti-Colonial movements. The struggle for independence has not been something alien to the Indian History writing, born out of British policy of war and conquest to colonial exploitation of India with other various socio- economic instabilities, famines, draughts and tribal insurgencies which gave birth to India's First War for Independence. It altogether marks the first instance where the Indian People from rulers of Princely states to common peasants all came to fight the common British Enemy (Savarkar). 1857, has been a part of major debate of historical contentions and debates for over a century, as there has been no dearth of sources on the same. The nature of 1857 is often projected as either – the Sepoy Mutiny, War of Independence, Violence on British women or rise of Popular participation i.e. Peasants, Hindu – Muslim conspiracy etc. The incidents of 1857 were more than just the story of Indian Sepoys rebelling against the British or the infamous 'Cow- Pig' smeared Cartridges, or the rebellion by Indian Princesses, Peasants rising or the Hindu- Muslim Unity, which had been promulgate to juxtapose cause of the revolt.

With the Emerging school of Subaltern Historiography, in 20th century where a great stress was to account the 'histories from below' where an attempt had been made to unearthed and

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make the Downtrodden or the Popular character of the 1857, which has been often overlooked or deliberately erased from the mainstream academic writing. The revolt, which still exists in the margins, as an unfinished project, contributions of such diverse communities like Dalits, other Depressed and Tribal Classes and women have been major forgotten categories which are now being re-documented into mainstream history-writing based on collective memory, oral narratives and folklore .

This whole perspective of unearthing the Revolt, from the marginal aspect, gave rise to a new genre of cultural representations and Identity creations; which was taken by the people of the local community. The revolt and its character came into question, with the major participation by the local communities and a new angle which came forward was the mass participation by Women in the Insurgence. This new inquiry and unconventional modes of History led to a whole new genre of Dalit Literature. Contributions of Indian people from diverse backgrounds started emerging and as a result, Local community histories and Oral histories started replacing the old Imperialistic archives. Celebrated Indian Women from diverse Caste and Class like 'Jhlokri Bai of Kori caste & Udadevi a pasi ,Avanti Bai, a lodhi , Mahabiri Devi – a Bhangi etc. were brought into the mainstream history writing. These recent projections have created whole new political spaces, questioning these cultural representations and politics of identity formations. Often such cultural representations especially around women are either compartmentalised or are long lost, often been interpreted as the "other" representations of the womanhood.

Women are left nameless in the pages of history, who actively led the revolt in the grassroots becoming the symbols of the popular resistances, and have hardly received any such scholarly acclamation. Subjected to rapes, butchery, mass killings or inhibiting valorised masculine and contesting sexual undertones under which they have been projected by some popular histories. This study majorly focuses on unearthing the role and contributions of these eleven rural peasant women, who organised a 'Women Rebel Army 'and fought the revolt from the margins of Uttar Pradesh during the revolt of 1857. This study aims at re-writing the constructed projections around these women and valuing their role in the resistance of 1857, which has been often 'invisibilized'.

En-Gendering the 1857

The empire was always showcased as having a masculine character, were women as mere 'objects' and the Indian Male were attributed to Effeminacy (Sinha, 1987:226). Nation and Gender both social constructions, which have been analogous in many social and historical context. The Company and its Subjects were always portrayed as these 'Masculine objects 'and its subjects were embodied as the weak, meek, barbarous and uncivilized often effeminate. The western stereotypes of gender categories and their models of nationalism and nation- state came into cultures and worldviews through colonialism in India (Sinha , Colonial Masculinity ; Partha Chatterjee, 1999).

Masculinity and femininity are two predetermined sets, governed by social norms which always alter in tandem with each other. Colonialism is a point of convergence of the Western stereotypes of gender categories, political and economic domain. The West justified colonialism as a 'Civilizing mission' by propagating its concept of modernity and progress. There are various ways of looking at asymmetric gender roles in the nation. Nation and gender intimately participate in the connotation of each other. Nations are gendered, with the asserting the Masculine character of the Nation and the Englishmen, a very modern ideal of

masculinity was shaped, with characteristic features of Manly Greek physique, which counterpoised to this stereotype: languor, softness, sensuality and Effeminacy was thus propagated. Colonial ideologies of modernity led to a progress fashioning of the rigid masculine self. The discourse changed the perceptions towards age, gender and the history in the colonised county. He further argues that it produced a cultural consensus in which political and socio – economic dominance symbolized the dominance of men and masculinity over women and femininity. (Nandy, 1978). The nexus between the political dominations and the gender stereotypes is further legitimised by the Oriental's discourses. In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the distinction between masculine and feminine races as a pervasive theme and appeared in connection with Bengalis, who demonstrated a noble lack of interest in proving their manhood by overt signs of martial, leather- faced masculinity. They much preferred the martial races as Sikhs and Mohammedans which exhibited aggressive spirit. The imperial constitution of politics of colonial masculinity' where the British superiority over the Indian subjects was expressed in terms of the distinction between the self- controlled and 'manly' Englishman and the over-emotional 'effeminate' Bengali (Mrinalini Sinha, 1987:226).

The Nationalist School on its Reconstruction and Revivalist project gained major momentum, in the Early Nineteenth century. It was the earliest school of thought to actually to beliefs in the Indian People's participation, and further called it as the very first war of independence. As it was the very time in the history of India, when the masses has come to avenge the common enemy. Moreover the proponent of the school attested to the Mass participation of Indian women, in the revolt from the Peasant communities, moreover they projected and compartmentalised them into the notions of 'Bharat Mata discourse' or the 'Ideal women discourse'. The conceptions of 'mother'- 'motherland, mother –hood, motherland- have served as the most universal and potent symbols of imagining the nation (Gupta, 2001, pp. 4291-4299) and modify the constructs of their 'femininity' around the prevailing political ideology.

This very compartmentalisation of Nationalistic history only reserved the pages of history of the Elitist/ Ruling Women who fought the revolt leaving out the marginal contributions. Such deliberate erasures lead to the wash-out of names and contributions of these women in the historical spaces. Historical deeds of women have been so fundamental and exclamatory that such examples and contributions from such predominantly rural class women are hardly been accorded and moreover left in the peripheries.

3. Making Representational Compartments: Historiography on 1857

Histories of wars and successions have always been written on then termed as weaker bodies of Women and children. And very often these histories have been written with utmost motives. Such histories have often been Symbolized and attained to categorization. Very often we account the mother who was a nurturer of civilization transitioned into the andromorphic Motherland /Bharat Mata/ which became the symbols for the Indian Women in Nationalist historiography. Such compartments of 'Respectable women' were not alien to European women, as they were highly sexualized as 'White Memsahab' which we often in the colonial writings of the period (Ramasawmay,2000) This im-personified imagery thus created a deified image of a single mother of whole nation, whose honour had to be protected from these evil colonisers. The colonial Women and her identity had largely been pictured and inserted in the 'Nationalistic respectable' discourse creating the 'authenticated body of nationalist' imagery for the middle class. Such a symbolism was attached to the Women, by

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the western scholars and the Nationalists. The former attached the honour of the Empire to these created symbols as they were convinced that nationalism could only be evoked when a violence perpetrated on the weaker sections can be made the ground for justification.

Which raised a defined parameter for representations which drew to constrained perspectives Female portrayals subjected as either 'Victims 'of the War, or portrayed as 'Valorising Masculine counterparts. The Victimization representation saw the ugliest form of atrocities as it had been associated mainly to the British Subjects, because of the scanty of the Indigenous writings then, the only available source can be determined to the British sources resulting in framing an entire discourse on predominance of incidents committed on English women. Accounts like English Newspapers, Women's Magazines, Cartoons and Paintings helped in creating this ruckus in the International sense with emphasizing the Incidents of Violence on Women. *The Massacre at the Bibighar Cawnpore* and the Lucknow conspiracy was much written about, with an aim to harpooning on barbarous nature of Indians. British Women were subjected to sexual assaults, rapes, mass murders based on the fabrications of eye-witness accounts, which laid to mass discontentment back home. Britain's honour was affected in these two incidents, and fuelled to hateful sentiments for the Indian subjects, which later became the justification ground for the Aftermath violence at Delhi. Moreover, this narrative totally ignored and side-lined even the existence of Indian Women, atrocities on them or even their participations or contributions and later attributed them as 'Victims of Wildness' (Blunt. 2000)

Another such construct was the creation of Female Masculine counterparts -the colonial men were shown as this progressive agent but women were portrayed in the nationalistic traditions, where such creation of femininity and masculinity of the existing male hero. The creation of such Mardani Rani Lakshmi Bai & Begum Hazrat Mahal – ideal mother like figures – which actually gave a twist to National evocation and disrupted the entire phenomenon of white man's burden – which majority aimed at reforming this barbarous home land – from social evils like sati, purdahs widowhood etc. Further these atrocities led to subjection of the British women as first the Victims and later as the Hero of the Revolt (Blunt, 2000). Who were later pushed to fit into the later compartments to compete the Indian narrative of Brave women who fought the alien forces.

1. 1857: People Movement

While representing the Indian women contributions, very carefully space was crafted for the elitist queens, which served the nationalist vested interests. (Narayan, 1998) Such distorted cultural representations led to exclusion of these lesser/ 'other' women who existed in the peripheries/ margins belonging dominantly to the peasant class, since peasants do not write their histories – which led to their interactions with the rebellion went undocumented, which later led to erasure of them in the pages of history (Pati, 2010, xvii). The revolt was always being 'mapped' around certain dominant regions – leaving the peripheries. Historical school of thought which stressed on 'Popular character' (Guha, 1983) of the revolt, further led to tapping of the revolt 1857, in the folklore –suggesting revolt still existing in the peripheries which led to works focused on the diversities and the specificities of the rebellion (Joshi, 2007), further also a stress on the demographic background of the peasants (Bayly, 1983). Thus a popular discourse of labelling the lesser peasant communities as dacoits and further classifying them into criminal tribes (Mayaram 2014) thus even led to their exclusions from even the census archives.

While looking for the lost archives or histories which exists in the 'Other' form of history writing the War, uncovered the participation of many lesser known communities which were often classified under the subcategories of – Royalty, landed aristocracy, courtesans, prostitute's, commoners, tribal and Dalit etc. Recent works around Dalit women participating the One such community which was highly sensualized was the peasant communities of Jaats and Gurjars, which were generally classified as criminal tribes by the British subjects. Haling to the peripheries and surviving on looting and plundering they were actually the backbone of the First war of Independence Savarkar also attests them as the ones who fought with full valour , as they comprised the footing soldiers in the war.

Two very prominent Icons of 21st centuries which came up as a resultant of Oral and Memory studies which are a resultant of community histories are these many new leaders and revolutionaries have recently sprung up – Men like Dhan Singh Gurjar and Umrao Singh Parmar, Tulla Rao Ram have recently emerged as the leaders resonating as the face of these dominant peasant communities. Yet these tracings and creations often go silent on the Women's question. Women in these communities are often side-lined and often resorted to the Homely atmosphere of the house.

Summary

In the construction of Nationalism, the modern nation has often been explicitly imagined through gendered metaphors, particularly constructed around the female body (George L.Mosse, 1985,5-12).Towards the end of the Nineteenth century the reformist movements' earlier attempts to 'modernise' religion and social practices led to major backlash in the form of movements to 'revive tradition' and unleashing of mindless violence by militant nationalists. The Nationalist project of creating a new modern Hindu- nation' was seen as threat by many other sections, largely Muslims and lower caste peoples. Much has been written by others on the emergence of the gendered representation of India as "Mother India" in the last quarter of the nineteenth century in Bengal and Maharashtra, Uttar-Pradesh to down South and parts of the world. This exceptional female figure appears as both divine and human; as "Indian" but also reminiscent of female figurations of the nation from other parts of the world.

Dalit literature and recent works also highlight some names like Asha Devi Gurjari, Habiba Gurjari, Rahimi Gurjari, Valmiki Gurjari , Namkaur, kushal Devi and many others who participated in the revolt, but are lost or erased from the Imperialist archival records. These women unearthing the role and contributions of these eleven women, who organised a 'Women Rebel Army 'and fought the revolt from the margins of Uttar Pradesh in Muzzafarnagar district during the revolt of 1857 . Hailing from rural peasant communities like Jaats and Gurjjars etc. which even brings to light the early nationalism and unity existing in country. These invisible women exist in alternate Histories like Collective Memory, songs, stories, ballads Folklore and Commemorations which can lead us to uncover their silenced voices, unearthing other Socio- economic factors which existed at grass root level

In the last I would just conclude with, such created symbols and allegories further the proponents of nationalism which harvest strong idea of Nationalism. And such contestations have always been laid on the Women's bodies. But what if when the Subaltern finally learn to speak ?

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The Female Patriots Of South Odisha—A Profile

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The participation of female patriots of South Odisha during Gandhian struggle for freedom was not less significant episode in the annals of Freedom Movement in India. Their uncompromising nationalistic feeling, valiant deed, altruistic dedication, heroic saga of sufferings and sacrifice for the sake of motherland created nationwide awakening and consciousness in society. It paved fuel for the escalation of women empowerment and Gandhian constructive programmes. The chivalrous tale of Rani Laxmibai, Begum Hazarat Mahal, queen of Ramagada, the blood boiling message of Annie Besant, Sarojini Naidu, Aruna Ashaf Alli, Sucheta Krupalini, Vijayalaxmi Pandit, the vivacious call of Gandhi for partaking of women in the national struggle had a tremendous impact and unfathomable response in every corner of Odisha. The female jingoists like Ramadevi, Saraladevi, Malatidevi, Annapurna Maharana, Reba Roy, Smt. Padmabai wife of Madhusudhana Rao, Sarojini Choudhuri daughter of Fakir Mohan Senapati played superb part for emancipation of motherland. The energetic message of Gandhi tempted the female stalwarts of South Odisha for their close association with Gandhian struggle for freedom. The prime objective of this paper is to highlight the noteworthy contribution of female patriots of South Odisha in the Gandhian freedom struggle for liberation of the country. But, their glorious tribute has not been properly evaluated by the recent researchers in the pages of history till date.

A. Laxmibai, the most celebrated woman leaders of South Odisha played pivotal role during freedom struggle in Odisha. She adorned the lap of Jogeya Panthulu and Varahagiri Sobhama on 12th October 1899 at Berhampur. Her father was a veteran lawyer and a renowned freedom fighter and mother was a pious, freedom loving lady. Her brother V. V. Giri was a true jingoist who later becomes the President of free India. Leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Rajendra Prasad and Mira Ben used to stay in her residence during their visit to South Odisha.¹ After her primary education; she took admission in the 'Theosophical Society at Kasi. She obtained Graduation from Dayacian College of Calcutta and joined at Vellore Medical College but her ill health spoiled her dream. Thereafter, she married to A.Venkataswar Rao of Rajmundry. Unfortunately her wedding life was short-lived. Influenced by the ideology of Gandhi, she actively associated with Salt Satyagraha, Individual-Civil Disobedience Movement, August Movement and Peasant Movement in Ganjam. She was courageous, a gifted orator and a disciplined Congress worker devoted entire life with Gandhian constructive works. She did a lot for the spread of the doctrine of Gandhi and was able to create patriotic feelings in the heart of the multitude. She took the charge of Vice-President of District-Congress-Committee. In the first general election, she was elected to the pre-independent Odisha Legislative Assembly from Berhampur Constituency and continued as MLA till 1953. She becomes the Speaker of Odisha Legislative Assembly from 29th May 1946 to 20th February 1952. She breathed her last on 27th January 1986 leaving behind her the grand legacy of an extra-ordinary patriotism.

Apurva Devi was the most dedicated flag-waver and a true nationalist of South Odisha, wife of Ballava Nayak of Kodala, a veteran Congress worker of the then times. She was a born leader, a well organizer and a disciplined social reformer. She along with her husband vehemently protested against the monopoly of Khalikote zamindary system. Thus, her contribution in the field of Freedom struggle was indeed remarkable.

Champa Devi, another remarkable lady fighter of Ganjam having splendid contribution to the national struggle was the inhabitant of village Dura of Ganjam. She received volunteer training at Alaka Ashram, Jagatsinghapur then Hindustan Sevashrama, Puri and came in contact with veteran Congress leaders like Rama Devi, Sarala Devi and Kuntala Kumari Sabat. The Gandhian philosophy of Harijan attracted her soul and heart profusely so that she played vital role in the Harijana Movement. She laid the foundation of Harijan Sevashram at Icchapur² in 1932 at her own cost and another at Phulbani in 1942 for the cause of Harijans. She took very active responsibility during Quit India Movement and also courted arrest. She died on 3rd May 1975 at the age of 71 years. Though such dynamic lady worker is no more with us, but her contribution to the up-liftment of Harijans and widow-remarriage will speak for ever.

Hemalata Samanta, popularly known as 'Hema Apa' was a great soul of South Odisha. Born on 8th August 1911 at Ramasa she adorned the lap of her father Kapil Das Samanta and mother Laxmi Devi.³ She married to Gouri Shankar Samanta, a committed freedom fighter of Khallikote in 1934 at Berhampur. Imbued by the philosophy of Gandhi, she left school and jumped in to the fire of nationalism at the age of 15 years. She received volunteer training programme organized by the Hindustan Seva Dala at Puri. In 1936 police arrested her at Kabisurya Nagar for her involvement in a mass Peasant Movement organized by Gouri Shankar Samanta and Banamali Maharana. Thereafter, she stayed in Velour Jail for 18 months. She left on 21st October 1998 at the age of 87 years. Undoubtedly she was a born leader and a promised personality having fine tribute to the Movement.

Krishnapriya Rath, the 'Night angle of Odisha' was a notable freedom fighter played decisive role in the anti-British agitation in South Odisha. Her husband Bhubaneswar Rath was a renowned legal practitioner of Berhampur. She was a very good philanthropist sacrificed her life for the service of mankind. She was a selfless worker of Indian Red Cross Society deputed to Manipur to serve the war victims. Thus, her name enrolled in the annals of Odisha because of her relentless service and dedication during war.

Kishorimani Devi was a top-ranking women stalwart of South Odisha popularly known as the iron lady of Ganjam. She wholeheartedly took part in the Civil-Disobedience Movement by responding the call of Gandhi and breaks the Salt law of the British. She made a frequent move to the interiors of the district to create anti-British feelings among the innocent people. Her heart kissing voice mobilized women large in number to march Humma to defy the Salt law of the British.⁴ She worked parallel with her husband Niranjan Patnayak, a veteran Congress leader of Ganjam district and also imprisoned during Salt Satyagrah. She founded a training camp named "Pragati Ashram" at Berhampur in 1930. Under her active support, this organization conducted series of hartals, protest, Strikes and processions, public meetings at different places in different times. She died on 16th January 1981AD.

Kundalata Devi, an emblem of peace and nonviolence was a dazzling personality of South Odisha took over the charge of Udyago Mandir founded by her husband Banchanidhi Patnaik at Berhampur to make popular Charakha and Swadeshi. In 1930 she led a Satyagraha rally in

Ganjam and was courted arrest. After her release from jail, she made an extensive tour at different areas of Ganjam accompanied with Sobhabati Panda. In the meeting held at Gobora, she donated her ornaments to Swaraj Tilak Fund for social cause. During Civil-Disobedience Movement she was arrested and got rigorous imprisonment.

P. Tarama, the inhabitant of Paralakhemundi born on 27th May 1900 was a prominent protester of anti-British movement. She considered Gandhi as her God father since childhood and followed his foot-print till her death. At the youth, she formed an anti-British group consisting of forty members and mobilized them to fight against the British. She took part vigorously in the Civil Disobedience Movement, Individual Satyagrah and was arrested. She died on 25th September 1978 at the age of 78 years. The Government of India honoured her in New Delhi for her unparalleled sacrifice in the national struggle.

Smt. Suryama was an ever remembering social activist, dedicated freedom fighter of South Odisha having fine tribute to the freedom struggle. She followed the foot-print of her husband Master Sanaya, a well known Congress worker and joined in the Non-Cooperation Movement. Inspired by the thunder call of Gandhi Do or Die she took vibrant role during Quit-India Movement, Anti-liquor Movement, Harijan Movement and received imprisonment many times. She was a staunch supporter of Gandhi and was so associated with him that when she received the sudden demise of Gandhi, her heart beat began to slow down and she left suddenly on 30.01.1948.⁵

Sobhabati Panda, a notable and responsible female patriot of South Odisha was born in 1913 in a Brahmin family at Digapahandi. Her husband Antaryami Panda was a popular Congress worker of Digapahandi. She attended the first public meeting of Gandhi at Berhampur which had deep impact on her mind.⁶ Inspired by the call of Gandhi, she dedicated her life for the common cause. She received her initial volunteer training from Alaka Ashram, Jagatsinghapur and Hindustani Seva Dala at Puri. In 1931 she performed significant role for the spread of Harijana Movement at Bari. She participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement and was imprisoned. She moved nook and corner of Ganjam with Purnabasi Devi to popularize the Congress ideologies. She set up a Sevaashram at Subarnapur.⁷ In 1942 police arrested her due to her involvement in August revolution. Thus her contribution to social struggle is not negligible.

Sitadevi Khadanga was a true nationalist, a multifaceted personality and a popular worker of Congress party in South Odisha. Her father Harihara Panda was a distinguished leader of Odia Movement. Born in 1902 at Aska she married to Banchanidhi Khadanga at the age of ten. She was a poet, dramatist, and a story writer. She wrote a good number of novels, dramas in Odia language like Nari, Nastik, Nispati, Prachinapanthi.⁸ Her literature not only created awareness but also united the womanhood to jump in to the main stream of nationalism. She was an active member of Ganjam District Board and raised her tone against the social evils of society by her pen.

Smt. J. V. Narayana was a born leader played heroic role during Civil--Disobedience Movement. She led a massive women rally in the streets of Berhampur to protest against the unlawful arrest of women satyagrahies and organized a grand meeting at town hall Berhampur, delivered fire brand speeches and was imprisoned twice for her anti-British activities. Besides this T. Arahulu wife of T. Krishnamurthy of Nuapada near Chikiti, Bara Laxmi Devi of Aska, Sucharubhasini Devi wife of Bira Laxman Das of Bhanjanagar,

Rasamani Devi and Malati panda of Berhampur were the other noteworthy freedom fighters of Ganjam district.

The undivided Koraput district was a part and partial of South Odisha chiefly inhabited by the simple hearted aboriginals. They did not like the ideas of subjugation were usually subsisted by the nature's piety. The land and forest were main source of their livelihood. The concept of liberty was an integral part of their life. By taking their simplicity the British had exploited them through ruthless way which disrupted their self sufficient life. The unwanted economic policy, excessive taxation system and bellicose temperament of the alien compelled them to unveil the banner of protest against the British. The tribal women of this district up rose to drive out the colonial hegemony. They neither surrender nor provided any assistance to the British in spite of colonial threaten. A few tribal magnates came out to political limelight and imbibed others to join with them.

The altruistic contribution of **Khara Parvati**, the wife of Khara Malaya of village Ghassab, an extra-ordinary persona of Bonda community during anti-colonial upsurge is indeed remarkable. When she delivered a son, people gathered at Ghassaba to take the glimpse of that child believed that the newly born babe was an incarnation of Lord Krishna who could easily oust the British. They took an oath before the baby that they should destroy the devil camps with the help of bamboo sticks and their bamboo sticks would be turned into guns at the times of fighting. Thereafter, the insurgents holding with bamboo sticks marched to village Pachipenthu. Khara Parvati killed two constables in an encounter. Observing her decisive warfare C.B.M. Pilley the British Commander got much nervous and ordered firing. Accordingly, Khara Malaya shoot dead on the spot. With much disappointment the tribal flew to forest and made gaurila warfare. That year the insurgents killed ten police officers in jungle. Ultimately, the colonial force succeeded to annihilate this great lady along with her son on the bank of Sileru in 1916. ⁹

During Quit India Movement **Santi Sahu**.¹⁰ followed the foot prints of her father Bauri Sahu of Khejendri, a renowned patriot of Koraput district. She was a trusted grass root Congress worker; a staunch freedom fighter contributed much for the upliftment of Harijans. She was a dedicated social worker took keen leadership in Harijan movement and anti-liquor picketing. She moved from door to door to spread the gospel of Gandhi and was able to create national consciousness and patriotic feelings among the Koraputians. She continued her social service till she breathed her last.

Laxmi Sourani, the native of Gunpur was a notable freedom loving woman jumped in to the fire of nationalism spontaneously and tried her best to spread the message of Gandhi Mahapru in the Koraput region. She coupled with her followers took active part in the Quit-India Movement, attended a secret meeting of Congress held at Joypore where prominent leader like Laxman Nayak and Sonu Majhi were present. She reached the message of Gandhi in Koraput district so secretly that police did not able to know about her involvement. Hence, she was not arrested but under the suspect of the police.

Another noteworthy female patriot of South Odisha was **Subarna Harijan**, of village Patri. Influenced by a veteran Congress stalwart named Mohmmad Baji, she met with Acharya Harihara and received training at Acharya Harihar Training Center, Sakhigopal. There she came in contact with Rama Devi. After her return she popularized the Gandhian concept of non-violence in Nabarangpur. On her instance a number of tribal women such as Sunadei Bhatra of Chatahandi, Mukta Majhi, Jema Bhatra of Daspur, Sakadei Bhatra of Barodei

joined freedom struggle. She was a good organizer and a very good social reformer played outstanding role against the British monopoly.

The most dynamic patriot of Kujendri was **Sandi Sabar**, born under the parentage of Bairu Gomango and Lujuri. With the assistance of Biswanath Patnaik, the Koraput Gandhi, and Bhagaban Senapati of village Gulumunda who donated her sataranji worth of Rs 2. 00/- , she received training at Bari Ashram and Alaka Ashrama for six months to spin cotton thread, weaving, cleaning of village, non-violence and named as Shanti. Thereafter, she took leadership among the Soura community to unite them. Every day in the morning and evening they hoisted tri-coloured flag in the school premises and slognaed “Jhanda Uchha Rahe Hamara”. One day Mr. Willock the Collector of Koraput camped there and ordered to down the flag. The nine tribal girls named Sita Gamango, Laxmi Sabar, Jadi Sabar, Sambari Sabar, Laxmi Gomango, Champa Sabar led by Sandi Sabar formed a human chain to protect the flag. Their protest and fearlessness made Willcock much nervous. Apprehending violence the Collector left that place without taking any action. She was never imprisoned during national struggle. When Biswanath Patnaik remained in jail, she took responsibility of freedom struggle in Kujendri area. She married with Madhu Sabar of village Khilpadar and breathed her last on 28th November 1954 due to excess bleeding while delivering child.

During Quit India Movement undivided Koraput district played considerable role. On 9th August 1942 after the arrest of freedom fighters of Umorkot, thousands of women came forward to face the police atrocity. The spinster daughter of Damburu Majhi of Landiguda, Parusa Sira of Chamundi, daughter-in-law of Raghunath Majhi of Padmapur, Gurubari Jani wife of Raidhar Jani of Garudagada bitten mercilessly by the police. Police captured Nandalal a freedom fighter of locality from the house of Chaitanya Bhatra; both were tied together at a pole in the middle of the village street. Chaitanya’s wife Satai was dragged out from her house and was misbehaved in front of her helpless husband. These blood boiling incidents were committed by the ruler over the ruled throughout the district. During Quit-India Movement the innocent tribal women of Koraput district who joined the Satyagrah were Sambari Gond, Kuji Gonda, Gunji Gonda, Moti Bhatra, Swati Ganda, Saraguda Bhatra, Raduna Bhatra, Sukadei Pujari, Bisi Pujari, Sani Pujari, Smt. Masti Kastani of Dabugam, Smt. Jamuna and Kandi of Maibalpur, Kumari Jhara, Jani Kumari, Kumari Tandra, Kumari Droupadi Garma and Surya from Tharinga. Except above discussed personalities also other tribal women fighters of south Odisha contributed more, but it is the irony of history that they never came to the pen of scholars. Hence, it requires scholastic study to bring them limelight.

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Plight of Women in Assam's Contemporary History: An Ecological Reading of Arupa Patangia Kalita's *The Story of Felanee*

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Abstract

Arupa Patangia Kalita has been reckoned as one of the most powerful voices in contemporary Assamese literature. She is a bold and acutely aware chronicler of her time. At the core, her works probe human suffering and predicament. They project the lives of the Assamese middle class and working class and focuses on women's issues, violence and insurgency. Her novel Felanee (2002) was translated to English by Deepika Phukan and was titled as, The Story of Felanee (2011). The aim of this paper is to highlight the plight of Felanee and other marginalised women during the late 1970s both at the time of anti-foreigner agitation and then later ethnic clashes between Assam's diverse communities. It also attempts to show their instinctive urge of survival inspite of the violence prevalent at the background.

Key Words: Ecocriticism, Violence, Insurgency, Trauma, Identity, Marginalised

Introduction

Cheryll Glotfelty in her introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader* (1996) defines ecocriticism as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (Glotfelty xix). The term “Ecocriticism” was coined by William Rueckert in “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism”, in 1978 but its antecedents stretch back much further. By Ecocriticism Rueckert meant “the application of ecology and ecological concept to the study of literature.” (Glotfelty xviii). Ecocriticism calls for a paradigm shift from the human-centric to the bio-centric. Ecocriticism takes an earth centred approach to literary studies. David Thoreau can be considered as the father of ecocriticism. The environmental turn in literary studies or green studies which debates “Nature” in order to defend nature has been more issue-driven than method or paradigm-driven. The term means either the study of nature writing by way of any scholarly approach or, conversely, the scrutiny of ecological implications and human-nature relationships in any literary text, even texts that seem oblivious of the nonhuman world.

Landscape in *The Story of Felanee* refers both to “geographical terrain and a terrain of consciousness” (Buell 83). They are defined by unique locations, landscape and communities as well as by the focusing of experiences and intentions into particular settings. They are not abstractions or concepts, but are directly experienced phenomena of the lived world and hence are full with meanings, with real objects, and with ongoing activities. Terrain here is always read like a text with cultural and literary meaning embedded by the narrator in his/her search for cultural memories. Like other biological organisms, humans live and act on landscapes, and thus have influenced, and been influenced by landscapes. (Bhattacharyya 40)

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The idea of landscape gives us a meaningful context into which we can set notions of place and community. Landscape refers to the perceived settings that frame people's senses of place and community. The term landscape signifies the specific arrangement of pattern of "things on the land: trees, meadows, buildings, streets, factories, open spaces and so forth" (Atkinson 49). Landscapes are characterized by their physical and human properties and can undergo significant changes in due course of time. They are diverse and complex, beautiful and inspirational. Exploitation of nature reflects exploitation of women. Landscape becomes equivalent to women being exploited. In the novel under study, we find that the novelist feminizes nature and tries to show woman and nature same as if it hampers individual self. And it is 'by connecting the selves with their own past memories and with each other' one can explore their selves. (Bhattacharyya 145)

One's self is one's sense of who one is, deep down—one's identity. When one lets someone else know one well, one's true self is revealed. Identity in itself is a complex term to be deciphered as one's identity is not something static but is a constant flux. As identities are constructed through multiple specificities such as race, ethnicity, gender, class etc. we need to rethink the very idea of identity *in terms of* ethnicity and gender here, where identities can be recast. (Monalisa 5)

Area of Research

The broad area which concerns the particular research is Ecocriticism. We have tried to understand the natural and human worlds as interrelated. And find out how women faces and copes with their problems and challenges in a patriarchal society by drawing inspiration from nature. The study however has been delimited to certain events in Assam's contemporary history.

Objectives

The study deals with the following objectives:

1. To highlight the plight of Felanee and other marginalised women during the late 1970s both at the time of ant-foreigner agitation and then later ethnic clashes between Assam's diverse communities.
2. To show their instinctive urge of survival inspite of the violence prevalent at the background.

Methodology

As methodology for the study, the conceptual tools of interdisciplinary Ecocriticism are applied here. The primary source of data is the text and the secondary source includes the existing literatures on the subject, both printed and soft copies of books, articles, journals etc.

Discussion

The *Story of Felanee* is a historical novel. It is based on real life events in Assam, which is one of the states of India's conflicted Northeast that has seen insurgencies and agitations, ethnic killings and communal strife, violence and bloodshed through the late 1970s and up until the present. The novel looks at several events in Assam's contemporary history and traces the life of one woman, Felanee, who loses her husband, her unborn child and her home in a fierce scene of courage and bloodletting.

The period since the late 1970s has been one of intense sociopolitical movements, armed rebellions and state supported armed repressions in large parts of northeastern India. Women in general have been at the receiving end of the violence unleashed both by armed rebels fighting against the Indian state as well as by the state's armed machinery. The text is situated in conflict ridden times. *Felanee* spans a time period which saw several movements and rebellions, sometimes running parallel to each other as ethnic groups increasingly claimed nationhood within or outside the political borders of the Indian state.

Felanee, which means —“thrown away”—is the name of the protagonist of the novel. The text's landscape traverses several decades starting with the journey of a child widow Ratnamala (an upper caste Assamese), daughter of a Mauzadar family. Ratnamala elopes with a mahout Kinaram Bodo, away from the wrath of the Mauzadar family, and settles in a village in the foothills. She dies after giving birth to Jutimala. Kinaram's bullet stricken body is discovered soon after. As Jutimala grows up to be a beautiful girl, a shopkeeper Khitish Ghosh (a Bengali sweet seller) spots her in a local *mela* and they marry. Meanwhile, trouble begins, houses are burnt and bullets are fired and Jutimala lies in a pool of blood after the birth of her daughter as riots break out in the 1960s. The Bhasa Andolan or the Language Movement during the 1960s stirred up emotions against Bengalis as outsiders; the attack on Khitish Ghosh's house may be seen as a manifestation of those times. The baby, which was thrown away in a nearby pond, is rescued by Khitish's brother Ratan—she is Felanee. Her plight begins with her birth at the time of riot in 1960 - the historic Language Movement of Assam

When Felanee grows up and marries Lambodar Koch and becomes mother to a son, Moni, another set of troubles brews. One day, Lambodar asks her to pack up their belongings as she looks sadly at her home and hearth,

“What could she pack?... the kordoi tree that is sweet even when it is tender, the short jahaji tree laden with bananas till the ground? Or the blooming red rose? The pond with the fishes up and about?” (11)

In the 1984 riot her home gets wrecked and her husband is killed. Though she and her son escape the riot, they can never escape the memory of the same:

... Felanee came out of the swamp. She was still holding Moni. She stared at the jute fields in the faint light. It looked as though a herd of wild elephants had trampled over the lush green. The place was full of dead bodies. Pools of blood were everywhere (24)

Felanee remembered seeing a man caught in a net and men setting upon him with weapons. She remembered seeing blood and more blood. Just then a man came running and informed them that not a single house had been spared in the village. No one had been left alive either. The body in the net had been carried away by people from the city who had arrived armed with weapons. The terror of that loss can never be fully expressed in language.

After her husband's death Felanee's position and her very identity is demoted to a refugee in her own homeland. When the doctor in the refugee camp asks her about her identity she is in utter fix as the images of her grandparents Ratnamala and Kinaram (Bodo), her parents Jyotimala (Assamese) and Khitish Ghosh (Bengali), her husband Lambodar (Koch) starts wavering before her mind. “What are you anyway?” stunned at this question

she kept looking at him. The boy stared back at her. Why she was taking so long to answer such a simple question, he thought. ‘What are you?’ Yes she thought, what am I?’ (32).

At this moment of accusation no word exists in Felanee’s perplexed world of multi-ethnic lineage that could give her identity fixity than what drops from her quaking lips-“human”. Felanee who could be an ideal trope of the ‘Assamese identity’ having an integrated poly-ethnic character, ironically transformed into a social outcast in her own home. The monolithic ideology of the Assam Movement has imposed such restraints upon the selves that not only Felanee but all the marginalised characters in the novel suffer the same crises of identity. The disruption caused by violence in the name of Assamese nationalism has been so dismal and devastating that it has caused fragmentation of happy homes, disintegration of family, trauma of disbelief and alienation in society at large.

Women’s collective survival remain central to *The Story of Felanee*. Through her female self-discovery narrative, Kalita poignantly presents the pathetic situation of a group of oppressed and marginalised womenfolk as well as the prominent resistance these women put forth with extraordinary courage and solidarity against the bewildering and engulfing spirals of violence. Though Felanee survives the fierce massacre and bloodshed, she loses her husband, unborn child, and her home. Minoti’s prince charming who is an ULFA comes to her for his sexual pleasure and fulfillment and deserts her once giving a child in her belly. Jun’s mother and Jaggu’s wife’s tremulousness is due to marital rape and domestic violence. Sumola was raped and disfigured till death. All these instances represent the denuded, dismembered and degraded forests which are themselves sites of exploitation. The forest becomes a dark place of refuge for the revolutionaries who have been wronged, a place where the revolutionaries disappear after attacking their opponents.

Environmentalists like Vandana Shiva refer to the idea of development that we have borrowed from the west as maldevelopment because they more often than not involve and encourage violence against the local environment and women. Minoti, Jun and Sumola are in fact, part of the gangrenous consequences of such maldevelopment.

Felanee’s existential predicament teaches her to continue her sustenance by living collectively with the other rootless inhabitants of the refugee camps and makeshift shanties such as Kali Burhi, Ratna’s mother, Sumola, Minoti, Jagu’s wife etc. The novel thus eloquently depicts the many tales of women’s struggles searching for ways of a dignified though poor life. Felanee with her small son works for economic sustenance and survives by frying puffed rice with Kali Burhi initially, learns to make *moorhas* from Ratna’s mother and selling these in the nearby market. Some others take greens and stool to sell in the market. She is in awe of Kali Burhi who has survived the big nasty patriarchal world by transforming herself from the social outcast Arati to the revered Kali incarnate. Kali Burhi declared, instead of shedding tears “Women have to be like chilli...tiny to look at but real fire once in mouth.” (66). After Kali Burhi’s death, Felanee also takes recourse to the same tactic.

The novel depicts how violence and terror of the Assam Movement has devastated myriad of happy homes by slipping into their lives to the extent of alienation of selves and society. Though certain historical events of the Language Movement (1960s), the killing of the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (1984) or signing of the Assam Accord (1985) propel the narrative action of the novel, the author is more interested in tracing their disjunctive impact on the lives of the beleaguered marginalised lives such as the severance of filial and ethnicities, the fragmentation of personal identity, disintegration of families, alienation and segregation, marginalisation and other disastrous eventualities that invariably

accompany dislocation. In a condition where their identity gets suspended as ethnic nomenclature Felanee negates all modes of identity formation with such questions:

“What all will they divide? Could they divide the sky over their heads? Will they divide the water in the rivers; the trees, the land, the people? Will they separate Kali Boori from her, and Minoti from Sumola?...” (184).

Felanee seems to escape into the world of nature. (Hemjyoti 7) Except for a brief period when the women come together to rescue their sons/ husbands from the army camp, the novel’s distancing from the issue of self/ identity erase questions which have been at the centre of much bloodshed in the story of felanee. The novel tries to resolve these complex questions by taking recourse to the natural world by invoking one sky and the freely overgrown reeds.

Arupa Patangia Kalita’s writing gain relevance and immediacy as she “reveal the dangerous and misleading nature of aggressive political agendas and regressive orthodoxies which divide and destroy the essential cohesion and plurality of Indian nation and civilization.” (Ghosh 114). Her writings, “set and produced in a troubled and contested landscape, are bound to transcend generic boundaries to evolve as a kind of alternate and passionate historiography documenting the lived experiences of ordinary people, caught in the bewildering spiral of violence and oppression.” (Ghosh 114). The women characters in *The Story of Felanee* are resilient and tenacious. The novel ends with a note of hope. Which is evident from the line:

Conclusion

The Story of Felanee hence reorients our perspectives on the interface between human and the physical environment. It highlights the plight of Felanee and other marginalised women during the late 1970s both at the time of ant-foreigner agitation and then later ethnic clashes between Assam’s diverse communities. It also focuses on the their instinctive urge of survival inspite of the violence prevalent at the background. It therefore signifies women’s fight for a symbiotic existence in a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual society.

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Where Women Prevail: Status and Issues of Female Heads of Patriarchal Families in Maharashtra

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Abstract:

Women have always played a prominent role in Hindu society. The status of Hindu women in India has undergone several changes. In some special instances women act as both breadwinner and caregiver in the absence of the male member. Such women are referred as Female heads of the family. With respect to the deviation from woman's traditional role in the family, she faces several issues and challenges. The present study is carried out in Pune and Ratnagiri districts of Maharashtra focuses on their issues and coping strategies. Data were collected by conducting in-depth interviews. Female Heads strive hard to accept the 'dual role', achieve and maintain the stable environment for themselves and their families.

Introduction:

Hinduism is the third largest religion in the world. It is the dominant religion in South Asia largely in India and Nepal. Since it is one of the biggest religions of the world it is significant to explore the role that women play in developing and practicing this. Women have played prominent roles in Hindu society from ancient times till now. The status of Hindu women in India has gone through several changes. Historically women in Hinduism have passed through two phases- a period of subjugation and a period of liberation. It is mentioned that in Vedic era, women in Hindu society have enjoyed a good and liberal life, whereas the status of women underwent deterioration in Post Vedic era. Whereas in contemporary society status of women has undergone change. It is seen that in some cases they perform role of not only a caregiver but also of a bread winner. It has also been observed that circumstantially some women have to adorn the role of men as head of the family. The present study focused on such women, their issues and coping strategies.

Status of Women in Hindu Society: Vedic Period

During the Vedic period women were assigned equal place in society as their menfolk. They enjoyed liberty that actually had societal sanctions. Rigvedic society was a liberal society. Education was equally open for boys and girls. Unmarried daughters had share in their father's property. In domestic life women were considered supreme and enjoyed freedom. Women had equally important share in religious and social life. She participated in religious ceremonies with her husband. It can be concluded that during Vedic period the status of women was equal to that of men. Divorce and remarriage of women were allowed under very special conditions. If a woman lost her husband, she was not forced to undergo the merciless practices.

Status of women in Hindu Society: Post Vedic period

In the Post Vedic period, the status of women in Hindu Society suffered a setback. Various restrictions were put on women's freedom and rights. In the Post Vedic period in India physical and biological limitations of women has gradually changed the general attitude towards women. Women were being viewed as weaker and inferior than men physically as well as mentally and intellectually. During the Post Vedic era patriarchal system became the prominent feature of the Indian society. The male domination was evident in almost all fields of the individual and social life. The deterioration in the position of women was first noticed in the field of education. The women lost their intellectual freedom. Ill effects of child marriage, custom of dowry and property rights made her life miserable. The society had cultivated an unsympathetic attitude towards widows and prohibition of their remarriage forced them to lead an ascetic way of life. (Nagamony P.S., 2018)

Status of women in patriarchy:

Indian families are predominantly patriarchal where elder males are head of the family. They are primary breadwinners and decision makers of the family and have authority over other members of family and family property. Females in the family are basically caregivers and look after children and household affairs.

Primarily there are two types of family in the Indian Society, joint family and nuclear family. Joint family is a group of people who generally live under one roof, who eat food from one hearth, who hold property in common who participate in common worship and are related to each other as some particular type of kindred (Karve, 1965). In joint family different household tasks and responsibilities are shared amongst all family members. Joint family also has several economic, social and psychological advantages. Elders in the family guide children. In joint families there is a sense of obligation and responsibility towards all the family members. It also provides an established support for all the members in the family. It not only provides assistance to the children but also to elderly. In case of the death of any male family member, joint family provides social, mental and economic support to his wife and children. The institution of joint family is undergoing change due to several factors like urbanization, industrialization, modernization. Younger generations migrate from their native families for education and employment and settles away from their kin. This is one of the important reasons for increase in number of nuclear families.

A nuclear family, is defined as a family consisting of married couple and their unmarried children living together. The nuclear families isolate people from their kin's network and weaken the relationship bonds that generally provide support.

Phenomenon of Female Headed Families (FHF):

This traditional joint or nuclear family organization may undergo drastic changes due to certain demographic and personal circumstances outside one's control. Circumstances such as death of male partner, informal or legal disruption of marriage, feminization of ageing, long term migration of male members of the family, force people to adapt a different family organization which suits their social and cultural condition. Such families are not mere lifestyle experimentations but come out of certain circumstances, (Bharat, 1994). Single

parent families, female headed households, dual earners are most commonly observed family variations that has been observed increasing in India. (Sonawat, 2001)

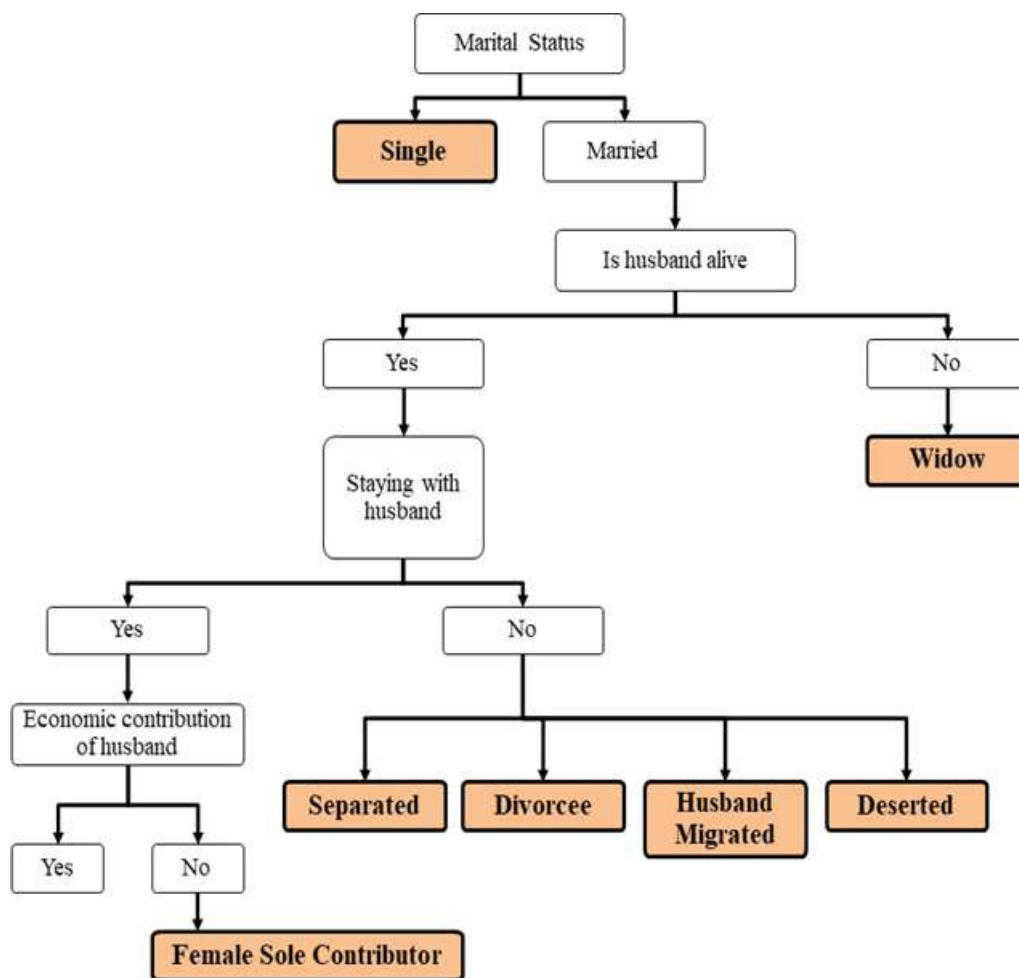
The present study focuses on such alternate family forms with specific emphasis on FHF.

Need and Significance:

In the patriarchal society when woman becomes head of the family, there is change in family structure, processes and family dynamics. The objectives of this paper are to study the increasing visibility of female headed families and their associated problems that have wider social, economic, psychological and cultural ramifications and to understand and document the coping strategies and mechanisms of female heads of the families.

Definition of Female Headed Families (FHF):

Female Headed families are defined by economists, demographers, legal experts and National Census from their own perspectives. For the present study the following types of women will be included as sample. Single/ never married, widows, separated, divorcee, deserted, women whose husbands migrate for longer period of time and women who are sole economic contributors of the family are considered as female head of the families.

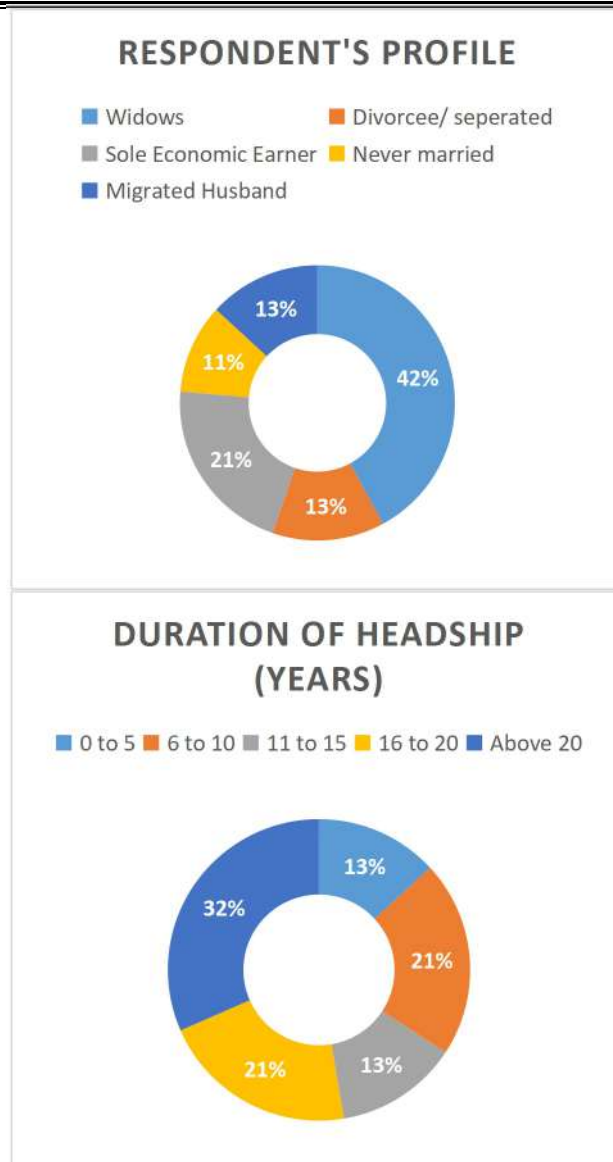


Female Headed Families: Indian Scenario

Globally, 33% of households are estimated to be headed by women (Praveen, Singh, 2008). India has 27 million female headed families in India, which constitutes 11% of the total households in the country (Census of India, 2011). Due to significant increase in number of FHF Housing and Household Amenities Data tables were released separately for the first time in the history of Census of India. In India seven states namely Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha and Gujarat have the highest proportion (more than 20%) of single member FHF.

Methodology:

The present study was conducted in two districts of Maharashtra namely Pune and Ratnagiri. According to the data of Census 2011, two districts with the highest number of female-headed families were selected. The data were collected by using an in-depth interview guide. Interviews of 38 female heads of the families were conducted. Data were analyzed thematically.



Data and Discussion:

Dimensions of issues of Female heads of the families:

Traditionally women have not seen to perform duties of men. Due to some unavoidable circumstances these women were forced into the role of family head. It does not come to them very easily. In the process of transition from a dependent family member to the head of family they face a lot of obstacles and issues. The following section highlights the issues that were recurrent in the in-depth interactions. These were categorized in three sections- Economic, Social and psychological.

Economic Issues:

Financial Insecurity:

In most of the cases it was seen that female heads of the families are prone to vulnerability to poverty. Many of them who are widowed, divorcee, separated or sole economic earners in the

family reported the incidences of financial stress. These women mentioned about the double burden of responsibilities they face. They act as both breadwinners and care providers of the family. It was also reported by some of the respondents that due to financial dependence these women are sometimes seen as a liability by their immediate families. Thus, the families avoid much interaction with them.

A respondent who was medical practitioner by profession reported that, "When my maternal family got to know that I was planning to separate from my husband, my mother and brother almost stopped talking to me. They avoided my phone calls also, my mother felt that I would call her to stay with me to look after my child. My brother was under impression that I might ask him for financial help. But actually, this was not the situation. I was all okay with whatever I had."

More commonly friends and colleagues are seen as approachable for financial help. It was also seen that in most of the cases there is betterment in the financial condition of the family as the time passes. In the cases where males were migrated for longer duration for work, financial scarcity was not reported. These families generally do not face lack of funds. As the financial burden is taken care by male counterparts in the family.

Compulsion to Earn:

Widows, separated, divorcee, sole economic earner of the family and single women rarely report any compulsion to earn after they left their husbands. Mostly these were old widows, who had resources like earnings from their children and pension of their husband. Most of the other respondents were forced to take up any kind of jobs for fulfilling their financial responsibilities.

Women also reported that they faced financial crisis in the initial stages of being alone. But as the time passed, they realized that they have a better control over their finances.

Social Issues:

Most of the respondents reported the difficulties in day-to-day transactions and societal acceptance of female headship. The most discussed issue is described in the following section.

Parenting:

On one hand they feel that their children are their strength but on other hand looking after them, taking care of them alone is also a big challenge. Many of them take help from their friends and maternal families in child care. In some cases, institutional options of child care like day care centers or full-time maids were also taken into consideration.

Most of the women feel that having a father figure would have impacted the children as well as family as a whole in a very positive manner.

All most all younger female heads opined that they do not have anyone who is equally responsible for taking decision for their children. They generally discuss their issues related to children with their friends, brothers or sisters. But they understand that the entire responsibility of the decision and outcome lies on them alone.

Most of the women reported that with time now they have learned to take all the decisions of their own. But they feel that there should be someone who revalidates their decisions and back it.

One of the respondents who was a young widow and had two children entering in their teenage mentioned, *'It's really difficult to take even some small decisions about children, like once my daughter wanted to go for a residential summer camp, but I really felt scared... I am alone here.. what can I do if something happens and what if there is any kind of emergency? People will hold me responsible. On the other hand, if I did not allow her to go, she will be disappointed. Sometimes I feel if my husband would have been there, things would have been easier'*

Psychological Issues:

Loss of Identity:

The problem of loss of identity was prominently seen in case of widows. In most of the cases widows were disowned by their in laws families. They had to take all the responsibility of themselves and their children alone.

One of the respondents mentioned that, "it has been nine years I lost my husband. I was so disturbed for so many years that I almost forgot that more than his widow now I am a mother of my child."

In the male dominant society, woman whose identity was formerly associated with that of their husband, sudden loss of husband either through divorce or widowhood gives her a feeling of worthlessness and identity loss.

Emotional Stress and Sense of Insecurity:

Many of the respondents reported that they feel insecure in the absence of their male partners. It was also been shared by that they impose restrictions on their own behavior while interacting with their male friends or relatives. Some of them also quoted the experiences of misbehavior by men. Such self-imposed restriction on conduct with men was seen necessary in order to ensure that the society should not judge them wrongly. This kind of continuous alertness and attempts to avoid or constrain interactions with males keep women under constant stress and add a sense of insecurity in the already-challenged situation.

The respondents also shared that the friends and relatives assume that these women do not have any obligations and personal responsibilities towards her family. They often seek help according to their need and try to interfere as per their convenience. The extended family members do not understand the dual burden that she faces. They assume that there is no one to question her and take her for granted.

The feeling of loneliness and burden of additional responsibilities makes a woman emotionally weaker and insecure.

Lack of Companionship:

Lack of companionship is a major issue that has been reported by most of the women. They feel lonely living with their children. Let it be happiness or sorrow there is no one to share it with. There is not even single instance, where they can sit back and relax. They have to be alert and responsible all the time.

Conclusions:

Female heads are vulnerable in initial days of headship. This may be due to the lack of exposure to day-to-day transactions generally expected from males. Female Heads strive hard to accept the 'dual role', achieve and maintain the stable environment for themselves and their families.

They face a 'double burdened' life. Financial and social stress are addressed foremost and can be overcome with time and support from society.

Psychological needs of female heads remain unmet. Positive interaction with peers, counselling and support groups would be beneficial for positive coping.

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THE ROLE OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN JUDICIARY

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“I measure the progress of a community with the degree of progress women have achieved.”

***Dr.B.R.Ambedkar**

Abstract

In Indian Constitution has very powerful respect to the women in society at large. The Biosphere conquered by the masculine public, whereas, females live in 1/2 of the people of the biosphere, more in, clean situations than the men. Everybody speaks that females are like to males or claims the fairnessⁱ. Status of women in the society is very much important which decides the development of nation. The women constitute almost one-half of total population of our country. In ancient times women were worshiped and given place of Goddess. But in recent times the women are exploited by this male dominating society. Women are considered weaker section of the society by many people. They are socially, economically and politically backward. Thus the overall development of our country is affected. Females Enablement is the necessity of a period for the progress of our motherland. There are many laws framed nationally and internationally. In our Indian constitution also there are numerous laws framed for the empowerment of women. The fundamental law of our land guarantees equality for women but then also the scenario is these laws are violated and in this male dominating society the women is the victim of exploitation almost everywhere and in every field. This research paper critically analyses the pivotal role of judiciary in empowerment of women in India. Under this Article I am discussing the empowerment of women by International Laws and by Indian Constitution along with other statutes.

Formation of the National Court of law

The Government of India Act, 1935 established basic structures of a federation and remedied arguments between Center and Provinces. Federal structure of government demands a Court which would have jurisdiction over the States as well as Provinces. Earlier private individuals had no right to sue a Dominion. However, section 200 of the Government of India Act, 1935 created the Federal Court at New Delhi, where individuals could come before it in appeals from any judgment, decree or final order of a Provincial Court, provided that it certified the case involved had a substantial question of law.

Judicial System

The Indian judicial system follows the British Colonial legacy of Common Law system based on the doctrine of precedents. The Supreme Court of India, High Courts and subordinate courts at district, municipal and village levels is the hierarchy of court system in India. The Apex Court has original, appellate and advisory jurisdiction. High Courts

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exist in most states, but some high courts have jurisdiction over more than one state having original jurisdiction over matters of fundamental rights and appellate jurisdiction over decisions of its subordinate courts and tribunals that are under complete control and supervision of their respective High courts.

International Treaties and Conventions for Women Empowerment

UN Charter, 1945 provides for equal opportunity for men and women. **The UDHR, 1948** states that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights irrespective of their race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. **The Convention on Political Rights of Women, 1954** declared that women are entitled and eligible to vote and hold public office without any discriminationⁱⁱ. **ICCPR, 1966** provides equal protection to women and menⁱⁱⁱ with respect to their rights as citizens. **International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Right, 1966** puts the onus on the State to protect the right for men and women to enjoy economic, social and cultural rights set forth in the present covenant^{iv}. **The Declaration of Mexico on the Equality of Women, 1975** provides for equal rights and responsibilities of woman and man in the family and society, equal access to education and training, right to work and equal pay for work of equal value, etc. for the benefits for women. **The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1981)** provides for equal access to, and equal opportunities for women in, political and public life, education, health and employment. This Convention is the only human rights treaty which affirms the reproductive rights of women as an appropriate measure against all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of women^v. **The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993)** by the UN General protects against physical, sexual and psychological violence at home and elsewhere in society. The Declaration states three categories of violence against women: violence perpetrated by the state, violence occurring within the general community and violence in the private sphere.

Indian Legislature and Women Empowerment

The Constitution of India:

The Indian Constitution provides not just for equality but also for positive discrimination in favor of women. Discrimination of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, is prohibited and equality before law is guaranteed. Articles 14, 15, 15(3), 16, 23, 39(a), 39(d), 39(c), 39-A, 42 and 51A(e) of the Constitution are of specific importance in this regard^{vi}.

Air India's discriminatory regulation that an airhostess cannot marry before completing four years of service and that she would have to resign if pregnant was held unconstitutional by the Hon'ble Supreme Court^{vii}.

The Central Government Service Rule which provided that "no married women shall be entitled as of right to be appointed to the said service" was held to be unconstitutional by the Hon'ble Supreme Court as being violative of Art. 14 & Art. 16 of the Constitution

In the landmark judgment of Sarla Mudgal, the Hon'ble Supreme Court directed the Central Government to take fresh look at Art. 44 of the Constitution, for a uniform civil code imperative for protections of the oppressed, and promotion of national unity and integrity^{viii}. However, the Lilly case^{ix} later clarified that the direction of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in Sarala Mudgal's case was obiter dicta. Even before the clarification of the court, the then

Prime Minister declared that the Government would not implement the constitutional mandate under Art. 44.

Other Empowerment of Woman in India

Empowerment under Criminal Law

A pregnant woman is protected from being executed with a death Sentence under section 416 of the Criminal Procedure Code.

Indian Penal Code

Sec. 376 of the IPC provides rigorous imprisonment and life sentence for whoever, commits rape and causes death or persistent vegetative state of a woman. While Sections 363 to 373 of the IPC provide for the definition and punishment for Kidnapping & Abduction of women.

Homicide for Dowry, Dowry Deaths or their attempts (Sec. 302/304-B IPC): Here the women are subjected to torture immediately after the marriage for Dowry. If the Women is burnt or murdered within the seven years of marriage, then the punishment will be imprisonment for at least seven years to the life imprisonment according to the severity of crime.

Mental torture and physical torture (Sec. 498-A IPC) If the Husband or his relatives shows cruelty towards his wife then punishment up to three years of imprisonment or fine will be awarded. Molestation (Sec. 354 IPC): If any person uses criminal intimidation in such a way to outrage the modesty of women then he must be confined up to three years or fine.

Sexual Harassment (Sec. 509 IPC): If a man initiates unwelcome sexually explicit physical contact; or demands/requests sexual favors; or shows pornography against the woman's will; or makes sexually remarks, then the punishment is rigorous imprisonment for up to three years, or fine, or both.

SPECIAL LAWS

The Dowry Prohibition Act 1961

This act provides for punishment of not less than five years with fine not less than fifteen thousand rupees or the amount of dowry, whichever is more.

The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 was passed in pursuance of the International Convention signed at New York on 9th May, 1950. This act protects women and children from forceful flesh trade for all commercial purposes. The Act regularized prostitution and provides assistance to all women and children who have been forced into the same.

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005, a civil law meant for protection orders and not criminal penalty, was brought into force by the Indian Government from 26 October 2006. The Act provides for the definition of "domestic violence", which includes physical violence, as well as emotional/verbal, sexual, and economic abuse.

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 provides for the prevention and redressal of complaints of sexual harassment at workplace. **The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 (Amended in 1995)** regulates employment of women before and after child-birth and provides for maternity benefits.

The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act 1971 regulates and provides for termination of pregnancies by registered doctors or medical practitioners in certain cases.

The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 of the Central Government in relation to any employment carried on by or under the authority of the Central Government or a railway administration, banking company, a mine, oil field, major port, corporation established by or under a Central Act.

Judicial activism and Empowerment of Women

The Judiciary exercises their judicial powers for protecting the fundamental rights and liberties of the citizens. In order to achieve this mission, the judiciary has to exercise and evolve its jurisdiction with courage, creativity, vision, vigilance and practical wisdom according to the circumstances. In the PIL of Delhi Domestic Working Women's Forum v. Union of India when six working ladies travelling in Muri Express were raped by seven Army Personnel the court set Guidelines for rehabilitation and compensation of Working Women who are rape victims^x.

In a significant case of Vishakha v. State of Rajasthan^{xi}, the supreme court has laid down executive Guidelines for Sexual harassment of Women at Workplace until some laws are formed concerning this subject. The Court observed that it is the duty of an Employer to protect women employees from sexual harassment at work. Vishakha is an NGO working for "GENDER EQUALITY". These Guidelines laid down under section 32 to protect fundamental rights under article 14, 19 and 21 will be considered as LAW defined by the Supreme court which falls under Article 141.

Data Analysis

In India, as such a large amount of distinguish ledge examination stresses regarding legal executive stays in its rising stage whereby accessibility of dependable flexibly of data is meagre and along these lines research labourer takes broad amount of their time in organizing and dissecting the information required for their investigation. To the extent, the reachable sources are included, it might be partitioned into 2 classes for example Administrative and Non-Governmental. During this examination, stress is on the Administrative bases^{xii}. We may need an over the top gathering of recognize inspectors to assessment the information of various portions inside the legitimate official.

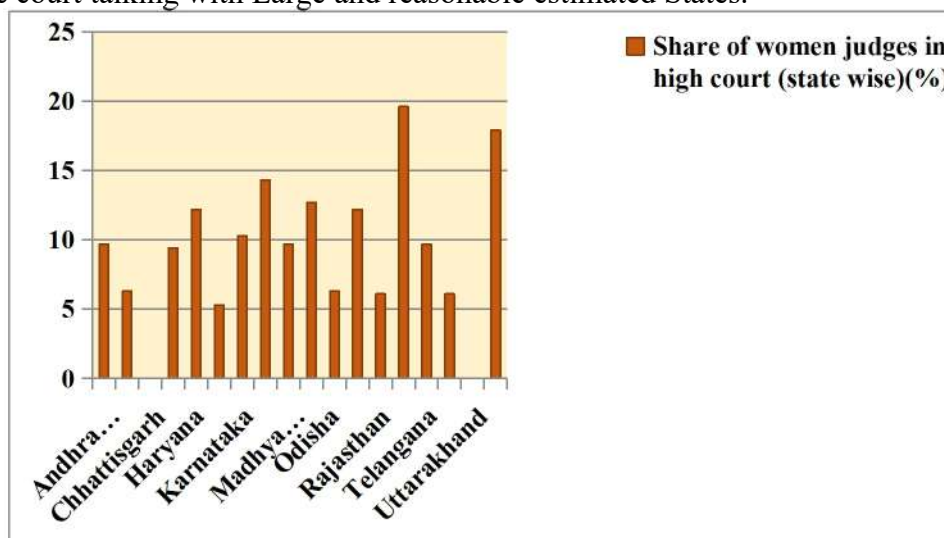
Discriminatory constraint in India

The essential feminine value in a Court of India was Fatima Beevi assigned on 6/10/1989. From that time forward, there are seven dynamically female appointed authorities inside the Supreme Court. Starting at now, there are 3 passing on female^{xiii} named specialists of the full scale 34 adjudicators (tallying judge of India) inside the Highest Court. It is really time that we try to hitch tons progressively feminine adjudicators as sexual direction consistency ought to start from legitimate official itself. The diagram is clear that lawful official must defeat any hindrance of this gigantic sexual direction dissimilarity. As on March 23, 2018, out of 670 selected specialists only 73 are women constructs a decision about working in different high courts for example to the extent rate is 10.89 you care for the working quality.

Further, we should separate the quantity of female appointed authorities talking with their different States inside the preeminent court, in sight of the information assembled by the Tata

Trust(TT) and obtainable inside, underneath stand the diagrams showing the paces of ladies from their specific State talking with inside the preeminent court^{xiv}.

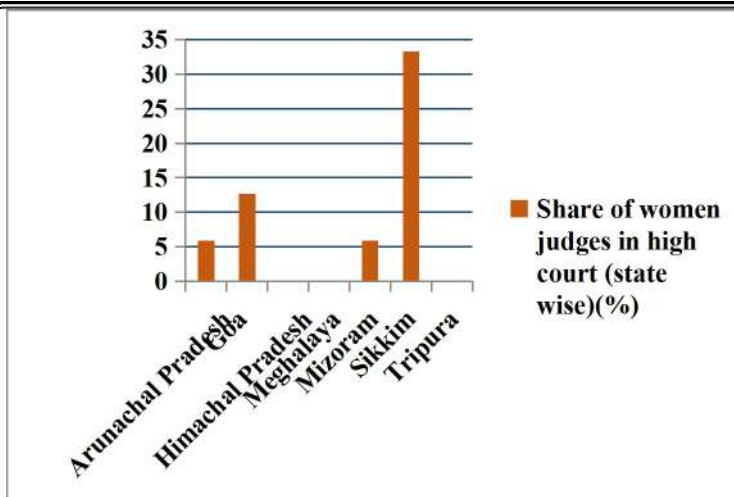
Coming up next is that the bar chart showing the paces of ladies chose inside the incomparable court talking with Large and reasonable estimated States.



The diagram observed that the speed depiction of ladies chose inside the preeminent law court of gigantic and normal measured states. Tamil Nadu is that the primary state in regards to most important number of female selected specialists; while Chhattisgarh and Uttarakhand don't have a lone depiction. This appears the concerned circumstance. the government and in this way the legitimate official got the chance to prepare in hybrid the truly basic opening especially in both these states.

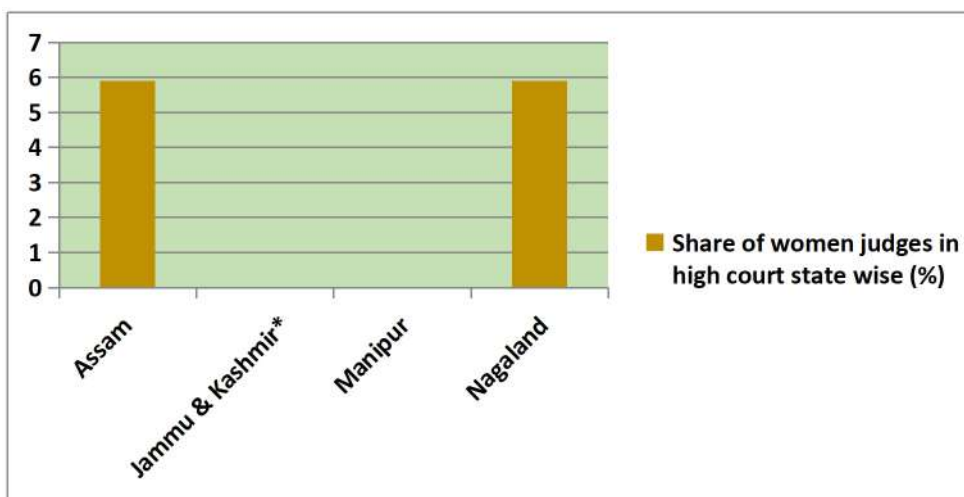
Further, Kerala and WB are driving after TN. Analysing the chart, it doesn't give a gigantic image of things in regards to the depiction of ladies chose inside the incomparable court. The legitimate official and in this way the assembly need to get game plans and realize on a quick reason. To the extent rates, Tamil Nadu is driving at 19.6% followed by West Bengal at 17.09% and Kerala at 14.3%. the chief imperative being 19.6% talks volume about the sex dissimilarity inside the depiction of ladies chose inside the incomparable court of law, steady with^{xv}, there was definitely not an its own named authority talking with 7 States inside the preeminent court.

Coming up next is that the bar layout showing the paces of ladies chose inside the preeminent court visiting with little States.

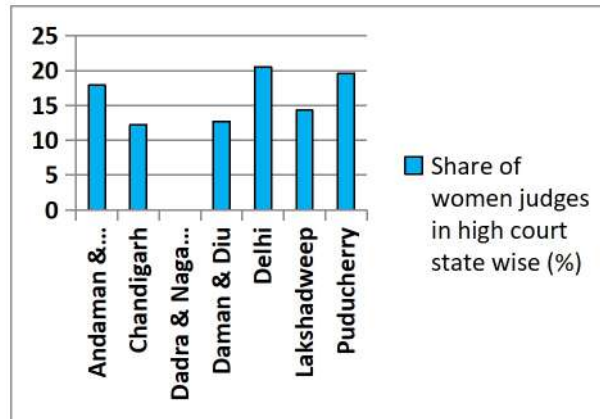


This diagram displays the paces of women picked inside the transcendent Law Court of littler Indian States. Meghalaya, Tripura and Himachal Pradesh do not have any delineation of females’ magistrates, which is baffling pondering the Indian demography. Amongst the more modest States, Sikkim takes completed acceptably well the degree that ladies picked inside the transcendent court.

As for amongst the little states, Sikkim takes 33.3% which is fundamental being a touch State. Actually, standing apart from the huge and medium evaluated State Sikkim has done generally well. Amongst the little State, Sikkim is trailed by Goa which takes shocking 12.7%. they're trailed by Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram both at 5.9%. the subsequent is that the bar plot displaying the paces of women picked inside the transcendent law court chatting with Big and sensible evaluated Situations.



In the above figure, the ladies chose within the region of Nagaland and Assam is about 5.9%. It's unacceptable that Jammu and Kashmir and Manipur has not at all women's appointed authorities. arising next is that the bar graph showing the paces of girls chose within the supreme court addressing Union Territories



The diagram appears the ladies' judges speaking to the 7 association regions. Dadra and Nagar Haveli have no ladies' judges; anyway additional association regions are very much spoken to.

The nearness of ladies judges implies that the legal executive maintains law and administers equity by giving equivalent chance and dependent on merits, just, and non-unfair rehearses. Maybe, the ladies on the seat has been impacting because of nature of legal dynamic by drawing a leaf from their own background. Notwithstanding offering significance to sex equity, the nearness of ladies decided in the High Court is disillusioning. This diagram plainly stated the State has not embraced any governmental policy regarding minorities in society.

Conclusion

The Empowerment of Women is done by our constitution and legislature but almost most of the laws are confined and limited to the books only. They are actually not implemented to its fullest extent. Actual women empowerment will be done when these laws will be actually implemented without any hesitation. Most of the women do not know about what women empowerment is and what are their legal rights as they are uneducated or less educated, Government authorities must provide their necessary help. In this male dominated world many women are suppressed, restricted and limited to do only household chores and are not allowed to do anything of her interest outside the homes. Thus necessary steps should be taken to overcome such problems by the Government and Judiciary by linking up with Voluntary and Social organizations.

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The Indian Justice Report 2019

Indian Justice Report 2019

Reports and as on June 2018

Women in Legal Profession: Past, Present, and Future

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“Women will work out their destinies - much better, too, than men can ever do for them. All the mischief to women has come because men undertook to shape the destiny of women.”

- Swami Vivekananda

Abstract:

The legal profession is considered one of the ancient most professions of all times. However, the credit to make it a profession in true sense from uniformity and sense of specificity point of view goes to Britishers in Indian scenario. Nevertheless, women's presence in this field had not been so easy during the regime of so-called lawmakers as well. Even after independence, they have been subject to extra-legal discrimination due to the effect of a so-called glass ceiling effect. This paper is an attempt to trace the struggle or instances to reflect the initial encounters of the court of law with the right of women to be a part of the legal profession and the way ahead.

Introduction:

Currently, when we look around we have women as judges of the supreme court and high courts, they are advocates, senior advocates, and advocates on records, they are now representing the state and central governments, PSUs, and Private sectors as well. But this scenario was not possible from the very beginning. There has been a time when women were entitled to study law but were barred from practicing the law. Series of cases which have been dealt with by courts in India to give them equal rights as their counterparts come within the purview of “person clause” cases and consequently such cases led towards the change in the law to give them equal rights as male to practice legal profession in India. A considerable amount of progress took place concerning women empowerment and gender diversity however still due to the glass ceiling effect they are not at par with the masculine in the patriarchal society.

In this background present paper will deal with legislative enactments in the pre-independence era and changes thereupon along with relevant cases laws. It will also include the latest enactments from a gender justice point of view as sets the tone for the future ahead.

Legislative position concerning Right to Practice in India:

The Constitution of India under the preambular part specifically recognizes the equality of status and opportunity. Part III which deals with fundamental rights under Article 19(1)(g) provides fundamental rights to citizens to practice any profession or to carry on any occupation, trade, or business. However, this right is subject to reasonable restrictions as mentioned under Article 19(1)(2) which covers professional or technical qualifications

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necessary for practicing any profession or carrying on any occupation, trade or business, or State Trading Enterprises.

The legal profession in India is being governed by the Advocates Act, 1961. Chapter IV of the same deals with the Right to Practise. Section 29 of the same recognizes Advocates as the only class of persons entitled to practice law in India and Section 30 states that, “every advocate whose name is entered in the State roll shall be entitled as of right to practice throughout the territories to which this Act extends.” So basically a person is required to be enrolled as an advocate in any of the state's roll to exercise the right to practice or to enter the legal profession. Therefore, Section 33 also prescribes that Advocates alone entitled to practice and section 24 provides conditionality to be an advocate as follows:

he is a citizen of India:

Provided that subject to the other provisions contained in this Act, a national of any other country may be admitted as an advocate on a State roll, if citizens of India, duly qualified, are permitted to practice law in that other country;

he has completed the age of twenty-one years;

he has obtained a degree in law

So basically if the abovementioned criteria are fulfilled then any person could join the legal profession as an advocate. The Advocates Act, 1961 specifically repealed the Legal Practitioners (Women) Act, 1923 and the Legal Practitioners (Fees) Act, 1926, and it also repealed Sections 53 and 31 of the States Reorganization Act, 1956 and the Bombay Reorganization Act, 1960 respectively. The purpose for mentioning repealed enactments is to trace the history to know the milestones in this field to make the slippery road a concrete one.

To start this first of all trilogy of cases is required to be mentioned which led towards reform in this field to make an accessible legal profession for women. These cases are *In re Regina Guha*, *In re Sudhansu Bala Hazra*, and in the case of *Cornelia Sorabji*.

In re Regina Guha is considered as the first case in India which is connected with person clause vis-à-vis women in the legal profession in India. Section 5 read along with section 6 of the Legal Practitioners Act, 1879 mainly considered to decide whether women should be allowed to join the legal profession. Though in this case five judges bench of Calcutta High Court unanimously held that, “a woman cannot be enrolled as a pleader.” Nevertheless, this case initiated the movement to raise a voice for the right to practice by women. The full bench of Patna High court in the *Sudhansu Bala Hazra* case held that “Women are not entitled to be enrolled as pleaders of Courts subordinate to the High Court.” However, observations of Hon’ble judges, in this case, led towards the formation of law known as the Legal Practitioners Women Act, 1923.

Before the case of *Ms. Cornelia Sorabji*, as discussed above, women in India have been denied practice until the High Court of Allahabad on 24th August 1921 took the reformative decision though administrative to allow women to practice law. Here it is important to mention as pointed out by Justice Yatindra Singh, Retd. Chief Justice of High Court of Chhattisgarh in the blog titled, “Women Rights, Person Clause and the Allahabad High Court” published on 19th November 2020 that, “*Cornelia* was not only the first woman to be enrolled in India but also the first to be enrolled anywhere in the world under the person clause. There were others, who were enrolled before her but that was due to the law explicitly permitting women to be enrolled and not under person clause.”

The question of whether women come within the purview of personal clause came to an end with the enactment of the Legal Practitioners (Women) Act of 1923 which states under section 3 categorically stated that Women not to be disqualified by reason only of sex. It

states that “Notwithstanding anything contained in any enactment in force in the territories to which this Act extends or in the letters patent of any High Court or in any rule or order made under or in pursuance of any such enactment or letters patent, no woman shall, by reason only of her sex, be disqualified from being admitted or enrolled as a legal practitioner or from practicing as such; and any such rule or order which is repugnant to the provisions of this Act shall, to the extent of such repugnancy, be void.”

Due to the effect of the abovementioned enactment though women have been entitled to the right to equality however due to social realities in this field and society in general their representation has not been as required for striking a right balance in this profession from gender diversity and gender justice point of view. This point is clear with a fact that it is only in the year 1989 when India has witnessed the first female Judge in the court in the name of Hon’ble Justice Fatima Beevi.

Globalization aftermath and women’s representation in the legal profession:

There is no denying that women have traveled a long path to reach the present stage where they are in Supreme Court, High Courts as well as in Corporate Firms. A maximum number of women nowadays are also in the academic profession. Nevertheless, when the question is related to political appointments their number is a matter of great concern in fact after two decades of the wave of globalization in modern India. With the emergence of national law schools near to all the states their admission, enrollment, and participation increased in a multifold manner and specific steps like the constitution of Supreme Court Gender Sensitization and Internal Complaints Committee in Supreme court and similar committees in almost every level due to the effect of the Gender Sensitization and Sexual Harassment of Women at the Supreme Court of India (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Regulations, 2013 and similar regulation with the enactment i.e. the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 provided safety environment to women.

Though much progress has been done still there is a lot needed to be done and most importantly at the societal and individual level.

Conclusion:

In the present century, one of the most remarkable things that happened is known as the ‘realization of the importance of gender diversity. The legal profession is a profession where it is more needed not at institutional but also at individual levels. We all have to realize the inherited potential and virtues of women and the contribution which may be ensured through their enormous involvement and participation in this field.

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Women in Indian Mythology: Seeking Order in the Chaotic Interpretations

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Abstract

Women are perhaps one of the most misunderstood and misrepresented figures in the annals of history. This stands particularly true in patriarchal societies, especially, the religious texts and mythologies of such groups, where women are either completely ignored or mostly seen as carriers of men's community values. The case is no different in Indian Epic Age (circa 2000 to 700 BCE) the period that lies interspersed between the composition of the first known Hindu text, the Rig Veda, and the rise of Buddhism. The product of this age were the two great Indian Epics viz. the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Although historians and archaeologists argue about which of the two was composed first, this particular study is centred around the position of women as seen in the two Epics and attempts to evaluate whether it had actually deteriorated as compared to the Vedic Age or not. It also attempts to restudy the available historiography and examine whether women in the Epic Age really succumbed to the notions of patriarchy or whether these notions were imposed upon them around the late ancient and early medieval times (circa 500 to 800 CE). For the purpose of this study, the female characters of the two Epics have been studied in detail and the revision and rewriting of the epics around 500 CE has been taken into consideration.

Introduction

The status of women in Indian society has been ever evolving. In religion, these ups and downs in their status has been even more pronounced because as the historian Wendy Doniger points out, "The female sex has never found favour with any of the world's religions, or with their priests and prophets" (Doniger, 2013). Hinduism is no exception to this and as one progresses from society in Ancient times to the Early Medieval times, the decline in the degree of freedom that women enjoyed in the family and the Indian society becomes steadily sharper. Although it is difficult to specify the exact point of time in history where this deterioration began, three broad periods of Ancient Indian society can be juxtaposed against each other to survey the changing position and role of women in society.

The first among these is the Early Vedic Period (1500-1000 BCE), the period of composition of the *Rig Veda*, which, apart from being the cornerstone of Hindu religion and society, is also the first literary source for studying the position of women. While the women in these times were never independent of the patriarchal authority over them, they were, regardless, the joint owners of property with their husbands and ruled over bipeds (slaves) and quadrupeds (cattle) [*Rig Veda*: IX 85.43]. Their presence was considered important, both in the household economy and in the society (Chakravarti, 1993) and there was no special value attached to chastity despite the patriarchal control over them. Education was also granted to women in these times. Many high class women were highly educated and actively participated in intellectual and philosophical discourses. References to *Brahmavadinis* or female composers of the *Vedic* hymns, like *Gosha*, *Apala*, *Lopamudra*, *Maitreyi*, *Gargi*, *Indrani*, *Mudgalini* and *Vishvara* are interspersed throughout the text, with six verses of Book 1 Hymn 179 of the *Rigveda* accredited solely to Lopamudra. Other career

options, apart from literary activities and household economy, also appear to have been extended to women. These include teaching, music and dancing [1.9.2, 1.9.4] as well as martial pursuits. Female warriors like Shashiyasi, Vadhrimati, Vishpala, Danu and Sarama are described taking part in actual fighting on the battlefield [Rig Veda 1.32.9, 5.61.6, 5.61.9, 10.39, 40]. Furthermore, women could, if they so chose, remain unmarried (*Amajur*) [1.117; 2.17; 10.39.3; 8.21.15].

However, the depiction above is romanticised. Realistically speaking, number of hymns attributed to female scholars as well as the number of women sages (only 30 known *Brahmavadinis*) is minuscule, suggesting limited access of “sacred knowledge” to women. Also, the role of women in the family was always subordinate to men. A woman was subordinate to male dominance and while she partook in rituals and participated in sacrifices by her husband, she did not perform any religious duties in her own right. Besides, she was neither the receiver nor the giver of any offerings. Female deities in the *Rig Veda*, after all, occupied minor positions suggestive of the fact that while there is divinity in the female aspect, the real power and prestige rested with the male. The status of women, thus, was always recognised as that of a subordinate and the position further rigidifies in the Later Vedic period (1000-600 BCE).

Somewhere, between these two phases, the two Great Indian Epics, which this paper is concerned with were composed. It is in these texts that women of the ancient society receive a more concrete shape than mere names and references by being depicted as definitive characters with distinctive behaviours and personalities. The following sections will deal with these characters in detail in order to understand whether or not women in the Ancient Indian texts succumbed to notions of patriarchy. **Women in the *Ramayana***

Of the two Great Indian Epics, collectively called the *Itihasa*, the *Ramayana* is assumed to be the one that “happens first” as per mythological beliefs, despite the evidence in the text that hints otherwise. Consequently, it is studied here first. Although Valmiki’s *Ramayana* (composed circa 2nd century BCE- 2nd century CE) is considered to be the general version among the educated in India, there are several versions of the epic, not just in Hinduism alone but also in *Jaina* and *Buddhist* traditions. The versions also change from one geographic location to another, traditionally referred to as *Sthala Ramayana*. Regardless of the variations, however, the main women characters in the story remain the same. For the purpose of this paper, they are studied here with respect to the three important stages in the life of the protagonist, *Rama*. It is to be kept in mind, however, that not all the female characters were studied for this analysis for the purpose of convenience as doing so can be a part of a separate research, specifically on the topic.

Based on the important stages in the life of *Rama*, the women can be divided as follows:

1. In the Infancy: Four main female characters were studied from this stage, namely, Rama’s mother, Kausalya, his two step mothers, Kaikeyi and Sumitra and the Royal wet nurse, Manthara and Ahalya.
2. In the Adulthood: Rama’s wife, Sita, her foster sister, Urmila, and her cousins, Mandavi and Shrutakirti.
3. In the Forest: Anasuya, Surpanakha, Shabri.

Several interpretations of women in the *Ramayana* exist in terms of research. Of these, most are centered on the deconstruction of the female characters highlighted by Valmiki in his version of the epic. Broadly, the *Ramayana* speaks about two general types of women.

The first of these adhere to the *Dharma* and are obedient daughters, sisters and wives. They generally act in accordance to the wishes of men in their lives and are therefore, regarded as good, noble and virtuous, even divine. In the rare circumstances, where they act on impulse, out of curiosity or fail to obey orders, they meet with tragic circumstances. The biggest example of this is

Sita crossing the line that her brother-in-law, *Lakshmana*, draws for her protection, which leads to her abduction. Another example is of *Ahalya*, who, out of curiosity, commits adultery with *Indra* despite seeing through his disguise, which results in her perturbation. In both the cases, *Rama*, the exalted protagonist of the epic, rescues the women in question. The second type of women in the story are the ambitious ones, who seek power. These include, *Rama's* stepmother, *Kaikeyi* and the wet-nurse, *Manthara*, who get him banished from the kingdom for fourteen years in order to secure the throne for *Kaikeyi's* son, *Bharata*. Another example of this is *Surpanakha*, sister of the main antagonist, *Ravana*, who is sexually assertive and hence depicted to be worthy of punishment at the hands of the ideal men. In both the cases, failure to adhere to the order established for women by men leads to downfall or disgrace of the woman.

In the *Ramayana*, thus, there is a strict underlying patronising tone towards women that is in sharp contrast to the depiction of women in the Vedic corpus of literature. Before analysing what may have resulted in this tone, it is imperative to look into the second Great Epic, the *Mahabharata*.

The Mahabharata

Compared to the *Ramayana*, the female characters are in extreme abundance in the *Mahabharata* and are difficult to classify. What stands out in this particular case, however, is that the patriarchal patronising tone is slightly less visible and the female characters have a distinct and unabashed personality that does not always result in their downfall. Women appear more sexually liberated in the *Mahabharata*, the conjugal relations are both polygamous and polyandrous (*Pandu* and his wives and *Draupadi* and her husbands) and although women retain their roles as daughters, sisters, wives and mothers, they are also capable of being learned (*Draupadi* was proficient in 36 arts), politically dominant and martially capable (*Hidimba*, *Amba*).

Obedient and self-sacrificing wives, however, are lauded in this text, too and further on, the incident of treating a woman or a wife as a commodity (*Draupadi* is used as a wager in a gambling game) highlight the ill treatment of women if not necessarily hinting at misogyny. Like the *Ramayana*, if the woman's honour is threatened (*Draupadi's* disrobing in this case), it is taken as a threat to the masculinity of her husband and is sufficient inducement for war. What is remarkable in this case, however, is that in the *Mahabharata*, the women, *Draupadi* in particular, are often seen questioning the decisions of their husbands, influencing political affairs and in some cases, even took matters into their own hands if justice was at stake, something that is not noted anywhere in the *Ramayana*.

Conclusion

After the brief analysis of the portrayal of women in the Epics and a comparison with the portrayal of women in the Vedic corpus of literature, a few points come to light about status of women in Ancient India. The Vedic texts are comparatively liberal in their presentation and portrayal of women. While a woman's authority in the family and the society was far below that of a man in the Vedic ages, she was still an individual in her own right, could choose to remain unmarried and had the right to be educated. The depiction of women in the *Mahabharata* is, to an extent, closer to this picture.

However, in the *Ramayana*, as well as secular texts such as the *Manusmriti*, women suddenly begin to be regarded as the upholders of the male honour and the reason behind sexual crimes [The *Manusmriti*, 9.12-17]. Vedic corpus, thus, appears to speak about what women as a part of the

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society actually were, whereas the *Manusmriti* and the Epics seem to emphasize on what women ought to be like.

This normative approach of these texts towards trying to describe the ideal woman, who is submissive, meek, self-sacrificing and obedient, thus, hints at the possibility that perhaps women at the time of the composition of these texts were probably the opposite. The *Ramayana* that strictly portrays marriage as a necessity for girls and the assertive authority of males over the females is in sharp contrast to the statement in the *Rig Veda* that a married woman is the mistress of her own house and has authority over her father-in-law, her younger brothers-in-law and shares the duties of her husband. Similarly, themes of abduction as well as holding one's tongue and laughter in front of the males, which appear commonly in the two Epics, appear to be of a warning nature. Women, who, as per the Vedas, could freely roam as well as partake in processions, are here forced to remain in the confines of the "lines" drawn for their safety by the men of the family, the proverbial *Lakshmana rekha*. Failure to do so would lead to disgrace and downfall, regardless of the chastity of the woman in question.

As stated before, there is no chronological information available to determine the actual date of composition of the two Epics. It is, however, believed that the texts, as they appear today were finally compiled by 3rd-4th century CE (the Gupta Period), with sufficient additions from folklore, stories of local heroes and traditional tales. It therefore, becomes important to contemplate that the purpose of these texts was more didactic than descriptive. Instead of reflecting on what the Epics say about the society in Ancient India in general and the position in women in particular, it is important to look at what they possibly aimed to do. It is also important to bear in mind that more often than not, historiography was used as a tool for manipulation of popular thought in order to achieve particular ends. Historical evidence shows that a lot of this manipulation in history was being done in the Early Medieval times in order to not just legitimise power but also to influence people through popular literature (Sahu, 1994). The study of the Epics to determine the status of women in society as an absolute authoritative source of history, is, therefore, a faulty approach. Although stories do represent society and social norms, nevertheless, the idea that there always is room for fiction, creative license and in this case, even manipulation of facts for didactic purposes or just to assert a certain point of view over others, should not be ignored.

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Epics, Politics and Women

Meghna Tribedi, Anannya Mukherjee

Abstract

The foundation of Hindu thought is made of sacred tales of Gods, kings, and sages. Two of the most important text of that era are Ramayana and Mahabharata which is the grandest of its time and is the stories are told and retold even to this day. However, in this article we intend to discuss about those female characters of the epic without whom these epics can never be re-imagined. Through the portrayal of these characters we intend highlight their political relevance and at times how their strong moral character and intelligence and their reaction to a situation developed the plot in a way that no other character in the epic can do.

Key words: Ramayana, Mahabharata, Manthara, Supanakha, Rama, Sita , Satyavati, Gandhari, Kunti, Draupadi.

Women in epics

We are well aware about the world wide famous epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata but here we will familiarise ourselves with the feminist approach and rather shift our focus to the female characters of each of the epics and their roles directly or indirectly played by them in order to present us with a picture of something great rather than an ending where we come to the realisation about the epic or admire or critic certain characters. Here we will focus on the political influence of them in that prevails throughout the epics and often challenging our thoughts and critique about their influence throughout the story.

Ramayana

While understanding Valmiki's Ramayana's narrative many female characters come to the fore front that played a dominant role, though not a direct one, always for the development of this epic. If you look at some kandas of Ramayana women were involved in one way or the other. As we see in:

- **Ayodhyakanda:** 12 years after Rama and Sita marriage, King Dasaratha decides to hand kingship to Rama. However, the night before the coronation, Dasaratha second wife Kaikeyi, who is manipulated by her maid servant Manthara, reminds him of the two bones that he granted Kaikeyi yours ago when she saved him. She demanded Bharat are to be seated on The throne and send Rama to the forest for 14 years to ensure a peaceful transition.
- **Aranyakanda:** 13 years pass with relative fees as Rama, Lakshman, and Sita travel the forest. While one day Rama is approached by Surpanakha, the sister of king Ravana, when she fail to seduce Rama she tries her charm on Lakshman still Rama spurns her, she then tries to kill Sita, and her nose was cut by Lakshman. Humiliated, she goes to her brother for help who determines to abduct Sita in order to seek revenge for sister Surpanakha. He tries to take the form of a sage and manipulate Sita out of the protection spell cast by Lakshman and abducts her. Entranced by her beauty, he demands Sita to

marry him but she refuses. Rama and Lakshman upon discovering Sita's abduction, immediately set out to rescue her.

- ***Sundarakanda:*** after Hanuman unites with his Lord Rama, kills across the ocean to the island of Lanka, where he finds Sita and gives her Rama's signet ring as a sign of his authenticity and fidelity. Sita thanks Hanuman but refuses to return with him, saying that she will wait till Rama comes to avenge her abduction. Hanuman is captured by Ravana, but he escapes while setting fire to Ravana's citadel before returning to Kishkindha.
- ***Yuddhakanda:*** Rama, Lakshman and their allies move to attack Lanka, Rama kills Ravana and Ravana's brother is installed on the throne. Sita is joyful at being reunited with Rama but she refuses to take her back on the grounds that after living with another man over her virtue might be compromised. Devastated, Sita walks into a sacrificial fire and her purity is attested by the fire God, Agni. Rama later reveals that he knew Sita was innocent but he had to prove it to the public. Rama, Lakshman, and Sita return triumphantly to Ayodhya.
- ***Uttarakanda:*** After ruling peacefully for some time, Sita falls pregnant. However, her joy is undermined when Rama begins to hear rumours that his citizens are beginning to think him cuckolded by Sita. Determined to save his reputation, he sends Sita to the forest. The devastated queen is found by sage Valmiki and taken into his care. She gave birth to twins who grew up to be his disciples. When Rama discovers that Sita and her children are living in the forest, he attempts to bring her back. After suggesting that she have to endure another ordeal by the fire, Sita's rejection and calls upon her mother earth to receive her, leaving Rama alone and devastated.

Understanding the narrative of this effect and while explaining certain kandas we highlighted three female characters who triggered the incident and how they really stand out in the plot of the Epic especially the heroine. The female characters who helped develop the Epic are

- **Manthara**

Queen Kaikeyi's women companion and trusted maid servant is a hunchback named Manthara. When the entire Ayodhya rejoices at the announcement of Rama being the future king, Manthara alone had a different view, it may be that Manthara believes in her arguments and things that what she does is for the best for the queen and her son Bharata. Her beliefs alone are able to turn the course of events in Ramayana.

Manthara compels Kaikeyi to talk to King Dasaratha about the two boons that he promised to fulfil when she asks for them. So with Manthara's evil counsel, Kaikeyi asks for those boons and tells Dasaratha to send Rama into 14 years of exile in the forest and make Bharata the king of Ayodhya.

- **Surpanakha**

The presence of Surpanakha though small but has a huge impact in what is to come. It was her unreciprocated seduction of both Rama and Lakshman and that her nose was chopped

away and her humiliation that resulted in the abduction of Sita and later in the battle between Rama and Ravana took place.

It was Surpanakha's humiliation that enraged Ravana to take revenge on Rama and his companions in order to return the disrespectful behaviour they portrayed to his sister. Surpanakha's incident acted just like a spark of fire in the forest. Thus her role here is very important for the development of the epic.

- **Sita**

Sita is the heroine of the epic Ramayana and expectedly has a large role to play throughout Ramayana. In the epic Valmiki portrayed Sita as someone ideal, to put it simply, Sita symbolises the meaning of an ideal woman, filled with loyalty and love for husband. And this very portrayal of Sita character helps in the plot development of the Epic and the apt ending as well.

When Rama was banished to the forest for 14 years she willingly gave up her luxurious life for the kingdom to accompany Rama, despite his opposition, this portrayed her unconditional love for him.

After her abduction, Sita was kept in the forest of Lanka where in sundarakanda Hanuman came to visit her. She had a lot of chances for the rescue with Hanuman but she waited for her husband to avenge her abduction resulting in the battle between Rama and Ravana. Her strong will and her sense of self respect resulted in the downfall of Ravana in the end.

When the war was over and Sita was asked to walk into the sacrificial fire to prove her purity, that she does so willingly, her calm personality was shown to us. In Uttarakanda, she was sent back to the forest alone in a state of a pregnancy in order to save her husband's reputation actually speaks volume about her mental strength despite in all odds.

In the end when she is asked to walk over the sacrificial fire again in order to prove her purity, she spoke up, she voiced against those who questioned women's purity and her loyalty. Horse standing up against what was wrong proved her strong personality and her clear judgement of the situation around her. Her going away with her mother goddess Dharti Mata stages the end of Ramayana as an epic.

Mahabharata

Going through the text of Mahabharata one aspect is very clear which is the portrayal of life and most importantly the position of women and their relationships with the other characters of the epic as well as their treatment via social norms. Surprisingly, unlike most of the texts during those days, the female characters and the role they played formed an essential part in mending or creating the plot and storyline of Mahabharata. Everywhere in the epic the women are described as someone with a high moral character and this morality and the notion of femininity of the then society is what drove the female characters of Mahabharata and resulting in the battle of Kurukshetra and ultimately fall of great kingdoms of the time.

The role of women in Mahabharata makes an interesting study providing insight into the strengths and weaknesses of their character and here we will highlight about four female characters that played the most crucial role in making Mahabharata the most ensemble epic.

- **Satyawati**

Satyawati was the daughter of the chieftain of fisherman. As a young maiden, while ferrying sage Parasara across the river, he fell in love with her and they bore a son named Vyasa, who is also the foremost writer of this epic.

Later, emperor Santanu fell in love with her and her father consented to the marriage only on one condition that Satyawati's children will inherit the throne and not Santanu's eldest son, crowned prince Devavrath. In order to free his father's dilemma Devavrath took an extreme vow of relinquishing his right to the throne and that he would remain celibate so that he would not have any children who might lay claim to the throne in future.

After Santanu passed away, Satyawati two sons died young. The older one was unmarried and the younger had two wives, Ambika and Ambalika, who was childless. This created a crisis for there was no legal heir to The Kuru lineage. Bhishma did not relent from his vow as he considered it sacred. At this juncture, Satyawati sent for her son Vyasa, who promptly responded as per his promise. Satyawati said the problem could be solved by his father in a child through each of the two young widow. The son born Ambika was named Dhritarashtra and the son born to Ambalika was Pandu.

As time passed, satyawati sensed the animosity between the sons of Pandu and Dhritarashtra, and she saw a struggle of power with tragic consequences. She later voluntarily retired to the forest.

- **Gandhari**

Gandhari was the wife of king Dhritarashtra and the mother of the Kauravas. She was the daughter of king Subala of the Kingdom of Gandhar .

Grandsire Bhishma sent a proposal seeking her hand in marriage for Dhritarashtra. Subala knew that Dhritarashtra was blind, but thinking that an alliance with the powerful Kuru clan would be in the larger interest, agreed to the proposal. Gandhari accepted her father's proposal as a beautiful daughter. She wanted to experience blindness and share it with her husband showing great strength of mind and in a spirit of personal sacrifice she voluntarily forwent her sense of sight after marriage by tie a scarf over both her eyes.

Gandhari was an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva who pleased by her devotion granted her a boon that she would be the mother of hundred sons. The boon caused her to conceive, but strangely her pregnancy lasted for two years. Out of frustration she struck her abdomen with an iron rod and surprisingly delivered of congealed mass. Sage Vyasa cold for hundred and one clay jars, carefully divided the flesh into the jars and closed them. In time, Gandhari became the mother of hundred sons and one daughter.

The boys grew up and had their training in martial arts under Dronacharya, Gandhari however noticed that her husband did not restrain the arrogant behaviour of their eldest son, duryodhana and brought it to his attention on various appropriate occasions.

After the great war of Kurukshetra Gandhari sorely aggrieved that all her sons had been killed and she wanted to pronounce a curse on the Pandavas but somehow restrained herself. Gandhari, however, could not forgive Lord Krishna whom she held responsible for all the tragic events, she said to him saying that the whole of his clan of the other would die fighting one another and her words came true.

After the war she retired to the forest with her husband and sister in law Kunti where they all perished in a forest fire.

- **Kunti**

Kunti was the wife of emperor Pandu and the mother of the Pandavas. She was the daughter of the king Sursena, father of Vasudeva, Krishna's father. Her father gave her in adoption to his brother-in-law, king Kuntibhoja and hence she is called Kunti. Her name at birth was Pritha, and therefore, one of the names of her son, Arjuna is Partha.

Kunti's character has brought in many critics and lots of analysis during the birth of Karna: how Shiva the Sun god, gave birth to Karna and abandoned him as a new-born child out of a sense of shame because she was not married, how she met Karna again on the eve of the battle and revealed to him for the first time of his divine birth.

Kunti accompanied her sons during their first period of exile, having escaped from the arson of the house made of combustible material, a bad attempt by the evil minded Duryodhana and Shakuni.

During the war she grieved the loss of her son Karna. And after the war she accompanied Dhritarashtra and Gandhari to the forest where she perished in the forest fire as well.

- **Draupadi**

One of the main protagonists of Mahabharata is queen Draupadi was the daughter of king Dhrupad, ruler of Panchala. She was born alongside her brother, Dhishhtadyumna, from the great sacrificial fire that their father performed for progeny to kill Acharya Drona who had insulted him. She was also known as Panchali or sometimes Krishna. Draupadi is one of the most notable among the women in Mahabharata, and has a stellar role in the second half of the epic.

She is portrayed as a strong willed woman who cannot be broken down easily in any situation. Her Presence alone over-shadowed the male characters of the epic because of her intelligence and strong voice of opinions. When everyone questioned her marriage with the Pandavas she stood strong on her grounds protecting her and her husbands' reputation in the court. She managed the affairs of the kingdom and her household standing along with her husbands.

After her disrobing scene in the court her voice silenced the court when she stood and voiced the inefficient system of the society and the thought process with which they ran the state no one was able to argue with her logic. She cursed each and everyone present in the court. It was this very disrobing of Draupadi that fed fuel into the fire of Pandavas who soon declared a war against the Kauravas who later achieved victory.

It was her intelligence and her dedication towards her husbands that she was able to cross the 13 years of exile and one year in hiding. It was her intelligence that Duryodhana evil intent during the time of their exile was never successful.

The way she stood out in the epic she remains an inspiration to the women of every century and women from every background.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say no matter what the era was these epic female characters were always there either as an inspiration or as a mirror of the society. Even with the diminishing voices of women these characters made their own presence and in their own intelligence and logic played huge role in both the epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata, without whom the epic can never be reimagined. These characters can be viewed in anyway but this does not degrade their importance and relevance to the plot.

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Role Of Indian Women In Indian Freedom Fighting Through The Eye Of *Kanthapura*

Madhurai Banerjee

Abstract

Studies took on the novel Kanthapura generally focuses on the torment Indian women suffered while fighting for Indian independence. As Raja Rao's Kanthapura is a miniature version of India so it also speaks about the Indian renaissance. But very few speak about the journey and the growth the women characters went through while revolting against British rule. The Indian women were successful to exterminate the idea of Manusmriti where Manu said that women were to be subjugated by their father, husband and son. It is important to note how the women came to the forefront for the freedom of their motherland even after balancing their family.

After the First War of Independence in 1857, many Indians were well aware that they could fight against the British government. However, they realized that they had to fight back in a unified way to free their homeland. Women in all cultures and communities whether it be the western or the eastern world were constantly tyrannized by male figures. According to post-colonial critics, women in Third World countries like India were “doubly oppressed”. Firstly in countries like India, all the Indians were subjected to oppression by the colonizers. Secondly, those oppressed Indian men were humiliating and oppressing the women in India. It is noteworthy how the independence of India in 1947 was possible because of the participation of women. Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938), is a fictional village named Kanthapura is a microcosmic representation of the macrocosmic fight for freedom that the whole of India was participating in.

The novel *Kanthapura* breaks away from the conventional structure as it starts with a female narrator. It was unconventional because in 19th century and in the beginning of 20th century women writers were still fighting for the power of authorship in a male dominated literary world. Raja Rao began the novel with a female narrator only to show the fight the women were fighting from a female point of view. All the female freedom fighters were combatting to win two battles simultaneously. The war to keep their family happy and the war to make their motherland free from the foreign rule were the two battles each woman was fighting. Though they were quite successful to make their homeland free still they are battling to win their respect and value in their own family. It is quite surprising that though the protagonist of the novel is a male named Moorthy, a follower of Gandhi but the story revolves around the zeal that was developing among the women villagers to be a part of Indian freedom movement. According to many critics this novel cannot be judged entirely as a feminist novel but one has to admit that being a part of freedom fighting by breaking the shackles of culture, tradition and religion was quite important for their growth as an individuals.

Raja Rao mentioned a number of women characters in the novel *Kanthapura* but only the characters of Rangamma and Ratna were fully coloured up by him. Raja Rao's women were conditioned by Mahatma Gandhi where he saw women as renunciators. Gandhi mentions how women have greater capacity than men to endure pain and suffering in their life and it is

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shown by Rao in his novel. Though the fictional women characters and even the women freedom fighters were shadowed by the light of Moorthy or by Gandhiji but breaking the barrier to be a victim of lathi charge not only by their husband but also by the British police for India's freedom is necessary for a reader to remember the forgotten women freedom fighters. Though Rangamma was neither a "village kid" and nor she was shot by the British police but her character in the novel reminds me of the journey of Matangini Hazra. She was a prominent figure in the quit India and non-cooperation movement. But still her fame lies with the name "Gandhi Buri" than her original name Matangini. She was shot thrice still she kept chanting "Vande Mataram" before dying. But only after 30 years of independence in 1977, her statue was put up in Kolkata, West Bengal. In the novel Rangamma was a well read woman. She used to read religious scriptures along with newspapers like *Tai-nadu*, *Vishwa-Karnataka*, *Deshbandhu* but still she was under the shadow of the glorified personality of Moorthy. Only after the imprisonment of Moorthy, the reader realises how worthy Rangamma is as a leader when she started an organization named "Sevika-Sangha". She tries to motivate all the village women with the example of Rani Laxmi Bai, Kamaladevi, Sarojini Naidu and Annie Besant. She explains them that a woman "need not to be a man to fight"(147). She tries to influence her fellow female villagers with her great eloquence. She says, "Sister, if for the thorny pit the illusioned said, you put our India, everything is clear." When the traditional and conservative village men were not ready to have their women as a part of the "Sevika Sangha" and said, "was there nothing left for our women but to vagabond about like soldiers?"(157). They even criticize the participation of their women members by saying "Why, soon it will be as if the men will have to wear bangles and cook so that you women may show yourself off!". But with her leadership qualities Rangamma successfully convinces all the male members. Rangamma "cries out, Now, sisters, forward!" while leading all the women who were marching towards the Boranna's toddy grove.

Another important and noteworthy character is Ratna who was Rangamma's sisters' daughter. Her way of living her widowhood gave her the tag of concubine. But it is worth noting that many things which were considered mad and erratic and have been criticized by the traditional society are celebrated by modern society. Individuals like Ratna were necessary to challenge the constraints that women widows had to go through. Even the woman who once criticized her stoops themselves down before the rebellious nature of Ratna and declares "come we will go to Ratna; for Ratna is our chief now and she will lead us out of it".

This zeal and rebellious nature of all Indians was the reason behind India's independence. What Rao portrayed in his fictional village *Kanthapura* was the mini representation of the whole India. What women freedom fighters like Aruna Asaf Ali, Bhikaiji Rustom Cama (Madam Cama), Kanaklata Barua, Matangini Hazra, Kamaladevi and many more did was exhibited beautifully by Rao in his novel in a microcosmic way. From being chained in the constraints of the patriarchy to swearing to burn the whole village to save it from the hand of English men *Kanthapura* was successful to show a complete transition in a woman's life. So on this P. C. Bhattacharya observes that to the "Kanthapurians there was no final defeat, no farewell but only fare forward, no ending but always a new beginning" (268).

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Gender and Poverty: Role of Education and Formal Employment in uplifting the Indian Women

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Abstract

Vulnerability plays a crucial role in rendering individual powerless and insecure. Of all the vulnerabilities, economic vulnerability is the most detrimental to the cause of a human being's overall security. In particular, the economic dependence of women on their male counterparts intensifies gender insecurity and gets them trapped in this cycle of abuse. This dependency calls for a socio-economic structure that makes women self-dependent. The actual empowerment of vulnerable sections of society through education and formal employment is vital. Poverty and exclusion from decision making are the primary forces operating behind vulnerability and gender insecurity. Government machinery has a critical role in creating a seamless platform to educate women and provide them with formal employment.

Keywords: Poverty; Economic-independence; Inequality; Education; Employment.

Introduction

Women of Indian society have been subject to discrimination for an extended period and constituted the least empowered segment of the population (Sivakumar, 2008). The struggle of women for securing an equal place in society dates back to the ancient past (Kokate,2020). Moreover, various social and political moments from time-to-time upheld women's cause in one form or another (Purushothaman, 1998; Roy, 1995). Inequality and discrimination coupled with poverty, continue to worry the policymakers in the entire world, especially third world countries, which are yet to develop efficient compatibility to deal with it. Being a socialist country, India has a constitutional mandate to alleviate poverty and minimise the inequality between the rich and the poor (Mohsin,2020). Poverty is very complex and multidimensional in its very nature, requiring efforts from various fronts to get rid of it (Asselin,2009). In the past few decades, considerable social progress has been secured all around the world. Institutional intervention through national and international organisations have done a commendable job at speeding up this process. However, violence against women in Indian society under the grab of social norms has been present. Morals and values, ethics, and society's culture have been presented and framed in a manner that makes the repression of women in society normal and acceptable. Hence, most women in India continue to reside in an unempowered and dependant state and hence recipients of violence (Saravanan, 2010). Gendered violence is both a cause and a consequence of gender inequality and gender inequity (Buvinic et al., 2013). Simply not being the perpetrator of gender violence is not enough; standing up, speaking out and demonstrating our support for gender equality and equity-based social change and women empowerment is crucial. Social hierarchies which disadvantage and discriminate against any particular group needs to be identified and eliminated. Simultaneously, those political and economic paradigms need to be promoted, which provide equal opportunities to all the communities and genders as their top priority. The structural inequalities existent in society are due to the cycle of violence, and such inequalities harm women the most as there is a relation between inequalities and gender, resulting in inadequate education, malnutrition, and poor living conditions (Farmer, 1996). Also, the lack of adequate data on violence against women complicates addressing inequality

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and exploitation existent in society difficult (Anderson,2009). Considering the gravity of the situation and the rise of violence cases against women worldwide, the General Assembly of the United Nations Organisation (UNO) designated 25 November as International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

Method

The author primarily used secondary sources of data to describe the economic and academic conditions of women in India. Reports from national and international agencies, research papers from multiple journals, news articles and reports from diverse sources were utilized to vindicate the case of empowering women through education and employment.

Result

Freedom to choose is a fundamental right of a human being. A peaceful and prosperous cannot come into existence unless more than half of its population (women) are not empowered enough to make choices for themselves. Subjugation of women in the society is result of interplay of different forces and biases. In order to create an egalitarian society based on just order, education and formal employment of women that could enable mainstreaming them into formal economic setup of the country is vital.

Discussion

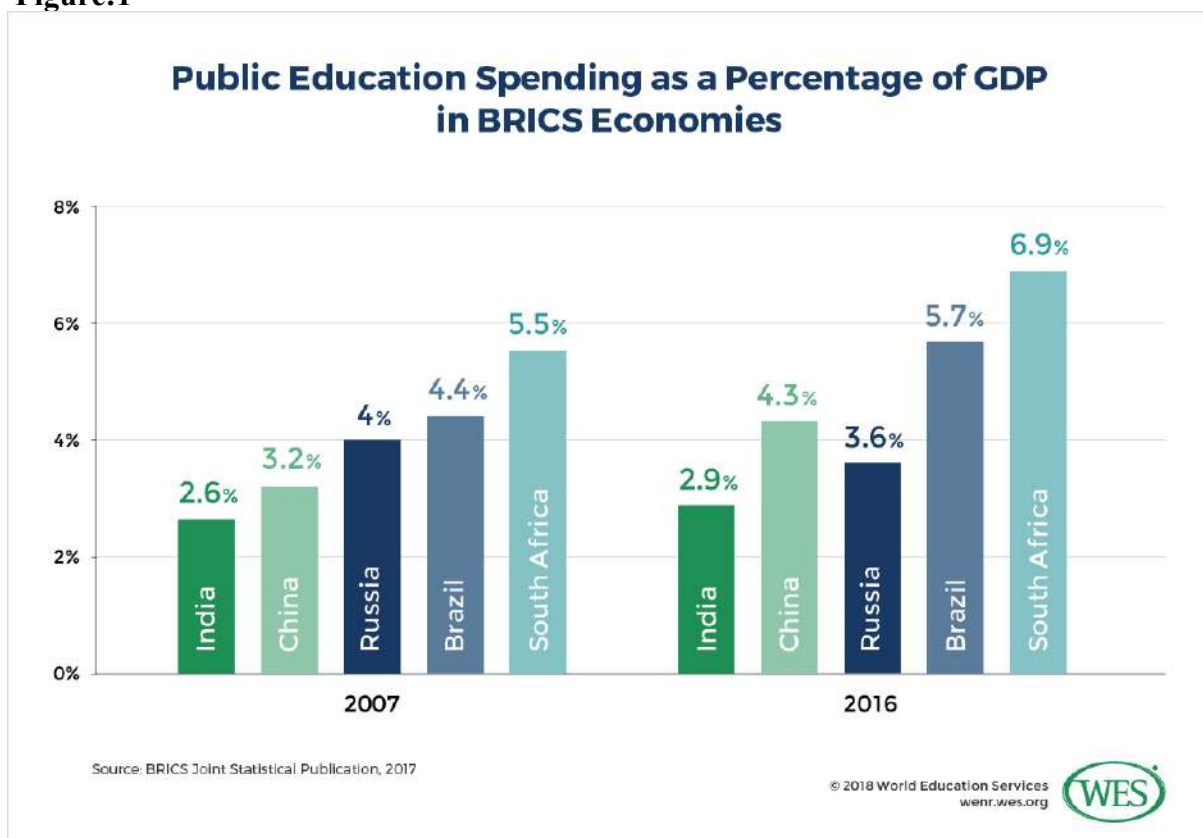
Since independence, literacy among the people of India has risen manifold. The literacy rate at the time of independence was merely 18 per cent; it is 74.04 per cent, according to the census of 2011. However, the average literacy rate of 74 per cent conceals and misrepresents some crucial realities that the country is faced with. In particular, the female literacy rate is a significant hit as many females are illiterate, having significant implications for the country's social, political and economic setup. Compared with the rest of the world, the average female literacy rate of Indian women is 60 per cent which is around 22 per cent less than the world average.

Moreover, there is also an extensive gap of around 20 per cent between the male and female literacy rate in India. Though the gender gap in literacy is almost equal at the primary stage, it sufficiently widens at a secondary and higher learning stage. As per the 2011 census, over 80 per cent of the country's young female population (aged 7 to 29) is literate, a figure which drops below 30 per cent for women aged 60 and above (Firstpost, 2019). So, enhancing the pace in women's education is necessary as it will serve as a bridge to communicate effectively with them. An educated mother is likely to create more impact on her progeny than an educated father. Analysing the data, a study found that though more women are enrolled in higher studies, fewer are serious regarding employment, mainly due to the country's early marriage system (Salve,2016).

Similarly, a report by International Monetary Fund reveals that though 'enrolment of girls in higher education increased from 39% to 46% from 2007 to 2014, but female participation in India's labour force declined to a low of 27% in 2014 from 34% in 1999' (Saha, 2017). Roughly, women constitute half of the population of India. They continue to contribute to the national economy directly or indirectly. Most of their services and contributions go unnoticed as it is taken for granted by a woman in or society to perform those activities. This amounts to economic injustice meted out to the women (Choudhary et al., 2009).

Furthermore, as long as women remain economically dependent, their social empowerment is a distant dream (Sentinel,2020). The government of India has adopted various schemes exclusively for women to mainstream their activities and make them part of the country's formal economic setup. Investing in education and rejecting social systems that demote women's status as equal individuals in a social setting would be essential to usher in a new change. The government of India needs to move more specifically on that front as India does not invest much in the education sector. Even among the BRICS economies, India is the country that spends the least on this section that holds promise for its demographic advantage in the world, as shown in figure 1. Kothari commission on education suggested that 6 per cent of the total national GDP needs to be put aside for the educational sector (Tilak, 2006). If this policy recommendation is implemented thoughtfully, a substantial change may be noticed very soon.

Figure:1

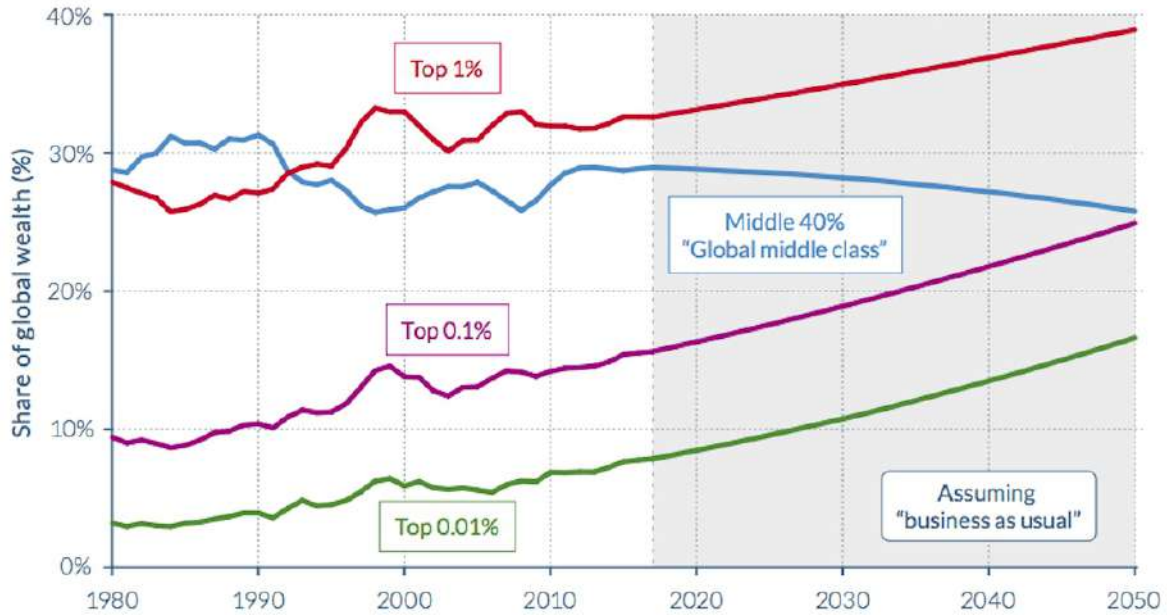


Source: BRICS Joint Statistical Publication, 2017

Inequality of wealth or income is not an Indian phenomenon, nor is inequality restricted to India. Inequality in one form or the other is all persistent all over the world. Inequality is the misdistribution of scarce or valuable resources like wealth, income, knowledge or power. The central aim to understand the prevalence of inequality in society lies in understanding the distribution and redistribution of resources in society among the various groups. Mainly it is the absence of equal opportunities or lack of means and approach to reach a level from which opportunities could be availed. The discriminated group does not rise suddenly; hence, only a

systematic and extensive programme can make progress and mainstream such groups (Pager & Shepherd, 2008). Figure 2 shows the trends of world inequality over the years.

Figure 2

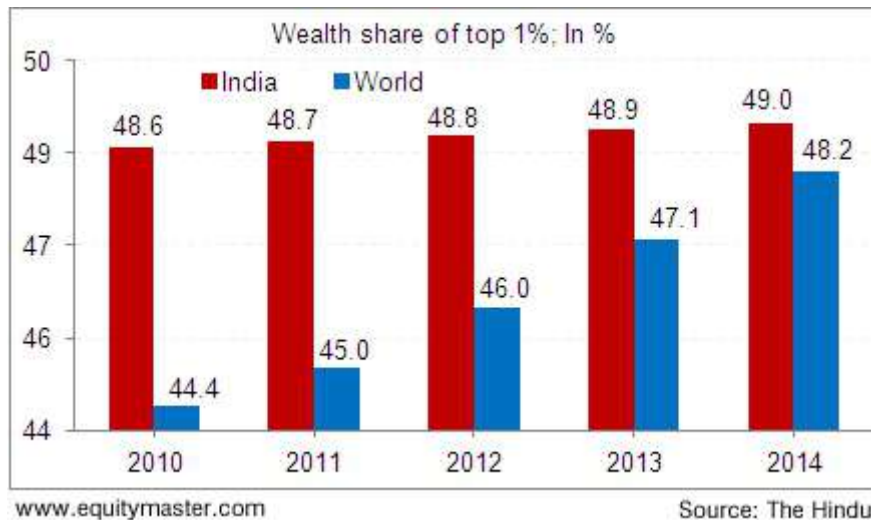


Source: World Inequality Report (Alvaredo et al., 2018)

Discrimination and inequality are complementary to each other as discrimination intensifies inequality by influencing the distribution of resources. Policy formulation on either of the subject needs to take both in cognisance. Even if a member of the discriminated group gets to work on a level playing field with un-discriminated ones, this individual faces wage discrimination because of specific social characteristics ascribed to such individual. If an individual lacks the means to get to a particular place, access, or lack of access holds little meaning. The poverty trends show that the reduction pace was much higher in the post-reform period, particularly during the high-growth period. The impact of higher growth on poverty reduction can also be seen from the decile-wise growth in per capita consumption expenditure. A comparison of the growth rate of per capita consumption (in real terms) during the periods 1993-94 to 2004-05 and 2004-05 to 2011-12 shows that the latter period's growth rate is higher for every decile (Rangarajan, 2018).

One of the most pressing and critical issues that any society needs to address is inequality in the system. Inequality has multiple forms and faces. The most evident and recognised faces of inequality are income inequality and social inequality (Grill, 2019). Inequality is a trans-disciplinary touching historical, psychological, economic, sociological and philosophical domain all along. Any policy proposal to manage rising inequality needs a nuanced thought and understanding keeping its multi-disciplinary nature in view. The wealth inequality in India has been represented in figure 3.

Figure 3



Source: Wealth inequality in India. (Equitymaster, 2014)

Inequality persists almost everywhere in the world in one form or the other. It is the scale and widening gap of inequality that poses a threat to civilisation's social fabric. Minimum inequality, if not justified, could be understood. It is rampant inequality wherein the rich get richer and the poor poorer, which calls for structural reforms. The concept of 'inclusive development' became a trendy concept in contemporary times, yet it was primarily exclusive development that our world has seen in the past decade. It is income and wealth inequality that an individual or an organisation can put on the scale, the case of social inequality is far worse, and it cannot be put to scale.

The social stratum of Indian society has got shaped so that it favours a minuscule upper-class minority both in terms of political and economic power. This holds very much real when it comes to India. Here such deep is a divide based on caste; even today, lower casts are denied water from the source to which upper-class castes have access. They are denied entry to temples, attacked for mounting a horse or flashing moustache! (Today, 2019) The ghettoisation of the Muslim population is not out of nowhere. Systematically, Muslims communities have been ghettoised. Property dealers do not sell any property to Muslims because of the apprehension that the place's overall value may fall because of having a Muslim in the vicinity (Hanan Zaffar, 2019). This kind of discrimination is especially right against the people of Kashmir, who are even denied rental rooms (Ahan Penkar, 2019). Social inequality remains incomplete without mentioning the segregation of jobs based on class and caste in India. Some specific jobs are done exclusively by the Dalits, like manual scavenging, and in the same way, other little chores are done by Muslims (Borooah, 2005)

The debate of women empowerment in India is an arguable subject and full of stark contradictions. Women in India have been subject to the worst kind of atrocities in the name of religion, culture and gender. Gradually their position started to change for the better. The constitution of independent India made sure to give a dignified place to her women, and it envisaged equal social position of women and men. However, most of the women in India still face discrimination and harassment in society in different forms.

When it comes to women in India, women's economic dependence on their male family members has made sure they remain subjugated. Economic independence is the precursor of social independence. The cultural shackles have made sure she remains economically dependent on their male counterparts. The rise of the national movement in the early twentieth century also put weight on removing the disabilities of women. Women were part and parcel of the national movement of independence and played an active role in unshackling the country from British rule. The protagonist of the national movement, Mahatma Gandhi, stood firm for women rights. However, most effectively, Rajaram Mohan Roy and other social reformists like Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar emphasised women's education, abrogation of the practice of child marriage and abolition of the Sati that raised the bar of women in India. Keeping this in view, the most liberating acts before India's independence for women empowerment were the Act of Sati (abolish) 1829, the Child Restriction Act, 1929, Hindu Widow Remarriage Act' 1856 and Women Property Right Act, 1937. After India's independence constitution, they have made special provision for women and other weaker sections of society. Article 14 says that the government shall not deny any person equality before the law or equal protection of the law. Article 15 declares that government shall not discriminate against any citizen on the ground of sex. Article 15 (3) makes a special provision enabling the state to make affirmative discriminations favouring women. Article 42 directs the state to ensure just and human conditions of work and maternity relief. Above all, the constitution regards every citizen's fundamental duty through Articles 15 (A), (E) to renounce the practices derogatory to women's dignity.

Conclusion

Education and formal employment possess tremendous potential to empower and develop women in particular and other vulnerable sections of society in general. Empowerment of women is not possible unless the issue of inequality is addressed. The promotion of education and employment among the women can play a crucial role in uplifting women's role and status in society and help them achieve economic independence. Once economically independent, the chances of social development also increase. Empowerment is all about taking the rational course of action and creating a seamless platform for everyone to develop. The government of India continues to make different programmes and policies to uplift the status of women, and there still is a vast scope for improvement.

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Women Uprising in Telangana (1946 - 1951)

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Abstract

The paper, Women Uprising in Telangana, (1946 – 1951) attempts to present the outline of the women coming out for a revolt for their pathetic living, due to the effect of parasitic feudal approaches and burden. In the year 1947, the Subcontinent of India was enjoying the freedom from British Raj, being the fruits of its sacrifices. The state of Hyderabad (India) was barbed in the Autocratic rule of Nizam, suffered from greater atrocities, under the rule of Nizam. The basic means of living was taken away and were used in Vetti Chakiri (forced Labour.) The social condition of villages turned rotten into pauperisation. There was a massive upraise from the towns to the remote villages confronting the parasitic hegemony. Women gave up the grief and stood equally beside the men who are into guerrilla against the feudal rule.

Keywords: Feudal, Women Revolt, Telangana

Women Uprising in Telangana (1946 - 1951)

The Peasant Movement of Telangana was a revolutionary breath and nerve of the people of Telangana against the Autocratic rule of Nizams and the local landed Doras (elite landlord) for their exploitation on the people in enormous ways. (Sundarayya. P, 1972)

The state of Hyderabad reigned by the Nizam after the fall of the Mughal Empire in the Indian Subcontinent, consisting of 83,000 square miles. The revenue system was carried out in Feudal order by the Doras (Jagirdar, Zamindar, Patel, Patwari and Deshmuk) (Sundarayya. P, 1972) levying heavy taxes on more than Half of Agricultural produce and taxed on even like, small occasions as the births, deaths, marriages and even on tonsures. Vetti Chakiri (forced/ Bonded Labour) was Prevalent entirely in the State of Hyderabad in the reign of Nizam. Nonetheless, any castes in the country like Harijan, Gouda, Yadava, Nayi, etc. were forced to work under the Doras, ranging from works in farmlands up to the works at their homes. Women were mainly targeted at the workforce as labour and in sexual exploitation, like the Gouda women who takes the toddy to the Dora's house. (Swarajyam. M, 2010)

Facing the torture:

It was in the life of Telangana people, the family members were taken and jailed by the Nizam Police and Razakars, punched the fingernails with pins, horses were tripped on the lying bodies, kicking of the hanging men with the spiked boots, beaten, with sticks until the flow of blood; Razakars spoiled the women for supporting guerrilla by giving rice to them in Neelayagudem village, they killed their babies in their glance. The Families of Tribes, Peasants, People from various castes who faced the atrocities by the Razakars and Doras under the regime of Nizam had started confronting them with immense vigour and strengths. (P. Sundarayya, p. 140)

The Communist Party intervened in support of middle peasants and poor peasants. The women in Telangana had taken the revolutionary or the rebellion way by holding the

musketeer in treating their enemies like Doras and to cleanse the Nizam rule for their means of life - Kuli (daily wages) instead of Vetti Chakiri behind many reasons being oppressed and exploited by the Nizam rule of Hyderabad. (P. Sundarayya, 1972). Women worked towards Headman not only in agriculture but in domestic work as in from evidence. (R S Sharma, D N Jha as in Dr Arun Kumar. G). A baby died by not getting feed by a mother as forcedly taken to the work on landlord's demand. Girls in slavery went as concubines to the Doras and their guests. (Sundarayya. P, 1972)

Women's fight for their Land

Telangana Women took an active part in the struggle for their daily wages, land and grains being seized by Landlords and of the evacuation of tribes like Lambadis, Chanchus and Koyas of the 'Briggs' Plan.'(To stop the revolution of the communities) The women stood equally beside their family men fighting against Nizam Police, Razakars, Congress Razakars and their armed forces. Being part of Political squad baring various roles by hiding in hills and forests and played higher agitation. Ailamma Chakali, of Jangaon fought bitterly for seizing her land by Deshmukh of Visnur. She inspired the people of Telangana greatly to get their lands back.⁷ (Sundarayya. P) She also paid a huge thug to the Feudal Nawabs of Hyderabad, when they were tried to capture Ailamma and her corps, Hundreds of the women and Telangana farmers responded valiantly with the sticks, spraying Chilli Powder and by pelting the stones. (Vasanth. K. et. al, 1991). Veeramma died in confronting Dora's followers and the Nizam police, a Lambadi woman cultivated and harvested crop to home after, against Landlord Rama Krishamma who tried to seize the land. The wife of Kumari Mattaya rouse against the "Military Police action," that killed her Husband. (Sundarayya. P)

The Women Frontier

The Nizam Cops and goons marched towards women, where Pullamma resisted and fought against them, later organised the women together. A young Koya Community girl of Bendlapadu, named Budemma joined in militia squad and became incharge in supplying women force, escaped many times from police raids but, was got spoiled and murdered. Bullets rushed into Lachhakka, who killed 4 police persons with a Sten gun when her hair plot struck in the bushes. Another woman Lachhakka sister of the duo brothers, the members of the party and Andhra Mahasabha faced evacuation of their Thanda (settlements of Banjara / Lambadi community) under the 'Briggs Plan.' Police caught Lachhakka and tortured her to reveal the secrets of their movements. However, she escaped. Perfect shooter Venkatamma became second to the commander in office and led one squad of Jagannadam (future husband) with ambush and arms. The forest area in the Godavari region was an active base of the women armed rebellion. Among them were 5 couriers, 9 of the guerrilla squad, some are incharge in deputy cadre and other members of the squad. Nagamma, Papakka, Lachhakka, Ramakka, Pullakka and many other members belong to the Koya (the tribe of Godavari region), rebelled against the feudal rule and their atrocities.(Sundarayya. P).

Art forms supporting the revolution

The women squads marched with their duties, by singing songs of revolution in towns and villages. (Swarajyam. M, 2010). There were as many as art forms in performance and visual

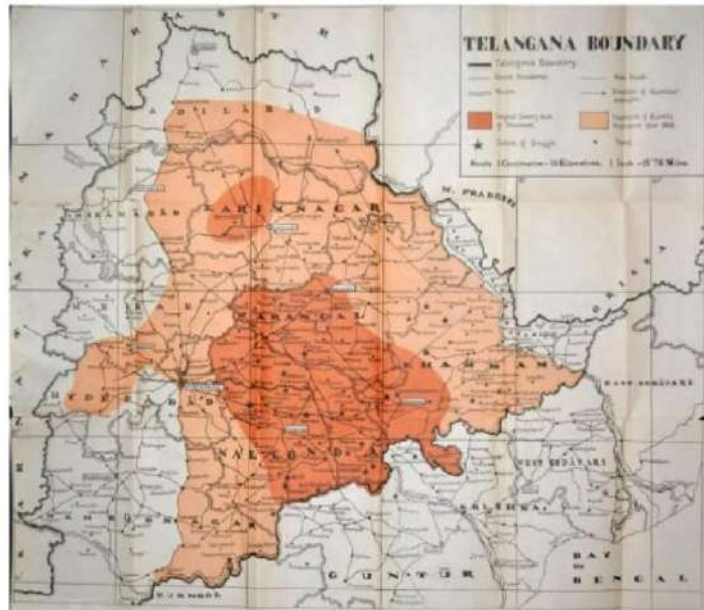
arts that embraced the women and peasant revolution in Telangana. The famous Telugu revolutionary song, “Bandenaka Bandi Katti, Padaharu Ballu Katti...Golkonda Killa Kinda, Ne Gori Kadtham Kodako”, the song goes on telling that, You Nizam: Have laid 16 vehicles in convoy... Down under the foothill of Golconda, O son, we lay you in the cemetery, was written and revolutionised by Venkipalli born Bandi Yadgiri, among Telangana folk against feudal lords. There was massive experimentation in the traditional format performances with the added Telangana needs and Telangana subject matters. Under Praja Natya Mandali (Popular Street Players) Women performed the stage plays jubilantly, Udayam Moturi supported by Parvathi and Kotewaramma Chintha presenting the trio format Burra Katha, Chultakamudu - women’s performance, praising the warrior leaders in Sharada Kathalu, Veedhi Bagavatham beside other forms like ‘Pakiru Patalu which informs the news from world around, Dandagam, Latkorsab, Kolatam, were presented all over the Telangana region. (Dhanaraju. V, 2012). Chittaprasad, an eminent Bengali Artist depicted Nizams Atrocities in Telangana and the conditions of women. (Ashok Bhowmick, 2012). The plays like ‘Mundhadugu’ – 1945 and ‘Maa Bhoomi’ – 1947 produced by the Duo, Sunkara Satyanarayana and Bhaskar Rao were banned and laid down the inspirations of revolution among masses. (Subbarayudu. G. L, at el., 1996)

Conclusion

There are many more stories of tiresome women in Telangana who showed valour for their Freedom, Land, Grain and Wages against the parasitic feudal system. Thanks to the inspiring Telangana women for their bravery who lead the freedom movement for their existence. Today, we even see the people were trafficked for sale or labour. In a recent article titled "Vetti", that mentally challenged persons from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh were forced into Vetti in few parts of Punjab observed by the Border Security force and freed them from the bondage. This is an ill will, to gain wealth which, has to keep in constant scan under respective Government Boards to take care for the needy women, children, poor and needy not to fall into the hands of traffickers.

The Boundaries of Telangana in Revolt

The light orange colour indicating the spread of Revolt and the Deep orange with strong ground of Guerrilla movement around 1948 (Sundarayya. P. 1972)



Women's Struggle with the Guns

The Guerrilla squad members practicing the Gun Firing.



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Writing Mizoram, Re-Writing History: Reading Malsawmi Jacob's *Zorami* as History

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This paper tries to look at Zorami (2015), a novel written by Malsawmi Jacob, a Mizo writer from the perspective of the representation of the historical experience of insurgency and unrest as it is endured by the women. It takes clues from theories of critical historiography such as Subaltern studies and tries to explore how the experience of women, either under-recognized or under-represented in Mainstream history is sought to be made visible in a work of fiction largely set against the backdrop of political and ethnic unrest.

Zorami: a Redemption Song (2015), is a work of fiction by Malsawmi Jacob, a noted novelist of Mizoram. It is set in the backdrop of the most traumatic years in Mizo history, the insurgency years of the nineteen sixties. The novel deals with the life of a girl, Zorampari, or Zorami. The first novel written by a Mizo writer in English, *Zorami* is better viewed as reproduction of an important chapter in the history of Mizoram. The flexibility of the fictional genre allows Jacob certain advantages over non-fictional genres to handle issues that are crucial to the history of the Mizo people. This choice, in other words, is very important insofar as contemporary views on history and history-writing are concerned. It brings together voices, shafts and experiences that often remain unrecognized or undocumented in what is viewed as canonical history. Jacob's choice of a woman as her protagonist is important. It is through her eyes that the unrest in Mizoram is viewed, her experience is presented as the experience of every women in a war-zone, sites of unrest who are subjected to forms of violence which are not always obvious. As *Zorami* In other words, it is

The novel is an important chronicling of post-colonial Mizoram. Apparently, it deals with the life and experience of a Mizo women, who when the novel opens is a well-established college lecturer, married to Sanga, a state bank official. Despite the fact that she is educated, married, respected and well-off, and therefore every reason to be happy, there is something that does not let Zorami happy. Zorami is thoughtful, quiet, she is crippled by the shock of being raped by Indian army personnel while she was merely thirteen years old. Although she survives the experience as a body, Zorami never succeeds in freeing herself from the scars the shock of being raped leaves on her soul to a point to push her to thoughts of suicide at one point of time. This violence cripples Zorami emotionally, psychologically, and also upsets her conjugal life. "As time passed, the wounds on her body healed, leaving scars. But her wounded psyche festered (178)." When the occasion arises for her marriage with Sanga, Zorami's mind is perplexed as she is unsure of whether marrying Sanga will not amount to an act of betrayal. This crisis is aggravated by her own father who calls her a "damaged girl". "You should be only too happy, he is willing to marry you, a damaged girl. He is too good for you (55)." This apathetic attitude of the father towards Zorami, already in pain, is an instance of the marginalization of women in every front. But while creating this episode, the novel successfully makes visible the violence that a women, both as a child and as adult are forced to endure. This could be better seen as an attempt to let make the gender-subaltern visible and voiced. This is important, as the story of countless women like Zorami suffer not only because they are bodily or otherwise abused, but more importantly they are pushed into

silence and invisibility. *Zorami* is an intervention into this hegemonic practice of construction of histories of unrest and insurgency.

The crisis in Zorami's life is, as seen in the novel, is a spillover of the social and political unrest in the Mizo Hills in the middle of the nineteen sixties. The violence that engulfs her life is a story of almost every Mizo woman of these times, although the forms of that violence may vary. To say this is not to dismiss or undermine, in any way, the suffering of the men. In fact, the novel tries to bring to life the violence and trauma as it was experienced by different sections of the Mizo society. However, the present paper will retain its focus on how the novel attempts to revisit recreate history of the embattled and fragile existence lived by the Mizo women at a time of socio-political volatility and unrest i.e., primarily the third quarter of the twentieth century, however with spillovers that live even today. This is important in the light of the fact that conventional histories of conflict-zones and situations tend to overlook the trauma which is collateral of any conflict. It is also important to note that although it has been more than half a century since the brutal days of Mizoram insurgency that began in 1961 with demands of a Mizo homeland, its consequence continue to wreak havoc on the present generation. As stated in an interview the writing of the novel itself was a challenging project, in terms of the emotional toll it had for her.

Perhaps the best way to understand how the novel morphs history into the form of fiction is to look at the way the life of the protagonist, Zorami, is shaped by the immediate history of Mizoram. Both are marked by the shadow of violence and trauma. In other words, what happens to Zorami, happens to Mizoram. Perhaps the most traumatic form of violence to a women body is rape, which reported and unreported, is almost a regular occurrence in a conflict-zone like Mizo hills of the nineteen sixties. In the novel, Zorami falls prey to the lust of a *vai sipai* (Indian soldier) :

She feels a chill all of a sudden. Outside, the morning sun is still shining. But a dark cloud has risen on her inner horizon. She shivers as she recalls her dream-the same dream that has haunted her for many years. Like in an old photograph she sees a girl lying hunched up under a bush...she looks dead. But somehow in the dream, Zorami knows she isn't quite dead (17).

It is important to note that that Zorami is ashamed to reveal this to anybody as she was taught to remain silent and quiet because she was a girl. Zorami is a common woman caught in the quagmire of violence and remains the focus of the entire narrative. However, Malsawmi Jacob incorporates multiple subjectivities from different social locations and views to render an ambivalent experience such as militancy, insurgency, and fight for freedom or unrest (I prefer to use the term 'unrest'). The novel is a multigenerational representation bringing together characters from colonial times as well from the most recent times. This wide array of views and subjectivities helps the novelist to present the experience and history of unrest, not in the usual canonical or conventional frame of chronicling, but more as an insider's account of it as a everyday reality.

The novel begins its traces the period of unrest in Mizo hills since its inception. Chapter four titled as 'A Plague of Rates' recreates the tension and anxiety felt across the Mizo hills, largely as a result of the apathetic and callous response of the state in managing what is known in Mizo as 'Mautam' (dying out and subsequent flowering of bamboos leading to abrupt rise in rat population) and the crisis that follows, namely, starvation and famine. Notwithstanding the authenticity of the narrative of neglect, its instrumentalization for

political mobilization and its centrality to the consolidation of a ‘Mizo’ national identity is a well known thesis. In other words the 1961 ‘*mautam*’ was not only the first major national crisis in Mizo hills, but more than that it was made to function as a symbol of marginalization by the power –centres in Assam as well as in New Delhi leading to what is viewed as ‘sub-nationalist’ aspirations. Malsawmi Jacob offers a vivid account of the sense of betrayal and alienation the experience generated in the Mizos. “The Government is not helping us either. The leaders of Assam know all about the *mautam* but they don’t care. We are only a district of Assam and what do they care about tribal people like us? (33).” It is at this point that the Mizos feel betrayed by the state. “It was a mistake to become part of India. We should have joined Burma instead. India is treating us like stepsons because we are a different race. It is nothing to them even if we all die out. They will just come and occupy our land, that’s all (33).” This marks the beginning of the long years of unease viewed as nationalist movement by the Mizos and as insurgency by the state. The first attempts are to resist the imposition of Assamese language, which was forced on the Mizos which slowly morphs into a demand for an exclusive homeland (34). The extent of anti-Indian sentiments is very obvious in the way Zorami is treated harshly on many occasions for her Indian-like look (50). For instance, in her childhood terms her ‘ugly’ for looking like a ‘vai’ (Indian).

Although subjected to violence and voicelessness, Zorami decides to put up resistance. She shares her scarred past with her fiancée Sanga and they get married. However, she stays frozen. In the meanwhile the Mizo identity assertion movement assumes pace. The Mizo national Famine Front, the First Pan-Mizo front, transforms into Mizo National Front led by Laldenga and the consolidation of a Mizo national identity becomes a reality. “We, the Mizo people, can never be at home in India, the land of the *vai* people. Our culture is different. Our customs and practices are different. Our religion is different. So they do not consider us as their people (61).” However the secessionist agenda is contested by voices from within in the form of characters like the father of Ralkapa, the rebel-cum-traitor. It is important to note that the older generation Mizos like him share neither the adventurism nor the utopian zeal of founding a free homeland, separate from India.

The recognition of the centrality of women’s participation in the social and political landscape is an important contribution of *Zorami* in extending our understanding of not only the history of Mizoram, but the history of insurgencies in India in terms of private lives and the everyday. To this extent, the novel is a classic example of contesting conventional history-writing exercises and an important move towards correcting erasures and evasions.

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Judicial Justice for Women in India

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Abstract

On a personal level, Indian women face various problems related to marriage, divorce, inheritance, guardianship, adoption and succession as these are private law issues that vary from religion to religion and are linked to private law at birth and apply to the person. After independence in the 1970s, the government first felt the need to review the on-going specific laws governing women and their impact on the status of women in the Asian nation. This article attempts to review government efforts in this direction. The article is divided into 3 sections. The main section deals with legal barriers to justice for women. The second section prohibits the numerous recommendations made by the High-Level Committee 2 ' on the Situation of Women in the Asian Nation" (1974 and 2015) to promote the situation of women in India. In the last section we made analyses assuming knowledge of applied mathematics from women's studies and examined the situation of women in India. Justice for women in Indian courts. The gap between the approval of laws and their implementation by the state needs to be explored, as the mere approval of laws cannot change the lives of women in society. The optimal application of the law is judged only on the basis of the reporting of crimes under various acts and therefore the penalties imposed on those convicted under them.

Keywords: Women, Indian Law, Justice, and Status of Women.

Introduction

In India, Justice in reference to marriage, divorce, inheritance, guardianship, adoption, and succession imparted in line with the personal law of the individual that varies from religion to religion. This is often not a brand-new development of an independent India even within the times of colonial rule same system of various personal laws was applicable to the private sphere of the people. When India's independence on 15th August 1947, it had been solely within the 1970s the govt. of India felt the necessity to review the continued women-specific laws and their impact on the status of women in India. The modification and continuity within the women's life were the priority of the govt. because it was already a journey of 23 years of independent India. To review the status of women in India the govt. of India formed the primary committee in 1971 then the second within the year 2013 solely.

The bound legal inequalities of the laws towards women justice and recommendation to get rid of these legal inequalities for women justice. The second section specifically focuses on the recommendations made by the committee on the status of women in India within the year 1974 and 2015 respectively (Ministry of Education and social welfare 1974; Ministry of women and child Development 2015). Until the 1970's no comprehensive review of the women-specific laws had been undertaken. Some laws were passed from time to time to lift the status of Indian women and embodied the principles underlying by the Indian constitution Because the Preamble to the Constitution of India guarantees 'to secure to any or all its voters, Justice-Social, economic and political; Liberty of thought, expression, belief, religion and worship, Equality of status and opportunity; and to push among all (Preamble The Constitution of India 1949).

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To review the status of women, the govt. of India entrenched the committee on the status of women by a resolution of the Ministry of Education and social welfare on 22nd Sept 1971 to induce helpful pointers for the formulation of social policies (Ministry of Education and social welfare 1974, xii). The main objective of the Committee was to look at the Constitutional legal and administrative provisions that have a control on the social rank of women, their education, and employment. The committee submitted its report on 31st Dec 1974, by clearly spoken communication that ‘Our investigation has discovered that enormous masses of women in this country have remained unaffected by the rights bound to them by the Constitution and therefore the laws enacted since independence. Our recommendations are created primarily with a view to creating these rights a lot of real and meaningful’ (Ministry of Education and social welfare 1974, Preface). In reference to women-specific laws, the report of 1974 dedicated chapter IV, ‘Women and therefore the Law’ to highlights the legal inequalities towards the women of India. This chapter broadly speaking mentioned problems with marriage, Age of wedding, Dowry, Divorce, Adoption, Guardianship, Maintenance, and Inheritance. The committee recommends the assorted changes that were needed within the laws to strengthen the women’s position in legal terms.

The committee report of 1974 entitled, *Towards Equality A Report of the Committee on the status of women in Bharat*, not solely highlights the unequal provisions of the women-specific laws it conjointly suggests their solutions. First, the committee highlights the varied personal laws in reference to bigamy or polygamy that weaken the position of women in several folds in India. The Committee (1974) was of the view that the continuation of such numerous personal Laws of the Hindus, Muslims, Parsee, and Christians are contradictory to our policy and entirely unreasonable. Because the Muslim personal law supports marriage. The committee recommends the immediate replacement of those laws by the Hindu marriage Act of 1955. On the problem of bigamy, the Committee (1974) recommends a clause to be additional to Section five or Section eleven of the Hindu marriage Act (Ministry of Education and social welfare 1974, 111).

Further, the Committee (1974) recommends that Section sixteen ought to even be amended to incorporate all children born outside spousal relationship and not solely children of void and a rescindable wedding. Further, the term “illegitimate” mustn't be employed in any statute or document. The offense of bigamy could also be censured with imprisonment up to seven years and a fine. this means the seriousness of the offense. However, limiting the right of initiating prosecution to solely the aggrieved person, in our social context, defeats the aim of the law. To remedy this, the Committee recommends allowing someone to initiate prosecution for bigamy with the permission of the court.

Child Marriage (Section 16)

In regard to child marriage, the Committee (1974) recommends that all offenses under the child marriage Restraint Act of 1929 ought to be made cognoscible and special officers appointed to enforce the law. With this, they conjointly advocate legislation prohibiting courts from granting any relief in respect of a marriage solemnized in violation of the age requirements prescribed by law unless each the parties have completed the age of 18 years (Ministry of Education and social welfare 1974, 114).

On the dowry Prohibition Act of 1961, the committee had been recognized that one among the 'major loopholes' within the existing legislation is that anything is allowed within the name of gifts and presents. Therefore, any gifts made to the bridegroom or his oldsters in more than Rs. 500/- or which might be therefore used on cut back his own monetary liability ought to be made punishable.

On the issue of divorce, the Committee (1974) reviews the tendency and therefore the role of the judiciary. Rather than guiding the conflicting parties towards a rational adjustment to the method of social change, the judiciary has either evaded the problem or thrown its weight on the side of the traditional read of the husband's authority. Further, on the problem of divorce, the Committee recommends that a definition of 'cruelty under the Hindu marriage Act and alternative Laws should be introduced so as to make sure that it's not fully left to the interpretation of the courts. A provision should be supplemental to the definition of cruelty stating that paternal notions of a wife's behaviour won't represent cruelty (Ministry of Education and social welfare 1974, 201). in contrast to divorce by mutual consent, one party's would like to dissolve the wedding, not to mention a protracted period of separation, is enough to reckon a marriage 'irretrievably broken' wherever reconciliation is not possible.'

The Committee (1974) conjointly suggested that no religion-converted person will, for a period of 2 years a minimum of, be able to have an effect on any matrimonial rights by resorting to the new religion. The benefit of deterring individuals from straightforward conversion to unravel their marital issues, in our opinion conversion shouldn't be a ground for divorce because it offers a simple approach of evading marital obligation (Ministry of Education and social welfare 1974, 123).

People in India escape the penalisation of bigamy by simply changing their religion to Muslim. As bigamy is allowed among the Muslim community, this deteriorated the condition of women in India. The Committee of 1974 created general observations in relevance guardianship rights. The up-to-date legislation of varied countries has shifted to concerning the child's interest as of prime thought and parental rights as being subordinate thereto. However sadly, our law doesn't clearly replicate this trend. The Committee (1974) recommends in respect to numerous laws associated with women's maintenance claims. Because the right of maintenance was given within the personal laws the Criminal Procedure Code, enacted in 1898. the right of the partner and dependent children to move the Court for relief against the husband or the father who neglects or refuses to take care of his dependent members of the family is therefore not confined to any explicit religion however is given to any or all wives and children no matter their personal laws.

To this extent, uniformity had been achieved in a minimum of one facet of family law (Ministry of Education and social welfare 1974, 128). This code has, however, been repealed and that we are these days ruled by the New Criminal Procedure Code of 1974. In spite of the passage of 76 years, however, the new Code continues to replicate the previous perspective to women.

Eventually in relevance inheritance, the Committee (1974) highlights the one major issue that has contributed to continue the difference between sons and daughters is that the retention of

the Mitakshara coparcenary. It's confined solely to male members. One primary principle of Muslim law that grossly discriminates against women is that under the law of inheritance if there are male heirs and feminine heirs of identical degree sort of a son and female offspring, full brother and a full sister, the share of a feminine member is half that of the male (Ministry of Education and social welfare 1974, 139). In respect to guardianship, adoption, and inheritance women ought to be forbidden on par with men. On analysis, the Committee of 1974 has found that 'Personal Laws' contain many provisions that are discriminatory towards women and amongst women of various religions. Law has got to be dynamic and will keep up with the changes within the social, cultural, economic, and political sphere. so as for an egalitarian system to prevail, the law-makers should make sure that the law acts as a catalyst in achieving the final word objective of a state.

Divorce & Adultry

In 2013, the Government of India (Ministry of Development of Women and Children 2015, XV) established a high-level committee on the legal and social status of women in India on the recommendation of the Board of Governors formed by the President of India May 24, 2013 the committee's main objective was the Carrying out a comprehensive study on the situation of women since 1989 and developing suitable political interventions on the basis of a contemporary need's analysis. The 2015 High Level Committee recommends changes in accordance with the 2015 report summary in relation to the legal aspect, it showed that all necessary changes in the specific laws of women in India are discussed and recommended. The Committee recommends removing the provision on the return of marriage rights under various laws.

Also in 2015, the committee's repeated recommendation from 1974 on the definition of the word cruelty under the Hindu Sea was made. The same problem of the irreversible breakdown of marriage was highlighted and demanded that it not become a ground for divorce as recommended in 1974. A husband could be divorced for adultery, the wife had to prove. It is also advisable to change an additional reason for cruelty or desertion, which is quite discriminatory against women, and that both spouses are treated equally with regard to charges of adultery.

In September 2018, Section 497 of India's Criminal Code was declared unconstitutional, which penalizes only men for their sexual relationship with a married woman. The court said the law on adultery violated a woman's sexual autonomy and deprived her of dignity. In a unanimous verdict, a five-judge constitutional court headed by Indian Supreme Justice Dipak Mishra said archaic Victorian law violated women's rights to equality. and the right to non-discrimination guaranteed by Articles 14 and 15 because women are treated as personal property. However, this adultery can be used as a reason for the divorce of the husband or wife in the marriage process. India's Chief Justice Deepak Misra warned that the verdict should not be viewed as a license for such acts (Parkash 2018). The Supreme Court of India removed the Colonial Adultery Act, which punished the crime with prison terms and was deemed unconstitutional to discriminate against women.

It was the second court ruling, issued in September 2018, that reflected the Supreme Court's liberal approach. Section 377: A 158-year-old Draconian Consensual Homosexual Sex Act (Times Now News 2018). The National Commission for Women, President Rekha Sharma,

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praised Section 497 (adultery) of the Supreme Court ruling, saying, "We are finally thinking about equality" (Sharma 2018). The country has now started in a new way. There have been many laws in which women were not treated as equals, but after all we think on an equal footing. In matters relating to "divorce" under Section 9 of the Hindu Marriage Act 1956, this will be discussed by the 2015 Committee. Since it was not published until 1975, the courts began to investigate the aspects of a woman who has the right to occupy her job in case she is removed from her husband (stated in the case of N. Radhakrishna V. Dhanalakshmi the Supreme Court of Madras that under modern law the concept of a woman's obedience to her husband and his duty to live his roof in all conditions)

Similarly, in the case of Swaraj Garg V. Garg, the Delhi Supreme Court ruled that the law of the Constitutional law on women to have a job that the husband's exclusive right to decide about the marital home would violate the equality clause under Article 14 of the Constitution - Ministry for Development of Women and Children 2015, 199). The aim of Article 9 was to preserve the institution of marriage, but it is now being abused. Human rights of one person as no one can or should be forced to live with another person. The Committee (2015) recommends deleting the provision on the return of marriage rights under various laws (Article 9 of the Hindu Marriage Law, Article 22 of the Special Marriage Law, Article 32 of the Divorce Law, and others). It should no longer be available as a marital resource. Ministry of Development of Women and Children 2015, 200) The Committee (2015) firmly believes that women have the same right to work and the return of marriage rights that cannot be imposed on women. The woman's right to work in a location remote from her husband should not be treated as a matter related to the return of marital rights and the basis of the divorce petition.

Special Marriage Act of 1954

With respect to the Special Marriages Act 1954, the Committee recommends (2015) the following changes: Section 6 of the Special Marriages Act requires marriage officials to post all notices of planned marriages in a prominent location in their office. Notices should not be posted on the bulletin board outside the registry office, as this puts young people at high risk who wish to marry of their choice. The notice period prescribed in Section 5 is currently 30 days. This should be shortened to 7 days as this provision has no other purpose than to delay the process and a couple who want to get married quickly due to parental or other disapproval cannot afford to wait an entire month. In Section 4, the age for marriage is 18 years for girls and 21 years for boys. According to Section 15, the marriage registration age for both years is 21 years. This provision needs clarification. The special provision under the law for the marriage of two Hindus should be deleted (Section 21A reads as follows: "Special provision in certain cases: If the marriage according to this law is made by a person who professes the Hindu religion, Buddhist, Sikh or Jain with a person professing Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, or Jain religion does not apply to Section 19 and Section 21, and Section 20, which creates a disability, does not apply to Indian Inheritance Law either Hindus should be deleted (Ministry of Women's and Child Development 2015, 208) The provision of a waiting period of 30 days and a minimum age of 21 years for both spouses for marriage registration should have to be changed. Since both provisions only delay the marriage registration process and put pressure on young couples, nothing more.

Another aspect related to the registration of marriages is that the Committee (2015)

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recommends that a central law on the registration of marriages be passed that applies to all religious groups in relation to the "age of marriage" uniformity of in-laws. It is imperative to ensure the proper application of the Child Marriage Prohibition Act 2006. In its 205th report on the Child Marriage Prohibition Act, the Law 18 Commission recommended that the minimum age for marriage for girls and boys should be the same: 18, which should be observed. Recommendations from various international organizations, such as UNICEF, pointing out the discrimination associated with a provision that allows a girl to marry a lower age. 006 must uphold all invalid and non-invalid child marriages (Ministry of Women and Child Development 2015, 209).

The age difference between the girl and the boy who is about to get married becomes sometimes evident that even the state wants the girl to be younger than the boy. It becomes difficult for couples to marry a girl older than a boy. Hence, hours have to be devoted to eliminating this type of discrimination at a legal level. More on the subject of divorce, the recommendation is repeated (the same applies to the 1974 report of the committee). was provided in order to shorten the two-year period for divorce prescribed by mutual agreement under the Divorce Act. 1869 should be changed to one year. The scope of the marriage law abroad should be expanded to provide relief to more women who are married abroad. Both parents must be treated equally and are considered the natural legal guardians of their children. In the case of maintenance claims, states must waive court fees and make their decisions within a certain time frame in order to relieve women in need. (2015) recommends that any property or rehabilitated property transferred from the state must be registered in the names of both spouses.

However, there is the repetition of recommendations regarding marital rights to the irretrievable breakdown of marriage should not be considered a ground for divorce in 2015, yet legal inequalities for women are not diminishing, with the exception of the relief granted to Muslims by the supreme authority Tribunal on the Triple Talaq matter as it stands. Declared unconstitutional Adultery is no longer a criminal offense in India, but can be a reason for divorce. Some of these recommendations are also proposed by the 1974 Committee. However, the committee's 2015 report makes repeated recommendations, particularly on marriage rights, the definition of cruelty and the irreparable breakdown of marriage. Inequalities for women are not diminishing, with the exception of Supreme Court relief to Muslim women on the Triple Talaq (divorce) matter, as is declared unconstitutional. Further adultery is no more a criminal offence in India, it can be a ground of divorce.

The judicial procedure and Court disposal

The judicial procedure and Court disposal of the crime against girls to urge an inspiration of however justice is imparted to girls in distress in India in 5 years from 2012 to 2016. As a result of review the women's cases and justice imparted within the Courts additional clarifies the connexion of the women-specific laws. Does this section cowl that how many girls are approaching Courts so as to urge justice under numerous laws? how many girls have gotten justice from the Courts? How many cases in total came before the Courts for disposal and how many sent for the trial every year from 2012 to 2016. In how many cases to trial was completed every year and the way many visited pendency percentage. when independence, there's a series of constitutional guarantees, laws, policies, and commissions fashioned by the

Indian government to research and uplift matters and position of ladies altogether spheres of life. Still, girls' vulnerability towards crimes not solely exists however shows a continual increase within the rate against women putting queries over the efforts created by the govt. to create India a secure place for girls. to investigate the effectiveness of the constitutional provisions and laws this section focuses on the Court disposal of crime against girls by analysing the whole variety of cases for trial and the women cases sent for trial throughout the year. How many cases within which trials were completed and case pendency proportion left for next year.

The Court's disposal of crime against girls is mentioned crime head-wise from 2012 to 2016. the very best variety of cases came before the Court under crime head of 'Cruelty by Husband or his Relatives' with a complete of 24,96,759 cases followed by the crime of 'Assault on girls with Intent to Outrage her Modesty with 13,03,645 cases, 'Rape' cases 6,30,882 and crime of 'Kidnapping & Abduction' 6,28,012 cases from 2012 to 2016. All-time low number of total cases came under the crime head of 'Domestic Violence' with 2,529 cases followed by 'Indecent illustration of Women' cases of 5,057 and plan to rape against the law of 21916 cases from 2012 to 2016. The crime head of 'Cruelty by Husband or his Relatives' showed an incredible increase of 1,42,763 cases from 2012 (426922) to 2016 (569685) before the Court. additional the crime of 'Assault on women with Intent to Outrage her Modesty showed a rise of 1,21,541 cases and followed by a 51124 increase within the 'Rape' cases from 2012 to 2016. The crime head of kidnapping & Abduction (+19223), dowry Deaths (+19662), and dowry Prohibition (+13661) conjointly showed a rise within the number of cases from 2012 to 2016. There was 2 crime heads Immoral Traffic (- 3430) and Indecent representation of women (-369) showed a declining trend in court cases from 2012 to 2016. (See Table-1, Crime-1). This showed that except for Immoral Traffic and Indecent representation of women all different crime heads showed a major increase within the complaints. the very best proportion of 2,29,138 71, 638 cases sent for trial. This clearly shows that even 1/2 the cases didn't go for trial within the Indian Courts that increase pendency percentage every year that's why justice is often delayed. (See Table-1, Crime -2) This showed that the Indian Courts are weighed down even they don't have enough judges to even hear the trial of the registered cases once a year.

The crime head of cruelty by husband or his relatives had the highest variety of cases 16,03,758 those came before the court for disposal and solely in 2,29,138 cases trials were completed from 2014 to 2016. under the crime of assault on girls with 'Intent to Outrage her Modesty 8,72,255 cases were put before the courts for disposal solely in 1,49,498 cases trials were completed, in rape cases, 4,15,056 were put before and in exactly 88,515 cases within which trials were completed from 2014 to 2016. The quantity of cases within which trials were completed clearly indicated that as even but half the cases went for trials and solely 10 % to 15 % of cases under trials were completed every year. This showed that the Courts solely imparting justice or disposing 10 % to 15 % of women cases every year.

This further clarified if case pendency proportion analysed. In 2016, the highest cases pendency proportion registered within the cases of 'Domestic Violence' with 94.0 per cent, followed by 'Indecent Representation' 92.2 per cent, 'Kidnapping & Abduction' 91.4 per

cent, ‘Dowry Prohibition’ 91.2 per cent, ‘Cruelty by Husband or his Relatives’ 90.6 % and ‘Immoral Traffic’ 90.1 per cent. These crime heads pendency percentages showed that there have been solely 10 % cases within which trials were completed and over 90 per cent of individuals still within the pipeline to get justice. If the lowest pendency percentage is taken into consideration that was 86.5 % of crime head of ‘Insult to the Modesty of Women’ followed by ‘Rape’ cases pendency 87.7 % and ‘Assault on women with Intent to Outrage Her Modesty’ 88.8 per cent.

Table 1. Court Disposal of Crime against Women Cases at National Level

Year	2012	2013	2014		2015		2016		Total*
Crime	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	2	
Cruelty by Husband or his relatives	426922	466079	499642	97081	534431	90971	569685	91810	24,96,759
Assault on Women with intent to outrage her modesty	201501	229829	258104	66462	291109	66887	323042	71638	13,03,585
Rape	101041	114785	125433	30840	137458	30001	152165	33628	6,30,882
Kidnapping & Abduction	120708	134287	109035	26044	124051	27206	139931	29084	6,28,012
Dowry Deaths	24461	38901	40477	7653	42410	7150	44123	7067	1,90,372
Dowry Prohibition	24461	28073	31741	9007	33586	7162	38122	8455	1,78,452
Immoral Traffic	12325	12949	6614	1881	7772	2122	8895	1921	1,55,983
Insult to the Modesty of Women	33034	35696	36734	8144	36221	7019	36767	6336	48,555
Abetment of Suicide	-	-	9151	2403	11319	3190	13823	3872	34,293

Attempt to Rape	-	-	4806	2781	6940	3174	10170	4290	21,916
Indecent Representation	1128	1348	980	4	842	32	759	54	5,057
Domestic Violence	-	-	481	312	846	418	1202	403	2,529

*Total-Total Number of Cases for trial during the year (Crime-1). Table 4.13, p.363, 2012, Table 4.9, 363, 2013. Table

5.6, 2014. Table 5.6, 1-2, 2015. Table 3A.7, 1-20, 2016 (Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. 2012-2016).

Crime 1 - Total Number of Cases for Trial During the Year

Crime 2 - Cases Sent for Trial During the year

The case's lowest pendency proportion indicates over 85 % cases pendency. This showed that pendency proportion is increasing annually. As in 2014, the very best pendency is 88.8 % below crime head of instigation to suicide and violence (See Table-2). over 85 % of cases perpetually went to pendency and half them ne'er went under trial each year; this showed that justice is given to 15 % solely and over half the individuals just ought to anticipate years for a trial. By impartation justice to but 15 % annually isn't a decent mark over the Indian judiciary. Slow and long procedures of Indian courts ar weakening women’s faith over the judiciary.

Table 2. Women Cases in which Trials were completed at National level

Year	2012	2013	2014		2015		2016		Total
Crime	1	1	1	2 (%)	1	2 (%)	1	2 (%)	
Cruelty by Husband or his relatives	46054	45423	46853	88.4	46127	89.3	44681	80.6	2,29,138
Assault on Women with intent to outrage her modesty	25319	27528	29995	86.6	34541	86.3	32115	88.8	1,49,498
Rape	14717	18833	17649	85.7	18764	86.2	18552	87.7	88,515

Kidnapping & Abduction	14830	15988	11791	88.7	12879	89.2	11720	91.4	67,208
Insult to the Modesty of Women	6956	6604	5778	79.3	3998	84.0	3629	86.5	26,965
Dowry Deaths	5216	5284	5061	87.1	5165	87.4	4351	90.0	25,077
Dowry Prohibition	4225	4205	4617	83.1	3212	88.3	3233	91.2	19,492
Immoral Traffic	1817	1632	949	85.6	987	87.2	854	90.1	6,239
Abetment of Suicide	-	-	1014	88.8	1340	87.2	854	90.1	3,877
Attempt to Rape	-	-	1016	78.2	1035	84.8	1093	89.1	3,144
Indecent Representation	131	342	169	82.7	137	83.6	59	92.2	838
Domestic Violence	-	-	47	88.8	46	94.3	69	94.0	162

*Total-Cases in which Trials were completed (Crime-1). Table 4.13, 363, 2012. Table 4.9, 363, 2013. Table 5.6, 2014. Table 5.6, 1-2, 2015. Table 3A.7, 1-20, 2016. (Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. 2012-2016).

Crime 1 - Cases in which Trials were completed.

Crime 2 - Cases Pendency Percentage.

Conclusion

The analysis of the 2 committee’s reports of 1974 and 2015 on the status of girls in India showed that there are sure legal inequalities are present like bigamy or polygamy among Muslims, the committee suggests the replacement of those laws with by the Hindu wedding Act of 1955 or uniform civil code. Each the committees advocate shaping the ‘cruelty’ word and putting a stop to the usage of the term “illegitimate” in any statute or document. The Committee (1974) recommends that each one offense beneath the child wedding Restraint Act of 1929 ought to be created cognisable and special officers appointed to enforce the law. in contrast to divorce by mutual consent, one party’s would like to dissolve the wedding, as well as a protracted amount of separation, is enough to see a wedding ‘irretrievably broken’ wherever reconciliation is not possible. The Committee (1974) conjointly suggested that no religion-converted person will, for a amount of 2 years at least, be ready to have an effect on any married rights by resorting to the new faith. The committees recommend reducing the amount of 2 years prescribed for mutual consent divorce under the Divorce Act, 1869 ought to be amended to at least one year. The provisions like thirty days’ notice amount and

minimum age of twenty-one years for each the spouses for the registration of marriage ought to be amended to seven days and therefore the same age of each the partner ought to be introduced. In relation to inheritance, the Committee of 1974 highlights the one major issue that has contributed to continuing the sure difference between sons and daughters is that the retention of the Mitakshara coparcenary.

At last, the Committee (2015) recommends that any property or restored property given by the state ought to be registered within the name of each spouse. The Committee (2015) recommends that the availability with reference to restitution of legal right under numerous statutes ought to be deleted. Each committee repetitively advocate numerous suggestions to get rid of sure legal inequalities in respect to ladies. Till 2018, 2 major judgments in respect to triple talaq (divorce) and extramarital sex came. Ladies face sure legal obstacles within the personal sphere to induce justice from the Courts. The third section more clarifies that if ladies visited the Courts to induce justice, it's solely ten to fifteen per cent ladies United Nations agency are becoming justice annually. The pendency proportion of cases was quite eighty-five per cent. The victims invariably have less patience and survival strengthen. Further, it had been terribly arduous for Indian ladies to fight such long cases as they invariably want family support to continue their judicial fight. She was invariably in the middle of her family, relatives, and friend to the Court proceedings. So in present times, no one has a lot of time to travel to the Courts years once year for justice. Even long and tedious judicial procedure conjointly lessens the probabilities of girl's relocation or rehabilitation specifically if she desires to get hitched with. The sure legal inequalities and slow procedure of justice build the women's approach to justice arduous in India however they do get justice.

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Claiming our space: Jain women in social and nationalistic context

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Abstract

Researches have been undertaken to look and study the Indian National Movement from the point of view of women's point of view. Addition of the community dynamics can bring to light hitherto lesser known perspectives on the gender. The present study discusses the space created by the Jain women in the national movement and its repercussion on the social realities.

Introduction

This paper discusses the ways in which the Jain women got involved in the National movement at different phases. Jainism as the religious system accepted women as the part of the religious community.

Social or nationalist movement are essentially structured by patriarchy. Even the scenario has not changed much even in the contemporary times. Women largely remained invisible in the patriarchal structures. During the movement Jain women performed acts of resistance. These would have been unimaginable during the usual course of the events. The Jain women directly challenged narratives of colonialism and oppression

Scope

The scope of the paper is limited to the Jain women of the modern times. Here both the categories of the Jain women are covered. Women who were born in the Jain family and those who got married in the Jain family. Gender research has been largely descriptive. This paper however takes the analytical discourse. This needs to be admitted that the analysis in this paper is not exhaustive by any means. Few representative examples are selected. It is an attempt to paint the picture of the Jain women in the national movement.

Jain women and the national movement

The national movement provided the Jain women the sphere. This also became platform for activism. This activism addresses several themes. The paper looks through the field of gender and political participation. These women represented the higher strata of the society.

Through their participation in the national movement they broke out through the stereotypes. While the Jain women like Maniben Nanvati followed the ideals of the Nationalist movement within the traditional framework, Mrudula Sarabhai did not mind crossing the social restrictions. She refused to play a familiar role. There exist the multiple and varying power relationships between gender, class, race, ethnicity, nationality, and sexuality. The women have not received attention in the history of the Indian National Movement as their male counterparts.

Mridula Sarabhai

Mridula Sarabhai (6 May 1911 – 26 October 1974) was an Indian freedom fighter. She witnessed from pre-independent India to post-independent India. Mridula was born in Ahmadabad, in an affluent business family. She was born in the Jain family. Here it needs to be pointed out that as a religious tradition, Jainism has distinct place. But socially like other minority religions they hardly escaped the overpowering and surrounding Hindu influence.

She was one of eight children of Ambalal Sarabhai and Sarla Devi. She was home-schooled by the British and Indian teachers under the guidance of her parents. She did not continue her college education and got involved in the nationalist movement. She boycotted the foreign goods. She was influenced by the ideals of Gandhian movement. She joined the Congress Seva Dal during the Salt Satyagraha. She was imprisoned for her role in salt satyagraha. She played important role in the organizational machinery of the Congress, heading its women's wing. Later when the party refused to nominate her, she stood as an independent and won with the large margin of votes.

Working way for peacemaking

In 1946, Pandit Nehru appointed her as one of the General Secretaries of the Congress party and a member of the Congress Working Committee. She resigned and followed Gandhiji to Noakhali when riots broke out. During the turbulent period of Partition of India, she took active lead in restoring communal peace, firstly at Patna, where she was attending the flag hoisting ceremony on 15 August 1947. Though she started with the organisational structures, she made and claim her space beyond the rigid and formal organisation. The account of her work in a way depicts the journey of Jain woman and in the broader context that of the Indian women. One can see the shifting of woman from that of victim of the system to the agent with power influencing politico cultural system. The daring to enter in the challenging territory was notable.

Creation of space

Interestingly we have instance of another Jain woman Maniben Nanvati who worked out the fusion of Gandhism and Jainism. She was associated with the activities of Khadi Mandir, which has been wholly run by women. Khadi Mandir is presently located at Vile Parle. Her husband Chandubhai Nanavati played instrumental role in motivating her to take part in the nationalistic movement. Maniben also dedicated her efforts towards the betterment of the tribal and underprivileged people. She also contributed to the field of education and medical field through the establishment and participation in the philanthropic institutions. Well to do family background facilitated the participation of the Jain women in the national movement. They did not only make use of the spaces, but expanded and made the spaces available to the less privileged.

Conclusion

The social and the nationalist movement broke the silence of the Jain women. The focus has been to analyse the situation from the women's perspective. The paper also explores the interrelation of the social structure with political aspects. Nationalist movement definitely provided space to the Jain women. There can be little doubt that the nationalist movement allowed voices to emerge that would otherwise be silenced. Their voices are important. The paper thereby opens up the perceptions about the women in the context of the Jain

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community and the larger social background. Nevertheless the fact cannot be denied that history has constantly emphasised that visibility of some women does not necessarily enhance the status of mass of women. These Jain women were elite women. The study is not just about making the Jain women visible but about enriching the understanding of reality.

Women Health an impetus to Women Rights in a Welfare State

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ABSTRACT

Social responsibility, social welfare and social justice play a vital role in underpinning the greatest aspect of social welfare. According to Gandhiji, 'Man becomes great to the extent that he works to the welfare of his fellow-men'. This holds so true when each of us are striving hard to meet the needs of the hungry, inadequately housed and insufficiently clothed brothers and sisters, thus denied their dignity or any kind of welfare. Social policy is an inclusive disciplinary, which suggests to supply solutions to deal with needs of social life. Social problems change supported economic and environmental factors. These changes also differ supported social organization and state policies. The study aimed to showcase the perception of degree college students of different types of colleges – aided and unaided college towards various aspects of women health in a welfare state. The sample for the study were 536 students, data was analyzed through percent analysis. The findings of the study are revealed the perception of students may be a result of stigmatization in the society due to lack of good health facilities. The ultimate aim of a nation would be to reduce the gap between rich and poor with adequate access to sanitation, hygiene, safe drinking water, free health and medical services, upliftment of women and their health care, response govt. actions thus making it favorable towards a welfare state.

Keywords: women health, types of colleges, aided and unaided colleges, welfare state

INTRODUCTION:

A welfare state is a concept of government where the state plays a key role in the protection and promotion of the economic and social well-being of its citizens. It is based on the principles of equality of opportunity, equitable distribution of wealth, and public responsibility for those unable to avail themselves of the minimal provisions for a good life. The general term may cover a variety of forms of economic and social organization. Social responsibility, social welfare and social justice play a vital role in underpinning the greatest aspect of social welfare. According to Gandhiji, 'Man becomes great to the extent that he works to the welfare of his fellow-men'. This holds so true when each of us are striving hard to meet the needs of the hungry, inadequately housed and insufficiently clothed brothers and sisters, thus denied their dignity or any kind of welfare. Social policy is an inclusive disciplinary, which suggests to supply solutions to deal with needs of social life. Social problems change supported economic and environmental factors. These changes also differ supported social organization and state policies.

Aspect of Women Health:

Ensuring safe motherhood

Pregnancy is the natural event in the life of women of reproductive age group. Pregnancy is the fertilization and development of one or more offspring, known as an embryo or foetus, in a woman's uterus. In a pregnancy, there can be multiple gestations, as in the case of twins or

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triplets. Childbirth usually occurs about 38 weeks after conception and in women who have a menstrual cycle length of four weeks, this is approximately 40 weeks from the start of the last normal menstrual period (LNMP). Conception can be achieved through sexual intercourse or assisted reproductive technology. Pregnancy is the most important phase in women's life. There is lot of concern to reduce maternal mortality and infant mortality.

Maternal health in India:

Each year in India, roughly 30 million women experience pregnancy and 26 million have a live birth. Maternal mortality is defined as the death of a woman during pregnancy, childbirth or within 6 weeks after birth. With an estimated 45,000 deaths per annum, India contributes to a majority of maternal mortality burden in the region.

Safe motherhood means ensuring that all women have access to the information and services they need to go safely through pregnancy and childbirth. It includes:

- Education on safe motherhood
- Prenatal care (care during pregnancy) and counseling with focus on high risk pregnancies
- Promotion of maternal nutrition
- Adequate delivery assistance in all cases
- Provisions for obstetric emergencies including referral services for pregnancy, childbirth and abortion complications
- Postnatal care (care after child birth)

In the light of all these points, as a result, welfare states still exist in several ways. The developments show that the view that social rights, freedoms, and ideological thoughts aren't sufficient to realize the economic process. Despite all these developments, it is possible to say that the welfare state has an active role on social policies and welfare states are resistant to the economic negativities experienced. In our opinion, reducing social expenditures should be the last resort in the reform initiatives of states to achieve growth in the future periods of transformation of the welfare state.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Olafsdottir, Sigrun(2007), *Fundamental Causes of Health Disparities: Stratification, the Welfare State, and Health in the United States and Iceland*, *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, v48 n3 p239-253 Sep 2007, state that the Research has established that those with higher social status have better health. Less is known about whether this relationship differs cross-nationally and whether it operates similarly across different institutional arrangements. ends of an equal/unequal continuum are compared: the United States and Iceland.

De Chenu, Linda; Daehlen, Dag; Tah, Jude(2016) in the article, *A Critical Comparison of Welfare States and Their Relevance to People with an Intellectual Disability*, *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities*, v20 n4 p397-415 compares the welfare services for adults with an intellectual disability in three European countries: England, Norway and Sweden. The purpose of the comparison is to develop an understanding of the welfare state and institutional contexts of the country-specific policies and to develop a critical analysis through a comparative method based on selected secondary literature.

Jongbloed, Janine; Pullman, Ashley (2016) in the article, *Well-Being in the Welfare State: The Redistributive Capacity of Education*, *European Journal of Education*, v51 n4 p564-586 Dec 2016, focuses on the macro-micro interaction between institutional arrangements and individual life outcomes, this article investigates how welfare régime types impact the association between education and well-being, as measured by satisfaction with life. Theorising with Esping-Andersen's ideal-typical welfare régime typology, we hypothesise that decommodified institutional arrangements reduce the association between education and well-being through compensatory social protections for at-risk individuals, while stratifying forces strengthen this association.

Halvorsrud, Kristoffer (2017) in the article *Student Dropout in Upper Secondary Education in Norway: A Challenge to the Principles of the Welfare State?*, *London Review of Education*, v15 n2 p302-316 Jul 2017, presents a review of extant research on student dropout in Norway, originally undertaken as part of a systematic review. The article contextualizes the foundational principle of equality as championed by the welfare state and identifies the significance of dropout in upper secondary education in Norway.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

This study is based on the objectives stated below:

1. To study perception of students of different types of colleges on women health in a welfare state.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY:

H₀ = Students perception in Navi Mumbai on Health as a factor towards a welfare state are not different based on aided and unaided degree colleges.

H₁ = Students perception in Navi Mumbai on Health as a factor towards a welfare state are different based on aided and unaided degree colleges.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The scope of this study is confined to the Degree college students in Navi Mumbai. The sample for the study is 536 degree college students belonging to different type of colleges – aided and unaided colleges.

The tools used for the present study are the following:

- Personal Data Sheet
- 4 Point Rating Scale of statements on Women health as a factor towards welfare state

Rating Scale on Social welfare towards a Welfare State: The tool used for the present study is a self-made tool based on the aspects of Social welfare, from Strongly agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1)

In the present study simple random probability sampling technique was used. The sample for the present study is Degree college students studying in colleges located in Navi Mumbai only. The study consisted of a sample of 536 degree college students located in Navi Mumbai of different type of colleges. The data was analysed through percent analysis and statistical method of ‘t-test’ was used.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

1. The study was limited to Degree college students of Navi Mumbai. The students of Mumbai and other parts were not covered under this study.
2. The findings may not be applicable to all over India as problems may vary from place to place and students of different sections of the society.

DATA ANALYSIS:

Statements of Students perception towards Women Health in a Welfare State

Women Health
Health of women is important in equal opportunities for them in the society
Maternity leave given for women is a help in their employment
Welfare towards women varies in rural and urban places
Women should be given additional and free medical facilities
Education opportunities should be given for women
Switching gender roles give more importance to women in the society.
Regular health checkup for women is an indicator towards a welfare state
Safe environment for education and work encourages women to support in economic development
Work at home done by women is often undervalued
Women are cast only in the role of victim rather than equal partners
Welfare schemes for women should be increased
There is an urgent need for a detailed re-examination of health statistics for India.

The 536 respondents stated their perception on various aspects of Women Health as a factor of Health towards a Welfare State. Their responses varied from Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree on aspects such as importance of Women’s health for equal opportunities in society, maternity and child care leave, free medical facilities, regular health check-up and welfare schemes can be looked into with concern. Welfare schemes, switching gender roles, safe environment for work and education, status of women at home and work needs to be considered for being a Welfare state. On the basis of these aspects out of the 536 respondents 28.12 (percent) state they Strongly Agree, 59.31 (percent) state they Agree, 10.55 (percent) state that they Disagree, and 2.00 (percent) state that they Strongly disagree to the factors of women Health as an aspect of Health towards a Welfare State.

Table 1.1 Relevant Statistics of Significance of Difference towards Health in a Welfare State on the Basis of Types of Colleges

	Type of College	N	df	Mean	S.D.	t-value	p-value	Level of significance
Health	Aided	270	269	157.59	1.56	32.67	p<.01	S at.01
	Unaided	266	265	215.57	1.59			

Conclusion: There is a significant difference on student perception on Health as factor towards Welfare State based on the different types of colleges.

Discussion: Poverty to a large extent is inseparable part of our society and also creating a great divide between the haves and have nots. Socio economic disadvantage is a fundamental courses of reduced health care. Socio eco. disadvantage is through the provision of social assistance. Social assistance refers to the govt. programs that aim in providing a mental level of support to individuals and household living. Social assistance helps in racing the purchasing power of the poor. The welfare state aims in adopting beneficial health practices. The present study highlights the perception of degree college students on the basis of aided and unaided college. The findings reveal that a significant difference, this could be due to various aspects of health such as women health, child health, nutrition, sanctions and hygiene, mental health, disease and disorders. The students of aided and unaided college may have perceived as the role of women in the society by giving them equal opportunities at work and education. Women have always been subdued to equal opportunities in the society. Women in rural and urban areas are distinctly different in the social status. The rural women are often restricted to social life and hence opportunities of employment are also break This in turn hinders their awareness and understanding of health, child health, nutrition, sanitation. Opportunities of employment are more free to women in urban areas thus reading to medical, maternity and insurance facilities. States feel that even in urban areas there is inequality in treatment to women and their employment opportunities. A young nation leads to developing nation for this to be true it is important to be monitor child's developmental milestones thus focusing on their growth and development. It is important that children upto 15 years should be given free medical support, vaccination should be free. State also felt that --- is compromised among people in urban areas and healthy meal is not the privilege of many and this gives space for infections and diseases to breed in our life. This also be may become a prolonged issue towards diseases and disorder as the number of people affected with disease increase, parallely there is increase in health decreased health aspects towards a welfare state. The govt. interventions needs to be strengthened to address all aspects of heath. Women, child etc. Regular monitoring and checkup is the need of the hour, awareness of nutrition and balanced diet should be regularly informed and oriented to people in rural areas. health camps needs to be strengthened. Insurance facilities should be given with low interest rates and insurance policy rates, so that it can be affordable to many more. Parameters of growth should be based on a particular area. One size fits all should be avoided. There should be more subsidized food centers and medical centers to enable social assistance. Provision of toilets, sanitation should be focused. Adequate water supply and clean drinking water facility is a challenge not only in rural areas but also in urban areas, this is a major hurdle as water is

our basic need of life and it is in social scarcity. Govt policies on sanitation and hygiene needs to be strengthened, fines and restriction should be imposed on defaulters, this will help in keeping our surrounding clean and a healthy environment. Urban disposal and is also a cause of pollution thus causing harmful effects on health and prolonged diseases. Efforts to be taken to bring in educational insight of all these aspects so that the younger generation is well informed and careful of their action impacting the event. A sound mind in a healthy body as a mantra is possible when one is free from illness, stress and is happy in life. This can be done if we put welfare of the society through health as a predominant factor towards a welfare state.

The study corroborates to the article a review of the 'welfare state' and alternative ways of delivering health care by Jorge. A Mera that concludes the idea that accessibility is in itself a characteristic inherent in the quality of health service. Without concrete govt. arrangements that embody a commitment to ensure that every citizen has access to an adequate level of health care, there is no reason to believe that a health system will reach a quality standard with national coverage for the population.

SUGGESTIONS:

1. Minority communities are to be an equitable share in the society and the development programme of the minority communities need to be reviewed regularly
2. Opportunities for Women education, employment, entrepreneurship, loans should be enhanced and encouraged.
3. Equal job opportunities and equal wages irrespective of gender, socio economic status, caste should be made mandatory.
4. Social welfare department need to be tightened to address the reported cases of discrimination.
5. Welfare schemes for women and girls should be made easily available with less bureaucratic interference and paper work.
6. Regular check of health statistics in India should be done, this will help in addressing the problems and issues at the grassroots level.

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A Study on the Judicial approach towards Women's Empowerment in Our Democratic India

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Abstract

In our democratic Republic of India, gender injustice has created a haul everywhere in the state, regardless of the cause, perhaps from the role of judicial commission in Nirbhaya's Act, 2013 to the paths of sudden Asifa Bano kathua case 2018, the apex took sturdy constitution. Yes, girls are slapped in each society for age and republic of India is not any exception. we tend to powerfully talk about women's empowerment, from the Hindu adoptions and maintenance Act 1956 to Triple talaq and also the protection of rights of wedding Act, Shayara Bano vs. Union of Republic of India 2017, whether or not the legislations and constitutions created up to now has been followed by the individuals in our nation, the Indian judiciary feels convinced of the necessity for women's empowerment by law and by legal means that. The constitution of republic of India has taken an extended leap in preventing and eradicating the lingering effects of such harmful incidents up to now as girls are involved, Till today, our Indian constitution expresses the affirmative action's in favor of our Indian girls towards their empowerment, so this paper speaks regarding the study on the judicial constitutions towards girls' empowerment in democratic Republic of India to ban all kinds of discrimination against our Indian girls and their red carpet for protection from her childhood and at last securing the civil right to women from different walks of life and participation.

Keywords: empowerment, discrimination, laws, history, constitution, laws etc.

Introduction

Jawaharlal Nehru, the greatest emancipator of women in India, played a significant role for the amelioration of their socio - economic condition, His speech during Women and the freedom movement in India quoted —One can tell the condition of a nation by looking the status of its women|| where, his every efforts to raise their status socially, economically, politically and educationally to make them equal to men, still our constitutions initiatives for women according, where here I want to salute Leila Seth (20 October 1930 – 5 May 2017) the first woman judge on the Delhi High Court where she became the first woman to become Chief Justice of a state High Court on 5 August 1991 and Justice Indira Banerjee is the Chief Justice of the Madras High Court, the second woman to hold the position in India.

Women who constitute a large portion of a human populace have been separated hassled and misused independent of the nation to which they have a place, un-mind of the religion which they declare and careless of the time allotment in which they live.[2] Everywhere ladies are stood up to with numerous difficulties. In all social orders to a more noteworthy or lesser degree ladies and young ladies are subjected to physical, sexual and mental mishandle that cuts crosswise over lines of salary, class and culture.

Tragically, India is one of the few nations where offenses against women have been expanding in huge way. Truth be told since ages the status and the situation of ladies in India is a questionable subject, as it mirrors the conflicting and the confusing idea of the Indian culture. In one-way individuals offers supplications to ladies as goddess, more finished Indian custom and the way of life says that "yatra nari pujoyante tatra ramante devta". Be that as it may, in the meantime and in opposite side ladies are thought to be in the optional position

and they are put to monstrosities even before birth till death.

At last, it will be obvious from history that the barbarities against women are since time immemorial. What's more, in the meantime assurance of women from atrocities is additionally as old as abominations against women as religion, custom, moral, moral qualities and through social developments, national and universal lawful insurances and so forth however among all these the huge part has been playing by law through legal as a rescuer of women from outrages in current period. Legal shields shield women from monstrosities, infringement and so on as well as empowering women in social, educational, economic, political fields.

Special Constitutional rights for Women Empowerment – The Concept of Protective Discrimination

The Indian constitution not just allowed break even with status to women standard with men, yet in addition engages the state to receive measures of positive discrimination for women for equalizing the combined education, socio economic and political hindrances looked by them. Farmers likewise enabled the state to make uncommon laws, arrangements, plans and projects within a popularity based nation for headway of women in all circles. The farmers of constitution meant to give equity, freedom and equality irrespective of gender; it can be seen in Preamble, Fundamental Rights, and Directive Principles of state strategy, Fundamental obligations and other provisions. The preamble is the way to open the mind of the creators. Established farmers meant to give equity, freedom and equality irrespective of gender, status, religion, belief and cast and so on by this one can comprehend that composers might want to build up a general public with sex uniformity, which straightforwardly or by implication endeavors to uphold the women empowerment.

- National commission for women empowerment (January 1992):The Government set-up this statutory body with a specific mandate to study and monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and legal safeguards provided for women review the existing legislation to suggest amendments wherever necessary.
- Reservation for women empowerment in local self-government:The 73rd constitutional amendment acts passed in 1992 by parliament ensure one-third of the total seats for women in all elected offices in local bodies whether in rural areas or urban areas.
- The national plan of action for the girl child (1991-2000):The plan of action is to ensure survival, protection and development of the girl child in order to safeguard the bright future of the girl child [2].
- National policy for the women empowerment (2001):
The Department of Women and Child Development in the Ministry of Human Resource Development have prepared a —National Policy for the Women Empowerment in the year 2001. The goal of this policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women.

The rights and safeguards enshrined in the constitution for women in India

- The right to equality and equal protection of laws [Article 14]
- The state shall not discriminate against any citizen of India on the ground of sex [Article 15(1)].
- The state is empowered to make any special provision for women. In other words, this provision enables the state to make affirmative discrimination in favor of women [Article 15(3)].
- No citizen shall be discriminated against or be ineligible for any employment or office under the state on the ground of sex [Article 16(2)].
- Traffic in human beings and forced labor are prohibited [Article 23(1)]. The state to secure for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood [Article 39(a)].
- The state to secure equal pay for equal work for both Indian men and women [Article 39(d)].
- The state is required to ensure that the health and strength of women workers are not abused and that they are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their strength [Article 39(e)].
- The state shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief [Article 42].
- The State to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation [Article 46]. [9]
- The State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people [Article 47]. [10]
- It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women [Article 51-A(e)].
- One-third of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat shall be reserved for women [Article 243-D(3)].
- One-third of the total number of offices of chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level shall be reserved for women [Article 243-D (4)].
- One-third of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipal it shall be reserved for women [Article 243-T(3)].
- The offices of chairpersons in the Municipalities shall be reserved for women in such manner as the State Legislature may provide [Article 243-T(4)]. Etc.
- The elections to the House of the People and to the Legislative Assembly of every State shall be on the basis of adult suffrage; that is to say, every person who is a citizen of India and who is not less than eighteen years of age irrespective of gender, status etc. entitled to be a voter. [Article 325[11] and 326[12]].

Legislative Initiatives towards Empowerment of Women in India

1. Constitution of India, 1950: The Constitution of India not only guarantees equality to women but also empowers the State to adopt measures to positive discrimination in favor of women. Article 14 of the Constitution of India guarantees equality before law. Article 15 prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex. Article 16 states about equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment.

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2. Indian Penal Code, 1860: Sections 292, 293 and 294 provide for punishment in sale and exhibit of obscene books objections and for obscene act in public place. Section 304(b) deals about murder of women in connection with demand of dowry. Sections 312 to 318 deal about punishment for causing miscarriage. Section 354 provides punishment for outraging the modesty of any woman, S. 366 deals about kidnapping for marriage against her will. Section 366-deals about procreation of minor girls for sexual purpose. Section 376 deals about punishment for rape. Section 494 protects women from bigamy. Section 497 deals about protection of married women from adultery. Section 498-A of Indian Penal Code deals about subjecting women to cruelty by her husband or relatives and her husband and S.509 provides punishment for uttering words and gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman.
3. Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973: Under S. 125, Code of Criminal Procedure, a woman has got right to maintenance.
4. Indian Evidence Act, 1872: Sections 113(a), 113(b) and 114(c) provide for presumptions as to abetment of suicide by a married woman within 7 years of marriage, as dowry death of a woman and as to absence of consent of woman for sexual intercourse.
5. Hindu Adoption Maintenance Act, 1956: Section 18-A provides for obligations of husband to maintain his wife. Section 18(2) provides right of wife to live separately and S. 19 provides for maintenance of widow by her father-in-law.
6. Hindu Succession Act, 1956: Section 14 of the Act provides for property of female Hindu to be her absolute property. Section 23 provides right of female legal heirs in the dwellinghouse.

Judicial Activism and its role in Women Empowerment

All arrangements of the Constitution and all laws ordered by the legislation body get their genuine significance and import through the procedure of legal elucidation. The Constitutional order and the different laws accommodating defensive segregation for ladies identifying with a few parts of their social, financial and political life have come up under the watchful eye of the courts. Through different gadgets like legal audit, legal activism, social activity suit and the obligation of authorization of essential rights the prevalent Courts in India have advanced a sexual orientation law which has given substance and life to the sacred plan of defensive segregation for women. The following overviews in various cases outline of the judicial approach in different cases has been discussed here, where the Courts have effectively conveyed their decision to fortify position of women.

- Judicial Approach in the issues identifying with Education: Education is the primary vehicle for human, economic and social development, profiting both the individual and society. The Supreme Court in Mohini Jain and Unnikrishnan cases recognized the right to education is an implied fundamental right. According to the court, the education has proximate relationship with life, protection of environment, eradication of untouchability, and other related rights.
- Judicial approach in the matters of Employment: Some activists and lawyers said she was raped solely because of her work. Several activist groups who subscribed to that

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view filed a Public Interest Litigation in the Supreme Court of India, under the collective platform Vishakha, which sought detailed directions on how sexual harassment of women in the workplace could be prevented.

- Judiciary towards sex-workers and sexually abused women: The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act retains the essence of the earlier Vishakha Guidelines but does not fix accountability for transgressions. In September 1992, a woman named Bhanwari Devi was raped. Her fault: she had tried to prevent the marriage of a one-year-old girl. It was part of her job, as a Saathin, or friend, in the Women's Development Project of the Rajasthan government, as per a government campaign, to persuade villagers to abandon the practice of child marriage. At first, she had suffered social boycott for her temerity. When that didn't work, five men raped her in front of her husband. A trial court acquitted all five men.

Conclusion

At long last one can state that in India there are such a large number of laws by lawmaking bodies, runs by manager and legal declarations and all the more significantly individual and in addition aggregate women's associations consistent bears for women insurance and strengthening yet too little equity to her on account of absence of ignorance, un-enthusiasm among women and individuals in the public eye. It is the need of great importance to have mindful and enabled women. An engaged woman ensures her as well as secure individuals around her. Thus, the time has come to end quiet; women's should battle for her place in this male ruled society. It ought to be beginning from family itself. The attitude and the male centric perspectives that have overwhelmed Indian individual's outlook since ages ought to be changed just the genuine products of law will be delighted in by women.

Women will work out their own destinies—much better, too, than men can ever do for them. All the mischief to men undertook to shape the destiny of women – Swami Vivekananda.

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Women's Liberation Movements in the Contemporary Period: The different Strands and Challenges in the Context of India.

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Abstract

Women's Liberation movement has gained a wide base in the contemporary world. In the case of India, since the time of pre-independence period, the women's rights movements have gained enormous popularity to till present. In order to exert their rights, the various sections of women's and their respective organizations have played a vital role. The present paper will include a broad analysis of the contemporary women's liberation movements in the context of India. It will also include the objectives and methodology followed by a detailed discussion and analysis over the contributions of the movements raised by the women's in asserting their rights and status in the society.

Key words: - Women, Liberation, Contemporary, Challenges etc.

Introduction

The Women's rights movements are usually pursued in the broader themes of women's liberation movements. These movements can be described as prolonged and sustained movements that have a clear vision, effective leadership, a set of institutionalized roles and an organization for the upliftment of women's condition in the society (Verma Parth 2019). Globally, after the Second World War, the women's rights movements changed dramatically. While coming to the context of India, the contemporary women's movements basically got emerged in 1975 which has played an important role in bringing the gender issues to the forefront of development planning and defining feminist politics. However, the genesis of the new women's liberation movement lay in the radicalization of Indian politics in the late sixties. The UN Declaration of 1975 as an International Women's Year coincided with the Emergency Rule in India. By the time the Emergency was lifted in 1977, several women groups had accorded democratic right issues. By the 1980s, the issue of women's oppression was depicted not only in discussion forums, seminars and 'serious' articles but also in the popular media. In fact, the women began to identify the sources of their problems and indignity began to acquire a language, an organizational platform, a collective identity and legitimacy that they did not had earlier (Patel Vibhuti).

Since India is a land of diversity, the challenges that the feminist movement now faces stem from the vast diversities of the country where the demands of feminism within the country are divided along the class, caste, sexuality, and disability. Therefore the present paper will basically try to highlight the women's liberation movements, the challenges and the different strands by putting special light on the contemporary era particularly in the context of India. Along with it the paper will also try to analyse how the demands of women have transformed in the present context as compared to the pre-independence period and lastly whether the

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government has provided or taken any policy measures in relation to the demands forwarded by the women section.

Literature review:-

According to a chapter on “Women’s movement in Contemporary India (Part III)” (Patel Vibhuti), the author basically tried to analyse how gender biases are challenged by women’s movement in contemporary India by evaluating the nature, dynamics, composition, methods of functioning, the political-social and economic agenda followed by different ideological trends and debates. In this chapter the author begins with the women’s liberation movements of the late sixties where he mentions that ‘between 1977 and 1979, new women’s groups emerged in the cities like Delhi, Bangalore, Ahmedabad, Patna and Madras, protesting against dowry murders, beauty contests, sexist portrayal of women in media, pornographic films and literature imported from abroad, introduction of virginity tests by the U.K. immigration authorities, custodial rape and pitiable condition of women in prison’. Further, in regard to the role of the state the article stated that women’s movement and the state have had areas of both collaboration and conflict. Collaboration in the sense that regarding legal reforms, gender budgeting and providing institutional support to women survivors of violence, the women’s movement has worked with the state whereas conflict in the sense that the women’s movement have also fought with the state with regards to discriminatory family laws and when state terror is unleashed on people’s movements-struggles for safe environment, water, atrocities against minorities, displacement of masses for mega projects.

The Second World War has led to the inception of a number of women related movements globally which has dramatically changed the lives of women particularly in the developed countries. As per an article titled “Women’s Rights Movement” (Burkett Elinor), stated that the women’s rights movement were largely based in the United States in the 1960s and 70s which sought equal rights and opportunities and greater personal freedom for women. This has been recognized as the “second wave” of feminism. According to this article, the first-wave of feminism was in the 19th and 20th centuries that focused on women’s legal rights, especially the right to vote, whereas the second-wave of feminism touched on every area of women’s experience including politics, work, the family, and sexuality. The third and fourth waves of feminism began from the mid-1990s and the early 2010s which covered the organized activism by and on behalf of women. Further this paper also mentioned about the writings of various renowned feminists whose books and articles have changed the mindset of the women’s. As for example the first publication of Betty Friedan’s book “*The Feminine Mystique*” (1963) has totally changed women’s reactions. Friedan spoke of the ‘problem that “lay buried, unspoken” in the mid of the suburban housewife: utter boredom and lack of fulfillment. Women who had been told that they had it all- nice houses, lovely children, responsible husbands – ere deadened by domestically, she said, and they were too socially conditioned to recognize their own desperation’. So, in this way the author in this article has tried to discuss about the various women liberation movements of the contemporary era by citing some really good examples of the so called feminist contributions.

In another article titled “The Modern Women's Movement” (Higgins Jenny 2012), the author begins that ‘the modern women's movement has lobbied for, and brought about a variety of social reforms. Issues of concern have included: pay equity, pension benefits, affirmative action, day care, reproductive rights, domestic and sexual violence, sexism and sex-role stereotyping, matrimonial property rights, and women's representation in government. The movement encompasses many groups, which operate at the community and bureaucratic levels, including Status of Women councils, women's union groups, native women's groups, rural women's groups, and a Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women’. On the part of the government’s political actions or regarding certain policy measures of the state, the article paper clearly mentioned that ‘lobbying efforts by women's groups have brought about significant policy change in the province’. With help of an example it has been cited that ‘in 1972, for example, the province passed the ‘Jury Duty Reform Act’ which allowed women to serve on juries. Though an important step forward, women could still opt out of jury duty if they wished. Women's groups thought that women should have the same obligations as men, so they could play an equal role in the justice system’. However ‘the reform came in the 1991 Jury Act. Again in 1979, the legislature passed the ‘Anti-Discrimination Human Rights Act’, which changed the wording of several pieces of provincial legislation to protect the rights of women and other groups. Terms such as 'wife', 'widow', and 'mother' were replaced with gender-neutral words such as 'spouse' and 'parent'. The changes affected such legislation as the Civil Service Act, the Constabulary (Pensions) Act, the Interpretation Act, and the Workers' Compensation Act. A major victory came in July 1980, with the passage of the Matrimonial Property Act. The legislation recognized an equal division of property upon separation or divorce. It also guaranteed that widowed women and men would inherit the matrimonial home’. So, here it can be said that in this article the author basically tried to analyse the very status of women’s movements globally about how they had gained enormous popularity in asserting their rights and status in the society and how they had transformed themselves with the ongoing time and conditions by overcoming all the challenges and obstacles imposed by the society.

As per an article titled “Contemporary Women’s Movements in India” (Mondal Puja), ‘there are different strands of thought and activism that have come together to create the contemporary women’s movements in India’. These movements were initiated by the Declaration of the UN Year of Women in 1975. This resulted in the myth that women in post independence India were “progressing”. It is because the report of the Committee on the status of women proved to be a turning point in the path of contemporary women’s movements in India which revealed that a majority of Indian women suffered from poverty, illiteracy and ill health, as well as discrimination in both the domestic and public spheres which led to rise in agitations and campaigns against the worst manifestations of sexism and patriarchy by middle class women. Moreover according to this article the year 1975 saw marked the development of various feminist activities in most part of the country. In Maharashtra and Hyderabad a number of women issues came into the forefront. At the same time a number of women related organizations were also formed, such as the Progressive

Organisation of Women (POW) formed in Hyderabad, Purogami Stree Sangathana (Progressive Women's Organisation) formed by Maoist women in Pune and the Stree Mukti Sangathana (Women's Liberation Organisation) in Bombay. Therefore, it can be said that the 1980s witnessed a transformation of the women's movements where the organizations increased their focus from one or two issues to deal with holistic issues.

Objectives

The objectives of the paper are:-

1. To highlight the challenges faced by the Women's liberation movements in the present context.
2. To highlight the different strands of the women movements.
3. To highlight the policy measures undertaken by the governments.

Methodology

The methodology of this paper is completely based on descriptive and analytical method, which was done with the help of certain secondary data.

Findings and Discussions

From the above study, it has been found that from 1970 onwards the women liberation movement has been a never ending process both globally and in the Indian context too. It is because from analyzing the various facts and articles it can be here said that in the contemporary era the development of social movements that usually highlight the problems of the rural and urban poor, industrial working class, tribal masses and minorities threw up a new kind of women decision makers in the society who had the combined strength of street-fighting, formal education and strategic thinking. As the women's were a part of the politics of protest, so they had to work under tremendous adversity. If we trace back to the nineties it can be said that other sectors of society also gave space to competent and highly qualified women to be in decision-making bodies. Moreover in the present era, gender sensitisation of the state and central government, management and trade unions, mass organisations, educational institutions is one of the topmost priorities among the development-oriented organisations. In the last two decades, women who have held important positions have had positive experiences whenever they have done thorough homework and have played roles of problem shooters diligently and fearlessly. At the same time, in several places they have faced tremendous male hostility and physical violence. Competent women in public life who have promoted the ethos of distributive justice have managed to get popular support. (Patel Vibhuti 1985)

Moreover, regarding the various strands of women's liberation movement as per an article by Parth Verma (2019) it can be said that, there were three different streams of feminist orientations:

- The Liberal Stream focuses on demanding reforms in those aspects of the polity which specifically affect women.
- The Leftist Stream situates oppression of women within a holistic analysis of the general structure of oppression and calls for a coming together of specific movements for social change in order to effect the revolutionary transformation of society.
- The Radical Feminists concentrate on defining the development of femininity and masculinity in society as fundamental polarities and experimented with reclaiming traditional sources of women's strength, creativity, and so on.

However as per the above findings and discussions here it can be end up that the major demands of the contemporary women movements: issues such as child marriage, sex-selective abortions and dowry-related violence, equality not merely for justice but for development, economic empowerment of women, childbearing should be shared as a social responsibility, recognition of household work as national productivity, marriage and motherhood should not be a disability, emancipation of women should be linked to social emancipation, special temporary measures for de facto equality and lot more such type of empowering demands. (Verma Parth 2019)

Conclusion

So, here it can be summed up that in the early 21st century, due to the launch of a radically new kind of feminist politics by the millennial Indian women that had not been seen before, inspired a vocabulary of rights and modes of protest used by the youth across the world, such as "Occupy Wall Street" and the "Arab Spring". In fact, they had also initiated a series of social media campaigns against the culture of sexual violence and so on. Though the Indian women's movement has achieved much, activists and scholars say that there is still a long way to go particularly in the contemporary era. But one cannot deny the fact that the women's movement is grappling with ever-new problems as vast economic and social changes sweep the country, while on the other hand the old mindsets steeped in patriarchy still prevail.

Moreover, the challenges that the women's movement now faces stem from the vast diversities within India itself. Feminism within India is divided along the class, caste, sexuality, and disability, and as parts of India develop at a faster rate, increased social and economic inequality is giving rise to new problems like sexual harassment at the workplace and in public transport, increasing number of rape cases and many others where it becomes a tough task for them to deal with and preserve their status in the society. As it deals with the new problems, Indian feminism is still battling with many of the old problems too. The recent #MeToo campaign shows the changing face of women's movements in India.

Although the government implements certain policy measures for the protection of women rights, such as the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005), the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (PREVENTION, PROHIBITION and REDRESSAL) Act (2013), the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act (2013), etc., only reaches to some sections of women's while others are still far away from the reach of such and are still fighting for their rights remaining within the patriarchal norms of the society.

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Dimensions Of Women Commodification- An Interpretation

Asmita Mukherjee

The world of humanity is possessed of two wings: the male and the female. So long as these two wings are not equivalent in strength. The bird will not fly.” – Abdu’l – Baha.

Over the years, the society never realised the need to pay the deserved respect to a woman's competence, intelligence, skills and emotions. What was considered necessary of a woman was her beauty and her ability to serve men. This has led to women losing their sense of self-worth, ability to determine choices, access to opportunities and resources and their power to control their own lives. This is where the need for women empowerment originates. The 'second class citizen' status assigned to women bears its roots to 'commodification' since the ancient times. The tendency to objectify women divulges not only through various rituals such as dowry system, 'kanyadan' 'swayamwara' etc, but also through the objectified description of her physical features and attributes.

During our research, we have read through famous works such as Manusmriti, Kamasutra, where we came across evidences which showcase the narrow minded opinions held by the society regarding women. In our paper, we aim at highlighting the probable reasons behind the inception of rituals and practices existent in ancient India that were portrayed as obligatory actions, which in reality seem to treat women as a mere object. We would also highlight the expected physical attributes to be present in a woman originating from the perspective of the society which again is an act of objectifying woman.

In patriarchal families, the birth of a son is bliss incarnate, while that of a daughter is the root of family's misery. The preference for the birth of a son was a prevalent norm in traditional households. In the ceremony called garbhadhana (impregnation), the prayer is for a male child. From these statements we come to know of the status of women in the then society. It can be said they were treated in the way the Shudras were, in the caste system. Since men had the right to perform the ascension rites, carry forward the legacy of his family and therefore he is considered as important member but the daughter is considered a burden as she would be married off.

It is stated in Kamasutra that, when she reaches the days of her youth and becomes marriageable, her parents should dress her smartly, and should place her where she can be easily seen by all. Every afternoon, having dressed her and decorated her in a becoming manner, they should send her with her female companions to sports, sacrifices, and marriage ceremonies, and thus show her to advantage in society, because she is a kind of merchandise. A woman is regarded eligible for marriage considering the following

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characteristics: she should be possessed of beauty, with auspicious body marks. She should take delight in sexual unions, resulting from love. A man should fix his affections upon a girl who is of good family, whose parents are alive, and who is three years or more younger than himself. She should be born of a highly respectable family, possessed of wealth, well connected, and with many relations and friends. She should be of a good disposition, and with good hair, nails, teeth, ears, eyes and breasts, neither more nor less than they ought to be, and no one of them entirely wanting, and not troubled with a sickly body.

It can be said that a girl belonging to that age, was considered a burden by her family and we notice the tendency of the father to pass on this burden on to the hands of the bridegroom as soon as she enters her youth, through the ritual of 'Kanyadan', as the father is insecure of the safety of his daughter. The bridegroom's list of above mentioned, expected features in his bride, reveals his demand of dowry from the bride's family and his wishes for grand treatment at his in-law's house. The existence of the dowry system highlights the status of the girl as a commodity in exchange of wealth. Manu, a famous law maker of the time, opines that in childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead, to her sons. A woman must never be independent.

The classification of women into four types have been delineated well in Kamasutra Firstly, there is the Padmini or Lotus woman, who has been regarded as the type of most perfect feminine excellence eligible for marriage. She in whom the following signs and symptoms appear, is called a Padmini. Her face is pleasing as the full moon; her body, well clothed with flesh, is soft as the Shiras or mustard flower, her skin is fine, tender and fair as the yellow lotus, never dark coloured. Her eyes are bright and beautiful as the orbs of the fawn, well cut, and with reddish corners. Her bosom is hard, full and high; she has a good neck; her nose is straight and lovely, and three folds or wrinkles cross her middle - about the umbilical region. Her yoni resembles the opening lotus bud, and her love seed (Kama salila) is perfumed like the lily that has newly burst. She walks with swan-like gait, and her voice is low and musical as the note of the Kokila bird. Secondly, the Chitrini woman has attractive gait and is neither too tall nor too short. Through thin in build, she has large breasts and yoni, symmetrical thighs and full lips. Her neck is conch-shaped(with three lines thought to be very fortunate), her voice is the song of the chakora bird. Her yoni is well rounded and high, soft and well lubricated inside, and having sparse pubic hair. Thirdly, the Shankhini type of woman is neither too fat nor too thin. She possesses long legs and a long torso. Her complexion is so clear skinned, that her veins show clearly beneath the skin. Her yoni is covered generously with pubic hair and her mucous discharge smells acid. Her limbs are slightly warm. Her voice is as unmelodious as a donkey's. Finally the Hastini type of woman walks gracefully and displays thick and crooked toes on her feet. Her neck is thick and short, her hair tawny. She is rather corpulent and her yoni and mucous discharge smell like the rut of an elephant.

Here we can see that how women have been categorized according to their appearance and physical features, their intellect and adroitness in matters were not taken into account. We also notice that the Hastini type of women have been body shamed and are considered inferior to the rest of the three types. Just as commodities are priced according to

their demand and their ability to satisfy wants, the women categorized as Hastinis, due to their undesirable physical attributes were not in demand and were valued less. Women get objectified since times immemorial which is also prominent through these classifications such as we have mentioned above- her neck being compared to a conch, her face to a full moon etc.

Manusmriti vividly describes the eight forms of marriage namely- Brahma, Daiva, Arsha, Prajapateya, Ashura, Gandharva, Rakshasa, Pishacha. We would like to interpret the Brahma and Pishacha rites. The Brahma rite is characterized by the gift of a daughter, after decking her with costly garments, along with presents of jewels, to a man learned in the Veda and of good conduct, whom the father himself invites. According to the Pishacha rite, when (a man) by stealth seduces a girl who is sleeping, intoxicated, or disordered in intellect, and tries to steal away her chastity, the girl is left with no alternative than to marry him.

In the Brahma rite we notice the girl dressed in expensive attire and ornaments, is being married off to a man. This implies that the father expects to ensure that the husband would take good care of his daughter in exchange of the costly jewels. The importance of the jewels is far more than the girl herself as her individual qualities won't ensure her happiness at her in-laws place but the lump sum stones(gems) would. The Pishacha form is the most degenerated one. Just as a thief, in the darkness of the night, sneaks into a house to loot the expensive objects in a house, in the same way, the man steals the girl away and her chastity, thereby forcing her to marry. This again reduces the girl to the status of a commodity with no human feelings to be cared for.

The following are the arts to be studied by a married woman as expected by a her husband- knowledge of kama sutra, singing, drawing, colouring the garments, hair, nails and bodies, i.e. staining, dyeing, culinary art, ie.cooking and cooker, tailor's work and sewing, carpentry, or the work of a carpenter, gardening, making figures and images in clay, spreading and arranging beds or couches of flower, making lemonades, sherbets, acidulated drinks with proper flavour and colour, knowledge about gold and silver coins, jewels and gems, stringing of rosaries, necklaces, garlands and wreaths, knowledge of the art of changing the appearance of things, such as making cotton to appear as silk, knowledge to pay respect and compliments to others.

In Kamasutra it has also been mentioned that the following women are not to be enjoyed and are not marriageable: A leper, a woman turned out of caste, a woman who is extremely white, a woman who is extremely black, a woman who is a near relation, one who is kept concealed, one who has an ill-sounding name, one who has her nose depressed, one who has her nostril turned up, one who is formed like a male, one who is bent down, one who has crooked thighs, one who has a projecting forehead, one who has a bald head. The one who is called by the name of one of the twenty-seven stars, or by the name of a tree, or of a river or whose name ends in 'r' or 'l' is considered worthless. Manusmriti states that a man

must not marry a maiden with reddish hair, nor one who is sickly, nor one either with no hair (on the body) or too much, nor one who has red eyes.

We can infer that just as people carefully look into the features of a product before purchasing it, in the same way, the knowledge of the numerous arts that is demanded of a married woman, has been listed. We also notice that the acceptance of a woman by a man for marriage, highly depends on her physical traits, not her personality and nature. Here again a woman is being regarded as a product.

Fertility was regarded as the most essential prerequisite for a wife in the patriarchal household and a barren wife was considered to be insignificant. Her ideal duty is to give birth to the baby and embarrass motherhood. The causes of re-marrying of a husband during the lifetime of the wife are as follows: The folly or ill-temper of the wife, her husband's dislike to her, the want of offspring, the continual birth of daughters. Even in the incontinence of the husband, from the very beginning, a wife should endeavour to attract the heart of her husband, by showing to him continually her devotion, her good temper, and her wisdom. If however she bears him no children, she should herself toilette her husband to marry another woman and when the second wife is married, and brought to the house, the first wife should give her a position superior to her own, and look after her as a sister. By violating her duty towards her husband, a wife is disgraced in this world, (after death) she enters the womb of a jackal, and is tormented by diseases, as a punishment for her sin. Even Manu Smriti says "When a woman deceives her husband(with another man), then the king should ensure that she be torn apart by dogs in a public place and the evil man should be burnt in a bed of red-hot iron". Yajnavalkya mentions that a woman whose husband is away from home, a wife should abandon playing, beautifying the body, joining societies and festivities, laughing and going to another's house. A virtuous wife who after the death of her husband constantly remains chaste, reaches heaven. But a woman who from a desire to have offspring violates her duty towards her (deceased) husband, brings on herself disgrace in this world, and loses her place with her husband (in heaven). A twice-born man, versed in the sacred law, shall burn a wife of equal caste who conducts herself thus and dies before him, with (the sacred fires used for) the Agnihotra, and with the sacrificial implements. Having thus, at the funeral, given the sacred fires to his wife who dies before him, he may marry again, and again kindle the fires.

The tendency of considering a woman's prime duty to give birth and carry forward the lineage, makes her stand as a device meant for production purpose. After a certain point of time, when the husband no longer finds his wife desirable and is dissatisfied with her, a woman is being expected to invite another woman into her husband's life and the remarriage of the husband stands as lawful, but when it comes to a woman, she has to bear with the miserable life she leads and continue to remain devoted to her husband as she has been inserted with the fear that the violation of her responsibilities towards her husband would lead her to the gates of hell. After the demise of the wife, the husband has the option to remarry and move on with his life, on the other hand, with the demise of the husband a woman's blissful life ceases to exist. She is not expected to beautify herself, wear colourful clothes, laugh her heart out, attend joyous ceremonies, do what makes her happy. She herself

becomes a non-entity, suffering social death. We see, that the commodity (wife), which was once owned by the husband, loses its value and charm with the death of the husband.

Through our research, we can infer that the society then, in the name of glorifying a woman, ultimately compares her to a product of use in the form of a means of exchange, a device for production and fulfillment of sexual desires. The societal beliefs and practices imposed upon women- such as the 'kanyadan', prohibition of remarriage have made their lives miserable surrounded with restrictions. This condition of women has not resulted entirely due to the the norms of the patriarchal society, but also due to their continuous acceptance of all the notions and customs thrust upon her. For example- Draupadi while informing Satyabhama about the duties of a wife tells her that one should not even talk in private to her own sons. Therefore it can be said that women were expected to perform their duties according to the ideals set by the society where women have a subordinate position to men. We feel that, although women in the present society are a lot more independent, empowered and receive opportunities that lead to a good life, there is still a need to completely break away from the shackles of the societal pressures. Only then the desired equality between men and women will be achieved and would lead to a progressive society.

Irom Sharmila and the Movement against Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA)

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Abstract

Governments after governments, the state of Manipur has witnessed the extension of the “Disturbed Area” status since a long. The status was extended as it was felt that the state was still a hot bed of violence, extremism and insurgency and the armed forces would establish peace and order and would help the state authorities to run the state. With the state still being a “Disturbed Area”, the controversial Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) gives a plethora of powers to the military and paramilitary forces in the state and this has always been a controversy as citizen complain and register protests of ill treatment including rape and murder in the state. The Act since being enforced in the state in 1980 has attracted a lot of controversy and backlash from people cutting across geographical boundaries and ideologies. The Act is seen as a tool to exploit the natives by the military forces on the pretext of insurgency and violence. The Act is also condemned as it strips civil rights of the citizens in many respects.

The “Iron Lady of Manipur”, Irom Chanu Sharmila is a social activist, a poet from the state of Manipur and was born on 14th March 1972. She is known for the 16 years long fast which she began on 5th November 2000 against the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958. The paper would discover the pains and sufferings of the iron lady of Manipur and would bring out the roles and functions of the controversial Armed Forces Special Powers Act being in place in several parts of the nation.

Keywords: Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), Irom Chanu Sharmila, powers, peace, Manipur.

Irom Chanu Sharmila is leading a marathon protest (though in present times her protest has weakened) against the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in the state of Manipur since she began her 16 years long fast on 5th of November 2000 against the AFSPA that gives the military and paramilitary forces much power to curtail civil rights. The atrocities that have been meted out to the citizens of Manipur since the enforcement of the status of “Disturbed Area”, is a prime example of violation of human rights and liberties on the pretext of insurgency and extremism. After the AFSPA was enacted in the State of Manipur, the state has seen rapes, kidnapping, extortion, fake encounters, killings and even more violence by the security forces who consider the natives the natives of Manipur as ‘objects’. The Manipuris have toiled much in the recent years and their experience have been pushed to the periphery on the hands of the government and its policies which the people have themselves chosen to rule and govern.

The problem started with the annexation of the state of Manipur into the Indian territory in 1949 as it was not fully welcomed by the people of Manipur. The annexation took place through an accord between the then king of Manipur, Bodhchandra and the Indian state and with this the discontentment grew over the period of time and was eventually expressed through the handful of insurgent groups that are active in the state. The military and

paramilitary forces in the state in order to curb insurgency and extremism in the state as been proactive and has always been on the heels to neutralize any who would they consider to be a threat to the peace and harmony of the state. The AFSPA also gives the forces the power to search properties without any valid warrant, to arrest people and question ruthlessly and to use force if the security forces find any “reasonable suspicion” in any person of acting against the harmony in the state. The presence of excessive security forces and the militarisation of the state led to limiting the civil rights and liberties and this also led to the curtailment of the voice of the native Manipuris. The special powers of the armed forces soon became a tool of atrocity and horrifying stories of ill treatment by the security forces became a every day phenomena in the state. The security forces would also under the guise of “reasonable suspicion” and encounter exploited and thrashed the protesters who raised their voice against all these atrocities in the state. The ever growing violence by the security forces in the state had created a perpetual fear of life and a culture of violence among the peace loving Manipuris.

The state saw a massive people’s movement after the Malom massacre where the security forces brutally killed nine civilians in the broad daylight by the Indian Army in retaliation of a bomb attack on an Assam Rifles convoy at Malom Makha Leikai. Irom Chanu Sharmila was a witness to this incident and was deeply disturbed and perturbed by the killings and atrocities meted out to the people after that. It was here in Malom that she began on 5th November her 16 years long fast and gained a lot of sympathy from the natives.

It was only after three days she began her protest peacefully, she was arrested unlawfully by the Manipuri Police and was subsequently charged with an “attempt to commit suicide”. She then after few days was transferred to judicial custody where she complained of ill treatment by the officials. Her health deteriorated for the worse very rapidly and soon she was forced to have nasogastric intubation while she under arrest and this happened from the 21st of November of that year. Her health continued to deteriorate but she had it in her mind of not giving up the fight she had initiated without taking it to a logical conclusion. She was also released and re arrested regularly from time to time since she began her fast on 5th of November.

It was by the year 2004 that she attracted lot of attention for her cause and for the common cause of humanity at large. She soon became an image of peaceful resistance and had become an “icon of public resistance”. She went to Raj Ghat, New Delhi on 2nd October 2006 following her procedural release and she says she went “to pay floral tribute to my ideal, Mahatma Gandhi”. She also met and gained support of Shirin Ebadi, the Iranian Nobel laureate who was a vocal supporter of human rights. Shirin Ebadi listened to her cause and promised her raise her voice for her in every possible platform. She also gained support from many social activists including Medha Patkar, Birubala Rabha, and from many leaders of the India Against Corruption movement. She also gained support from the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Lenin) (CPI-ML) in the month of September 2011 and the party supported whole heartedly to repealing the notorious AFSPA and soon the party called for a nationwide agitation to gain popular support for the cause. Other political parties including the Manipur chapter of the Indian National Congress also supported her fight and called to repeal the AFSPA. The chief of AITMC, Mamata Banerjee also supported her cause and she promised to do the best she could to repeal the Act. She continued to make requests from time to time to those in power to repeal the Act including calling on to the then Prime Minister, Dr

Manmohan Singh. It was also in the same year 2011, that the Save Sharmila Solidarity Campaign (SSSC) was formed by volunteers to bring to notice and to highlight the cause for which she has been fighting for so many years. During the entire period of her fight she met her mother only for once and as she feared that seeing her mother's pain and anguish she may break her resolve and the long drawn fight may just crumble. She said, "The day AFSPA is repealed I will eat rice from my mother's hand". She continued to be released and re-arrested from time to time at the will of those at helm.

Her protest was a normal one until it attracted attention of national and international media. Her protest was only for the common people of the state and was not much organised or planned and was a reaction against the violence and exploitation by the security forces. Her first hand experience of the Malom massacre led her to protest against all the atrocities meted out to the people of Manipur. She stood against the injustices and oppressions which her people faced and she refused to bow down before any power in the state. The Malom massacre was a deciding factor in the affairs of the state as more and more people started raising their voice against the AFSPA and the militarisation of the state. The Act bestows innumerable powers and which are most often undue to the security forces to curb insurgency in the state. The excessive militarisation in the state also led to the violation of fundamental rights including both equality before law and equal protection of law. The ambiguity in the Act led to the extreme suffering of the women, youth and children who as women were raped mercilessly, youth were tortured and children were thought of next gen insurgents. The Act also allowed "fire upon or otherwise use force even to the causing of death, against any person who is acting in contravention of any law and order for the time being in force in the disturbed area" and this in the law led to the Malom massacre where nine civilians were gunned down without any warning by the Assam Rifles merely on the basis of 'suspicion', though this was not the first instance of ruthlessness by the security forces, it attracted much attention from all across the state. The Malom massacre multiplied the voices of dissent in the state and the voice of Irom Sharmila echoed even in the ears of the deaf. Her protest was peaceful and was to uphold the rights and liberties of common Manipuris. She through her protest has brought to the fore the extreme human rights violations under the narrative of the so called *peace* and *change* in the state. Her demands were from time to time mocked at and efforts were made publicly to distort her image of a crusader of civil rights and liberties. All these couldn't deter her spirit and aim of repelling the AFSPA from the state and she even today continues to be an epitome of non-violence and peace and she showed through her marathon fast as how "a man can be destroyed but not defeated".

It was then on 26th July 2016, Irom Sharmila, who had been on a marathon fast since 2000, announced that she contest the next state elections in Manipur in 2017 and she also announced that she would break her fast on 9th August 2016, putting a curtain to her 16 year long fast, probably one of the longest ever known and heard. She then started preparing for the state elections which was a surprise to many of her well wishers. She fought the 2017 elections against the then Chief Minister and Congress stalwart Okram Ibobi Singh but she suffered a massive setback as she could not even gather 100 votes. Many considers her abrupt decision to contest had not gone well with her supporters and Okram Ibobi Singh had a cake walk securing more than 15000 votes against Sharmila's 90 votes, she broke down publicly when the results came out. Her defeat in the election is seen as a huge blow to her demands to repeal the controversial AFSPA.

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Paithani Saris and Women in Maharashtra: Patterns of Consumption and Preference Through Time

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Abstract

For women in Maharashtra, Paithani silk saris constitute an important component of their wedding trousseau and a symbol of prosperous married life. The aim of this study is to explore the historically changing nature of the relationship between Paithani silk sari and the women in Maharashtra, and the different factors and forces involved in this. The essay argues that women are crucial in determining the fortune of these silks—their demand, supply and circulation.

I.

Sari is a loose piece of drape that is folded and wrapped around the body, and which constitutes a traditional garment of women across the Indian subcontinent (Pathak *et al.*, 2016: 9). The different ways of draping, folding and wrapping the sari, along with the different kinds of textiles, tapestry and weaving patterns, and motifs are often considered as the identifiable markers of the dress culture of women in India (Sharma, 2019). Several socio-cultural and political issues have also been framed over time around sari and women (Bhatia, 2003; Loomba, 1997; Sharma, 2019).

The aim of this study is to explore the changing nature of the relationship between Paithani silk sari and the women in Maharashtra. It aims to understand the changing taste patterns of Maharashtrian women over time, and how that might have impacted the patronage and prosperity of these silks.

II.

Paithani sari is a hand-woven, silken gold-embroidered sari that traditionally involved cross-knitting with gold and silver threads and alternative lighter and darker shades to create the effect of light and shadow (“*dhup-chhaon*”) (Mahapatra, 2016: 138). The silk used for making the Paithani sari is very fine and delicate, and the colours were all traditionally obtained from natural sources (Mahapatra, 2016: 138). Although initially Paithan, in the Aurangabad district of Maharashtra, was the only major center of Paithani sari production, from the seventeenth century onwards, the weaving of Paithani spread into Yeola (a small village in Nashik), Pune and Malegaon, also in Maharashtra. While in the very early phase, Paithani textile manufacture received royal patronage under the Satavahanas and Yadavas, patronage in the medieval times was provided by the Mughals, followed by the Maratha Peshwas and the Nizam of Hyderabad (Mahapatra, 2016: 125-6).

Three broad components of the Paithani sari include the rich, ornamental zari work, the “*pallu*” often showing peacock designs, and a border of an oblique square design (Mahapatra, 2016: 127). Various kinds of motifs are generally seen on the “*pallu*”—“*asavari*” (or potted flower motif), “*bangadimor*” (or peacock in bangle motif), “*parinda*” (or pheasant motif) and

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the “*shikarkhana*” (or hunting spot motif). In the Satavahana times, the “*bagula*” and “*hansa*” (different kinds of birds) motifs were commonly used. The “*asavari*” motifs continue to be popular even today. The coconut border (“*narali*”) was probably the most common Paithani border until the end of 19th century (Mahapatra, 2016: 127). Broadly, there are three kinds of Paithani saris that are known: “*kalichandrakala*” (pure black with red border), “*shirodak*” (parrot-green coloured) and “*raghu*” (pure white coloured) (Mahapatra, 2016: 127).

III.

For women in Maharashtra, Paithani saris are an important part of their wardrobe and dress-culture. The Paithani sari woven in silk is considered to be an important part of the Maharastrian bride’s wedding trousseau (Katiyar, 2009: 48-9). In the eighteenth century, families of the Maratha noblemen or “*sardars*” would often offer Paithani saris as presents and gifts to the newly-weds, along with other rich presents (Saswadkar, 1975). In the contemporary times, although Paithani saris are given as gifts to the women during marriage, they are not essentially possessed as “heirlooms”. Thus, the possession of the sari is not obtained completely, and one only uses it, though the right to claim it as an inherited property is probably missing in such a case.

The different motifs found on Paithani saris could also be interpreted as representing different aspects of the married life of women in Maharashtra (cf. Pathak *et al.*, 2016). It must be noted that only women from the royal household or those associated with any of the regional Maratha court could afford to buy these saris as they were significantly high-priced and exquisitely made (Katiyar, 2009: 45). Royal women preferred to wear Paithani saris with pure gold border and “*pallu*”, mixed with copper to provide strength. Traditionally, the bridal Paithani sari would have creeper or floral motifs in a background of rich gold on the borders. While the bride would wear bright green “*shalu*” with red borders and elaborate “*pallu*”, the elderly women would wear Paithani sarees with “*butee*” designs (Mahapatra, 2016: 128). Among the chief patrons of the Nizam’s court were royal women such as Begum Niloufer, who is said to have visited a Paithani textile weaving centre and introduced the “*parinda*” motif design on them (Pathak *et al.*, 2016: 13). However, the non-elite women would have had to choose their wardrobe from among cheaper varieties of saris, woven in cotton or tussar silk, produced by weavers in the Vidarbha and other regions under the control of the Maratha empire, as the Paithani textiles were mostly out of their reach (Katiyar, 2009: 45).

It is not only the Paithani sari but also its associated ornaments and accessories that serve as a significant marker of the Marathi lady’s identity. In the contemporary times, the wearing of the Paithani sari is generally accompanied by a set of gold ornaments--necklace, bangles and armlets. The necklace could be in the form of “*Kolhapuri saaj*”, “*Lakshmi haar*” or “*Thushi*”. The “*Kolhapuri saaj*” consists of twenty-one pendants that are arranged like a tree-leaf, and this is generally considered to be the marker of a married woman. The “*Lakshmi haar*” has gold coins bearing the motif of goddess Lakshmi on them, strung together with a silk-breaded thread. The “*Thushi*” is a choker style necklace with gold beads. The gold beads are generally seen as indicating abundance of food and prosperity in the bride’s new in-laws’ house. The bangles could include the “*tode*” which is an intricately carved gold bangle that is generally a

gift from the groom's family for the bride and is worn along with several green glass bangles. The armlets include the "*bajuband*" or "*vaaki*" which was traditionally worn on both arms but is nowadays only worn on one arm.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there were broad shifts in the patterns of consumption culture among women in South Asia, and especially in Maharashtra (McGowan, 2006). This was more true for the upper class elite Hindu and Parsi women who now thought it important to control the consumption of certain goods and adapt to consumption of certain kinds of goods, like English shoes, which they were not using earlier but which was now identified as marker of elite status. These were especially thought to be important articles in accompanying a woman in her journey from the world of her own to a foreign land. In this wave of a new consumption culture, the demand patterns for sari also changed; elite women were now looking for mill-made lighter cloth and finer handlooms or imported satins and silks rather than handmade cottons (McGowan, 2006). Thus, Parvati Athavale, a Marathi Brahmin widow travelling to the USA in male company in the early twentieth century, decided to pack fine Gujarati silk saris rather than the usual coarse red cotton sari of the Marathi Brahmin widows (McGowan, 2006). However, women were not only accepting and appropriating new ways of wearing the sari, giving up the older textile varieties, but also rejecting or detesting certain new forms of drapery. An example of this was the case of the Marathi Brahmin lady, Lakshmibai Sardesai, in the early twentieth century, who did not find it comfortable to wear the six-yard saree tied on one side and only wore it temporarily when her husband insisted upon doing so (McGowan, 2006). Eventually, Lakshmibai gave up wearing sari in that particular way, and returned back to her traditional style of draping it (McGowan, 2006). However, the extent to which both elite and non-elite women could determine their way of dressing up and wearing the sari can be questioned.

Maharashtrian married women in the contemporary times also wear the Paithani sari on other such auspicious and special occasions as the "*Satyanarayan katha*" sessions, or the sacred-thread ceremony of the male child in the family.

In general, the limited appeal and demand based on class lines, narrow socio-cultural significance and complex mechanism involved in weaving and manufacturing the Paithani saris would have been important factors that led to a decline in the general popularity of the Paithani silks. In the ancient period, Paithani silks were probably exported to other countries, in return for gold and other semi-precious materials (Dhavale *et al.*, 2017). Although it is true that the coming of the machine mill-made clothes did not completely replace the production of hand-woven Paithani silks, there is not much evidence available to suggest that Paithani silks were a major component of the colonial trade and exchange.

IV.

Women in Maharashtra still value the use of Paithani saris, though its use might be limited to only certain special socio-religious ceremonies. The possession of Paithani saris is of immense prestige value, at least for families in and around Paithan. This is indicated by the fact that families do exchange and gift Paithani saris as textiles of prestige and worth to one another, just like richly embroidered shawls and other textiles. Moreover, Paithani saris are an integral part of the "*shringara*" of the married woman, and along with other accompaniments that indicate her married status, Paithani saris are also indicative of prosperity and happiness in married life. Thus, there is a considerable demand from among

Maharashtrian women for these saris, although the problems of production and circulation persist.

To bridge the gap between the demand and supply sides, it is important to modify the way these saris are manufactured. The sari weavers at Aurangabad have taken account of the unaffordability of these textiles for middle-class income groups and have started developing Paithani saris in cotton weave. These are much cheaper in terms of price but use similar weaving technologies as the traditional Paithani silks. The need has also been felt to develop a wider product base for the Paithani saris and putting it into diverse uses, by developing a product layout based on market surveys, though at the same time retaining its traditional craft and quality (Bhatia and Desai, 2014). Enabling out-migration of the traditional artists and promoting culture-industry revitalization can also help in effective increase in the supply and production of Paithani saris. Engaging more women in the act of manufacturing these Paithani silks would also help broaden the social base of production and manufacture of Paithani silks. The Marhati Emporium at Paithan has women weavers working on almost all the hundred looms there.

The importance of Paithani sari is sufficiently well-recognized within the Marathi families and/or families with any root in Maharashtra, though it is largely confined to only that. This implies that peoples, especially women from other cultures, maybe largely ignorant or unaware of the significance of these textiles. If Paithani saris were to be made more popular among the consumers across the country, comparable to that of the Benarasi or Jamdani, the rich cultural heritage and socio-cultural significance of these saris could be effectively preserved, especially among Indian women. However, one obvious drawback in this suggestion is that Paithani saris are by nature prestigious in nature and are not meant for regular usage. However, if gift-giving of these saris could be introduced among women of other cultures, and other varieties of Paithani silks could be introduced which would cater to regular consumer demands, these problems might be mitigated.

V.

Through this research, an attempt has been made to identify how the consumption and patronage of textiles, such as the Paithani saris, by women determine the fortunes of these textiles. The relationship between women and Paithani saris acts both ways in certain ways—while women offer patronage and generate a demand for Paithani saris, Paithani silks are integral to married women in terms of being an identity of their marital status, and bestowing a certain degree of prestige to them. The historically elite nature of their consumption and patronage and the specific socio-cultural significance of these saris has helped offer possible answers to questions regarding the diminishing popularity of Paithani saris and their consumer base. However, as contemporary analysis has revealed, Paithani saris do have a way forward in terms of defining the sartorial practices of women in Maharashtra, and that there is an immediate need to harness the potentialities of this demand for Paithani saris by increasing its production and improving supply conditions. Women play a crucial role not only in consuming the Paithani sari, but also in participating in its manufacture process in increasing numbers.

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TARABAI SHINDE: A STUDY ON HER WORK TOWARDS OPPOSITION OF PATRIARCHY AND CASTE DISCRIMINATION

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Introduction

The history of Indian struggle would be insufficient without mentioning the contribution of women (Swami, 2018). The role of women in freedom struggle is very important. These women have faced various number of exploitations and hardships to earn freedom (Swami, 2018). After India gained independence, the participation of women nationalists was widely accepted (Shukla *et al.*, 2019). However, male dominated patriarchal society again pushed women into household space. They were not treated as partners in building newly independent nation India. Newly independent India legally prohibited dowry, female infanticide, child marriage. However, in reality they were still in practice (Shukla *et al.*, 2019). In a patriarchal world where women have been traditionally silenced, Indian feminist like Tarabai Shinde, Savitribai Phule, Fatima Sheikh, Ramabai Ranade defied the norm and paved the way to the feminism that people of India experience today (Swami, 2018). However, these women leaders have been long gone and forgotten in the history of India (Swami, 2018). Tarabai Shinde was one such woman who fought for unfair treatment of women and equal rights for men and women in the 19th century (Kale, 2014). In Indian society, where women are not only treated as lower to men but are also subject to discriminations and exploitation. Tarabai Shinde defined feminine image and raised questions about the standard set by patriarchy for women. She used her influential language and intense writing to convince society that the issue at hand has a simple solution and that is equality between men and women (Kale, 2014). Tarabai not only focused on women in India, but also believed that women around the world were similarly oppressed (Sasha, 2019).

The purpose of this paper is to study the contributions made by Tarabai Shinde towards the opposition of patriarchy and caste discrimination in 19th century India. It also attempts to find out the impact and importance of Tarabai's role in history and in present. This paper also

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aims to create awareness about the other female leaders whose contributions are now forgotten in history.

Introduction to Feminism

The word feminism is derived from the French word *feminisme* (Srivastava, 2018). Feminism can be described as a challenge to the oppression that women face in various contexts. The term feminism emerged long after women started questioning their inferior status and thereby sought to change the status quo. History indicates that women's voices and struggles have not been heard nor have they been recorded. Their lives were seen as confined to the home. Hence, not much is known about women's political aspirations. The little that is recorded is found in the testimonies of early feminist like Tarabai Shinde, Pandita Ramabai and Rakmabai who raised their voices against social injustice, patriarchy and caste discrimination in the country. While the entry of women at the centre of debate and discussion in most parts of the country happened late, such a process was relatively faster in Maharashtra state (Srivastava, 2018).

Feminism in India

Despite century's long struggle for emancipating women, the Indian woman's image is intertwined in the ancient idea of Sita and Savitri (Kale, 2014). Everyday, there are various examples of men's hypocrisy and violence against women in India. Indian women's life was controlled by many rules and regulations where she was not even free to do anything. Since time immemorial in the world, specifically in Asian countries and in India, the social custom and creeds have overall control of man. Gender is decided by cultural, social, political and economic forces which influence social behaviour of men and women. Indian feminism is said to be influenced by Tarabai's work (Kale, 2014).

Maharashtra in 19th century

Before the 19th century, women in India had low status (Tokekar,2019). These women were enriched with number of problems such as sati, child marriage and female infanticide. Women were almost reduced to a stage of slavery. They had no existence of their own, inside their four walls of home. Even outside, all avenues of education were closed to them. In connection with western education, intellectuals realized the progress of the western world. They desired to imitate them and bring some considerable changes in Indian society. This paved the way for the modification of society. Nevertheless, social reform movements initiated in Bengal, Maharashtra too did not lag behind. Balashastrri Jambhedkar was the pioneer of renaissance in Maharashtra. Gopal Hari Deshmukh, Justice Mahadev Ranade, R.G. Bhandarkar are some of the prominent names in the social reform movement of Maharashtra. Although few in numbers, there were some women social reformers too. Pandita Ramabai, Dr. Anandibai Joshi, Savitribai Phule, Yashodabai Joshi, Parvatibai Athavle to name a few. These female social reformers redefined the role of women in social scenarios. These women were intelligent, hardworking and determined. The social reform movement helped these women to relate their issues with the society and often to beyond national boundaries. One name among these female social reformers which is not as popular as the above, but is important is of Tarabai Shinde (Tokekar, 2019).

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Tarabai Shinde



Image 1: Tarabai Shinde (1850-1910)
Source: Pinterest



Map 1: Map showing Buldhana district in the state of Maharashtra

Tarabai Shinde (1850-1910) was born in Berar province of a small town called Buldhana in Maharashtra (Kumari, 2017). She was born in a wealthy Maratha family (Kumari, 2017). Tarabai was born in a period when the British Raj was at its zenith and the quality of life for women in the country had become worse (Tharu *et al.*, 1991). Bapuji Hari Shinde was Tarabai's father who was a head clerk in the office of Deputy Commissioner of Revenues. A qualified academic with Tarbai as his only daughter, her father taught her languages such as Marathi, Sanskrit and English (Tharu *et al.*, 1991). She was a keen reader, skilled in classical and modern literature (Prasad, 2017). Due to societal norms of that time, she got married very young (Singha, 2016). However even in her marriage, she was quite different. She had a form of marriage called *gharjavai*. *Gharjavai* means after marriage, the husband comes to live in the wife's household. This was considered as an unusual practice in the patriarchal society because usually women lived in their husband's house after marriage. Tarabai had no children, a choice she made diligently and defended in the face of a society in which a childless married woman was considered as inappropriate (Singha, 2016). Tarabai herself was a victim of *marathmola* which means the Marathi seclusion of women (Srivastava, 2018). She admitted that just like other Maratha women she too was kept locked up and confined. However, as she was married within the *gharjavai* system, she relatively had some freedom at her natal home (Srivastava, 2018). Until her death, in 1910, Tarabai Shinde remained a voice against patriarchy and ill treatment of women (Singha, 2016).

Contributions

Tarabai Shinde began working with social activists- Savitribai and Jyotirao Phule (Singha, 2016). She was a founding member of the Satyashodhak Samaj or Truth Seeker's Society at Pune (Kumari, 2017). Jyotirao and Savitribai were also the members of this organization. Jyotirao and Savitribai Phule started their first school in 1848 for the untouchable caste girls.

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In 1854, they also started a shelter for upper-caste widows who were forbidden from marrying and excluded from mainstream society. Later, they involved Tarabai in both these initiatives. Tarabai received most of her experience through her work with Savitribai and Jyotirao Phule. They shared similar ideas of the oppression of gender and caste in Indian society (Kumari, 2017). She raised the awareness on the double-standards of men and women in society (Singha, 2016). Tarabai also discussed the unfair treatment given to various castes in the Indian society. This allowed citizens to begin to question the standards they have set for women (Singha, 2016).

Work- *Stri Purush Tulana*



Image 2: Original cover page of *Stri Purush Tulana* book
Source: Pinterest

Stri Purush Tulana is a forty-page essay written by Tarabai Shinde which was published in the form of a book in 1882 (Rajan, 2020). This book is considered as the first writing in Marathi literature in which she questions men about man-woman relationship in a very straight forward, brave and in a relevant manner (Tokekar, 2019). When a widow-Vijaylaxmi aborted her unborn child, a criminal case was filed against her and she was sentenced to death (Singha, 2016). This was most popularly called as Vijaylaxmi case (Rajan, 2020). Tarabai decided to speak up against this case through her writings. This was the main starting point of India's first modern feminist text that is- *Stri Purush Tulana* which translates as- A Comparison between Women and Men (Rajan, 2020). The book was printed in 1882 (Singha, 2016). However, this book remained undiscovered until it was republished by S.G. Malshe in 1975 (Rajan, 2020). The book covers three main aspects (Shinde, 1882). The first aspect relates to the low status of widows in Indian society. The second aspect relates to the status of married women in their homes. And then comes the main third part of the book which is indicated in the title. It compares men and women and explains how men are responsible for women's illiteracy and are lacking in skill development. She also claims that women have all abilities that men possess but are suppressed by the patriarchy on purpose. Tarabai also touches upon one more aspect. That is, how newspapers are responsible for creating the distorted image of women and for reinforcing their oppression. She believes that the world created by God has a twofold division. The human beings are divided into male and female, similarly as other living beings like flora and fauna. Thus, she states that all the

pleasures of life are worthless unless enjoyed together. Both are like two hands, which are so interdependent and incomplete without each other. She then gives the examples of widows in the past and how the *shastras* don't allow them to have a relationship with another man. She has mentioned many points in her book in support of arguments about how a woman's life has become meaningless in the male dominated system of patriarchy. Tarabai suggested that remarriage is better than having an illegitimate relationship with another man. She demanded in her book that the British government should pass a law allowing widows to remarry. According to her, the *puranas* and epics have restricted and controlled women's life through orthodox norms and conventions. She has explained in her book through an anecdote from Ramayana, how the concept of *pativrata* was utilized for the advantage of men (Shinde, 18820). She preferred to re-establish the history and accord an honourable status to women (Rajan, 2020).

Criticism

Immediately after her book got published, the local newspaper started publishing articles which condemned Tarabai Shinde (Prasad, 2017). It was until Jyotirao Phule's work *Satsar* (1882) which made a reference to Tarabai's work (Kale, 2014). It was then revived once more (Kale, 2014). The criticism which was leveled at her was in-fact, owing to the fact that the very men she condemned were the ones who were publishing the newspapers (Prasad, 2017).

Its Significance in present times

Tarabai made her observations more than 135 years ago (Tokekar, 2019). With the course of time, number of developments took place. Particularly after Independence, girls started to educate. They also entered the public sphere and started doing jobs in different fields. They started taking responsibilities with men. However, does that mean that attitude of society changed towards women? Even at present, marriage is considered as a turning point in the life of girls. Widows are still given low status and also child marriages do take place. The need to have male child is so deeply rooted in our society. At present, because of constant usage of electronic media the ability to break these images has become quite easy. Tarabai Shinde's attribution in the media holds good even today (Tokekar, 2019).

Conclusion

Tarabai Shinde's work most certainly is a landmark in highlighting how patriarchy has been at task from time immemorial to subjugate the very identity of women (Srivastava, 2018). Tarabai's work for emancipation of women is not only inspiring but is also eliminating threats surrounding gender equality as a whole. Apart from Tarabai Shinde, there are many such other female social reformers who have fought for social injustice in our country. However, they are forgotten in the history of India. Due to the struggle and hard work made by these female social reformers, today women have excelled in various fields (Tokekar, 2019). The female social reformers of this land have awakened the passion of women for self-actualization and pursuit of excellence in various fields. These women activists have played a prominent role in changing many social evils. They have fought for bringing change in India. However, due credit is not given to these female reformers. Only by a fuller and clearer understanding of past efforts made by these women reformers, the people of India today can take inspiration from them. Such women who sacrificed their lives just to bring

change in India must be respected and should be given due credit in a similar way people give credit to the male social reformers of India.

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Women in Social Reform movement from prior Independence to modern Dynamic era

Ms. Naimisha Chandrakant Kadhiwala

Abstract

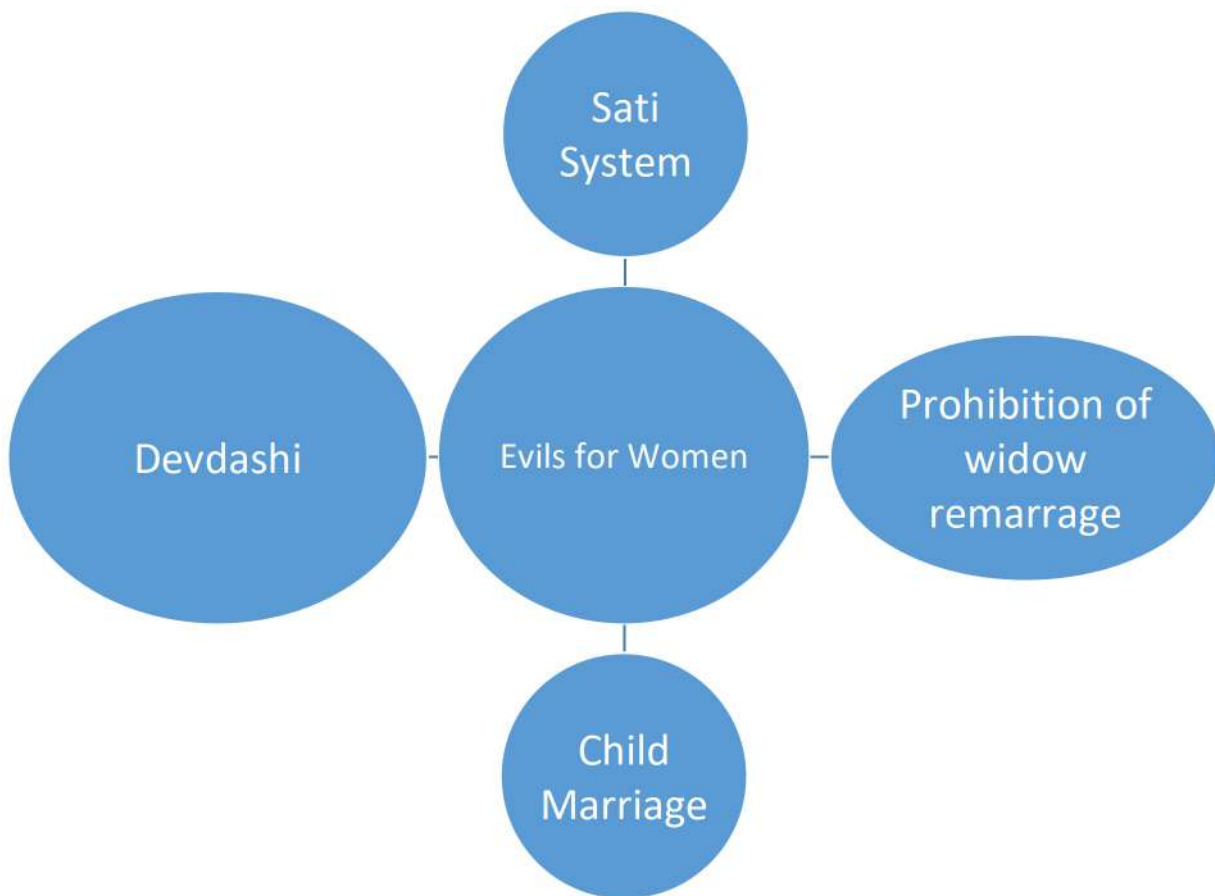
First of all we have to understand what is social reform movement. A social reform movement refers to any attempts that seeks to correct any injustices in the society.....in other words we can say that social reform is a kind of social movement that aims to make gradual change or change in certain aspects of society, rather than rapid or fundamental changes. My basic title of the paper is women in social Reform movements but I explained only social reform but I have to explain What is social Evil ? If we can't get definitions of evils in ancient time to modern era. We can't reform it from time to time. In ancient India there are evils like- child marriages, Devdashi, Baby drink milk, Sati system, Parda system, Prohibition of widow remarriage, dowry abolition, and Girl education etc. Amongst that era many reformers women were occurs whose tendency to see the society from different view points. Actual role of women in past and today's perspective in social reform movement is very analytical.

Keywords: Movement, Prohibition of widow remarriage, Parda system, Devdashi, Social reform, evil.

Research problem of paper :

In ancient time or prior to Independence "Gender" like male and female and now we have new gender definition of trans gender or third gender. In an ancient time female gender was considered as a burden to a society., my view says that they only make a women organized as a dirt and want to throw them from their life any how. If a parent conceive a girl child and give her birth immediately they dispose her from their life for example they sink her in a milk pot, If a woman become widow they disposed her by " Sati". If they continuous gets girl child they gave their first girl to temple for "Devdashi". If a man become "Widower" he wanted to marry small girl in age though he is in more age ultimately it is the main reason for "Child marriage" and if that aged man dies she is forced to be "Sati". The basic idea of study this paper is ultimately use of women as per a need and disposed her from the society.

If we talk about the modern era , women are very ambitious somehow they are in politics, in beauty competitions, in doctor field, pilot and also works in army., if we get still male domination is prevail in the society. We only make fool to our heart that male and women are equal dominion in the society but scenario is different. A women can't get 33% of reservation in the parliament. If a women raise her voice it is dumped by society which is leaded only by a male.



Introduction : India is known as a country of its vast culture and wealthy monumental heritage. But in past the concept regarding women of India was very narrow , at that era many reformers like Jhansi queen Laxmibai, Fatima Shaikh, Sarojini Naidu , Madam Bhikhaiji kama, Padmavati Rani , Ahilya bai holkar and many more contribution toward social reform movement . My topic is ancient to modern era ., in modern times we have women reformers such are Kalpana Chawala, Meghana Patkar, Bhawaridevi whom we know as “Vishakha” case law , Swati Maliwal who raise her voice against legality of sex business/ sex worker . In ancient or prior independence the reformers women were not aware of their rights but some women like regorious tendency they were modernized. Under their civilization mission they condemned. Indian religion ,culture and society for their behavior towards women . The reformists and renaissance ideals of the enlightenment in Europe have usually been cited by the historians as the inspiration for social reform initiated in 19th century in India gave many voices to torpor women and stood for their natural rights and places that become very first base stone of those rights which in future uprooted many evils in our society.

Ancient or prior independence evil practices in India :

➤ **Sati system :**

In 18th century we were ruled out by the Britishers. In that era Britishers always protested evil systems of India. There were so many evilious systems were happened in India but amongst them Sati system which break the dignity of a women born as a women and also take right to life .and liberty of women under the shadow of customs.. Ultimately we can say

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that Human Rights of women were breached . They were snatching women’s gender equality. Their bias attitude toward women was very crucial . In 1765 Britishers firstly establish their government in West Bengal . They knew that without learning norms and traditions of the society they can never be successful. This is how they started reading Indian history. In Bengal they recognized first evil system which we call Sati system. With a view to rulling over Indian territory Britishers refused to legislate over the Sati system. But reformers from Indian society like Raja Ram Mohan Rai one of the reformist also started movement against unlawful Sati system. In 1798 it was declared unlawful in Bengal. From 1815 to1824 this unlawful practice continuously work and at that time 6632 cases were registered . Thus practice of Sati was prohibitedofficially by the “Regulation XVII” of 4th December, 1829 says that practice of suttee or of burning to burying alive the widows of Hindus , illegal and punishable by the criminal courts.

The action of campaigning for social reforms gave government supremacy in the political and ideological context.

➤ **Devdashi System :**

When a person has first daughter they give it to the temple as a “DAAN” which is called “Devdashi” system. The main purpose of this system is to dispose he women from the society anyhow. But the disciplined society title that thing as “Service to the Lord”. As the consequences that girl became keep of the Mahants and they weren pleased by her dancing. The base of the prostitution was started from there only. .In history it is also known as Anti-Nautch movement . Indian social reformer and Lahore purity servant reformers tried to gain public favor for the abolition of this practice. Devdashi’s were dedicated girls to Hindu shrines.

By this consequences the concept of Female education come across to the society. But still in modern era in Andhra Pradesh and many parts of India Devdashi system is practiced illegally in many parts of India.

➤ **Female education banned :**

I told as you prior when the Britishers came to India rulling over it they never interfere the ideology and sociology of Indians because if they interfere in that the people will throw them out. But during their administrative set up they brought two big changes ,first they allow Christian missionaries to work here and second they introduced English education set-ups to Indian which consequences social reform movement for women. Only women from reknown families were to learn classical or vernacular literature.

The contribution of Mrs. Annie Besant was eminent towards girls education. She establish the central Hindu Girls School at Banaras (Varanashi) with the object of importing western Education to give quite separately from boys in a modernized school of Hinduism. In 1916 the first medical college Lady Hardinge college. The women SNDT college was also established in the same year.

Three main factors are responsible for this. First education which was the main reason of awareness was limited to the elite class. Second in the beginning main works for women were done only by Christian missioneries and Indians did not allow their wives to interact with

others because they think if they would do so it will be create revolte to their families. In such circumstances the social Reform movement were raised by the single persons or solo persons like Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar and Behramji Malabari etc, the next stage efforts started by women activist like Brahamosamaj and Prarthana samaj etc., these early associations faced high level of social opposition and response women and was the most popular organization.

Many renounced women leaders came in main national frame like Sarladevi Chandrani, known as “New Women” both as feminists and as nationalists. She actively participated in both the social reform and nationalist movements. She was the first lady where in National social conference adjunct. So, she founded that Bharat stree Mahamandal Group of Indians women in Allahabad in 1910. Sarla devi’s efforts resulted in organizing women only associations in the early decaders of the 20th century.

Council of Indian women (1925) and All-India women’s conference (1927). It also opened branches in different parts of southern India and connected to the Madras Theosophical society which was working to women and was the most popular organization . Next step was the arrangement for the female franchise in 1917. As a result, by 1929, all the provincial legislatures had given the women right to vote.

➤ **Social Reform movement in modern dynamic era :**

There are many vast changes in modern dynamic era . There are too many movements in modern era amongst them some are as under :

- **ME TOO MOVEMENT :** This movement is one kind of movement in which when a women or any person here person we define as under IPC S-9 ., included transgender also is sexually abused by any male on any places like sexual harrasement at work place, rape by near relatives, or any other person whose intension is malafied and a women who was suffered also quote her name in me too movement. In glamour industries many women were become victim of casting couch though they women are civilized and educated. For example , Tanushree Dutta, Tishka Chopra , Kangana Ranaut, Jiya Khan, and many more well known names are included in it.

The illumination of the fashion industry cheat women though she is well educated. If she want to become famous she has to do what dominant owner says to her I meant that this will make her sexual abusing herself.. The presentation of women is very odd on screen that attracts opposite gender to herself which is very abusing fact. In Slice advertisement they only making adds of soft drink why they show outer beauty of the women so far. Women are not things of exhibition the ultimately goal towards women are to present her in dismanner or indisciplined manner.

- **Domestic Violence :** As per the survey domestic violence is increasing during the tenure of the Lock down period many families women though she is educated or uneducated suffer from the same problem as well in modern era. As we can say that social evils which were exists in ancient time still it is exist but mode of practice is different . The modus operendi is different. In past women was beaten openly but the civilization concept make open beaten concept less popular. Now women is beaten under the four

walls of the room but she never complaints of it at all to her parents. The era is changed but situation is not changed and as it is from prior.

Conclusion : It is cleared that the above mentioned discussion shows piteous condition of women invited reformers to deory and carry out implementation or upliftment for a long period . As in 19th century or prior to independence so many evils were exists but with the help of the reformers we achieve good cohabitants from that. Such evils were I have already discussed above.I can't give you tremendous suggestions regarding this matter I only give you to educate yourself and make your self prepare for any hard comes circumstances you can facet over that any how. This should be happen only by goal of "EDUCATION". In my paper so many things were attributed but only by education you make yourself aware fro society , for your earning, for your family, for your rights etc. We also organize social awareness programmes for women. Women and children are vulnerable class of the society as they are not aware for their rights and duties.

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Social Media Crime: Emerging trends, Challenges and Solutions

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Abstract

Without a question, social media has revolutionized mass media and changed the way people communicate. It has given people a new sense of confidence in their ability to voice their dissatisfaction, share the truth, and expose the lies. The numerous modes of social networking, such as Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, and YouTube, have enabled people to build, upload, and exchange information, ideas, and, most importantly, pictures and videos from anywhere in the world through various networks and platforms. Along with its many benefits, social media also has some drawbacks that cannot be completely avoided. People's ability to coordinate with large amounts of information sent in text messages, Facebook pages, and tweets is inexperienced, since they consume it without checking the contents, which could be dangerous. Apart from that, online violence focused on gender is a bold fact in the virtual universe of social media. The aim of this research paper is to highlight the role of social media in exacerbating cyber-crime and other forms of gender-based abuse in the Indian context. Furthermore, any effort to trivialise the negative effects of cyber-crime through social media could have unintended repercussions.

Keywords: Social Media, Cyber Crime, Trolling on social Media, Fake New

1) Introduction:

Via various forms of social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, the common man enthusiastically joined the struggle. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp, among other social media platforms. It is undeniable that the whole campaign has been fuelled by social media by the general public, especially the youth of this country. Understandably, social media has played a critical role in influencing people's opinions and forming their perspectives on any topic of social importance. It is difficult to disagree that social media has little effect on the minds and opinions of millennials, the main consumers of social media, i.e. Facebook and Twitter are two social media platforms. A broad range of extreme comments can be found on the internet. Today's social media is a hotbed of poisonous and hateful debates. Combating hate speech and fake news has been a big problem for policymakers around the world.

An examination of the positive and negative aspects of social media reveals that, despite its advantages, some of the dangers and other negative consequences cannot be ignored. The consequences of the right to privacy in the virtual universe, on the other hand, are a fiercely contested subject. Any right to privacy must in the encompass and protect the personal intimacies of the home, family. Marriage, motherhood, procreation, and child rearing. News and opinions circulate so quickly on social media that it can trigger turbulence and social unrest. Although acknowledging the many benefits of social media, the dangers must still be addressed with caution. People's ability to coordinate with large amounts of information sent in text messages, Facebook pages, and tweets is inexperienced, since they consume it without checking the contents, which could be dangerous.

As a result, inciting civil discord across social media and the rapid growth in cyber crimes

pose a serious danger to modern Indian society. Online abuse of women, prominent people, and political figures through different forms of social networking exemplifies a society's conduct and social illness. Since the law of the land is competent to act, the offenders are rarely apprehended and brought to justice. Online stalking by trolls⁶ on social media has been found to go unchecked and rarely addressed as a major web-based crime.

2) Emerging Social Media

Sharing information via social media is critical to achieving digital citizenship, and has undeniably opened new opportunities for sharing and spreading information, knowledge, and resources to an ever-increasing number of individuals in a limited period of time, and at a low cost. The emergence of social media is changing the way people interact with one another and how content is exchanged and communicated. It's not like popular media like print, radio, or television. In this sense, various social networking networks such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and others have been playing a dominant and decisive role in influencing public opinion on the internet.

With the advancement of the social media movement, India could no longer remain immune to its influence. About 300 million users use various forms of social media at this time. In recent years, the aspects in which social media has changed connectivity have gained a lot of media coverage. In India, no other medium has gained as much popularity in such a short time as social media. The applause for this fantastic achievement goes to social media's user-friendly features, which allow them to share and contribute to whatever post or video they choose.

3) Dark side of Social Media

Initially the use of social networking was limited to corporates and business for connecting with peers, customers, clients, with Twitter handle, Facebook accounts or WhatsApp mentioned on business and visiting cards. Social Networking has now branched to include friends, family associated and classmates as well. Since the early 1990s, when internet freedom was granted, India's networked population has risen from millions to billions. Through time, social media has been a feature of everyday life for civil society around the world, including a diverse range of players, from individuals, groups, political parties, the government, and also dissenting groups such as radicals, jihadists, and separatist organisations. During the 2013 riots in Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh, the government alleged that anti-social forces used social media extensively to spread hate and disinformation among groups. The key question is: how does the widespread use of social media impact India's interests, and how should the Indian government and policies respond? The troubling condition is that the government has little influence of social media outlets other than a full internet shutdown. Currently, various anti-India parties are using social media to spearhead a hate campaign against India. As a result, adversaries—both state and non-state actors—have routinely used social media to spread disinformation, false narratives, hate propaganda, incite terror, false alarm, and instil mutual mistrust, which has begun to affect various aspects of human life and society's day-to-day functioning, further destabilising India's national integration and protection.

a) Trolling on Social Media:

On social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and other similar social networking sites, virtual violence in the form of cyber-trolling is often used to silence dissenting views and promote communalism as a way of restricting or suppressing freedom of speech and expression. This means that 200 million Indian consumers are exchanging messages in real time on a regular basis. As one of the most commonly used means of expression today, social media plays a vital part in both countering and amplifying hate speech. It is a form of targeted gender and symbolic abuse that can be interpreted as "silent orchestrated strategies" toward those who differ (physically, psychologically, verbally, or in writing) with the current government's philosophies.

b) Issues Affecting Communal Hatred as a Result of Fake News:

Dissemination of communal items amid the darkness of false news and hate propaganda on social media is emerging as one of the nation's latest threats to political values and secular ethos. Internet bombs, treats, internet harassment and technology-driven crimes, such as focused virus strikes are the next wave of crime that the world has to encounter in the days to come. Social media users are often subjected to a deluge of false news about communal hate rhetoric, which they mostly mistake for true news and post on their social media sites without verifying its authenticity, which has undeniably had a significant impact on individual behaviour and shaped their minds toward societal schism.

c) Crime of Sedition and Social Media

Since the advent of the modern social media movement, it has been observed that the majority of social networking sites have proven to be a powerful and risk-free tool for India baiters to spew their venom against the nation. In Kashmir and the North Eastern nations, the pages have been ruthlessly abused to spread misinformation by manipulating reality. The key goal is to gain foreign recognition for the so-called "freedom" movement while also criticising the Indian government and security forces for abusing citizens' human rights. Since these forums have such a large audience, the vicious propaganda is carried out in a systematic way.

4) Anticipation towards Social Media-Related Cybercrime:

Few Promising Steps Social media is used to communicate and engage by people all over the world, but cyber criminals are using it to commit crimes such as privacy invasion, defamation, misrepresentation of identity or stealing by personation, obscenity, sending offensive messages, and sometimes even crimes against the state, such as encouraging anti-national acts, spreading hatred, and so on. Many individuals have become victims of these crimes as a result of a lack of information and excessive use of social networking platforms. Fear of falling behind in the technological race has resulted in a spike in the number of these crimes. According to Pavan Duggal, a cyber lawyer and advocate with the Supreme Court of India, only cyber crimes are recorded in India for every 500 that occur, and only one of those is filed as a criminal case. Similarly, in 2012, a propaganda campaign through the Internet and social media allegedly triggered a mass migration of people from the Northeast from south India.

As a result, it can be claimed that cyber-crime through social media is one of the most pressing issues facing cyberspace today. To begin, cyber-crime is described as any criminal

violation or illegal act that occurs on a device. Cybercrime refers to any activity carried out in cyberspace with the intent of committing a crime. While the Information Technology Act of 2000 does not describe the word cybercrime, it does address cybercrime in two broad categories. The first is Chapter 9, which covers fines and adjudications under sections 43 to 47, and the second is Chapter 11, which covers crimes under sections 65 to 75. Cyber-crime on social media can be categorised into three categories: offences against people, property, and the government. Cyber stalking, cyber bullying, cyber defamation, cyber forgery and frauds, breach of privacy, and data stealing are also examples of cybercrimes perpetrated against people. Cyber-crime against all types of property is the second category of cyber-crime. Illegal electronic trespassing in cyberspace, computer vandalism, dissemination of malicious programmes, and unauthorised storage of computerised content, such as hacking and cracking, are among the most serious cyber-crimes known to date. Though the heading of the newly inserted Sec. 66 E provides as punishment for violations of privacy, the penal provision only seeks to prohibit electronic voyeurism which is only one of the forms of breaching another's privacy.

Cyber-crime against the government is the third category of cyber-crime. Cyber terrorism is one form of crime that falls into this group. When an attacker "cracks" into a government or military-run website, it becomes a so-called crime of terrorism. In terms of dealing with social media-related offences, the government is yet to present a clear proposal to address the pernicious phenomenon of trolls abusing women online.

5) Judicial Response to Social Media Crime and Freedom of Speech and Expression:-

Several times, the current regulatory system and structure have shown inadequacy when dealing with new cyber-crimes perpetrated via social media. Though social media has provided users with a voice to express themselves, it has also exposed them to slander, character assassination, coercion, and defamation. The main in the legal scenario between cyber crime and real world crime and the main reason why judges have difficulty in deciding cases related to cyber crime is that the cyber world is omnipresent, there may be actions done in some part of the world whereas the damage occurs in a different part.

The overarching theory of "freedom of speech and expression" refers to the "right to hold an opinion," not the "right to threaten, abuse, or harass others in public and prohibit them from communicating." The publishing of defamatory material in an electronic medium is referred to as cyber defamation. Cyber defamation means the harm that is brought on the reputation of an individual in the eyes of other individuals through the cyber space. However, it is equally possible to overstep the limits to enforce a statute that is detrimental to free expression when setting in place the frameworks to combat such attacks online. Section 66A of the Information Technology Act, 2000 was just that, until it was struck down by the Supreme Court in *Shreya Singhal v Union of India*. Section 66A was ostensibly designed to address communications that were "grossly offensive" or "menacing in nature," as well as the dissemination of false information with the intent to inflict "annoyance, nuisance, threat, obstruction, insult, or harm." As a consequence of this modern fact, politicians, intelligence forces, and law enforcement authorities must understand the effect of social media in the wake of terrorist attacks, in terms of response preparation for terrorist threats, and quick distribution of information.

Not long after, Four people, including a minor child, abducted and sexually assaulted a 22-year-old Kurla man who enjoyed posting selfies on social media. They tracked him down to a popular restaurant in the city. Although criminals sometimes target people after befriending them online, this is undoubtedly the first time a person has been followed with a selfie, and by complete strangers. People are bullied in a variety of ways, including cyberbullying, revenge porn, trolling, pornographic text messages, virtual mobbing, and so on, and these criminals are punished under the applicable provisions of the Indian Penal Code, 1860. In several occasions, the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India has reaffirmed that the "right to privacy" is a cardinal precept under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution; moreover, its relation to internet content is yet to be explicitly explained by judicial rulings. Some websites have ushered in a new age in cyberspace culture, affecting netizens both individually and professionally. Terrorism, financial crime, and victimisation of women and children are only a couple of the problems that law enforcement officials are worried with because of social media.

Article 19(2) of the Indian Constitution had steadfastly stated that "nothing in 19(1)(a) shall affect the operation of any existing law imposing reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right conferred by the said sub-clause in the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, public order, decency or morality, defamation or incitement to an armed conflict in the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, public order.

6) Other Legal Provisions relating to Social Media Crime

In practise, however, enforcement agencies file cases by invoking relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code 1860, as well as those corresponding to The Information Technology Act, 2000, such as offences under Indian Penal Code, 1860 Sections 463, 464, 468, and 469 read with The Information Technology Act, 2000 Sections 43 and 66, to ensure that the evidence or punishment specified at least in one of the two statutes is given. Furthermore, Sections 507, 499, 509, and 354 A and B of the India Penal Code, 1860 empower a survivor to file a lawsuit without understanding the harasser's true identity. It also discusses the rise of trolls in the online community. The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2013, recently added section 354D to the Indian Penal Code, 1860, which punishes the perpetrator for stalking for the first time with three years in prison and a fine, and for the second time with five years in prison and a fine.

Conclusion:-

Regardless of mix histories, electronic media have become coordinating instruments for today's technologically enabled communities, since the social media movement has wrought a new kind of social order by strengthening social networks while diminishing inter-personal connections on the other hand. Web-based activities and programmes that promote interaction are provided through social media tools. This demonstrates how technological convergence makes people's lives easier. This massive churn-out in the virtual world has unquestionably specified the growing dominance of this web-based social media and its brunt on the masses, especially the new generation, who have a direct or indirect impact on it, and it also draws imprecise conclusions in the form of various rumours, which consistently strikes to cause various forms of bullying, flash mobs, and other forms of social unrest.

The dilemma is exacerbated by the disproportional development of cyber laws in comparison to the threat posed by social media. The only way to make people mindful of their rights and responsibilities is to educate them about their rights and responsibilities and monitor cyber-crimes on social media as they arise, and to recognise this as a social responsibility. Without a doubt, the provisions of penal laws and information technology laws seem to be sufficient to deal with almost all types of criminal activities carried out through social media; however, all that is required is effective enforcement of the same by appropriate authorities on the ground, as well as appropriate modifications at regular intervals to make it more effective and powerful to combat new occurrences. In this regard, the judiciary should play an important role in ensuring that regulations are applied more strictly in order to combat cyber-crime. In order to do so, the legal system that governs social networking sites should be reviewed on a regular basis.

Last but not least, the Indian Parliament attempted to cover several crimes under The Information Technology Act, 2000 by enacting The Information Technology Amendment Act, 2008, but even it will be insufficient because new cyber-crimes from social media emerge on a regular basis, posing undeniably one of the greatest challenges to India's criminal justice system.

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Women in Social Reform Movements

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Abstract:

The history of Indian freedom struggle would be incomplete without mentioning the contribution of women. The sacrifice made by the women of India newline will occupy the foremost place. They fought with true spirit and undaunted courage and faced various tortures, exploitations and hardships to earn us freedom. When most of men freedom fighters were in prison the women came forward and took charge of the struggle. The list of the great women whose names have gone down in history for their dedication and undying devotion the service of India is a long one.

It has been 79 years since Mahatma Gandhi raised the slogan of 'do or die' at the Bombay session of the All India Congress Committee, thereby initiating India into the mass uprising that would eventually lead to the nation's freedom. Gandhi had been striving for self-determination of Indians at different levels for the last several decades. However, the significance of the 'Quit India movement' lay in the broadening of his support base to include peasants, students and the lower middle class.

Following Gandhi's call for civil disobedience on August 8, 1942, the Mahatma along with all the leaders were imprisoned, leaving the movement leaderless. In the absence of any organised structure, people engaged in the most daring and spontaneous acts of protest against British rule. Railway lines were disrupted, police stations were burnt down and telegraph services destroyed. The British retaliated in vehement terms using 'lathi charges' and making mass arrests. An aspect of the movement that is rarely spoken about is the way it encouraged women to come out of the thresholds of their homes and raise their voice against British rule. With majority of the men behind bars, women took to the streets, raising slogans, holding public lectures and demonstrations and even making and transporting explosives. Women were also one of the worst sufferers of British retaliation. It was common for British officials to forcefully enter households and slap, beat up and rape women. While women numbering in hundreds had participated in agitations, there are some women who left a clear mark when one talks about the role of women in the 'Quit India movement'.

The history of freedom struggle is replete with the saga of sacrifice, selflessness, bravery of women. Many of us don't know that there were hundreds of women who fought side by side with their male counterparts. They fought with true spirit and undismayed courage. The Indian women broke away from various restrictions and got out of their traditional home-oriented roles and responsibilities. So, the participation of women in the freedom struggle and National awakening is simply incredible and praiseworthy. However, it is not easy for women to fight as warriors in the male dominating society. Even though females tried to change the perception of such orthodox people who thought women are meant to do only household chores. Moreover, females not only sacrifice their lives but also combat such issues. Rani Laxmi Bai was one of such women who fought against British rule by mitigating all odds, hence this paper entitles to highlight the legacy that women showed in the history by showing their fierce nature.

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Keywords: Indian Women's Freedom Movement, Role of Society, Struggle for Equality, Progress.

Introduction:

In the pre-independence period, the status of women within the country was in a deprived state. The major cause of this was, there was a prevalence of male dominance. The major responsibilities of the women were dedicated towards the implementation of household responsibilities and they were not allowed to participate in the implementation of other tasks and activities, no where they allowed to express their ideas and viewpoints.

India needs to dearly hold sacred its independence. For generations the cloak of the British Rule that had grappled, sometimes with force, sometimes with injustice the very essence of freedom that is the basic right of every individual citizen, was thrown over after many attempts. And hence the Independence of this nation was won in ways and by its people in unprecedented ways. During this period, number of systems, were put into operation, which imposed unfavourable effects upon women. These include child marriages, restraints were imposed upon widow remarriage, female foeticide, female infanticide, purdah system, sati and polygamy. During the period of the East India Company, many social reformers such as Raja Ram Mohan Rai, Ishwar Chander Vidya Sagar and Jyotiba Phule had undergone numerous challenges that were associated with bringing about changes in the status of women within the Indian society. Men of honour had a significant role to play in the freedom struggle. However, surprisingly women too led from the front and emerged as game changers in the quest for independence. During this period there were many ladies, who mastered the art of martial arts. Rani Laxmi Bai fought for the Independence of the country. Women participation in India's freedom struggle began as early 1817 when Bhima Bai Holkar fought against Britishers. Madam Bhikaji Cama, the first Indian women socialist who fought for her motherland's freedom after the 1857 uprising. There is no doubt that women participation in Indian anti-imperialist struggle in large number.

The present paper would focuses our attention on how the women whose names have gone down in history for their dedication and undying devotion for the service of India and its independence.

The Role of Women in Freedom Struggle:

The condition of women started improving when issues related to them began to be raised by the socio-religious reform movements from the first quarter of the nineteenth century. It laid the foundation for their inclusion in the process of reforms pertaining to gender justice as well as freedom struggle. By the twentieth century, women became important participants in the freedom struggle. Their participation in the massive popular struggles during the course of national movement created new possibilities that socio-religious reform movements could not. The women who were recipients of justice in the nineteenth century became companions of nationalist men from the early twentieth century onwards. They participated in all streams of the national movement, be it Gandhian, Socialist, Communist or revolutionary nationalism. They also contributed to the tribal and peasant movements as well as trade union struggles. They came from different backgrounds like educated and liberal families, urban and rural areas and from various castes, religions and communities.

The First Stage (1857 and Before):

Broadly, we can divide India's struggle for independence into two stages. The first stage constitutes the revolt of 1857 and before. Many women fought against the company rule in the nineteenth century. **Bhima Bai Holkar** fought bravely against the British colonel Malcolm and defeated him in guerrilla warfare in 1817. **Maharani Velu Nachiyar** (1730 - 1796) bravely fought with the British army decades before the 1857 Revolt. She probably remains the only queen to have defeated the British army successfully.

However, the 1857 Revolt saw many stalwart women participants in the freedom struggle that have gone down as legends in the history of Indian Independence. **Manikarnika or Rani Lakshmibai** of Jhansi is the most prominent among them all. She raised the banner of revolt after the annexation of Jhansi, by Lord Dalhousie, in 1854 through the application of the controversial doctrine of lapse. She became famous not only for her bravery in combating the British forces but also for capturing the Gwalior fort. She died fighting on 17 June, 1858 during the battle for Gwalior and became an iconic figure. **Jhalkari Bai** played an important role as a member of the Durga Dal (women's brigade Jhansi). She dressed up like Rani Lakshmibai, led the troops in the battle and misguided the British.

Begum Hazrat Mahal refused to be bogged down by the Doctrine of Lapse and reclaimed Awadh from the British as well as reinstated her young son as king. However after the fall of Lucknow she had to flee to Nepal. **Rani Avantibai Lodhi** of Ramgarh, **Rani Tace Bai**, **Rani Jindan Kaur**, **Jhalkaribai** and **Uda Devi** are other historical women who fought with the British army during the revolt. Besides their strength and courage at battles with the British armies, notable Indian women also paved way for social change. **Savitri Bai Phule**, educationist, regarded as the first female teacher of India who started the first school for women for the first time in India. We come to know about **Uda Devi Pasi** through legend. She killed more than half a dozen British troops in the battle of Sikandar Bagh in Lucknow in November 1857.

There were many more women who fought valiantly in the revolt of 1857 but didn't get enough credit. **Rani Avantibai Lodhi** of Ramgarh raised 4000 troops to fight against the British when they took over her husband's kingdom after his death. When defeat became eminent she killed herself with her own sword.

The Second Stage (Post-1857 Revolt):

During this stage the process of organized political activity picked up pace. This period experienced a consistent rise and growth of national consciousness. The most important development was formation of the Indian National Congress. The Congress emerged as the most important platform to express the nationalist sentiments and passed through three important phases- Moderate, Extremist and Gandhian. Some other parallel ideologies and trends also emerged in the form of revolutionary nationalism, socialism, trade unionism and Kisan Sabha Movement. Women participated in varying degrees in almost all these phases.

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The Munda Rebellion (1899-1900) was the first local uprising in which women actively participated against the British. As far as the mainstream population is concerned, it

was the Swadeshi movement, where the housewives from urban middle class families came out of their homes for the first time ever in the history of India.

Annie Besant was the first prominent personality that emerged as an active participant in the Indian social and political life in the early twentieth century. She was an Irish lady who arrived in India in 1893. Besant made India her home and initially devoted herself to education and revival of Indian culture and religion. She also worked for the women's rights, caste equality and rejuvenation-of Panchayats. She entered in politics in 1913. She also used them to launch a campaign for self-government in India during the Home Rule movement in 1916-17. Annie Besant also became the first women to become the Congress president in 1917.

Most of the influential women became visible in the twentieth century. They emerged during the Gandhian phase. **Kasturba Gandhi** always remained a source of moral support to her husband. She became a political activist and fought for civil rights against the British, both in South Africa and India. She was imprisoned in 1942 for her involvement in the Quit India Movement (QIM) and died, two years later, at the Agha Khan Palace in Poona.

Large scale participation of women began during the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) in 1930s. **Sarojini Naidu** led the satyagrahis at Dharsana Salt works on the Bombay coast. Among the 2050 participants, 359 were women, who faced the lathis of the police with other participants with great confidence. Sarojini Naidu became the first Indian women to preside Congress in 1925.

Durgabai Deshmukh organised Salt Satyagraha in 1930 in Madras presidency with two prominent leaders A. K. Prakasam and D. Nageswara Rao. She also set up the Andhra Mahila Sabha in 1941 for the welfare of women. Women also participated, in substantial numbers, in revolutionary activities. **Madam Bhikaji Cama**, the mother of Indian revolution. Madam Cama encouraged the Indian youth to fight for the cause of their nation. She organised the Free India Society and published the journal *Bande Mataram* to spread her revolutionary thoughts.

During the Quit India Movement of 1942, the participation of women was not as high as in the Civil Disobedience Movement. But the lack of numbers was compensated by their valuable contribution. When the movement went underground due to increased repression by the colonial government, lot of work was done under the leadership of women like **Aruna Asaf Ali**, **Sucheta Kripalani** and **Usha Mehta**. Aruna went to prison in 1930, 1932 and 1940 during the Civil Disobedience Movement and Individual Satyagraha. She edited the journal 'Inquilab' which aimed at mass mobilization. Congress radio that operated from different locations in Bombay. In Singapore, Subhash Chandra Bose created the Rani Jhansi regiment It was an All-Women Regiment of the Azad Hind Fauj' (Indian National Army) led by **Captain Lakshmi Sehgal**. She was also appointed the Minister of Womens affairs in Azad Hind Government.

There were many more women who participated in the freedom struggle and four of them belonged to the Nehru family. They were **Swarup Rani**, **Kamala Nehru**, **Vijayalakshmi Pandit** and **Indira Gandhi**. Swarup was Jawaharlal Nehru's mother and Kamata was his wife. Kamala got involved in organizing women for protests against the British government. For this she was arrested few times. Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Nehru's sister actively participated in the CDM and individual Satyagraha and got arrested. His daughter Indira was pulled in the freedom struggle from the very young age. She organized 'Vanar sena' and 'Manjari sena' of the young boys and girls. She was also arrested during the QIM.

Rajkumar! Amrit Kaur of the Kapurthala royal family of Punjab was impressed by Gandhi. She got involved in the activities of the Congress and participated in the CDM. She was imprisoned during the QIM. She was also a founder member of the All India Women's Conference (AIWC) which first met at Pune in 1927

Jyotirmoyee Ganguly resigned from the government service in response to Ganchi's call for Civil Disobedience and participated in an agitation organized by the Forward Bloc in 1945 against the imprisonment of the INA soldiers. She died protesting against British suppression.

Mira Behn joined the Sabarmati Ashram at Ahmedabad and engaged in the promotion of khadi and satyagraha. She wrote more than thousand articles for various papers like Young India, Harijan, The Statesman, The Times of India and The Hindustan Times. She also participated in the Quit India Movement. **Matangini Hajra** was born in a typical peasant family. She participated in the Dandi March in 1930 and agitations against chowkidari tax during the CDM. She was hit by a bullet and died while hoisting the national flag during the QIM.

There were another category of women who might not have directly participated in the freedom struggle but they contributed to the emancipation of their own kind. Some of the prominent examples in this category

are **Gangabai** or **Maharani Tapaswini**, **Subbalakshmi**, **Pandita Ramabai**, **Sarla Devi Chaudhurani**, **Mehribai Tata** and **Muthulakshmi Reddy**. They aimed at developing female education, improvement in the condition of child widows and women's status in th family, prohibition of child marriage and purdah, and enfranchising women.

Conclusion:

The British ruled India for about 200 years. The sacrifices and movements started by the freedom fighters of India brought us freedom, and made India an independent country in 1947. August 15, was, and still is, a memorable day for all Indians, and is a reminder of the patriotism and struggle of our freedom fighters. The sacrifices, hard work and contribution of some of these freedom fighters, such as Bhagat Singh, Mahatma Gandhi, and Sardar Vallabhbbhai Patel, is known to us, while other freedom fighters remain to be unsung heroes.

Women played indispensable role in India's Freedom struggle. All kind of women ranging from a common person to highly accomplished ladies participate in it. In the background of a conservative society and several limitations, their contribution is immensely commendable. The list of such women is endless who dared to fight for India's freedom with undaunted courage. The contribution of women in the struggle for an Independent India cannot be overlooked. A lot of courageous women raised their voice against the British rule. Many women took to the streets, led processions and held lectures and demonstrations. These women possessed a lot of courage and intense patriotism. Their selfless hard work, sacrifices and struggles are seldom talked about. The discussion about the Indian movement of independence is incomplete without mentioning the significant contributions by female freedom fighters. This Independence Day, let's not forget the innumerable sacrifices made by female Indian freedom fighters.

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Status of Women in Indian Society

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Abstract:

There are two main pillars of human life-man and woman. Both share equal responsibility in the making of society and hence both are supplement to each other. From the very beginning, the women in various societies of the world are exploited in many ways. Since women had a strong will to improve their status in society, they have managed to make a niche for themselves in today's society. Also, there are some elements in the society who have helped women to be independent, fight for their rights and injustice against them. Women have succeeded in improving their status and are improving day by day. The worth of a civilization can be judged by the place given to women in the society. One of several factors that justify the greatness of India's ancient culture is the honourable place granted to women. The Muslim influence on India caused considerable deterioration in the status of women. They were deprived of their rights of equality with men. Raja Ram Mohan Roy started a movement against this inequality and subjugation. The contact of Indian culture with that of the British also brought improvement in the status of women. The third factor in the revival of women's position was the influence of Mahatma Gandhi who induced women to participate in the Freedom Movement. As a result of this retrieval of freedom, women in Indian have distinguished themselves as teachers, nurses, air-hostesses, booking clerks, receptionists, and doctors. They are also participating in politics and administration. But in spite of this amelioration in the status of women, the evils of illiteracy, dowry, ignorance, and economic slavery would have to be fully removed in order to give them their rightful place in Indian society.

Keywords: Equal, Exploited, Independent, Injustice, Responsibility.

Introduction

The worth of a civilization can be judged from the position that it gives to women. Of the several factors that justify the greatness of India's ancient culture, one of the greatest is the honoured place ascribed to women. Manu, the great law-giver, said long ago, 'where women are honoured there reside the gods'. According to ancient Hindu scriptures no religious rite can be performed with perfection by a man without the participation of his wife. Wife's participation is essential to any religious rite. Married men along with their wives are allowed to perform sacred rites on the occasion of various important festivals. Wives are thus befittingly called 'Ardhangani' (betterhalf). They are given not only important but equal position with men.

But in the later period the position of women went on deteriorating due to Muslim influence. During the Muslim period of history they were deprived of their rights of equality with men. They were compelled to keep themselves within the four walls of their houses with a long veil on their faces. This was definitely due to Islamic influence. Even today in some Islamic countries women are not allowed to go out freely. The conservative regimes of Iran and Pakistan, for example, have withdrawn the liberties given to women folk by the previous liberal governments. Even in India the Muslim women are far more backward than their Hindu, Christian and Sikh counterparts. The sight of Muslim women walking with long 'Burkas' (veils) on their person is not very rare. The women are, as a matter of fact, regarded as captive and saleable commodities in Muslim families. One man is allowed to have so many wives with the easiest provision of divorce. The husband can divorce a wife just by

saying 'I divorce you' under the provision of Muslim laws. This is what the emperors did hundred years back and the men are doing it even now in almost all Islamic countries. Even in this last phase of the twentieth century rich and prosperous men of Islamic countries keep scores of wives in their harems. It was natural outcome of the Muslim subjugation of India that woman was relegated to a plaything of man, an ornament to decorate the drawing room. Serving, knitting, painting and music were her pastimes and cooking and cleaning her business.

In the wake of Raja Ram Mohan Roy's movement against women's subjugation to men and British influence on Indian culture and civilization the position of women had once again undergone a change. However, it was only under the enlightened leadership of Mahatma Gandhi that they re-asserted their equality with men. In response to the call of Gandhi they discarded their veil and came out of the four walls of their houses to fight the battle of freedom shoulder to shoulder with their brothers. The result is that the Indian Constitution today has given to women the equal status with men. There is no discrimination between men and women. All professions are open to both of them with merit as the only criterion of selection.

As a result of their newly gained freedom Indian woman have distinguished themselves in various spheres of life as politicians, orators, lawyers, doctors, administrators and diplomats. They are not only entrusted with work of responsibility but also they perform their duties very honestly and sincerely. There is hardly any sphere of life in which Indian women have not taken part and shown their worth. Women exercise their right to vote, contest for Parliament and Assembly, seek appointment in public office and compete in other spheres of life with men. This shows that women in India enjoy today more liberty and equality than before. They have acquired more liberty to participate in the affairs of the country. They have been given equality with men in shaping their future and sharing responsibilities for themselves, their family and their country.

It is a fact that women are intelligent, hard-working and efficient in work. They put heart and soul together in whatever they undertake. As typists and clerks they are now competing successfully with men. There are many women working in the Central Secretariat. They are striving very hard to reach highest efficiency and perfection in the administrative work. Their integrity of character is probably better than men. Generally it was found that women are less susceptible to corruption in form of bribery and favouritism. They are not only sweet tongued but also honest, efficient and punctual in their jobs as receptionists, air-hostesses and booking clerks at railway reservation counters. As a matter of fact they are gradually monopolising the jobs of receptionists and air-hostesses.

Another job in which Indian women are doing so well is that of teachers. In country like India where millions are groping in the darkness of illiteracy and ignorance efficient teaching to the children is most urgently needed. By virtue of their love and affection for the children the women have proved the best teachers in the primary and kindergarten schools. They can better understand the psychology of a child than the male teachers. Small children in the kindergarten schools get motherly affection from the lady teachers. It is probably significant that the Montessori system of education is being conducted mostly by the women in this country.

Women have been serving India admirably as doctors and nurses. Lady doctors have been found to perform efficient surgery by virtue of their soft and accurate fingers. They have monopolised as nurses in the hospitals and nursing homes. Very few men have been able to compete with them in this sphere because the women have natural tendency to serve and clean. It is thus natural tendency found in women which motivated Florence Nightingale to make nursing popular among the women of the upper classes in England and in Europe. She showed the way to women kind how nobly they can serve humanity in the hours of sufferings and agonies.

Women's contributions in politics and social services have also been quite significant. We cannot fail to mention the name of Indira Gandhi who shone so brilliantly and radiantly in the firmament of India's politics. She ruled this country for more than a decade and took India victorious out of Pakistan-war which resulted in the historic creation of a new country, Bangladesh. In the field of social service Indian women have also done some excellent jobs. They have not only served the cause of the suffering humanity but have also brought highest laurels for the country. The name of Mother Teresa cannot but be mentioned. She brought the Nobel Prize for India by her selfless services to the poor, destitute and suffering people of our country in particular and the needy and handicapped people of the world in general. Today, we need the services of the educated women who can tour throughout the country and help in removing human sufferings. The Government is alarmed at the rapid growth of population in the rural areas in particular. Women volunteers can more easily take up the task of canvassing the advantages of family planning among the rural womenfolk. They can, more easily than men, carry on propaganda against hazards of unhygienic conditions under which the villagers live. In urban areas they can efficiently take up the task of visiting and teaching the orphans and the helpless widows in the orphanages and the widow welfare centres. They can train them in sewing, knitting, embroidery and nursing in which women by nature excel. They can also train them in the art of music and dancing.

But all this should not lead us to conclude that the women should look down upon domestic life. The main sphere of action for them who have not taken up jobs outside should be essentially a happy home which is their real kingdom and where their sweet manners and mature advices as wife, mother, sister and daughter make tremendous effects on the male members of the family. The progress of a nation depends upon the care and skill with which mothers rear up their children. The first and foremost duty of Indian women should, therefore, be to bring forth noble generations of patriots, warriors, scholars and statesmen. Since child's education starts even in the womb and the impressions are formed in the mind of a child while in mothers arms women have to play a role of vital importance. They have to feel and realise at every step of their life that they are builders of the fate of our nation since children grow mainly in mothers arms. They should also discourage their husbands and sons from indulging in bribery and other corrupt practices. This they can do only when they learn the art of simple living by discarding their natural desires for ornaments and a living of pomp and show. In many cases families have been running in deficit due to the extravagance of the housewives in maintaining a high standard of living. The result is that the earning male members of the family are forced to fill up the gap in the budget by corrupt practices. Corruption has been so far the greatest impediment in way to India's progress. Minus corruption India would have been one of the most developed nations of the world.

There is no denying the fact that women in India have made a considerable progress in the last fifty years but yet they have to struggle against many handicaps and social evils in the male dominated society. The Hindu Code Bill has given the daughter and the son equal share of the property. The Marriage Act no longer regards woman as the property of man. Marriage is now considered to be a personal affair and if a partner feels dissatisfied she or he has the right of divorce. But passing of law is one thing and its absorption in the collective thinking of society is quite a different matter. In order to prove themselves equal to the dignity and status given to them in the Indian Constitution they have to shake off the shackles of slavery and superstitions. They should help the government and the society in eradicating the evils of dowry, illiteracy and ignorance among the eves. The dowry problem has assumed a dangerous form in this country. The parents of the girls have to pay thousands and lacs to the bridegrooms and their greedy fathers and mothers. If promised articles are not given by the parents of brides, the cruel and greedy members of the bridegrooms' family take recourse to afflicting tortures on the married women. Some women are murdered in such cases. The dowry deaths are really heinous and barbarous crimes committed by the cruel and inhumane persons. The young girls should be bold enough in not marrying the boys who demand dowry through their parents. The boys should also refuse to marry if their parents demand dowry. But unfortunately the number of such bold and conscientious boys is very few. Even the doctors, engineers, teachers and the administrative officers do not hesitate in allowing themselves to be sold to the wealthy fathers of shy and timid girls. Such persons have really brought disgrace to their cadres in particular and society in general. The government should enact stringent laws to afflict rigorous punishment on dowry seekers, women's murderers and rapers.

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“Role of women of Uttarakhand in Freedom Movement of India: A historical study”

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Abstract

Due to the specific geographical cultural conditions of Uttarakhand, the women here are more engaged in agricultural work than the women of other parts of the country. Traditionally, the reeds of the mountain economy have been women, due to which they did not get an opportunity to take an active part in education, social and political life. Closed walls of the social caste system also appear to be responsible for this. The entire hill society was also affected for the first time due to the nationwide mass awareness and freedom movement of the 1930s - as a result, the social status of women had started to change from this era. This paper deals with the participation and struggle of women of Uttarakhand in the national independent movement and their challenges.

Keywords: Independent, Satyagraha, Kumaon-Garhwal, Gandhian

In this direction in Uttarakhand, in 1921, during the maiden visit of Mahatma Gandhi, the women here participated in political-social programs. Due to this, women formed their organization in Almora under the leadership of Smt Hargovind Pant and Bachhi Devi, influenced by Gandhian ideology. It was the first women's organization in the hilly region in the history so far. Commenting on the initial program of this organization, the weekly 'Swadhin Praja' (16 April 1930) wrote that “After Mohan Joshi and Shanti Lal were injured due to police clashes during Jhanda Satyagraha (1930), the group of women like Smt. Kunti Devi Verma, Mangla Devi, Bhagirathi, Jivanti Devi Thakurani etc. were trying to hoist the tricolor at Almora municipal building.” Therefore, the women running with the arms locked hoisted the tricolor and called for a mass struggle.

Along with this first success of women in the political field, women in Nainital also endured the attack of police harassment in the Salt Satyagraha. In Nainital, women like Janaki Devi, Bhagirathi Devi, Vimala Devi, Padma Joshi and Shakuntala etc. Elite women tried to bring unprecedented awakening to the Kumaon region. Highlighting the work of the women's organization in Kumaon, the newspaper 'Swadhin Praja' (Almora) wrote (28 January 1931) that the women's conference held at Bageshwar in 1931 stressed the need for all-round development of women. On this occasion, women burnt Holi of foreign cloth and adopted Khadi. To make Khadi popular, he undertook the Pad Yatras. Mountain women not only focused their programs on political subjects, but also adopted social reform program prominently. As a result, in 1932, in the Kumaon Reform Movement, women participated in large numbers and opposed the touching and contagion and prevailing varna system. At the same time, he had called upon the people to abandon it and move towards moral, religious and spiritual progress.

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With the efforts of social reform in the mountainous region, the craftsmen were tried to get social justice by giving them entry into the temple and the panghats. Parallel to this reformist social effort, women took part in the Civil Disobedience Movement, started picketing at the shops of foreign cloth and picketing at the furnaces of liquor. As a result, Mangala Devi, Padma Joshi, Kunti Verma, Jivanti Devi, Bhagirathi, Vishni Devi, Shobha Mittal, etc., were imprisoned by the administration in different parts of Kumaon. After some time he was also released unconditionally.

In Garhwal, a part of Uttarakhand, women were less aware than in Kumaon. Especially on political questions, he had little interest. After 1920, for the first time, the women of the region spoke of forced labor and forest sorrows through songs of their tough and troublesome lives-

'Remoti ghasiyari remoti maalu na kata'

Similarly, commenting on the oppression of women on the sufferings of forced labor, the Garhwal Monthly (1907) wrote that "Aha! what a disaster it is. Whom to send to complete your objects. Here, Pradhan threatens, and *Chamasi* shows eyes." It is to be said with regret that such sad-widowed women are also caught in forced labor in our Kumaon region. What could be more shameful for the British Raj, where such atrocities on women also occur. Although the women could not be stirred up for the movement even after this persecution of the Anglo power, however, the voices of awakening were beginning to emerge in them.

After Mahavir Tyagi during the Salt Satyagraha, his wife Sharda Devi participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement, organizing women. In Dehradun zone, many women started taking interest in subjects of national politics, influenced by Kamla Nehru and Uma Nehru's constant arrivals and their programs. The message of 'Chal Mahila Jagriti' from Doon Valley gradually started to affect the inner region of Garhwal as well. In this endeavor, the name of Saraswati Devi, daughter of Arya Samaj leader Naradev Shastri and Lala Chhajooram, is notable.

As a result, after the end of the Salt Satyagraha, women took time out from the time of farming and in one voice demanded the opening of employment oriented educational institutions in addition to education for the development of women. Also, the public and administration were requested for cooperation in the prohibition movement.

Under the program for the development of women and public awareness in Garhwal, on 10 October 1939 AD, at the meeting of Jagrit Mahila Samaj held at Nandprayag, Chamoli, Garhwal, mainly by re-establishing prohibition, home-cottage industries, women got employment at home. The traditional cottage industries, which have been destroyed with the expansion of the Anglo administration, were demanded to be revived. At the end of this first women's conference of Gahdal, by passing a unanimous resolution to the Minister of Mahila Samaj, Malti Devi, sending a copy of it to the government - severely criticized the government and the local administration for promoting drug addiction.

Another proposal emphasized the need to collectively adopt the tenancy and craft industry from the public. This creative work of the women society led to a new awakening and enthusiasm in the society. As a result, women's interest in the field of adult education and home craft industry increased.

Under this series of programs of Garhwal Mahila Samaj, again on 1 May 1940 AD, a session of Jagrit Mahila Samaj was organized in Srinagar Garhwal. Opposing the practices like polygamy, old marriage, and raised the demand of the administration to take legal action against it. In another resolution passed in the conference, a demand was made to open a school for women as well as a women's hospital for maternity women.

As a result of these efforts of the Awakened Women Society, the administration closed the liquor shops for some time in view of the resentment of women in Pauri and Nandprayag. On the other hand, the Self-Awakened Women's Society opened a technical education institute for destitute women and trained them to make wool and rugs.

Margaret Chauffin, Smt. Vidya Dharma (Principal Vidyapeeth Prayag) and Ku. EV Stellart had a notable role. This enlightened women, from time to time, attended the meetings of the Awakened Women Society and apprised the Garhwali women in their status and role at the national and international level. In addition, motivated to educate girls on the same priority basis as boys. In 1949, due to the cooperation from the enlightened women and men, an industrial organization named Udyog Mandir was born by the Awakened Mahila Samaj. Through this, the system of training of women was duly made accessible.

Women who worked in various fields during this early period of women awareness in Garhwal were prominent among them Kamala Uniyal, Kunti Devi Nautiyal, Leela Devi Sah, Malati Devi Vaishnav, Revathi Devi, Chandola, Revathi Devi Khanduri, The names of Revathi Devi Uniyal, Sambhi Devi, Chandrakala, Sateshwari Devi and Vaishnava sisters Lalita Vaishnav / Chandola (the first postgraduate woman of Garhwal) Shanti Chandola, Kusum and Vimala Chandola (daughters of all Vishmbhar Dutt Chandola) are notable.

At the national level, for the first time in Panchayat elections of 1940 AD, the woman candidate from Nand Prayag became the panchayat chief. In Nainital, women led by Kunthi Devi Verma destroyed the forest department by setting fire. In Garhwal division, during this period, women took on the police administration themselves by helping men to do underground work. Among these women, the names of Satyabhama Negi, Shyama Vats Bachidevi Doval are notable. Born in village Sarsu Patti Aswal Sue, Pauri Garhwal, Satyabhama wandered from village to village and tried to organize women to protest against British rule and oppression.

Born in August 1890 AD in village Bagthal in Chamoli tehsil, Shyama Vats visited the village, sitting on the back of her only son, Braj Bhushan Vats. During this period, Shyama Vats appealed to the public to participate in anti-government demonstrations as part of the tour and contact campaign in places like August Muni, Chamoli, Guptkashi, Joshimath etc. Shyamadevi, known for her traditional nature, would ask the public to jump into the movement and if a man expressed an inability to do so, Shyama Devi would darely ask her to wear bangles. Finally, concerned with the increasing activities of Shyama Devi, the administration kept her under house arrest.

After the arrest of the Congress leader of Pauri region, Sakalanand Doval, his wife Bachhi Devi organized women from 1940 AD to 1947 and mobilized them against the Anglo power. The hill women played an active role in the liquor ban movement in the region even after attaining independence.

As a result of these efforts of the Awakened Women Society, the administration closed the liquor shops for some time in view of the resentment of women in Pauri and Nandprayag. On the other hand, the Self-Awakened Women's Society opened a technical education institute for destitute women and trained them to make wool and rugs.

Margaret Chauffin, Smt. Vidya Dharma (Principal Vidyapeeth Prayag) and Ku. EV Stellart had a notable role. This enlightened women, from time to time, attended the meetings of the Awakened Women Society and apprised the Garhwali women in their status and role at the national and international level. In addition, motivated to educate girls on the same priority basis as boys. In 1949, due to the cooperation from the enlightened women and men, an industrial organization named Udyog Mandir was born by the Awakened Mahila Samaj. Through this, the system of training of women was duly made accessible.

Women who worked in various fields during this early period of women awareness in Garhwal were prominent among them Kamala Uniyal, Kunti Devi Nautiyal, Leela Devi Sah, Malati Devi Vaishnav, Revathi Devi, Chandola, Revathi Devi Khanduri, The names of Revathi Devi Uniyal, Sambhi Devi, Chandrakala, Sateshwari Devi and Vaishnava sisters Lalita Vaishnav / Chandola (the first postgraduate woman of Garhwal) Shanti Chandola, Kusum and Vimala Chandola (daughters of all Vishmbhar Dutt Chandola) are notable.

At the national level, for the first time in Panchayat elections of 1940 AD, the woman candidate from Nand Prayag became the panchayat chief. In Nainital, women led by Kunthi Devi Verma destroyed the forest department by setting fire. In Garhwal division, during this period, women took on the police administration themselves by helping men to do underground work. Among these women, the names of Satyabhama Negi, Shyama Vats Bachidevi Doval are notable. Born in village Sarsu Patti Aswal Sue, Pauri Garhwal, Satyabhama wandered from village to village and tried to organize women to protest against British rule and oppression.

Born in August 1890 AD in village Bagthal in Chamoli tehsil, Shyama Vats visited the village, sitting on the back of her only son, Braj Bhushan Vats. During this period, Shyama Vats appealed to the public to participate in anti-government demonstrations as part of the tour and contact campaign in places like August Muni, Chamoli, Guptkashi, Joshimath etc. Shyamadevi, known for her traditional nature, would ask the public to jump into the movement and if a man expressed an inability to do so, Shyama Devi would darely ask her to wear bangles. Finally, concerned with the increasing activities of Shyama Devi, the administration kept her under house arrest.

Conclusion

The women of Uttarakhand have played a notable role in the freedom struggle. The women who were troubled by the oppression of the British before Independence, gave an unprecedented contribution to the women's movement in Kumaon when Mahatma Gandhi reached Nainital. At that time, the harassment of women along with the British broke out when Gandhi reached Nainital. When Gandhi reached Nainital on 14 June 1929, women from all over Kumaon also reached Nainital to support their movement. This is also where the women's movement started in Kumaon. After this, women everywhere jumped into the movement for independence. After the visit of the Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi,

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during the Salt Satyagraha movement in 1930, there was a vigorous movement in support of women in Nainital. This forced the British to think ahead of the women power from the movement. Among women, Vimala Devi, Bhagirathi, Tara Devi, Padma Joshi, Lakshmi, Kunti Verma, Bhagwati, Hansa, etc. organized a strategy to dislodge the feet of English power. The victims of exploitation and exploitation used to send secret information from one place to another at night.

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MISSUS OF JORASANKO: FROM ORDINARY TO EXTRAORDINARY

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“For we women are not only the deities of the household fire but the flames of the soul itself”. - Rabindranath Tagore

Glorifying women more as a Dasi than Devi, the Indian social structure outlined a subordinate status for women for ages. The basic institution defining the subordination of women was the patriarchal family, both among Hindus and Muslims. In a patriarchal family, the control of men over women’s lives is total and pervasive through control over women’s productive or labor power, women’s reproduction, sexuality, mobility and property or economic resources. Moreover, all major institutions in society –economic, political, religious, social and cultural are controlled by men. Their helplessness enabled men to perpetuate unbridled acts of self-indulgence.

The situation of women in the 19th century was all the same as their position in the society was far from being satisfactory. It was their total seclusion which brought about their physical and mental degeneration. In many parts of India, especially in the north and east, the purdah had long become an established system both among the Hindus and Muslims. Women were also restricted from attaining a formal education. Girls were trained in the conventionally feminine skills of cooking, knitting, and other household activities, while formal education was mainly imparted to the boys. A fairly common prejudice also prevailed at that time that education is sinful for women and that educated women were more likely to be widowed. It was the complete dependence of women on men which reduced their position to one of abject surrender. This was also the time when most girls were married off young, before they attained puberty. Then, when they were physically ready to bear children, they were conditioned to think of nothing but motherhood. With several girls being married off to much older men, widowhood naturally followed close on the heels of the wedding (despite of being educated), resulting in ostracism and confinement of women in puja rooms or Kashi. Moreover, having been denied an education, they were left at the mercy of their in-laws, and

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often had to deal with grasping relatives who dispossessed them of any property they may have inherited. Apart from child marriage, the practice of infanticide, polygamy, sati -if not universal or widely prevalent in the 19th century, was prominent enough to further suppress the condition of women. This is why the first and foremost agenda of the social reformers in the 19th century was the liberation of women, along the lines of drawing attention to women's education, women's rights and emancipation.

When such was the condition of women in society, women who were born in the Tagore family during this time or came to the family as brides made the Tagore family a compendium of laughter and tears, education, social service, music, dance, religion, atheism and patriotism too. The Tagore family space, with Jorasanko as its center, seems to have been a vast nest of talented women. The women of the Tagore family did not remain as obscure shadows behind the confines of the four walls. They participated wholeheartedly in laying the foundations of new era, some of them directly while others as able helpmates of their husbands. Though many of the social restrictions also prevailed in the Tagore's family, women here were never deprived of education. Moreover, they also had the courage and strength to tread new paths. The most important gifts that Bengali women received from the ladies of the Tagore family were self-confidence and a wide road on which to march ahead. This preceded contributions to music, art and literature. This is why the various activities of these ladies like cantering on horseback along the Maidan, traveling to England, attending parties at the Viceregal Palace, lecture-tours in the USA, lessons in painting, music, play-acting, writing books, participation in the national movement and establishment of women's organizations, became important. These activities were necessary to sow the seeds of courage in the faint hearts of Bengali women and to give a jolt to the static society. Like their men-folk, the women of the Tagore family became models for Bengali women for all ages to come.

Among the women of Tagore family, Jnanadanandini and Swarnakumari are well known. But every history is preceded by a previous one and we should not forget their grandmother Digambari Devi. Digambari Devi was married to Dwarkanath Tagore on 7th February, 1811, when she was 9 years old. They had very little things in common. In those days, when a husband was considered the lord and master, not only in this life but also in future ones, Digambari had the strength of will to seek the opinion of renowned religious scholars. Her query was that whether it would be right to sever all relations with a husband who had deviated from the religion of his forefathers. This was because, during that time, Tagores were devout Vaishnavas. Let alone meat or fish, even onions were taboo in the household. But as, Dwarkanath's business prospered, he began associating with the British, started eating meat and drinking sherry, mainly when entertaining his business associates. Digambari Devi was alone in her protest, in a patriarchal family, yet no one criticized her. Hindu society looked upon her with great respect and admiration. Thus, following the words of pundit, she severed all relations with him, except for looking after his material comforts (seva). For a spirited lady like her, religion and duty stood above all else and she stood firm in her decision. But since not much is known about Digambari Devi's parents and their family condition, it also remains a question whether in the name of religion, she remained in Jorasanko severing relations with her husband instead of permanently shifting to her parent's house.

After Swarnakumari Devi, it was Jnanadanandini Devi (1850- 1941) who took the lead. She was married to Satyendranath Tagore at the age of seven. She was a social reformer who

inspired the women of her time and tried to spread out the wave of education among them during the earliest phase of women's empowerment in 19th century Bengal.

She was born in Jessore, in a Kulin Brahmin family. Her husband, Satyendranath Tagore was not only the first Indian Civil Service officer but also a pioneer of women's liberation in Bengal. He was keen that his shy girl-bride should become the ideal of Indian women in every way. Hence, he dreamt of taking his wife to England, where women had the liberty to move both in and out of the house at will. But, Maharshi didn't gave the permission and his wish remained unfulfilled. However, when Satyendranath was posted to Maharashtra on his return from England, he was able to convince Maharshi to take his wife with him to his place of work. This move proved to be a turning point in Jnanadanandini's life and transformed her into a social reformer. In the meantime, her education began afresh under the tutelage of the Maharshi's third son Hemendranath and under the young acharya of Brahma Samaj, Ayodhyanath Pakrasi.

When Jnanadanandini moved to Bombay, her life changed altogether. It was challenging yet exhilarating to be amongst people who thought very differently from the Tagores. After spending two years in Bombay, Jnanadanandini, set foot in Calcutta. That day heralded the victorious advancement of Bengali women. This was during the sixth decade of the 19th century. Winds of change were blowing all over but it took quite a while before the rigorous rules of purdah were relaxed in Bengal. This time, Jnanadanandini did not have to face reprisals alone, other women of the Tagore family as well as some other Brahma women stood by her side. But the day she returned from Bombay, she was alone.

Our debt to Jnanadanandini may appear obscure to the women of the 20th and 21st centuries. She trod many unfamiliar paths to engineer the advancement of Bengali women. She travelled all the way to England alone with her infant children. Crossing the kalapani at the time was a venture that even men balked at. We are surprised to learn that she undertook the voyage only to acquaint herself with women's liberation. On her return to home, she was able to use her experience to usher in a golden dawn with numerous possibilities for women.

Jnanadanandini gifted Bengali women graceful mode of dress for moving out of doors. On her arrival in Bombay she discarded the cumbersome oriental dress for the neat way Parsi women had of wearing the saree. Though she made minor alterations but she basically adhered to this mode of dressing. This mode of wearing the saree was called the 'Bombay style' in the Tagore family as it had been imported from Bombay. For the common Bengali it became 'sarees of the Tagore family'. On her return from Bombay, Jnanadanandini advertised in the papers offering to teach others to wear the saree the way she did. A number of aristocratic Brahmikas came to her to learn to wear the saree, the first one being Saudamini who was later married to Bihari Gupta. Jnanadanandini also began the practice of wearing petticoats, chemises, blouses and jackets with saree.

Apart from modernizing women's dress, Jnanadanandini introduced two other unknown habits. They were: evening outings and celebrating birthdays. She brought both the ideas from England. Hence, it is assumed that Jnanadanandini was the pioneer in celebrating birthdays in the Tagore family. There are other instances of her independent nature. After Satyendranath's returned from Bombay, she did not wish to remain as a mere member of the joint family at Jorasanko. She was the first to leave the ancestral home, to move to a separate residence with her husband, son and daughter. Thus, Jnanadanandini was the precursor of the

modern nuclear family. However, though she moved away from Jorasanko, her ties with the family remained intact.

Among the women of the Tagore family, after Swarnakumari Devi, Jnanadanandini participated most actively in the rich literary ambience of the family. She made every effort to detect and encourage the talent latent in each one of the young members in the household. She collected all the young children and brought out a magazine called *Balak*, the first children's literary magazine in Bengali. Though she was the editor, Jnanadanandini wrote only one article. She also established a litho press to encourage the youngsters to draw and paint. Another contribution of hers was the dramatization of two fairy tales: *Saat Bhai Champa* and *Tak Doomadoom*. Upon her return from England in 1880, she began to write articles in the Bengali journal called *Bharati*. In 1881, four years before the establishment of the Indian National Congress, Jnanadanandini published an article titled *Ingrajninda O Deshanurag* (Criticism of the British and Patriotism), in which she called for the establishment of a nationwide organization which would have branches in the remote district towns. Jnanadanandini alone helped Bengali women to move forward in their quest for fulfillment.

Swarnakumari Devi (1855 -1932), the brightest star of the andar mahal, was inextricably entwined in every endeavour of Jnanadanandini. Before she had finished her education Swarnakumari wrote an entire novel, *Deep Nirban*. Slowly Swarnakumari gained due recognition in the world of Bengali literature. Apart from novels, she also wrote satires, poetry, songs, humorous skits, non-fictional articles, travelogues, musical plays, reminiscences and school texts. Her admiring readers crowned her with fame. We could easily consider her a bridge between Bankimchandra and Rabindranath, two writers at opposite poles. Though she mainly followed Todd in her historical novels and short stories, her mastery even in that field is unmatched. She wrote quite a few historical novels. *Deep Nirban*, *Mibar Raj*, *Bidroho*, *Phooler Mala*, *Hooghly Imambara*, all were popular. However, Swarnakumari won more acclaim for her social novels and short stories than for her historical creations.

It should be noted that, Swarnakumari being detached from the mundane affairs of daily life, her writings seldom portrayed the realities of social life. This was perhaps the reason behind Rabindranath's strong objection to translations of Swarnakumari's work.

Swarnakumari was also concerned about the fate of widows. She, along with her friends, founded an organization for women's welfare called Sakhi Samiti. The main purpose of this organization was to educate widows and young unmarried girls as teachers for women. At that time, women, specially married ones, seldom went to school, yet the quest for education and knowledge was increasing. Thus, governesses were in great demand, usually foreign missionaries or men had to be employed. Swarnakumari realized that educated Bengali women could easily get these jobs and be economically independent.

Along with social work and creative writing, Swarnakumari also attended the Congress sessions. Her husband, Janakinath Ghosal was intimately involved with the Indian National Congress for a number of years, right from its inception. She attended the fifth and sixth sessions. Her concern for the motherland was not only reflected in her novels written in later years but also in the life of her younger daughter Sarala. She had contemplated dedicating Sarala to serve the country rather than to get her married.

Apart from Jnanadanandini Devi and Swarnakumari Devi, each and every women of the Tagore family, be it Saudamini, Sarada, Kadambari or Mrinalini, all were culturally and intellectually enriched. They had the eagerness to learn and to tread new paths, maybe for self-emancipation or to set an example for other women in the society. In this article, we highlighted only two women of the Tagore family because they were first of their kind and somewhat kept a deep impact upon the society where majority of the women were struggling for their existence.

In the 19th century, the Tagore family positioned itself at the helm of the renaissance in Bengal. Almost the entire gamut of artistic values and aesthetic norms of modern Bengali culture is a contribution of the Tagore family. Despite being so advanced from other contemporary families, we have noticed that both Digambari Devi and Jnanadanandini Devi were married at a very early age. But, the fact behind child marriage in the Tagore family remains unknown. In our opinion, one reason might be that, Maharshi's family wanted their women to be culturally and intellectually enriched, so they wanted to start this process of constructing their women at an early age because we know that a child's brain is like a blank slate, they learn things faster compared to an adult. Hence justifying the custom of child marriage.

The women of Thakurbari were quite active in the respective field in which they excelled, be it literature, music, art or political participation. But all their activity were very much personal, that is, for self-emancipation or self-satisfaction. Hence, it became an example in the lives of other women rather than directly influencing them or directly affecting their status in the society. For example: Swarnakumari Devi's prosperity in literature became an example in the lives of the women who wanted to liberate themselves in the patriarchal family through education. But they had to manage on their own to read and write. However, some of their works did create a deep impact upon society. For instance, Jnanadanandini Devi, for the first time crossed kalapani just to enhance her knowledge regarding women's liberation and Swarnakumari Devi formed Sakhi Samiti for women's financial liberation. But, one can say that being from a wealthier family, they had enough resources to travel to England and form an association as compared to other women who had the wish but not resources.

Another reason behind the success of the women of the Tagore family was the continuous support of the male members of the family. We have seen that Satyendranath dreamt of taking her wife Jnanadanandini to England, he wanted to make her the ideal of Indian women in every way. She began her education under Hemendranath, Maharshi's third son. On the other hand, Swarnakumari was encouraged by her brothers, Jyotirindranath, Rabindranath, Satyendranath in her literary works. Her musical dramas, such as Basanta Utsav used to be enacted in the private party of the Tagores, where Kadambari, Rabindranath used to play the role. She also participated actively with her husband in the sessions of the Indian National Congress. Thus, it is clear that they were lucky enough to get their husband and brothers beside them at a time when patriarchy was smashing the backbone of majority of the women in the society. In the Tagore family too, patriarchal culture existed, but it was not toxic in nature. But one question remains unanswered that, did their success depended upon this one factor or was it their indomitable spirit that gave them a higher position in the society.

After having a clear insight into all the significant sources of the condition of women into 19th century along with the condition of Thakur Bari women, we have observed that women of the

Tagore family were way much prosperous in every field than other women. The reason may be their financial status and huge inspiration from the family members. They were also capable of establishing individualism, one of the important factors of Renaissance. But, it is also true that, many women of that time, be it Rassundari Devi, Chandramukhi Basu, Kadambini Ganguly were making their presence felt more strongly than the women of Thakur Bari.

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स्वतंत्रता संग्राम और राजनीति में महिलाओं की भूमिका Women's participation in Freedom Movement and Politics

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भूमिका

जब 18वीं सदी के उपरांत अंग्रेजों ने भारत पर अपना अधिपत्य जमा लिया तथा यहां के संसाधनों का दोहन करने के लिए लोगों का शोषण और उत्पीड़न करना शुरू किया। तब अंग्रेजों के इस शोषण से तंग आकर इनसे मुक्ति हेतु यहां की जनता ने आंदोलन करना शुरू कर दिया। इस स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन में महिलाओं का भी बराबरी का योगदान था यहाँ की महिलाएं सच्ची भावना तथा अदम्य साहस के साथ लड़ी तथा 1947 में आजादी दिलाने में विभिन्न यातनाएं शोषणों और कठिनाइयों का सामना किया।

नारी चेतना का विकास क्रम :

यदि प्रारंभिक काल से देखें तो पाते हैं कि, पूर्व में नारी को काफी स्वतंत्रता थी । उन्हें पुरुषों के बराबर अधिकार प्राप्त था। कालांतर में उनकी स्थिति गिरती गई । उन्हें शिक्षा के अधिकार से वंचित करके घर के अंदर रहने को मजबूर कर दिया गया । फिर भी कुछ विदुषी महिलाएं और क्षत्रिय वर्ग की महिलाएं समाज में अपना पहचान बनाने में सक्षम रही या शासन में इन्होंने अपना योगदान दिया । इसमें कश्मीर की रानी दिग्दा ,सल्तनत काल की रजिया सुल्तान, अहमदनगर की चांद बीबी , जहांगीर की पत्नी नूरजहां आदि प्रमुख थी ।

19वीं सदी में जब समाज की कुरीतियों जैसे सती प्रथा , जोहरप्रथा का अंत कर ,विधवा विवाह ,नारी को सम्मान दिलाने का आंदोलन जोर पकड़ा, तो इनके शिक्षा की भी जोरदार वकालत की गई जिसके अंतर्गत कई स्कूल तथा विश्वविद्यालय स्थापित

हुए जिसमें माता रमाबाई ज्योतिबा फुले उनकी पत्नी का योगदान ,कुछ मिशनरियों द्वारा भी इनके अंदर आत्मविश्वास जगाया गया । इन सब के कारण नारी अधिक सक्षम और जागरूक हुईं वे अब अपने अधिकारों के प्रति सचेत होने लगी ।

स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में महिलाओं की भूमिका

जागरूक होने के उपरांत महिलाओं ने स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में बढ़ चढ़कर हिस्सा लिया । तथा भारत के सभी प्रमुख आंदोलन में अपनी भागीदारी दर्ज की। यहाँ हम भारत के कुछ प्रमुख आंदोलनों को क्रमबद्ध रूप से देखने का प्रयास करेंगे जिसमें उन्होंने अपना योगदान दिया जैसे:

1857 का स्वतंत्रता संग्राम: अंग्रेजों की हड़प नीति के कारण भारत के कई रजवाड़ों की जगीरो को अंग्रेजों ने अपने शासन में मिला लिया तब असंतुष्ट राजाओं ने काफी संगठित तरीके से 1857 का विद्रोह किया जिसमें झांसी की रानी लक्ष्मीबाई ने झांसी के सैनिकों को ऐतिहासिक नेतृत्व प्रदान किया तथा “मैं अपनी झांसी नहीं दूंगी” का नारा बुलंद किया।¹ वे 17 जून 1858 को युद्ध में शहीद हो गईं परंतु समर्पण नहीं किया।इसी प्रकार बेगम हजरत महल ने लखनऊ में 4 जून 1857 अपना नेतृत्व प्रदान किया तथा अंग्रेजों से लोहा लिया।

बंग भंग आंदोलन : 1905 में बंगाल का विभाजन करने की नीति के विरोध में बंग भंग आंदोलन हुआ जिसमें विदेशी वस्तुओं के बहिष्कार तथा स्वदेशी अपनाने पर बल दिया गया। यह ऐसा पहला जन आंदोलन था जिसमें घर की चारदीवारी में केंद्रित महिलाएं विशेषकर शहरी क्षेत्रों की मध्यवर्गीय महिलाओं ने राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन में सक्रिय रूप से भाग लेना प्रारंभ किया । महिलाओं ने कंधे से कंधा मिलाकर जुलूसों सभाओं एवं विरोध प्रदर्शनों में भाग लिया। दक्षिण भारत और बंगाल की स्त्रियों ने

विदेशी चूड़ियों और शीशे के बर्तन का इस्तेमाल छोड़ दिया।² कालांतर में राष्ट्रीय स्वतंत्रता संघर्ष में इनकी भूमिका महत्वपूर्ण होती चली गई ।

होमरूल लीग आंदोलन: 1916 में स्वराज्य की प्राप्ति के लिए सरकार पर दबाव डालने के उद्देश्य से इस आंदोलन को शुरू किया गया था । जिसमें तिलक के साथ एनी बेसेंट ने प्रमुख रूप से नेतृत्व प्रदान किया। इन्होंने कॉमन व्हील और न्यू इंडिया पत्र द्वारा तथा पूरे भारत में संस्था स्थापित करके आंदोलन को फैलाया और इसे अखिल भारतीय स्वरूप प्रदान किया।

असहयोग आंदोलन : गांधीजी द्वारा राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन का नेतृत्व संभलाने के साथ ही राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन में महिलाओं की भागीदारी बढ़ी । इसका कारण यह मान सकते हैं कि, गांधीजी की सत्य अहिंसा और सत्याग्रह की नीति काफी हद तक महिलाओं के स्वभाव के अनुकूल थी।

असहयोग आंदोलन गांधीजी द्वारा शुरू किया गया पहला अखिल भारतीय स्वरूप का आंदोलन था जो कई कारणों से शुरू किया गया था जैसे रोलेट एक्ट, 1919 का जलियांवाला बाग हत्याकांड (जिसमें 10,000 लोग अपने नेता के गिरफ्तारी के विरोध में शांतिपूर्ण जुलूस में भाग ले रहे थे इसमें पुरुषों के साथ महिलाएं भी सैकड़ों की संख्या में थी जिनके ऊपर गोली चलाई गई ।) तथा खिलाफत आंदोलन आदि था । इस आंदोलन में महिलाओं ने पर्दा प्रथा त्याग कर तिलक फंड में अपना आभूषण दान दिए। सरला देवी , मुथुलक्ष्मी रेड्डी , सुशीला नायर , राजकुमारी अमृत कौर, सुचेता कृपलानी, अरुणा आसफ अली जैसी अनेक महिलाओं ने बड़ी संख्या में आंदोलनों में भाग लिया तथा विदेशी कपड़ों की होली जलाई और शराब दुकानों के आगे धरने दिए। पश्चिम बंगाल में सी.आर दास की पत्नी बसंती देवी तथा इनके अनुसरण पर अनेक उच्च वर्ग की महिलाएं स्वेच्छा से गिरफ्तारी दी।³ तथा आंदोलन को सफल बनाने में

महत्वपूर्ण योगदान दिया। परंतु चौरी चौरा कांड के तत्काल इस आंदोलन को रोकना पड़ा फिर भी यह आंदोलन अंग्रेजों के नींव को हिला दिया।

क्रांतिकारी आन्दोलनों में महिलाओं की भूमिका

1922 में गांधी जी द्वारा असहयोग आंदोलन खत्म करने से राजनीतिक खालीपन में उत्साही युवकों ने क्रांतिकारी गतिविधियों के तरफ अपने आप को मोड़ लिया । जिसमें अंग्रेजों के दिलों में दहशत फैला कर उन्हें भारत से भगाने की योजना के तहत कार्य करने लगे । जिसमें गोली बन्दूक का भी सहारा लिया जाता था । इस प्रकार के क्रांतिकारी विचारों से बंगाल के कई कॉलेज की लड़कियां भी प्रभावित हुई तथा क्रांतिकारी गतिविधियों में हिस्सा लिया जो निम्न थी:

- प्रीतिलता वाडेदर ने पहाड़तली (चटगांव) के रेलवे इंस्टिट्यूट पर छापा मारा परंतु वह शहीद हो गई।
- कल्पना दत्त सूर्यसेन के साथ 1935 में गिरफ्तार हुई, इन्हें आजीवन कारावास की सजा मिली ।
- 1931 में कोमिला कि दो युवतियों सुनीति चौधरी और शांति घोष ने कोमिला के जिला अधिकारी की हत्या कर दी।
- 1932 ने बीना दास ने दीक्षांत समारोह के दौरान उपाधि ग्रहण करते समय गवर्नर पर गोली चलाई।

इस प्रकार इन भारतीय महिलाओं ने भी अंग्रेजों का मनोबल तोड़ कर देश की आजादी में अपना महत्वपूर्ण योगदान दिया।

सविनय अवज्ञा आंदोलन : गांधी जी द्वारा दिए गए जब 11 सूत्री की मांग को अंग्रेजी में ठुकरा दिया तो दांडी मार्च द्वारा नमक कानून तोड़कर इस आंदोलन की शुरुआत की गई। गांधीजी के विशेष आह्वान पर महिलाएं शीघ्र ही इस आंदोलन का अभिन्न अंग बन गईं। महिलाओं ने विदेशी कपड़ों की दुकानों , शराब की दुकानों , अफीम के ठेकों पर धरने दिए तथा तीव्र प्रदर्शन किए। भारतीय महिलाओं के लिए यह आंदोलन एक मील का पत्थर था।⁴ क्योंकि इस बार सरकार ने बर्बरता से आंदोलन को दबाने के प्रयास में महिलाओं को भी नहीं बखशा था ।

धारासणा में कई नेताओं के साथ सरोजिनी नायडू को भी मुट्ठ वाली लाठियों से पीटा गया। युवा नागा महिला गोडिनेल्यू ने अपने नागा साथियों के साथ सविनय अवज्ञा को पूरा समर्थन दिया जिसके लिए कालांतर में जवाहरलाल नेहरू ने इन्हें रानी की उपाधि से सम्मानित किया । इस आंदोलन में लड़कियों ने मिलकर माजेर सेना का गठन करके अंग्रेजों को खूब परेशान किया ।

इस आंदोलन का अंत गांधी इरविन समझौता 1931 के बाद हो गया परंतु वार्ता असफल होने पर दोबारा इसे शुरू किया गया पर पुनः यह शिथिल पड़ गया । फिर भी यदि महिलाओं की भूमिका को देखें तो अब व्यापक रूप से संघर्ष में अपनी हिस्सेदारी प्रकट करने लगी थीं ।

भारत छोड़ो आंदोलन

गांधी जी द्वारा शुरू किया गया आखिरी महत्वपूर्ण आंदोलन था । जिसमें इन्होंने “करो या मरो” का नारा दिया था । यह आंदोलन क्रिप्स प्रस्ताव की असफलता और जापानी आक्रमण के बढ़ते हुए खतरे तथा युद्ध कालीन परिस्थितियों के कारण बढ़ती हुई कीमतों और वस्तुओं के अभाव से उपजे भारतीय जनमानस के असंतोष के कारण शुरू किया गया था जो स्वतःस्फूर्त था । इस आंदोलन में बड़ी संख्या में शिक्षित वर्ग की महिलाएं आकर जुड़ीं। स्कूल कॉलेज छोड़कर छात्राओं ने भी सक्रियता से इसमें हिस्सा लिया। कुछ प्रमुख महिलाओं ने इस आंदोलन को अपना नेतृत्व प्रदान किया जिसमें अरुणा आसफ अली , सुचिता कृपलानी , उषा मेहता , कोकिला सरोजिनी नायडू , राजकुमारी अमृत कौर , बेगम साफिया अब्दुल वाजित आदि।

अरुणा आसफ अली ने ग्वालियर टैंक पर तिरंगा फहराकर भारत छोड़ो आंदोलन की शुरुआत की । इन्होंने भूमिगत होकर नेतृत्व प्रदान किया । इन्हें गैंड ओल्ड लेडी भी कहा जाता है।

सुचिता कृपलानी अपने अन्य साथियों के साथ बम गोला बारूद जैसे सामग्री एकत्र कर गुप्त संगठनों को बांटने का कार्य करती थी ।

उषा मेहता ने अन्य साथियों के साथ मुंबई में भूमिगत होकर गुप्त रेडियो स्टेशन को संचालित किया।⁵ इनका मुख्य कार्य कांग्रेस की सूचनाओं का प्रसारण करना होता था।

कोकिला सरोजिनी नायडू को कैद कर आगा खान पैलेस में रखा गया था

इसी समय आजाद हिंद फौज के सुभाष चंद्र बोस ने *रानी झांसी रेजीमेंट* महिलाओं के लिए स्थापित किया जिन्होंने अंग्रेजों को भारत से निकालने में अपनी पूरी शक्ति झोंक दी।

इस प्रकार भारत छोड़ो आंदोलन तक में महिलाएं और भी जागरूक हो चुकी थी तथा देश की आजादी में प्रभावशाली तरीके से अपना योगदान करना शुरू कर दिया था। तथा अपनी अदम्य साहस शक्ति और त्याग का परिचय देते हुए पुरुषों के साथ बराबरी पर अंग्रेजों से लोहा लिया

कुछ अन्य आंदोलन इन प्रमुख आंदोलनों के अतिरिक्त कुछ स्थानीय स्तर के जनांदोलन भी अंग्रेजों के खिलाफ हुए जिसमें महिलाएं अपनी भागीदारी दिखाई जैसे

- **ताना भगत आंदोलन** जो 1914 के आसपास जात्रा भगत द्वारा अंग्रेजों के सांस्कृतिक हस्तक्षेप के विरोध में शुरू किया गया था जिसमें एकेश्वरवाद की बात कही गई तथा मांस मदिरा और आदिवासी नृत्य में दूर रहने पर बल दिया जाता । इसमें झूम की खेती की ओर लौट जाने का आह्वान भी किया गया था⁶ इस आंदोलन में देव मेनिया भगत नामक महिला ने अपना नेतृत्व प्रदान किया
- **नागा आंदोलन** 1930 में रॉगमेई जादोनांग के फांसी देने के बाद नागा महिला गोडिनेल्यू ने नेतृत्व प्रदान किया । यह आंदोलन अपनी पुरानी संस्कृति बचाने के लिए था । इन्होंने सविनय अवज्ञा आंदोलन से भी अपने आप को जोड़ा और समर्थकों को कष्टकारी करो और कानून की अवज्ञा करने का आदेश दिया इन्हें 1932 में बंदी बना लिया गया था । इन्हें आजादी के उपरांत जेल से रिहा किया गया ।
- **बारदोली सत्याग्रह** 1928 में किसानों द्वारा लगाना अदायगी के लिए सरदार वल्लभभाई पटेल द्वारा चलाया गया आंदोलन था। इसमें महिलाओं ने बड़ी संख्या में भाग लिया था। गांधी ने इस आंदोलन के बारे में कहा था कि “यह स्वराज्य प्राप्ति के लिए संघर्ष नहीं है। लेकिन इस तरह का हर संघर्ष हर कोशिश हमें स्वराज के करीब पहुंचा रही है ।”

इस प्रकार भारत की आजादी के लिए तथा अंग्रेजों की सत्ता उखाड़ फेंकने के लिए भारतीय महिलाओं ने अपना महत्वपूर्ण योगदान दिया ।

राजनीति में महिलाओं की भूमिका

भारत में प्रारंभिक तथा मध्य काल में अनेक क्षत्राणी रही जो राजनीति में अपनी भूमिका निभाई परंतु जब देश गुलाम हुआ तो स्वतंत्रता संघर्ष के दौरान अनेक वर्ग की महिलाएं आगे आई तथा राजनीति में उन्होंने अपना बहुमूल्य योगदान दिया जिसमें सरोजनी नायडू , कस्तूरबा गांधी , विजयलक्ष्मी पंडित , एनी बेसेंट , अरूणा आसफ अली, राजकुमारी अमृत कौर आदि प्रमुख थी ।

- **कोकिला सरोजिनी नायडू** - यह प्रथम भारतीय महिला अध्यक्ष थी जिन्होंने 1925 में कांग्रेस की अध्यक्षता की। 1947 में आयोजित एशियन रिलेशंस कॉन्फ्रेंस की चेयरमैन बनी तथा स्वतंत्रत भारत में उत्तर प्रदेश की पहली महिला राज्यपाल बनी ।
- **कस्तूरबा गांधी** - ये गांधीजी की पत्नी थी जिन्होंने गांधीजी की सभी राजनीतिक गतिविधियों में सक्रियता से भाग लिया ।
- **विजय लक्ष्मी पंडित** - इन्होंने आजादी के आंदोलन में भाग लेने के अतिरिक्त राजनीति में भी अपनी भूमिका निभाई ये कैबिनेट मंत्री बनने वाली प्रथम महिला थी । 1937 में संयुक्त प्रांत की प्रांतीय विधानसभा के लिए निर्वाचित हुई । 1946 से 1950 तक भारतीय संविधान सभा की सदस्य चुनी गई । 1953 में संयुक्त राष्ट्र महासभा के अध्यक्ष बनने वाली यह विश्व की पहली महिला थी।⁷ यह भारत की राज्यपाल तथा राजदूत जैसे कई महत्वपूर्ण पदों पर रही।
- **एनी बेसेंट** - पाश्चात्य भौतिकवाद सभ्यता की कड़ी आलोचना करते हुए प्राचीन हिंदू सभ्यता को श्रेष्ठ सिद्ध किया । धार्मिक शैक्षणिक सामाजिक राजनीतिक क्षेत्र में उन्होंने राष्ट्रीय पुनर्जागरण का कार्य प्रारंभ किया भारत के लिए राजनीतिक स्वतंत्रता आवश्यक है इस उद्देश्य की प्राप्ति के लिए इन्होंने

होमरूल आंदोलन संगठित करके उसका नेतृत्व किया। इन्होंने 1917 में कांग्रेस की अध्यक्षता की ।

- **श्रीमती राधा बाई सुब्बाराव-** यह प्रथम महिला थी जो 1930 में राज्य परिषद तथा 1943 में केंद्रीय लेजिसलेटिव असेंबली के लिए चुनी गई।⁸
- **अरूणा आसफ अली** - आजादी में भूमिका निभाने के अतिरिक्त इन्होंने राजनीति में भी अपना योगदान दिया । 1958 में वह दिल्ली की पहली महिला महापौर निर्वाचित हुई । 1964 में अंतरराष्ट्रीय लेनिन शांति पुरस्कार , 1920 में पद्म विभूषण तथा 1997 में मरणोपरांत देश का सर्वोच्च नागरिक सम्मान भारत रत्न दिया गया ।
- **राजकुमारी अमृत कौर** - स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन में भाग लेने के अतिरिक्त जब देश आजाद हुआ तो भारत की प्रथम स्वास्थ्य मंत्री चुनी गयी । इनका सतत प्रयास गरीब महिलाओं व बच्चों का जीवन स्तर उठाने में रहा । ये अखिल भारतीय महिला सभा की संस्थापक सदस्य थी । इन्होंने बालकल्याण भारतीय परिषद के स्थापना की जिसकी वह अध्यक्ष भी थी। भारतीय रेड क्रॉस सोसायटी के विकास में इनका योगदान सराहनीय है ।
- **बेगम सफिया अब्दुल वजीत** - इन्होंने भारत छोड़ो आंदोलन में सक्रियता से भाग लेने के बाद भारतीय राजनीति में भी अपना योगदान दिया ये उत्तर भारत विधानसभा में दो बार 1952 और 1957 में चुनी गई । उसके बाद ये सदैव सामाजिक कार्य से जुड़ी रही।
- **इंदिरा गांधी-** इन्होंने स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन में भाग लिया तथा युवा लड़के लड़कियों को लेकर वानर सेना बनाई , जो विरोध प्रदर्शन और झंडा जुलूस के साथ चल कर अपना छोटा सा महत्वपूर्ण योगदान दिया । ये आजाद भारत की पहली महिला प्रधानमंत्री बनी इन्होंने कई और भी महत्वपूर्ण पदों पर रहकर देश की राजनीति में भूमिका अदा की जैसे विदेश मंत्री , रक्षा मंत्री

1980-82, गृह मंत्री 1970 से 1973 तक तथा भारत के वित्त मंत्री 1969 से 1970 तक रही ।

- **मुथुलक्ष्मी रेड्डी** - इन्होंने भी आजादी के संघर्ष में भाग लिया तथा 1927 में मद्रास लेजिसलेटिव काउंसिल में देश की पहली महिला विधायक बनने का गौरव इन्हें प्राप्त हुआ।
- **सुचेता कृपलानी** - यह भी स्वतंत्रता सेनानी रही तथा इन्हें भारत की पहली मुख्यमंत्री होने का गौरव प्राप्त है । 1940 में उन्होंने भारतीय राष्ट्रीय कांग्रेस की महिला शाखा अखिल भारतीय महिला कांग्रेस की स्थापना की । 1946 में यह संविधान सभा की सदस्य चुनी गई । 1949 में संयुक्त राष्ट्र महासभा के प्रतिनिधि के रूप में इन्हें चुना गया।
- **लक्ष्मी सहगल**- इन्होंने सुभाष चंद्र बोस की आजाद हिंद फौज में शामिल हो आजादी में अपना योगदान दिया यह अखिल भारतीय जनवादी महिला समिति के संस्थापक सदस्यों में से थी , बाद के वर्षों में ने भारत के राष्ट्रपति के उम्मीदवार के रूप में भी चुना गया था।
- **कादंबिनी गांगुली**- पैसे से यह चिकित्सक की पर राजनीति में भी सक्रिय रही 1889 में कांग्रेस के मद्रास अधिवेशन में इन्होंने भाग लिया तथा भाषण दिया । 1914 में गांधी जी जब कोलकाता आए तो उनके सम्मान में आयोजित सभा की अध्यक्षता भी इन्होंने ही की थी।

इन प्रमुख महिला राजनीतिज्ञों के अतिरिक्त और भी अनेक महिलाओं ने राजनीति में अपना सक्रिय योगदान दिया।

निष्कर्ष-

इस प्रकार देखते हैं कि स्वतंत्रता संग्राम और राजनीति में महिलाओं की भूमिका अहम थी यद्यपि 19वीं सदी में इन्हें इतनी स्वच्छंदता नहीं थी । फिर भी आगे आकर इन्होंने आंदोलनों को सफल बनाने में अपना अहम योगदान दिया। समय के साथ साथ जैसे ही शिक्षा द्वारा इन में जागरूकता आई इन्होंने अपने लेख द्वारा संघर्ष हेतु जनता में जोश भरा जिनमें भगिनी निवेदिता, स्वर्ण कुमारी देवी, सुभद्रा कुमारी चौहान आदि प्रमुख थी।

कुछ महिलाओं ने आंदोलनों का नेतृत्व प्रदान किया जिसमें लक्ष्मीबाई, बेगम हजरत महल, सरोजिनी नायडू ,अरूणा आसफ अली ,अनसूया बिन ,कस्तूरबा गांधी आदि प्रमुख थी ।

कुछ महिलाएं राजनीति में सक्रिय हुईं तथा देश में अपनी भागीदारी निभाई इस समय शिक्षित तथा अशिक्षित सभी वर्ग की महिलाएं भी देश के प्रमुख आंदोलनों का हिस्सा बनीं तथा अपने त्याग और बलिदान द्वारा 1947 की आजादी की बुनियाद रखी।

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‘महिला शिक्षा में सकारात्मक परिवर्तन – पूर्णियाँ प्रमंडल के संदर्भ में ’

शोधार्थी का नाम –
पाकीजा तवकीर शीबा
इतिहास विभाग
पूर्णियाँ विश्वविद्यालय, पूर्णियाँ
बिहार ।

सार

भारत में महिला शिक्षा प्रारंभ से ही एक विचारणीय विषय रहा है। महिला शिक्षा समग्र और लंबे विकास का सुनिश्चित करती है तथा यह विकास का संकेतक होती है। समाज में स्थिति को बदलने के लिए महिलाओं की शिक्षा सबसे शक्तिशाली साधन है। मेरा यह लेख पूर्णियाँ प्रमंडल जो कि बिहार राज्य का एक प्रमंडल है, की महिलाओं की शिक्षा में सकारात्मक परिवर्तन को दर्शाता है। इसमें 1991–2021 तक इस क्षेत्र की महिलाओं की शिक्षा में जो क्रांतिकारी परिवर्तन हुए उसे आँकड़ों द्वारा प्रदर्शित किया गया है। महिला शिक्षा में सरकार तथा नागरिक दोनों की प्रमुख भूमिका होती है। आधुनिक काल में महिला शिक्षा में सकारात्मक परिवर्तन लाने के लिए सरकार द्वारा भी बहुत से कदम उठए जा रहे हैं जो कि महिला शिक्षा को बढ़ावा दे रहा है तथा महिलाओं को सारी बाधाओं को तोड़ कर आगे बढ़ने के लिए प्रेरित कर रहा है। इस लेख में इन योजनाओं का भी उल्लेख किया गया है। अंत में पूर्णियाँ प्रमंडल महिला शिक्षा में सकारात्मक परिवर्तन को भारतीय महिलाओं के शिक्षा के ओर बढ़ते कदम के साथ दर्शाते हुए निष्कर्ष के साथ लेख को समाप्त किया जाता है।

परिचय

पूर्णियाँ प्रमंडल बिहार राज्य का एक प्रमंडल है जिसकी स्थापना—1990 में हुई थी, इसके तहत चार जिले पूर्णियाँ, कटिहार, अररिया तथा किशनगंज आते हैं। इस क्षेत्र को सीमांचल के नाम से भी जाना जाता है। यह सांस्कृतिक मिथिला क्षेत्र के कोसी—सीमांचल क्षेत्र का एक हिस्सा है। इस प्रमंडल का मुख्यालय पूर्णियाँ जिला है। 2011 की जनगणना के अनुसार इस प्रमंडल की जनसंख्या—10,838,525 थी।

साक्षरता की दृष्टि से यह प्रमंडल बिहार में सबसे पिछड़ा है परंतु पिछले कुछ दशकों में इस प्रमंडल में महिला साक्षरता बढ़ी है। यहाँ की महिलाएँ शिक्षा

के प्रति जागरूक हो रही है तथा उनकी शिक्षा में सकारात्मक परिवर्तन देखा जा रहा है।

स्वामी विवेकानन्द ने कहा था – “बिना महिला की स्थिति में सुधार के दुनिया के कल्याण के बारे में सोचना असंभव है। एक पंखी के लिए एक पंख से उड़ना असंभव है।” बिना महिला शिक्षा के किसी भी समाज का विकास नहीं हो सकता। देश में बदलाव के लिए महिलाओं का शिक्षित होना आवश्यक है। इस प्रमंडल की महिलाओं के शिक्षित होने से यह प्रमंडल भी अब धीरे-धीरे विकास कर रहा है तथा देश में अपना योगदान कर रहा है। 2011 की जनगणना के अनुसार बिहार में महिला साक्षरता दर 53.33% है। महिला शिक्षा में हो रहे सकारात्मक परिवर्तन को हम इन कुछ आँकड़ों से समझ सकते हैं :-

जनगणना वर्ष	जिला	कुल साक्षरता दर	महिला साक्षरता दर
1991	पूर्णियाँ	28.52	16.8
	कटिहार	28.7	16.8
	अररिया	26.19	14.01
	किशनगंज	22.22	10.38
2001	पूर्णियाँ	35.51	23.72
	कटिहार	35.29	24.03
	अररिया	34.94	22.14
	किशनगंज	31.02	18.49
2011	पूर्णियाँ	52.49	43.19
	कटिहार	53.56	45.37
	अररिया	55.10	45.18
	किशनगंज	57.04	47.98

इन आँकड़ों का अगर हम अध्ययन करे तो हमें पता चलेगा कि इन जिलों में महिला साक्षरता दर लगातार बढ़ रही है। हालाँकि 2011 कि जनगणना के अनुसार महिला साक्षरता के मामले में पूर्णियाँ जिला बिहार में अंतिम स्थान पर है तथा अन्य जिले भी महिला साक्षरता में पिछड़े स्थान पर ही है लेकिन फिर भी अगर इन जिलों में पिछले जनगणना वर्षों से तुलना की जाए तो हर जनगणना वर्ष में महिला साक्षरता में बढ़ोत्तरी मिलेगी जो कहीं ना कहीं महिला शिक्षा में सकारात्मक परिवर्तन को दर्शाता है।

बिहार सरकार की जेंडर रिपोर्ट कार्ड-2019 के अनुसार सरकारी स्कूलों में कक्षा 1-12 में पंजीकृत होने वाली छात्राओं की जिलावार स्थिति वाले सुचकांक में पूर्णियाँ प्रमंडल के इन चारों जिलों को "Good Performing Districts" की सूची में रखा गया है। इन जिलों में 2016-17 में सेकेन्ड्री लेवल पर ड्रॉप आउट की दर में भी कमी आई है।

बाल विवाह, दहेज प्रथा तथा गरीबी ऐसी समस्याएँ हैं जो महिला शिक्षा में बाधा उत्पन्न करती हैं। पूर्णियाँ प्रमंडल एक पिछड़ा हुआ क्षेत्र है तथा यहाँ बाल विवाह, दहेज प्रथा तथा गरीबी बहुत ही गंभीर समस्या है। यहाँ लोग कम उम्र में ही लड़कियों की शादी करा देते हैं जिससे वे आगे की पढ़ाई नहीं कर पाती तथा सामाजिक बंधन में बँध कर रह जाती हैं। गरीबी के कारण भी यहाँ लड़कियों को पढ़ाई बीच में ही छोड़ने पड़ती है तथा वे चाह कर भी आगे नहीं पढ़ पाती हैं। परंतु पिछले कुछ दशकों से सरकार द्वारा तथा गैर सरकारी संस्थानों द्वारा किये जा रहे प्रयासों के फलस्वरूप यहाँ महिला शिक्षा में धीरे-धीरे सकारात्मक परिवर्तन दिख रहे हैं तथा अब महिलाएँ यहाँ पहले से ज्यादा जागरूक होने लगी हैं तथा अब वे अपने अधिकार को जानती हैं। बहुत सारे कैम्पेनो के द्वारा भी यहाँ के समाज के लोगो को महिला शिक्षा के महत्त्व को समझाया जा रहा है जो कि इस प्रमंडल की महिलाओं के लिए एक मील का पत्थर साबित हो रहा है।

महिला शिक्षा के लिए सरकार द्वारा उठाए गए कदम :-

1. मुख्यमंत्री कन्या उत्थान योजना – बिहार सरकार द्वारा अगस्त 2018 में इसे लॉच किया गया था। योजना का लक्ष्य स्कूली तथा विश्वविद्यालय स्तर की शिक्षा को पुरा करने के लिए छात्राओं को प्रोत्साहित करना तथा बाल विवाह को रोकना है।

यह एक सशर्त धन ट्रांसफर योजना है इसके तहत लड़कियों को जन्म से लेकर ग्रेजुएशन पुरा करने तक किशतों में कुल 54,100 रूपया प्रदान किया जाता है।

2. मुख्यमंत्री बालक-बालिका साईकिल योजना – इस योजना की शुरुआत बिहार सरकार द्वारा 2006 में की गई थी। इसके तहत कक्षा-9 के छात्र-छात्राओं को साईकिल खरीदने के लिए 2500 रूपया दिये जाते थे जिससे कि वे आसानी से स्कूल जा सकें। इस योजना के परिणामस्वरूप इसके आरम्भ होने के पहले वर्ष में ही स्कूलों में लड़कियों के दाखिले में 30% की वृद्धि हुई।

3. बेटी बचाओं बेटी पढ़ाओं योजना – भारत सरकार द्वारा यह योजना 22 जनवरी 2015 को हरियाणा के पानीपत से प्रारंभ की गई। यह योजना बेटियों के सुरक्षा तथा शिक्षा से संबंधित है। इस योजना का मुख्य उद्देश्य लैंगिक पक्षपात को रोकना, बेटियों की सुरक्षा तथा उनकी शिक्षा है।

4. बाल विवाह एवं दहेज मुक्त हमारा बिहार कैम्पेन :- यह कैम्पेन 2 अक्टूबर 2017 को पुरे बिहार राज्य में प्रारंभ किया गया। इसके तहत हर जिले में टास्क फोर्स गठित किया गया।

5. सरकारी नौकरी में महिला आरक्षण-2016 में बिहार सरकार द्वारा सरकारी नौकरियों में महिलाओं को 35% आरक्षण का प्रावधान किया गया।

6. कुशल युवा प्रोग्राम – 2016 में बिहार सरकार द्वारा प्रारंभ किया गया। इसके तहत छात्र-छात्राओं को विभिन्न स्किलों की ट्रेनिंग दी गई।

7. समग्र शिक्षा योजना – बिहार सरकार द्वारा 2018–19 में इसे प्रारंभ किया गया। इसके तहत सभी कस्तुरबा गाँधी बालिका विद्यालय को सिनियर सेकेण्ड्री लेवल में अपग्रेड किया जाना है।
8. अक्षर आँचल योजना :- बिहार सरकार की इस योजना का उद्देश्य 8 लाख महादलित एवं अत्यंत पिछड़ा वर्ग तथा 4 लाख अल्पसंख्यक महिला जिनकी आय सीमा 15–35 वर्ष है, को शिक्षा की धारा से जोड़ना है।

निष्कर्ष

पिछले कुछ दशकों में पूर्णियाँ प्रमंडल में महिला शिक्षा में सकारात्मक परिवर्तन तो आए है परंतु अभी भी महिला शिक्षा को पूर्ण करने के लिए बहुत से कार्य बाकी है। इसके लिए ना केवल सरकार बल्कि हम नागरिकों का भी यह कर्तव्य बनता है कि इस दिशा में हम कार्य करें तथा महिला शिक्षा के प्रति लोगों में जागरूकता फैलाए। अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति बराक ओबामा ने कहा था – “यदि हम किसी अन्य व्यक्ति या किसी अन्य समय की प्रतीक्षा करते है तो बदलाव नहीं आएगा। जिस बदलाव को हम चाहते है वह बदलाव हम है।” बदलाव हमें स्वयं करना पड़ेगा। यह बदलाव महिला शिक्षा के लिए भी महत्वपूर्ण है क्योंकि शिक्षित महिला एक मजबूत समाज एवं संस्कृति की नींव होती है।

गाँधी जी ने कहा था – “एक पुरुष शिक्षित होता है तो एक व्यक्ति शिक्षित होता है परंतु जब एक महिला शिक्षित होती है तो एक समाज शिक्षित होती है।” महिला शिक्षा का महत्व हम गाँधी जी की उपर्युक्त कहीं बातों से जान सकते है। गाँधी जी का मानना था कि महिलाएँ हर स्तर पर भारत के बदलाव के लिए बहुत कुछ कर सकती है और आज आधुनिक भारत की महिलाएँ हर क्षेत्र में आगे बढ़ रही है। किसी भी समाज का विकास तभी संभव है जब वहाँ की महिलाएँ शिक्षित हो। आज पूर्णियाँ प्रमंडल की महिलाएँ भी हर

क्षेत्र में धीरे-धीरे अपनी पहचान बना रही है। अब यहाँ भी बाल विवाह जैसी कुप्रथाए समाप्त हो रही है जो कि महिला शिक्षा के लिए अभिशाप है।

इन सबके बावजूद आज भी हमारे समाज में महिलाओं को समानता का वो दर्जा प्राप्त नहीं है जिनकी वो हकदार है। अब यह हम सब की जिम्मेदारी है कि हम एक ऐसे वातावरण का निर्माण करें जहाँ उन्हें समानता का दर्जा प्राप्त हो। हम सब को मिल कर समाज की सोच को बदलना है। इसके लिए हमें एक लम्बा रास्ता तय करना है। परंतु एक दिन यह जरूर होगा। पूर्णियाँ प्रमंडल में महिला शिक्षा में सकारात्मक परिवर्तन देश के अन्य प्रमंडलों के लिए भी एक उदाहरण है।

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प्राचीन भारत में राजनीति के क्षेत्र में नारियों का योगदान

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प्रस्तुत प्रपत्र में प्राचीन भारत में ही शासनतन्त्र में महिलाओं की भागीदारी को रेखांकित करने का प्रयास किया गया है, प्रसंग वश मध्यकालीन महिलाओं के नाम प्रसंगत: दे दिए गए हैं। केवल प्राचीन काल में ही भारत में नारियों की शासनतन्त्र में भागीदारी सम्बन्धी आंकड़ों को एकत्र करना इस प्रपत्र का उद्देश्य है।

Key words - नानाघाट अभिलेख, 'महिला शासन तन्त्र', 'परम भट्टारिका', 'पादशाह बेगम', 'युद्ध में भैरवी', रुद्राम्बा

राजशास्त्रकारों में कौटिल्य का मत है कि राजा के निधन होने अथवा राजत्याग करने पर राजकुमार, राजकुमार का पुत्र, राजपुत्री का पुत्र और इसके भी अभाव में राजकन्या अथवा गर्भिणी राजमहिषी को राजपद पर नियुक्त करना विधिविहित होगा।⁽¹⁾ सोमदेव ने सात प्रकार के राज्याधिकारियों में नारी को स्थान नहीं दिया जबकि कौटिल्य ने नारी को भी राज्याधिकारियों में स्थान दिया और उत्तराधिकारी की सीमा का विस्तार राजवंश की स्त्रियों तक किया। महाभारत का भी मत है कि पुत्र के अभाव में पुत्री राज्याधिकारिणी हो सकती हैं⁽²⁾ तथापि बहुमत में शास्त्रकारों ने शासनाधिकार के मामलों में नारियों को स्वभावतः योग्य शासक के पद से वंचित ही रखा है। यद्यपि ऋग्वेदिक जनसभा 'विदथ' में स्त्रियों को बोलने की स्वतन्त्रता थी⁽³⁾ इस काल में विभिन्न रत्नियों में विभिन्न प्रकार की पत्नियों का जैसे महिषी (पटरानी) 'परिवृक्ति' (परित्यक्ता पत्नी), 'वावाता' (राजा की प्रिय पत्नी) का सम्मिलन स्त्रियों की गुरुता का सूचक है⁽⁴⁾ लेकिन उनके प्रशासनिक कार्यों में हस्तक्षेप या भूमिका स्पष्ट नहीं है।

प्राचीन इतिहास के पन्नों में उत्तर भारत में महिला शासिका के उदाहरण स्पष्टतः ज्ञात नहीं होते हैं। कन्नौज में राज्यश्री और वाकाटक वंश में प्रभावतीगुप्ता के प्रतिशासन के उल्लेख मिलते हैं। कश्मीर के इतिहास में भी कुछ महिला शासकों के उदाहरण ज्ञात होते हैं लेकिन दक्षिण भारत में महिला शासकों के कई उदाहरण प्राप्त हैं। राजपरिवारों की महिलाओं ने महत्वपूर्ण प्रशासकीय पद प्राप्त किए, अपने अधिकारों का प्रयोग करते हुए प्रभूत दान दिया तथा निर्माण कार्य आदि सम्पन्न कराए।

प्राचीन भारत में राजनीतिक प्रक्रिया में महिलाओं की भागीदारी के तीन रूप दिखाई देते हैं—

- 1 संरक्षिका के रूप में शासन संचालन जैसे सातवाहन काल में नागनिका और वाकाटक युग में प्रभावतीगुप्ता का उदाहरण
- 2 वास्तविक शासिका के रूप में शासन संचालन जैसे काकतीय रुद्राम्बा, सुगन्धा, का उदाहरण
- 3 महत्वपूर्ण प्रशासनिक पदों पर आसीन होकर क्षेत्र विशेष का शासन संचालन
- 4 प्रशासनिक कार्यों में राजपरिवार की नारियों के ही उदाहरण ज्यादा हैं जबकि सामान्य वर्ग में नारी दशा और दिशा साहित्य में मिलने वाली परम्पराओं एवं रूढ़ियों से अलग नहीं थी, बहुविवाह, क्रयविक्रय, अबला, भोग्या, नारी पराधीनता जैसी प्रथाएँ सामान्य वर्ग की चेतना में व्याप्त थी।

प्राचीन भारत में महिला राजनीतिज्ञों की परम्परा का प्रारम्भ नागनिका से मिलता है। सातवाहन काल में शातकर्णिकी की मृत्यु के उपरान्त उसके दो अल्पवयस्क पुत्रों—शक्ति श्री और वेदि श्री— की संरक्षिका के रूप में महारानी नागनिका ने शासन किया इसी अवधि में उसने नानाघाट अभिलेख उत्कीर्ण करवाया और अश्वमेध यज्ञ का भी सम्पादन किया⁽⁵⁾। अभिलेख में उसके द्वारा विविध यज्ञों के अवसर पर दिये गए दक्षिणा की सूची प्रस्तुत की गई है।⁽⁶⁾

सातवाहन कालीन एक अभिलेख में 'महासेनापतिनी' विरुद का उल्लेख मिलता है। लेख के अनुसार " महासेनापति भवगोप की भार्या महासेनापतिणी वसु ने यति बोपकि द्वारा उत्खनित कराए गए लयण को पूर्ण कराया था तथा वास के निमित्त चारों दिशाओं के भिक्षु संघ को प्रदान किया था। ("महासेनापतिस भवगोपस भरिजाय महासेनापतिणिय वासुयं लेण....."⁽⁷⁾) अभिलेख में महासेनापति की पत्नी ने अपने को महासेनापतिनि कहा है सम्भव है कि सातवाहन काल में राज्य के उच्च पदाधिकारियों की पत्नियों को उनके पद विरुद या उपाधि से अभिहित किए जाने की परम्परा रही हो, पर कोई दूसरा उदाहरण इसके समर्थन में प्राप्त नहीं है अथवा यह भी अनुमान लगाया जा सकता है कि वसु स्वयं किसी नारी सेना की प्रधान रही हो और अपने इस अधिकार में महासेनापतिनि कही जाती हो, पर अब तक किसी भी सूत्र से प्राचीन भारत में नारी सेना अज्ञात है।

सातवाहनकालीन अनेक लेखों में जो नासिक, कार्ले, अमरावती से मिले हैं, में नारियों के द्वारा दिए गए दानों की चर्चा है, पर ये नारियाँ राजपरिवार की रही हो जरूरी नहीं। ये लेख सामान्य नारी की समाज में स्थिति को दर्शाते हैं।

यदा कदा हिन्द्यवन नारियों ने भी तत्कालीन राजनीति में भूमिका निभाई। डेमेट्रियस कुल के शासक अगाथोक्लीज के परिवार से सम्बन्धित अगाथोक्लीया ने 130 ई पू में मेनान्डर की मृत्यु के बाद वर्षों तक अपने पुत्र स्ट्रेटो प्रथम के साथ संयुक्त शासन किया और सिक्कों को भी जारी किया। इसने अधिकांशतः चांदी के सिक्के चलाए जो तौल में लगभग 36 ग्रेन के थे, इन सिक्कों के अग्रभाग पर दाहिनी ओर मुकुटमय रानी का सिर तथा ग्रीक लेख 'बैसिलिसेस थियोट्रोपो अगथोक्लेअस' तथा पृष्ठ भाग पर स्ट्रेटो की आकृति मुकुट धारण किए तथा खरोष्ठी लेख 'महरजस त्रतरस ध्रमिकस स्रतस' मुद्रित है।

वाकाटक वंश— वाकाटक वंश में शासक की महारानियों या राजकुमारियों का उल्लेख प्रशासन के सिलसिले में नहीं हुआ है। चालुक्यों के काल में ऐसे उल्लेख अवश्य मिलते हैं। वाकाटक काल में राजा की मृत्यु के पश्चात युवराज के अवयस्क होने की स्थिति में प्रशासन का निरीक्षण और निर्देशन राजमाताएँ अवश्य करती थीं। रुद्रसेन द्वितीय की अग्रमहिषी प्रभावती गुप्ता ने 20 वर्षों तक प्रबल झंझावातों में राज्य की नौका सफलतापूर्वक खेया। प्रभावतीगुप्ता चन्द्रगुप्त द्वितीय की पुत्री थीं (" वाकाटकानाम् महाराज श्रीरुद्रसेनस्य अग्र महिषी युवराज श्री दिवाकरसेनस्य जननी श्री प्रभावतीगुप्ता ...")⁽⁶⁾ चौथी पाँचवी शताब्दी ई. में अपने अल्पवयस्क पुत्र की अभिभाविका के रूप में उसने दृढ़ता से शासन की बागडोर सम्हाली। प्रभावती गुप्ता ने अपनी वैधव्यावस्था में अपने प्रतापी पिता चन्द्रगुप्त का ही एकमात्र आश्रय लिया था। चन्द्रगुप्त ने कुशल शासन की विशेष व्यवस्थाएँ की, पाटलिपुत्र से कितने ही सैनिक, नागरिक, अधिकारी वाकाटक राजधानी भेजे गए थे। पूना के ताम्रपट्ट राजमाता के शासन के 13वें वर्ष जारी हुए थे, उस समय उनका पुत्र दिवाकरसेन युवराज था। उसके बाद उसकी मृत्यु हो गई थी। रिथपुर ताम्रपट्ट वृद्ध राजमाता की रामगिरि मंदिर की यात्रा के अवसर पर जारी हुआ था।

कश्मीर के इतिहास

कश्मीर के इतिहास में महिला शासकों के कई उदाहरण प्राप्त हैं। उत्पल वंश के शासक गोपाल वर्मन के पश्चात उसकी माता सुगन्धा के शासिका बनने के उल्लेख मिलते हैं।⁽⁹⁾ राजनीतिक अव्यवस्था के इस दौर में सैनिक तन्त्र के प्रबल होते ही दो वर्ष उपरान्त सुगन्धा को अपदस्थ कर दिया गया था। सुगन्धा ने अपने सैन्य अनुयायियों की सहायता से राजगद्दी पर अधिकार बनाये रखने का प्रयास किया परन्तु इस प्रयास में उसे 914 ई में अपने प्राण गवाने पड़े।⁽¹⁰⁾ कश्मीर में 948 ई के आसपास लोहार वंश के क्षेमगुप्त की रानी "दिदा" ने अपने लोहार वंश के सम्बन्धियों के साथ मिलकर एक "महिला शासन तन्त्र" की स्थापना की। उसका नाम सिक्कों पर भी अभिलिखित किया गया। 958ई में क्षेमगुप्त की मृत्यु के बाद दिदा ने कश्मीर पर 50 वर्ष तक शासन किया। प्रारम्भ में वह अपने अवयस्क पुत्र अभिमन्यु की संरक्षिका के रूप में शासन करती रही (राजतरंगिणी, षष्ठ सर्ग) कश्मीर और भारतीय इतिहास में दिदा की गणना प्रसिद्ध शासकों में की जाती है। 1028 ई में कश्मीर के राजसिंहासन पर राजा अनन्त के सिंहासनारूढ़ होने पर उसकी रानी सूर्यमती ने प्रशासन और वित्तीय सुधार हेतु आवश्यक कदम उठाते हुये प्रशासकीय दायित्व को बिना किसी राजपद के वहन किया।⁽¹¹⁾

उड़ीसा – उड़ीसा के इतिहास में कर या भौम वंश की त्रिभुवनमहादेवी के तिथि 110 के घेनकनल अभिलेख में कहा गया है कि उत्तम केसरी और गयाड जैसे प्रसिद्ध महाराजाओं की मृत्यु के बाद कर वंश अपनी प्राचीन प्रतिष्ठा मात्र पर जी रहा था, राज्य की वही अवस्था हो गई थी जो प्रकाशमान ताराओं से हीन आकाश की या दुखी हृदय स्त्री की हो जाती है, इस स्थिति में ही दक्षिण के प्रसिद्ध नागवंशी सरदार राजमल्ल की पुत्री त्रिभुवनमहादेवी ने गददी धारण की और महासामन्त चक्र ने उनसे कर राज्य की लक्ष्मी की रक्षा की प्रार्थना की थी।⁽¹²⁾ तिथि 141 के तलचेर अभिलेख में यह कहा गया है कि अपने पुत्र कुसुमहार की मृत्यु के बाद त्रिभुवनमहादेवी ने शासनसूत्र स्वयं सम्हाला था। राजगद्दी धारण करने के लिए उसका पौत्र लोणमार अभी अल्पवयु था। त्रिभुवन महादेवी ने कदाचित अपने पिता राजमल्ल की सहायता से वंश प्रतिष्ठा पुनर्स्थापित की थी। उसकी एक ज्ञात तिथि 110 या 120 अर्थात् 716 या 726 ई हैं। कर शासन के अन्तिम दिनों में कई रानियाँ ही बारी बारी से गद्दी पर बैठीं। गौरीमहादेवी (पंचम शुभाकर की रानी), उसकी पुत्री दण्डी महादेवी, उसकी विमाता बकुलामहादेवी,⁽¹³⁾ और लवण कार की रानी धर्ममहादेवी ने कृमशः गद्दी धारण की।⁽¹⁴⁾ ये शासिकाएँ भी 'परम भट्टारिका' और 'महाराजाधिराज परमेश्वरी' जैसी विरुद्ध धारण करती रही। (दण्डी महादेवी की उपाधि उसके एक अभिलेख में— "परम माहेश्वरी मातापितृपादानुध्यात परम भट्टारिका महाराजाधिराज परमेश्वरी श्रीमद् दण्डी महादेवी")⁽¹⁵⁾ दण्डी महादेवी की अन्तिम ज्ञात तिथि 793 ई है।

दक्षिण भारत के अभिलेखों में राजपरिवारों के महिलाओं के राजनीतिक प्रभावों को देखा जा सकता है। मेगस्थनीज लिखता है कि पाण्ड्य देश में स्त्रियाँ शासन करती थीं। पाण्ड्य नाम हेराक्लीज की पुत्री पण्डाइया या पण्डे या पण्ड्या के नाम पर पड़ा था, वह यहीं उत्पन्न हुई थी, तथा उसके पिता ने यहाँ का राज्य उसे दे दिया था, उसे उसके पिता से 500 हाथी, 4000 अश्वारोही तथा 1300 पदाति प्राप्त हुए थे। प्लिनी भी पाण्ड्य देश में स्त्रियों के शासन की बात करता है। रेवकनिम्मडि जो अमोघवर्ष की पुत्री तथा ऐरंगंग की महारानी थी, ने एडेटोर 2000 पर 850 ई में शासन किया।

बादामी के चालुक्य नरेश—पुलकेशिन 1, कीर्तिवर्मन 1, मंगलेश, पुलकेशिन 2, चन्द्रादित्य, विक्रमादित्य 1, विनयादित्य, विजयादित्य, विक्रमादित्य 2, कीर्तिवर्मन 2 आदि राजाओं के विवरण मिलते हैं।

इनके शासनकाल में सार्वजनिक कार्यों के परिचालन में रानियों का कम से कम कुछ का तो अवश्य ही हाथ होता था। वे विदुषी और दानशील होती थीं। स्कन्धाचारों में राजा के साथ उनकी उपस्थिति महत्वपूर्ण थी। प्रान्तीय शासिका के रूप उनकी भूमिका को नकारा नहीं जा सकता।

विक्रमादित्य प्रथम के बड़े भाई चन्द्रादित्य की रानी विजय भट्टारिका ने अपने नाम से दो ताम्रपत्राभिलेख जारी किए थे। वह एक उच्च कोटि की कवियित्री भी थी।⁽¹⁶⁾ पी. वी. काणे के अनुसार विजय भट्टारिका ही संस्कृत की प्रसिद्ध कवियित्री विजयांका या विज्जिका थी जो अपने को 'कर्णाटराजप्रिया' कहती है। विजय भट्टारिका का उदाहरण अनुपम है। उन्होंने सातवीं शताब्दी में बादामी के चालुक्य राजा विक्रमादित्य प्रथम के अधीन प्रान्तीय राज्यपाल के रूप में कार्य किया था।⁽¹⁷⁾

विजयादित्य की छोटी बहन कुंकुम देवी सन 705 ई में कुंडुडि नगर के स्कन्धावार में उसके साथ थी। उसके कहने पर राजा ने एक विद्वान ब्राह्मण को एक गाँव दान दिया था।⁽¹⁸⁾ सन 1077 ई के लेख से विदित होता है कि उसने जैनों की एक 'बसदि' बसाई थी⁽¹⁹⁾— विजयादित्य की माता विनयवती ने ब्रह्मा, विष्णु, महेश्वर की प्रतिमाएँ स्थापित कराई थीं⁽²⁰⁾—

गणिकाएँ अपने रूप और लावण्य से भारत के इतिहास में राजदरबारों को प्रभावित करती रही है। विजयादित्य ने पट्टदकल के विशाल शिव मंदिर का निर्माण कराया था। उसके नाम पर ही इस मंदिर का नाम विजयेश्वर पड़ा था अब इसे संगमेश्वर कहते हैं। इस मंदिर के एक स्तम्भ पर कीर्तिवर्मन द्वितीय का लेख है।⁽²¹⁾ उसका एक लेख महाकूट से भी मिला है महाकूट लेख में उसकी चहेती गणिका रक्षिता वीणापोटिगल का उल्लेख है, उसने हिरण्यगर्भ दान दिया था और देवता को अमूल्य वस्तुएँ दान दी थी। लेख में रक्षितावीणापोतिगल को विजयादित्य की 'वल्लभा गणिका' कहा गया है।

विक्रमादित्य द्वितीय 733-34 ई में बादामी का राजा बना। उसकी दो रानियाँ — हैहय अर्थात् कलचुरि वंश की राजकुमारियाँ और सगी बहने थीं। इन दोनों ने अनेक मंदिर बनवाए, मंदिरों के नाम अपने पर रखे और पुण्य के अन्य कार्य किए। इनमें लोकमहादेवी बड़ी थी। उन्होने ने लोकेश्वर के विशाल मंदिर का निर्माण कराया। अब यह विरूपाक्ष मंदिर के नाम से जाना जाता है। लोकमहादेवी ने मंदिर के नाम नेरंगल्ल 50 के जिले की आमदनी कर दी थी।⁽²²⁾ छोटी रानी का नाम त्रैलोक्यमहादेवी था। कीर्तिवर्मन इनका पुत्र था। त्रैलोक्यमहादेवी ने भी पाषाण मंदिर बनवाया था, जिसका नाम त्रैलोक्येश्वर था। यह विजयेश्वर मंदिर के उत्तर में स्थित था। अब इसके अवशेष नहीं मिलते हैं।

कीर्तिवर्मन द्वितीय के पूना जिले में केंदूर से प्राप्त शक संवत् 672 के ताम्रपत्रलेख में जिस दान का उल्लेख है, वह राजा ने अपनी महारानी 'महादेवी' की प्रार्थना पर दिया था—“श्रीमहादेवीविज्ञापनया दत्त”। रक्तपुर जिसकी पहचान धारवाड़ जिले में लक्ष्मणेश्वर से की जाती है, के स्कन्धावार में वह राजा के साथ थी—“विजयस्कन्धावारे”⁽²³⁾—

कल्याणी के पश्चिमी चालुक्यों में राजकुमारियाँ प्रदेशों की प्रशासिका बनी और छोटे छोटे प्रशासकीय दायित्व सम्हाला। कल्याणी के चालुक्यों के काल में सामाजिक स्थिति सार्वजनिक जीवन में नारियों के भाग लेने के लिए अनुकूल थी। कम से कम समाज के उच्च वर्गों में तो यही स्थिति थी। ये सभी चालुक्य महारानियों ने प्रान्तीय राज्यपाल या अधिकारी के रूप में क्षेत्र विशेष में शासन किया और अपने अधिकारों का प्रयोग करते हुए दान आदि भी दिए। वस्तुतः उच्च प्रशासनिक पद प्राप्त करने वाली नारियों की संख्या चालुक्य वंश में ही इतिहास में अधिक प्राप्य है। चालुक्य काल में राजाओं की पत्नियों को ताम्रपत्र प्रचलित करवाते और दान देते हुए पाते हैं। अपने पतियों के साथ वे स्कन्धावार में भी जाती।

इनमें अक्का देवी का स्थान सबसे उल्लेखनीय है। यह चालुक्य विक्रमादित्य पंचम की बहन थी। यह महिला युद्धों में भाग लेती थी और सेना का संचालन भी करती थी। 1010 ई के लेख से पता चलता है कि अक्का देवी 1010 ई में किन्सुकद 70 पर शासन कर रही थी। इसे लक्ष्मी का अवतार, अनेक दानों का वितरण करने वाली, बुद्धिमती, सत्य और सच्चरित्रता की देवी कहा गया है⁽²⁴⁾, उसने अनेक पुण्य अवसरों पर ब्राह्मणों को दान दिया था। अभिलेखों इन्हें 'युद्ध में भैरवी' कहा गया है।⁽²⁵⁾

यदि यह उपाधि कोरी कल्पना नहीं है तो कहा जा सकता है कि इस अभिलेख की तिथि — शाके 944 अर्थात् 1022 ई से पूर्व उसने अनेक युद्धों में भाग लिया होगा⁽²⁶⁾— इसके करीब 15 वर्षों पश्चात् अक्कादेवी वनवासी 12000 पर मयूर वर्मदेव के साथ शासन करती ज्ञात होती है।⁽²⁷⁾

अक्कादेवी और मयूरवर्मदेव पतिपत्नी ज्ञात होते हैं⁽²⁸⁾— कल्याणी के चालुक्य राजा जयसिंह द्वितीय की दो रानियों की जानकारी मिलती है—1. सुगलदेवी जिसे सन 1029 ई के एक लेख में पाशुपताचार्य ब्रह्मर्षि पंडित को दान दिए जाने का उल्लेख है। 2. देवल देवी जिसने अभिलेख के अनुसार अपनी माता नोलंब महादेवी की भस्म गंगा में प्रवाहित कराई थी और भाई उदयादित्य की उपस्थिति में उन ब्राह्मणों को दान दिया था जो गंगा की यात्रा कर वापस आए थे⁽²⁹⁾

इसी प्रकार कल्याणी के चालुक्य राजा विक्रमादित्य षष्ठ ने 1077 ई से 1126 ई तक राज्य किया। अभिलेखों में इसकी कई रानियों के उल्लेख मिलते हैं जिन्होंने प्रान्त या क्षेत्र का शासन सम्हाला। बिल्हण ने उसकी दो रानियों का उल्लेख किया है। विक्रमादित्य षष्ठ के शासन के दूसरे वर्ष में ही केतल देवी द्वारा बीजापुर में कुंबित्तिके के चण्डेश्वर मंदिर में दान देने का उल्लेख है।⁽³⁰⁾ फिर वह 16वें वर्ष में बेल्लारी जिले में सिरुपे, कोलनारु तथा एक अन्य गाँव की शासिका के रूप में मिलती है⁽³¹⁾। केतल देवी बड़ी विदुषी एवं संगीत में निपुण थी। विक्रमादित्य षष्ठ की एक महारानी लक्ष्मी महादेवी या लक्ष्मादेवी पाँचवें वर्ष (1081 ई.) में द्रोणपुर (धारवाड़ जिले में द्रोणि) की शासिका थी⁽³²⁾। 1084 ई के सूडि के एक अभिलेख में उसका उल्लेख राजा की प्रिय रानी के रूप में तथा राजा के साथ कल्याणपुर में बराबरी के दर्जे से शासन करने का उल्लेख आया है⁽³³⁾। 1096 ई. के आसपास वह धर्मपुर और 18 अग्रहारों का शासन करती थी⁽³⁴⁾। इसके 7 साल बाद जब सम्राट ने चन्द्रदेवी के तट पर अनेक दान दिया तो वह भी वहाँ उपस्थित थी। 1110-11 ई में वह निट्टिसिंग की शासिका थी।⁽³⁵⁾ लक्ष्मादेवी काव्य में निपुण थी, कंठ और वाद्यसंगीत तथा नृत्य में पटु थीं। उसने इतना दान दिया था कि संकल्प के जल से उसके आस पास की भूमि सदा भीगी रहती थी।⁽³⁶⁾ एक अन्य रानी चन्दनदेवी ने 1097 ई में शिक्षा के लिए प्रभूत दान दिया था⁽³⁷⁾। 1093-94 ई में जक्कलदेवी जो सम्भवतः कदम्ब राजकुमारी थी, इंगुण्णै गाँव का शासन कर रही थी। इस गाँव में सम्राट ने महामाणिक्य देव की प्रतिमा के लिए एक जैन मंदिर बनवाया

था। 1095 ई. में पट्टमहादेवी मैलसल महादेवी कण्णवल्ले का शासन कर रही थी। यह सम्भवतः वही रानी है, मलयमती देवी के नाम से जिसकी प्रशंसा 'मृदुमधुरवचनरचनाचतुरकलालापि' के रूप में 1108 ई के एक अभिलेख में है।⁽³⁸⁾ इसी प्रकार पद्मल देवी 1119 ई. में मंगोली के अग्रहार की शासिका थी⁽³⁹⁾। शावलीदेवी 1177-78 ई में या उसके कुछ बाद नरेंगल के अग्रहार का प्रबन्ध किया। यह अग्रहार उसके पति ने उसके अंगभोग (व्यक्तिगत खर्च) के लिए दान दिया था। अब्बल देवी-लिंगगाँव पर शासन कर रही थी (लिंगसुगुर अभिलेख)।

चालुक्य नरेश सोमेश्वर द्वितीय के एक पुत्र जयकेशि ने अपनी रानी बोप्पादेवी के साथ कोंकण पर संयुक्त रूप से शासन किया वहीं चालुक्य नरेश सोमेश्वर द्वितीय की महारानी कंचलदेवी मुणुगुंडु में शासन कर रही थी⁽⁴⁰⁾

996 ई में मैसूर में पम्पा देवी के शासन की जानकारी एक लेख से प्राप्त होती है। पम्पा देवी चालुक्य पेरुमारणिदेव की पुत्री थी। पेरुमारणिदेव की पहचान कल्याणी नरेश तैलप द्वितीय से की जाती है।⁽⁴¹⁾

पृथ्वीराज विजय से पता चलता है कि चाहमान कुल में उत्तर भारत में 1177 ई में सोमेश्वर की मृत्यु के बाद उसके पुत्र पृथ्वीराज की अल्पवयस्कता के कारण उसकी माता कर्पूरदेवी ने अत्यन्त योग्यता पूर्वक शासन का संचालन किया और इस कार्य में उसके मुख्य सहायक और सलाहकार मुख्यमंत्री कलम्बवास और कर्पूरदेवी के चाचा भूवनेकमल्ल थे।⁽⁴²⁾

तेरहवीं सदी के उत्तरार्द्ध में अलूप राजवंश की रानी बल्ला महादेवी ने 'महाराजाधिराज प्रबल साधक' जैसी पुरुषोचित उपाधियों को धारण कर लगभग 14 वर्षों तक शासन किया। (शक संवत् 1201 से 1214 तक)

वारंगल के काकतीय - वारंगल के काकतीय वंश में रुद्रमदेवी - 1259-1295 ई.-का स्थान उच्च है। रुद्रदेवी रुद्राम्बा जिसे उसके पिता राजा गणपति ने अपना उत्तराधिकारी चुना (काकतीय सरकार राजतन्त्रात्मक थीं)। अन्य राज्यों के समान ही यहाँ भी सामान्यतया पिता के पश्चात पुत्र को ही सिंहासन मिलता था। स्वयं रुद्राम्बा के बाद उसकी पुत्री का पुत्र प्रतापरुद्र शासक बना था। काकतीय वंश में स्त्री शासिका का अद्भुत उदाहरण मिलता है। शायद काकतीयों में भी स्त्री शासन के विरुद्ध इतना विरोध था कि रुद्रमदेवी को भी पुरुषों के नाम रखने पड़े और दरबार में पुरुषों के वस्त्र धारण करने पड़े। रुद्राम्बा ने सिंहासन पर पिता गणपति के साथ ही शक संवत् 1182 अर्थात् 1259-60 ई. में शासन करना आरम्भ कर दिया था। प्रारम्भ में वह अपने पिता के साथ संयुक्त शासन कर रही थी। शक संवत् 1191 अर्थात् 1269 ई के लेख में रुद्रमदेवी को गणपति महाराज की 'पट्टोद्धति' कहा गया है। इस समय तक वह केवल भावी रानी थी। (काकतीय वंश में यह प्रथा चल पड़ी थी कि तत्कालीन शासक अपने उत्तराधिकारी को प्रशासन में भाग लेने के लिए बुला लेते थे। काकतीय नरेश गणपति ने अपने शासन काल के अन्तिम वर्षों के दौरान अपनी पुत्री रुद्रमदेवी को अपना सह शासक बना लिया था।) रुद्राम्बा ने अपने विद्रोही सोतेले भाइयों को मार कर, विद्रोही सामन्तों पर विजय प्राप्त कर अभिषेक के समय 'काकतीयराज्य स्थापनाचार्य' तथा 'रायपितामहाक' जैसी उपाधियाँ धारण की थी। काकतीय रानी रुद्राम्बा ने "रुद्रदेव महाराज पुरुषवत" नाम से काकतीय राज्य पर 40 वर्ष तक शासन किया।⁽⁴³⁾

उसके शासन की उत्कृष्ट सफलता के लिये समसामयिक यात्री मार्कोपोलो ने उसकी प्रशंसा की है।

"निस्संदेह रुद्रमदेवी आंध्रप्रदेश के महानतम शासको में से एक थी। यद्यपि वह स्त्री थी फिर भी उसने अपनी कठिनाईयों को अपने उच्च पद के कर्तव्यों पर हावी नहीं होने दिया। उसने अपने सुसंचालन से अपने पुरुष नाम रुद्रदेव के औचित्य को सिद्ध किया। रुद्रदेव नाम उसके पिता ने ही रखा था। उसने राज्य के प्रशासन में सक्रिय भाग लिया। उसने पुरुषों के वस्त्र धारण करके प्रतिदिन दरबार की अध्यक्षता की, विदेशियों से भेंट की, गुप्तचर सेवाओं की रिपोर्टों को सुना, अपने राज्य के मंत्रियों, सेनापतियों, अन्य उच्चाधिकारियों से विचार विनिमय किया और इन सभी को राज्य के सर्वोत्तम हितों की वृद्धि के लिए प्रेरित किया। संकट के समय वह अपनी सेना का नेतृत्व करने में भी नहीं हिचकचाई। वह केवल वीर एवं निर्भीक योद्धा ही नहीं थी वरन उसने सेनापति के रूप में महान योग्यता प्रदर्शित की। इस सन्दर्भ में सेउण नरेश महादेव के विरुद्ध उसका नेतृत्व विशेष रूप से उल्लेखनीय है।"⁽⁴⁴⁾

सेउण के यादव-

तेरहवीं सदी में सेउण के यादव दक्कन की राजनीति में छा गए थे। यादव साम्राज्य में राजतन्त्र की सामान्य विशेषताएँ प्रचलित थीं। पिता के बाद प्रायः सबसे बड़े पुत्र को ताज मिलता था। रानियाँ और राजकुमारियाँ शायद ही कभी प्रशासन में भाग लेती थीं। सिंहासन के अधीन खानदेश के सामंत खोलेश्वर की बहन लक्ष्मी अपने भतीजे के नाबालिग होने के दौरान अपने भाई के प्रदेश पर शासन करती दिखाई देती है। तद्वैवादि पर शासन करने वाली भागुबाई सम्भवतः सिंहासन की ही सम्बन्धी थी। किन्तु ये दो दृष्टान्त अपवाद ही प्रतीत होते हैं।⁽⁴⁵⁾

मध्यकालीन भारत की पहली और अन्तिम मुस्लिम महिला शासिका रजिया थी। मध्यकालीन इतिहासकार मिनहाज ने 'राजाओं के लिये आवश्यक गुणों से एवं योग्यताओं से युक्त एक महान शासिका' कहा है। रजिया का शासन साढ़े तीन वर्षों तक चला उसने चतुर कूटनीतिज्ञ और युद्धनीति के रूप में स्वयं को प्रस्तुत किया, उसने परदा करना छोड़ दिया, वह पुरुषों की तरह पोशाकें पहन कर जनता के बीच हाथी पर सवार हो कर जाने लगी थी।

बीजापुर के अली वाजिद शाह की विधवा पत्नी चॉद बीबी ने अपने पति की मृत्यु के बाद अहमद नगर की राजनीति में बड़ी स्मरणीय भूमिका निभाई। साहसी चॉद बीबी ने अहमद नगर के किले को अपने अधिकार में लेकर पूरी शक्ति लगाकर किले की रक्षा की। विजय नगर साम्राज्य में काफी संख्या में स्त्रियाँ राजकीय पदों पर नियुक्त की गईं। महिला अंगरक्षिकाएँ राजा के प्रति बहुत निष्ठावान रहती थीं। नूरजहाँ ने 1613 ई में 'पादशाह बेगम' की उपाधि धारण की थी उसके नाम से सिक्के ढाले गए और सभी फरमानों पर राजा के हस्ताक्षर के साथ उसका नाम भी लिखा जाने लगा। 1700-1707 ई के बीच मराठा राजा राम की पत्नी ताराबाई राज्य की वास्तविक शासिका बन गई थी। ताराबाई ने जगह जगह जाकर मुगलों के विरुद्ध मराठा अभियानों को दिशा निर्देश प्रदान किया उसने सेनापतियों की नियुक्ति और स्थानान्तरण देश की कृषि उपज तथा मुगल आधिपत्य के अधीन प्रदेशों पर हमलों की योजना आदि सभी कार्यों का नियन्त्रण अपने हाथ में ले लिया था उसके राज्यकाल में मराठों के विरुद्ध औरंगजेब द्वारा किये गये सभी प्रयास विफल हो गये।

बुंदेलखंड में नौजवान फुर्तीली स्वाभिमानी अदम्य साहसी रानी लक्ष्मीबाई विद्रोहियों की नेत्री रहीं। जब अंग्रेजों ने झांसी पर डेरा डाला तो उसने अप्रतिम वीरता से उनका सामना किया कालपी ग्वालियर के गढ़ पर रानी ने बड़ी बहादुरी से ब्रिटिश घुडसवारों का सामना किया। अन्त

में वह शहीद हुई। 'बुन्देलों हर बोलो के मुंह हमने सुनी कहानी थी खुब लडी मर्दानी वह तो झांसी वाली रानी थी ' के रूप में आज भी उसकी स्मृति सुरक्षित है। जनरल हयरोज ने अपने दुर्जेय शत्रु के बारे में कहा "यहाँ वह औरत सोई है जो विद्रोहियों में एकमात्र मर्द थी "

नागालैंड की झांसी रानी कही जाने वाली भारत स्वातन्त्र्य सेनानी पदम भूषण रानी गायडिनलु को मुक्ति आन्दोलन हेतु बहुत लम्बी सजा दी गई। 1947.1948 में उ.प्र. की राज्यपाल बनने वाली राष्ट्रवादी नेता और प्रख्यात कवियित्री सरोजिनी नायडु को भी स्वतन्त्रता संग्राम में भाग लेने पर कई बार जेल हुई 1925 में कानपुर में हुए भारतीय राष्ट्रीय कांग्रेस के 40वें अधिवेशन की वे प्रथम भारतीय महिला अध्यक्ष बनी। भारत सरकार ने अरुणा आसफ अली को 'भारत रत्न' और डा. लक्ष्मी सहगल को 'पदम विभूषण से अलंकृत कर इन क्रांतिनेत्रियों के प्रति सम्मान प्रदर्शित किया है।

सेना के मुख्य अधिकारी युद्धों में अपनी पत्नियों और उपपत्नियों में से चुनी हुई कुछ नारियों को ले जाते थे⁽²³⁾ राष्ट्रकूट राजा अमोघवर्ष प्रथम (817-877) ने वास्तव में सैन्य शिविर में ही जन्म लिया था। जब उसका पिता विन्ध्यप्रदेश में युद्ध संलग्न था। यद्यपि एक नीतिज्ञ ने युद्धस्थल में स्त्रियों की उपस्थिति का निषेध किया है।

स्पष्ट है कि प्राचीन भारत में नारियों का राजनीति के क्षेत्र में योगदान यत्किंचित अवश्य रहा। सामान्य रूप से प्रशासन अथवा निर्णयन में उनकी भूमिका को स्पष्टतः प्रधानता नहीं मिली लेकिन अवसर मिलने पर उनकी भागीदारी और छमता के प्रमाण अवश्य मिलते हैं।

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1857 के विद्रोह में बिहारी महिलाओं का वर्गीय आधार

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सारांश

1857 ई. का विद्रोह भारतीय राष्ट्रीय स्वतंत्रता संग्राम की अत्यंत ही महत्वपूर्ण घटना मानी जाती है। दरअसल, 1857 ई. के प्रथम संगठित विद्रोह को 'प्रथम मुक्ति संग्राम' भी माना जाता है। आरंभिक ब्रिटिश संघर्ष में जिस तरह बिहार की भूमिका अग्रणी रही उसी प्रकार देश में ब्रिटिश सत्ता से मुक्ति प्राप्त करने के लिए संचालित राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन में भी बिहार की भूमिका निर्णायक रही। गौरतलब है कि भारतीय इतिहास में 1857 का महत्वपूर्ण स्थान है। 1857 में हुए इस संघर्ष को इतिहासकारों ने अंग्रेजों के खिलाफ हुए पहले और सबसे बड़े संघर्ष के रूप में दर्ज किया है।

भारतीय राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन की प्रकृति मूलतः पुरुष प्रधान थी और संभवतः यही कारण है कि राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन पर लिखी गईं तमाम पुस्तकों, लेखों आदि में महिलाओं की सहभागिता और उनके योगदान को यथोचित स्थान नहीं मिल सका है। वास्तव में तत्कालीन पितृसत्तात्मक समाज में महिलाओं की दुनियाँ घर के चहारदीवारी के भीतर सीमित थी और उसे पुरुष की अनुगामणी ही माना जाता था। पुरुषों ने इस विद्रोह में बड़े पैमाने पर भाग लिया परंतु स्त्रियाँ भी उनसे कम नहीं थी। राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन का इतिहास तमाम ऐसी महिलाओं के साहस, त्याग व बलिदान से भरा पड़ा है, जिन्होंने अपनी पारिवारिक भूमिका के साथ-साथ राष्ट्रवादी गतिविधियों में भी हिस्सेदारी की।

इतिहास साक्षी है कि बिहार भी इस विद्रोह का एक प्रमुख केन्द्र बिन्दु था। मेरठ में 10 मई, 1857 ई. को फूट पड़ने वाले 'विद्रोह' की छाया बिहार पर भी पड़ी और 1857 ई. के विद्रोह में बिहार की महिलाएँ सक्रिय रहीं एवं इनका योगदान भी अविस्मरणीय है। गौरतलब है कि 1857 ई. के विद्रोह में बिहार की महिलाओं ने अत्यंत ही सराहनीय भूमिका निभाई है मेरे इस लेख में 1857 के संघर्ष के बहाने इस 'विद्रोह' के माध्यम से विद्रोह के प्रसार तथा इसमें विभिन्न बिहारी महिलाओं की भागीदारी को चिन्हित किया गया है और उन स्रोतों को खंगालने की कोशिश है जिनसे 1857 के इतिहास को बनाने में मदद मिलती है।

मूल शब्द

1857, स्वतंत्रता संग्राम, बिहार, विद्रोह, इतिहास, महिलाएँ, भूमिका, निम्नवर्गीय इतिहास, अंग्रेज, सैनिक, योगदान इत्यादि।

प्रस्तावना

बिहार को “भारतीय सभ्यता की श्रेष्ठ भूमि” कहा गया है, किन्तु 18वीं शताब्दी आते-आते अपनी विज्ञात ऐतिहासिक उपलब्धियों के बावजूद वह बंगाल का परिशिष्ट राज्य बनकर रह गया।⁰¹ 1857 ई. का संग्राम सही अर्थों में इतिहास के पन्नों में भारतीय स्वतंत्रता संग्राम का महाआख्यान है, जिसमें समाज के सभी तबके के लोग जैसे-अमीर-गरीब, ऊँच-नीच, पुरुष-नाड़ी, सिपाही-किसान, भारतीय समाज के हस्तकार एवं श्रमिक जातियाँ भी शामिल थी।⁰² 1857 ई. के संग्राम पर प्रारंभ में जो भी इतिहास लिखा गया, उसमें प्रकट किये गये मत यह थे कि सिर्फ राजाओं, सामंतों एवं सिपाहियों के निहित स्वार्थों की उत्पत्ति के रूप में ही इस विद्रोह को देखा गया, लेकिन जैसे-जैसे हम औपनिवेशिक स्रोतों के दबाव से बाहर निकले और नए जन स्रोतों की तलाश की, वैसे-वैसे इतिहास लेखन में सन् 1857 के महासंग्राम का चित्र विस्तृत और व्यापक होता गया।⁰³

भारतीय उपमहायुद्ध में उपनिवेशवादी शासन की नींव 1757 ई. में पड़ी जब प्लासी के युद्ध में अंग्रेजों की विजय हुई लेकिन तत्काल ही इस विजय को चुनौती भी मिलनी शुरू हो गई।⁰⁴ 1763 ई. का सन्यासी विद्रोह इसका आरंभ बिंदु है जो लंबे समय (1800) तक चला।⁰⁵ 1857 ई. में ब्रिटिश उपनिवेशवाद के विरुद्ध जो महाविद्रोह फूटा था, वह कोई आक्समिक घटना नहीं थी बल्कि सन्यासी विद्रोह से शुरू होने वाली अनेक विद्रोहों की एक 100 साल की लंबी श्रृंखला की वह विस्फोटक परिणति थी जिसमें आम किसान से लेकर देशभक्त राजे-महाराजे तक एक झंडे के नीचे शरीक हुए थे। गौरतलब है कि 1857 ई. के पूर्व के सभी जन विद्रोह की ब्रिटिश हुकूमत के अथवा भारत में ब्रिटिश शासन के मददगार सामंतों और भू-स्वामियों के ही खिलाफ थे।⁰⁶

इस तरह सन् 1857 के विद्रोह का यदि हम समुचित एकाग्रता से अध्ययन करें तो हमें यह ज्ञात होता है कि इसका क्षेत्र विशाल और विविध था। आजादी की इस लड़ाई में विभिन्न वर्गों, धर्मों और समुदाय के लोगों ने जितने बड़े पैमाने पर अपनी आहुति दी, उसकी मिशाल तो विश्व इतिहास में भी कम मिलेगी और जैसा कि हम जानते हैं कि इस महाविद्रोह को विश्व के समक्ष, उसके सही परिप्रेक्ष्य में प्रस्तुत करने का महत् लोकप्रिय कार्य कार्लमार्क्स और फ्रेडरिक एंगेल्स कर रहे थे।

इतिहास साक्षी है कि किसी भी विद्रोह में उच्च वर्ग व निम्न वर्ग दोनों की भूमिका महत्वपूर्ण होती है परंतु महत्व केवल उच्च वर्ग के लोगों का दर्शाया जाता है तथा निम्न वर्ग अदृश्य रह जाता है। जबकि अंग्रेजी शासन काल के दौरान समाज का हर वर्ग असंतुष्ट था चाहे वह किसान हो या जमींदार। इसलिए इस विद्रोह में हर धर्म और हर वर्ग के लोगों ने भाग लिया और इस प्रकार से यह भारत का 'प्रथम स्वतंत्रता संग्राम' बना। इस विद्रोह में बहादुर शाह जफर, नाना साहब, बेगम हजरत महल, रानी लक्ष्मी बाई, खान बहादुर खाँ, देवी सिंह, कदम सिंह, ताजुद्दीन, तफजुल हुसैन खाँ, वीर कुँवर सिंह आदि ने भाग लिया।⁰⁷

बिहार इस विद्रोह का एक प्रमुख केंद्र बिंदु था। मेरठ में 10 मई, 1857 ई. को फूट पड़ने वाले 'विद्रोह' की छाया बिहार पर भी पड़ी, इस क्षेत्र में भी अच्छी-खासी संख्या में विद्रोहियों ने भाग लेना शुरू कर दिया।⁰⁸ बिहार से कई अनेक महत्वपूर्ण नेता हुए जिन्होंने सक्रिय रूप से इस विद्रोह में भाग लिया। वारिस अली, पीर अली खान आदि उन्हीं में से एक थे।⁰⁹ इनके अलावा इतिहास के पन्नों में 1857 ई. के विद्रोह में उच्च वर्ग की भागीदारी का स्वरूप मुख्यतः विवादास्पद रहा है। इन उच्च वर्गों में मुख्य रूप से राजा, जमींदार, व्यापारी व शिक्षित वर्ग के लोग आते थे। इन लोगों के सहयोग से अंग्रेजों की जड़े मजबूत हुईं परंतु उच्च वर्ग में अन्तर्विरोधी व्याप्त था। जिसमें बादशाह बहादुर शाह जफर, झाँसी की रानी लक्ष्मी बाई, बेगम हजरत महल, नाना साहब, तात्याँ टोपे जैसे लोग विद्रोह का नेतृत्व कर रहे थे। तो दूसरी तरफ बिहार से बाबू कुँवर सिंह के साथ-साथ उनके छोटे भाई अमर सिंह जैसे बड़े जमींदार बिहार में ब्रिटिश सत्ता को चुनौती दे रहे थे, तो एक तरफ छोटे-बड़े राजा भी हर तरह से अपना समर्थन विद्रोह को कुचलने में प्रदान कर रहे थे। लेकिन विद्रोह के क्रम में कुछ ऐसे व्यक्तित्व भी थे जिनसे अंग्रेजों को सहायता मिल रही थी।¹⁰

इतिहास में सभी के साथ एक जैसा न्याय नहीं होता। अधिकांश प्रसिद्ध इतिहासकार विशिष्ट व्यक्तियों की उपलब्धियों का वर्णन कर अपने कर्तव्य की इतिश्री समझ लेते हैं। प्रथम भारतीय स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में अनेक पुरुषों तथा महिलाओं ने अपने प्राणों तक का उत्सर्ग कर दिया था, पर हम केवल कुछ ही लोगों के नाम से परिचित हैं। अनेको के तो नाम की भी जानकारी हमें नहीं है। जब बुद्धिजीवी वर्ग उनके बारे में कुछ नहीं जानते हैं, तो फिर सामान्य लोगों की जानकारी का तो सवाल ही पैदा नहीं होता।

1857 ई. का युद्ध भले ही सफल न रहा हो, किन्तु सैनिक असंतोष, राष्ट्रीय घृणा और आहत धार्मिक भावना के संयुक्त उभार के रूप में यह अपनी महत्ता को बतलाता है। यह विद्रोह तथाकथित सिपाही विद्रोह मात्र नहीं था, जैसा कि ब्रिटिश हुकूमत ने इस मुक्ति-संग्राम को अंधविश्वास जनित सिपाही विद्रोह कहकर सच्चाई पर

पर्दा डाला और लोगों को गुमराह किया। अंग्रेजी सेना के भारतीय सिपाहियों को चर्बी वाले कारतूसों के बारे में जानकारी जनवरी, 1857 ई. में ही चल गया था।¹¹

गौरतलब है कि 1857 ई. के मुक्ति संग्राम में हर वर्ग, हर वर्ण, धर्म सम्प्रदाय की स्त्रियों ने आगे बढ़कर हिस्सा लिया था। वे हर मोर्चे पर लड़ी थी। घायलों की तीमारदारी करने, मुक्तियोद्धाओं को अपने घर में छिपाने, उन्हें सुरक्षित जगह पहुँचाने, उनके लिए जासूसी करने संदेश पहुँचाने से लेकर खुद हाथ में बंदूक या तलवार लेकर दुश्मन पर टूट पड़ने तक की भूमिका उन्होंने जोरदार ढंग से निभाई थी। असूर्यपश्या मानी जाने वाली बेगमों ने भी हथियार उठाये, रानियों ने भी तलवारें संभाली। दलित तथा पिछड़े वर्गों की जुझारू स्त्रियों ने कंधे से कंधा मिलाकर यह लड़ाई लड़ी थी। इतना ही नहीं इस मुक्ति संग्राम में तवायफें भी किसी से पीछे नहीं रही थी।¹² हमारी सभ्यता—संस्कृति अन्य देशों की अपेक्षा प्राचीन एवं श्रेष्ठ हैं। पुरुष के अलावे महिलाएँ भी जीवन के प्रत्येक क्षेत्र में अग्रणी थी। उनमें ऐसी विद्वता थी कि बड़े-बड़े पंडितों को शास्त्रार्थ में उनसे पराजित होना पड़ता था। घर—आँगन की महिलाएँ उस समय में तलवार भी उठाया करती थी। रणक्षेत्र में वे पुरुषों से कभी पीछे नहीं रहती थी। इसका ज्वलंत उदाहरण हमें 1857 ई. के विद्रोह में देखने को मिलता है।¹³

28 फरवरी को एक सरकारी पत्र में सेनापति ने जनरल को लिखा कि 'जबरदस्ती इसाई बनाने की अफवाह से बैरकपुर में सिपाहियों में असंतोष फैल रहा है।' दरअसल, सैनिकों को पुरानी—'ब्राउन बेस' नामक बंदूक की जगह नयी एनफील्ड राइफल दी गयी, जो कारतूस वे अपने दाँतो से काट कर खोलते हैं वह गाय व सूअर की चर्बी से बने होते थे।¹⁴ इससे हिंदु—मुस्लिम सभी सैनिकों में असंतोष फैल गया कि सरकार धर्म भ्रष्ट करने हेतु ही यह षडयंत्र रची है।¹⁵ मंगल पांडे, जो 34वीं नेटिव इन्फैन्ट्री का सिपाही था उसने लेफ्टिनेंट बाँग एवं मेजर ह्यूसन को गोली मारी थी¹⁶ जिसके हेतु ही 08 अप्रैल 1857 ई. को मंगल पांडे को फाँसी दे दी गई।¹⁷ जिससे विद्रोह की ज्वाला और धधक उठी। धीरे-धीरे मेरठ, झाँसी, लखनऊ, कानुपर, इलाहाबाद एवं बिहार आदि कई जगहों पर विद्रोह का फैलाव हुआ।¹⁸

इन्ही परिस्थितियों तथा अंग्रेजों की कुकृत्यों ने भारतीय महिलाओं को वीरांगना बनने पर मजबूर किया। 1857 ई. के प्रथम मुक्ति संग्राम में जिन वीरांगनाओं ने आगे बढ़कर भाग लिया और नेतृत्व संभाला, उनके नाम तो स्वतंत्रता संग्राम के इतिहास में स्वर्णाक्षरों में अंकित हैं। लेकिन जिन्होंने पीछे रहकर अपना प्रत्यक्ष, परोक्ष योगदान दिया और जिनके नाम किसी कारण से उजागर नहीं हो पाए उनका भी महत्वपूर्ण योगदान है। दरअसल कई महिला प्रेरक की भूमिका निभाते हुए मुक्ति—संग्राम की चपेट में आकर शहीद हो गई। उल्लेखनीय है कि 1857 ई. के नेतृत्वकारी सशक्त संघर्ष में दलित महिलाओं की संख्या दलित पुरुषों से कहीं ज्यादा है। वस्तुतः इसमें कोरी जाति की झलकारी बाई, पासी जाति की उदा देवी, लोधी जाति की अवंतिका बाई, मेहत्तर

जाति की महावीरी देवी और गुर्जरी जाति की आशा देवी सहित कई महिलाओं को 1857 ई. की लड़ाई में शामिल बताया जाता है और वे सभी दलित जाति के लिए वीरता की प्रतीक बन गई हैं।¹⁹

1857 ई. के विद्रोह में बिहार की महिलाएँ सक्रिय रही इनका योगदान भी अविस्मरणीय हैं। जालौन की रानी तेजबाई को उनके पति के साथ विद्रोह के आरोप में मुंगेर के जेल में रखा गया था। रानी तेजबाई को प्रताड़ित करने के लिए उन्हें सीलन भरी अस्वास्थ्यकर माहौल में रखा गया था। मुंगेर के सहायक शल्य चिकित्सक डॉ. डूका ने 31 अगस्त, 1858 ई. को अपनी जाँच में कहा था कि जालौन की रानी तेजबाई को जहाँ रखा गया है, वहाँ साल-भर से जल जमाव है। रानी के रहने वाले कमरों में पानी रिसता है। कमरे की लंबाई-चौड़ाई 12 गुणा 8 से कम है। यह निवास स्थल स्वास्थ्य के लिए अत्यंत खतरनाक है।²⁰

बिहार से 1857 ई. के विद्रोह में धरमन बीबी का योगदान अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण रहा है। कुँवर सिंह की उप-पत्नियों में से एक थी धरमन बीबी। इन पर बाबू कुँवर सिंह का विशेष अनुराग था। शाहाबाद के गाँवों में धरमन बीबी के प्रति बाबू कुँवर सिंह के उत्कट प्रेम की अनगिनत कहानियाँ और गीत आज प्रचलित हैं। इन्होंने विद्रोह में बाबू कुँवर सिंह का उत्साह भी बढ़ाया और योगदान भी दिया। ऐसा माना जाता है कि धरमन बीबी भी कुँवर सिंह के साथ उनके मार्च में शामिल थीं। वे कुँवर सिंह के साथ रीवा तथा अन्य स्थानों तक गईं। उनकी मृत्यु भी लॉग मार्च के दौरान बाँदा में हुई। धरमन बीबी के नाम पर कुँवर सिंह ने आरा और जगदीशपुर में दो मस्जिदों का निर्माण कराया था।²¹

राष्ट्रीय फलक पर 1857 के महाविद्रोह की प्रकृति का विश्लेषण विभिन्न इतिहासकारों द्वारा उपलब्ध जानकारी ऐसे अध्ययनों में शामिल डा. ईश्वरी प्रसाद, डा. ए. एल. श्रीवास्तव, डा. पन्निकर, श्री सुन्दर लाल एवं डा. एस. आर. शर्मा आदि इतिहासकारों ने 1857 ई. के विद्रोह को राष्ट्रीय क्रांति की संज्ञा दी है एवं उसकी तुलना अमेरिकी, रूसी, फ्रांसीसी आदि विश्वविख्यात क्रांतियों से की है। डॉ. पन्निकर ने लिखा है—“क्रांति का उद्देश्य अंग्रेजों को भारत से बाहर निकाल कर देश में एक राष्ट्रीय राज्य की स्थापना करना था। इस दृष्टि से यह गदर या विप्लव न होकर एक राष्ट्रीय क्रांति थी।”²²

पंडित जवाहर लाल नेहरू ने लिखा है—“यह एक सैनिक विद्रोह से बहुत कुछ अधिक था। यह जोरों से फैला और इसने जनप्रिय आन्दोलन तथा स्वतंत्रता संग्राम का रूप ले लिया।” आर. सी. मजुमदार के शब्दों में—“जबकि यह सच है कि 1857 ई. की क्रांति मुख्यतः सैनिकों का विद्रोह था। इस बात का समर्थन करने के पर्याप्त प्रमाण हैं कि कुछ क्षेत्रों में विद्रोह व्यापक रूप से फैला और इसने एक जनक्रांति का रूप धारण

कर लिया।" नेताजी सुभाष चन्द्र बोस ने भी 1857 ई. के गदर को राष्ट्रीय क्रांति माना है।

ईश्वरी प्रसाद ने लिखा है—“1857 ई. की घटनाएँ केवल विद्रोह नहीं थी। यह उत्तरी भारत का एक विद्रोह था जिसका उद्देश्य एकमात्र ईस्ट इंडिया कंपनी की तबाही और विदेशी बंधनों से स्वतंत्रता प्राप्त करना था। डॉ. प्रसाद आगे लिखते हैं कि यह विद्रोह योजनाबद्ध था और विद्रोह के नेता बहुत समय से लोगों में ब्रिटिश राज के विरुद्ध गाँव-गाँव में इस भावना को फैला रहे थे। वे नेता निःस्वार्थ और देशभक्त थे तथा उनको अपने देश की स्वतंत्रता से अधिक प्रिय कोई वस्तु नहीं थी।”²³

शशांक शेखर सिन्हा ने दो प्रमुख स्त्रियों का उल्लेख अपनी पुस्तक रेस्टलेस मदर्स एन्ड टरबुलेन्ट डॉटर्स सिचुएटिंग ट्राइब्स इन जेन्डर स्टडीज में इस प्रकार किया है— इस संधाल विद्रोह में सिद्धू-कान्हू की दो बहनें जिसमें फूलों तथा ज्ञानो का नाम विशेष रूप से आता है, इनके द्वारा भी विद्रोह को नई दिशा प्रदान की गई। संधाली लोकगीतों में फूलों और ज्ञानों का नाम विशेष रूप से उल्लेखित हैं। इनके बारे में यह भी कहा जाता है कि इन दोनों बहनों ने तो ब्रिटिश छावनी में घुसकर इक्कीस सैनिकों के गर्दन को अपने तलवार से उड़ा दिया। यह घटना इनकी वीरता का ही प्रमाण है एवं इन दोनों स्त्रियों ने इस विद्रोह को त्वरित गति प्रदान किया।²⁴

इस क्षेत्र से दो अन्य महिलाओं का नाम भी सामने आता है, ये हैं राधा तथा हीरा इन महिलाओं ने बड़ी ही वीरतापूर्वक ब्रिटिश सैनिकों के छक्के छुड़ाए। परंतु अंत में, इन वीरांगनाओं को पकड़ने के पश्चात् इन पर अदालती कारवाई शुरू की गई।²⁵ इस क्षेत्र से महिलाओं ने बड़े की उत्साहपूर्वक भाग लिया। एक घटना से पता चलता है कि महिलाओं में प्रतिशोध की भावना इतनी जबरदस्त थी कि एक महिला को पैर में दो बार गोली लगने के पश्चात् भी वह दोइचा गाँव के सैनिकों के साथ हो गई। इतनी गंभीर घायल अवस्था में भी उस महिला ने सोचा कि यदि वह चिकित्सा के लिए गई तो यह उसके लिए घातक सिद्ध हो सकता है। वह महिला जोखिम उठाते हुए, अपने इलाज के लिए महिला वार्ड में गई लेकिन इस परिस्थिति में भी वह महिला अपने दायित्वों को नहीं भूली तथा अपने दोइचा गाँव को लूटने के लिए संधालियों के साथ हो गई। इस घटना से प्रतीत होता है कि महिलाओं में जोश चरम सीमा पर था वे किसी भी संकट या तनावपूर्ण स्थिति का सामना करते हुए संधाल बहुल क्षेत्र से 'दिकुओं' को भगाना चाहते थे।²⁶

इस प्रकार हम देखते हैं कि 1857 ई. के विद्रोह के पूर्व ही रानी सर्वेश्वरी के द्वारा विद्रोह का आगाज कर दिया गया था। जिसने भविष्य में होने वाले विद्रोह के लिए महिलाओं को जबरदस्त सीख दी थी। 1857 ई. के विद्रोह में बिहार की महिलाओं ने तो अत्यंत ही सराहनीय भूमिका निभाई है। बहरहाल, जैसा कि हम पहले बता चुके हैं कि 1857 ई. के विद्रोह से संपूर्ण बिहार क्षेत्र अंग्रेज सरकार की अकूत ताकत और

सैन्य अधिकारियों की जी तोड़ मेहनत के बावजूद 1857 ई. के महाविद्रोह में बिहारी समाज के विभिन्न समुदायों ने अंग्रेजों के कुरितियों के विरुद्ध हर तबके के लोग ब्रिटिश शासकों के अत्याचार के खिलाफ आवाज उठा रहे थे, चाहे वह किसान हो या मजदूर या व्यापारी। सभी जाति व संप्रदाय के लोग अंग्रेजी सरकार का वास्तव में उन्मुलन करना चाहते थे और यही कारण था कि इस विद्रोह में सभी ने भाग लिया गौरतलब है कि पुरुषों के अलावे 1857 ई. के विद्रोह में बिहार की महिला भी सक्रिय रही बहादुर महिलाओं ने गदर में जिस राजनीतिक समझ, बूझ व रणकौशल का परिचय दिया उसकी मिसाल आने वाली महिलाओं के लिए प्रेरणास्त्रोत बन गई। इतना ही नहीं महिलाओं ने गीतों के माध्यम से क्रांतिकारियों में भरपूर उत्साह बढ़ाया इतिहास के पन्नों में बाबू कुँवर सिंह पर रचे गये भोजपुरी गीतों की संख्या अनेक हैं जो आज भी भोजपुरी क्षेत्र की जनता बाबू कुँवर सिंह को प्रति वर्ष होली के अवसर पर उन गीतों को गाकर स्मरण करती हैं।

इस तरह यह विस्मयजनक है कि संथाल 'हूल' ने औरतों की इतनी भागीदारी हजारीबाग में मिलती है जिसका उल्लेख 'हूल आफिशियल रिकार्ड्स' में मिलता है। परंतु उसी क्षेत्र में जब 1857 ई. में सिपाही विद्रोह फैला तो सरकारी दस्तावेजों में महिलाओं का उल्लेख नहीं मिलता।²⁷

बहरहाल, सुजाता सिंह के अनुसार भी जेन्डर की दृष्टि से 1857 ई. विद्रोह में संथाल हूल की भाँति वह सामुदायिकी भागीदारी नहीं दिखती। हजारीबाग में मुख्य विद्रोही सिपाही ही थे। फिर भी 1855-56 ई. में संथाल औरतों की भारी संख्या में विद्रोही गतिविधियाँ औरतों के इतिहास में अपना एक शीर्ष स्थान रखती हैं।²⁸

निष्कर्ष

इस प्रकार से बिहार संपूर्ण 1857 ई. के विद्रोह का अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण केंद्र रहा क्योंकि बिहार का शायद ही कोई जिला हो, जहाँ विद्रोह की अग्नि न प्रज्वलित हुई हो। दरअसल, विद्रोही नेताओं को स्थानीय लोगों का भरपूर साथ मिला और बिहार में 1857 के विद्रोह का दमन करने में अंग्रेजों को काफी मशक्कत करनी पड़ी। हालांकि इस क्षेत्र से राजा-महाराजाओं के अतिरिक्त आम जनता की भूमिका भी अत्यंत प्रशंसनीय रही। इसमें बिहार के सैनिकों ने भी अदम्य साहस के साथ स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में भाग लिया। गौरतलब है कि 1857 ई. के भारतीय स्वतंत्रता संग्राम की ध्वनि संपूर्ण बिहार में सुनी गई तथा इसका आधार था आर्थिक रूप से कमजोर वर्ग। उच्च जाति के लोग जो क्रांति में सम्मिलित थे, वे भी आर्थिक रूप से कमजोर ही थे। इसी प्रकार महिलाओं ने भी इस विद्रोह में आगे बढ़कर हिस्सा लिया। औपनिवेशिक शासन के विरुद्ध भाग ले रही महिलाएँ सभी तबकों से थी। वैसे तो बिहार की महिलाओं ने सदैव ही आंदोलन को महत्व दिया तथा कदम-से-कदम मिलाती हुई चली और अपने उद्देश्य

में कामयाब हुई लेकिन फिर भी बिहार की महिलाओं पर बहुत जानकारी नहीं मिलती। बहरहाल, नये शोध और स्रोतों की उपलब्धता आगे आने वाले समय में शायद अधिक महिलाओं को सामने लाये तब इतिहास के नये पन्ने खुलेंगे।

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प्राचीन भारत में नारी शिक्षा : एक तुलनात्मक अध्ययन

(वैदिककाल से पूर्व मध्यकाल तक)

अंकिता मीना

शोध छात्रा

भारतीय इतिहास एवं संस्कृति विभाग

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सारांश

नारी समाज रूपी राष्ट्र की धुरी है जिसके चारों ओर मानव रूपी समाज का सम्पूर्ण ढाँचा घूमता है। नारी ब्रह्मा है, विद्या है, श्रद्धा है शक्ति है, वह सब कुछ है जो इस संसार में सर्वश्रेष्ठ के रूप में दृष्टिगोचर होता है। शास्त्रों में नारी को कामधेनु कहा गया है जो एक माँ, बहन, बेटी, पत्नी आदि के विभिन्न रूपों में समाज में अपने सभी दायित्वों को सम्पूर्णता से निभाती है। एकमात्र नारी ही ऐसी शक्ति है जो समाज रूपी पहिए को गाड़ी रूपी साधन में बदल कर एक नया संसार रूपी बगीचा महकाती है। यदि महिलाओं की स्थिति को भारतीय संदर्भ में देखा जाये तो हम कह सकते हैं कि प्राचीनकाल में उनकी स्थिति काफी अच्छी थी प्राचीन काल में भारतीय समाज गौरवशाली था। इसके निर्माण का श्रेय प्राचीन काल की नारियों को दिया जा सकता है।

मुख्य शब्द : वैदिक काल, पूर्व मध्य काल, शिक्षा, संस्कार

प्रस्तावना

नारी समाज का वह स्तम्भ है जिसके बिना समाज का निर्माण नहीं हो सकता। नारी के विषय में पुराणों में यह श्लोक अंकित है –

“विद्या समस्तास्तव देवि भेदाः स्त्रियां समस्ता सकला जगस्तु।

त्वथैकया पूरितमम्बयेतत का तै स्तुति स्तव्य परा परोकित।।”

इसका अर्थ है कि हे देवी! संसार की समस्त विधाएँ तुमसे निकली हैं और सब स्पृहाएँ तुम्हारा ही स्वरूप हैं, समस्त विश्व एक तुम्हीं से पूरित है अतः तुम्हारी स्तुति किस प्रकार की जाएं।

प्राचीन काल में नारी को बहुत सम्मान की दृष्टि से देखा जाता था। कोई भी धार्मिक अनुष्ठान नारी के बिना अधूरा माना जाता था उन्हें पुरुषों के समान शिक्षा का अधिकार था। वैदिक युग में कन्याओं को शिक्षा

प्राप्त करने का अधिकार प्राप्त था। विद्या आरम्भ करने से पूर्व कन्या का भी उपनयन संस्कार किया जाता था व ब्रह्मचर्य का पालन करते हुये वे विभिन्न विषयों की शिक्षा ग्रहण करती थीं। हारीत संहिता के अनुसार वैदिक काल में दो प्रकार की छात्राएँ होती थीं :-

1. सधोवधु
2. ब्रह्ममवादिनी।¹

सधोवधु छात्राएँ विवाह होने से पूर्व वेद मंत्रों और याज्ञक प्रार्थनाओं का ज्ञान प्राप्त कर लेती थीं। ब्रह्ममवादिनी छात्राएँ जीवन-पर्यन्त ज्ञानार्जन में लगी रहती थीं और आजीवन ब्रह्मचर्य व्रत का अनुपालन करती थीं।² इन नारियों ने वेदाध्ययन काव्य रचना त्याग-तपस्या द्वारा ऋषिका का पद प्राप्त किया था। इनके द्वारा अनेक वैदिक श्लोकों की रचना की गई। शौनक ने अपनी कृति वृहददेवता में मंत्र दृष्टा नारियों के नामों का उल्लेख किया है। उपनिषदों में मैत्रयी, गार्गी आदि अनेक विदुषियों का उल्लेख मिलता है। वे दर्शन, तर्क मीमांसा, साहित्य व विभिन्न विषयों की पण्डिता थीं।³ नारियाँ सूत कातना, वस्त्र बुनना व ललित कला में निपुण होती थीं।⁴

वे अस्त्र - शस्त्र चलाने का ज्ञान प्राप्त करती थीं। विश्वला अपने पति के साथ युद्ध में गई थी जहाँ उसकी टांग टूट जाने पर अश्विनी कुमारों ने उसकी चिकित्सा की। वृत्रासुर के साथ उनकी माता दनु भी युद्ध में गई जो इन्द्र द्वारा मारी गई। नमुचि के पास नारियों की एक सेना थी तथा मुद्गल पत्नी इन्द्र सेना ने शत्रु को पराजित कर उनसे अपहृत गायें छुड़ा ली थी।⁵ उत्तर वैदिक काल में नारियाँ व्यावहारिक शिक्षा के अन्तर्गत नृत्य, संगीत, चित्रकला आदि की भी शिक्षा प्राप्त करती थीं। त्रिपुर की नारियाँ अपनी भाव-भंगिमाओं की वजह से लोगों को प्रसन्न करती थीं।⁶ चित्रकला में कन्याओं की रूची थी। बाणासुर के मंत्री कुष्माण्ड की कन्या की सखी चित्रलेखा ने अनेक देवों, गंधर्वों और मनुष्यों की आकृतियों का चित्रांकन किया जिसमें अनिरुध का चित्र उल्लेखनीय है।⁷ बौद्ध व जैन ग्रन्थों से ज्ञात होता है कि उच्च कुल की नारियाँ सुशिक्षित होती थीं। संघमित्रा ने लंका जाकर बौद्ध शिक्षा का प्रचार किया। शुभा, सुलभा व अनोपमा आदि नारियाँ धर्म व दर्शन में पारंगत थीं।⁸

तत्कालीन युग की उच्च शिक्षा प्राप्त भिक्षुणी खेमा उल्लेखनीय है। जैन परम्पराओं में कौशाम्बी नरेश की पुत्री जयन्ती का उल्लेख मिलता है।⁹ जयन्ती ने महावीर स्वामी के साथ वाद-विवाद किया था। इसने महावीर स्वामी के तर्कों से सन्तुष्ट होकर प्रवज्या ग्रहण की तथा आजीवन ब्रह्मचर्य व्रत का पालन करती रही।

अनेक नारियाँ ज्ञान प्राप्त कर शिक्षिका का जीवन व्यतीत करती थीं, ऐसी नारियाँ उपाध्याया कहलाती थीं। ये शिष्याओं को विभिन्न विषयों की जानकारी प्रदान करने के साथ मीमांसा और व्याकरणशास्त्र जैसे जटिल विषयों का अध्यापन करवाती थीं। शिक्षा में कुशल माणवीका के साथ विवाह करने वाला पुरुष अपनी पत्नी से गौरवान्वित होकर उसके (पत्नी) नाम से स्वयं का नामकरण करता था।¹⁰ शिष्याओं के लिये अलग से शिक्षण संस्थाओं का प्रबन्धन था। पाणिनी ने विशेष रूप से छात्राशालाओं का उल्लेख किया है।¹¹

200 ई. के आसपास समाज की इस व्यवस्था में परिवर्तन आने लगा और कन्याओं का विवाह अल्प आयु में सम्पन्न होने के कारण नारी शिक्षा का प्रसार अवरूद्ध सा हो गया। नारियों का उपनयन संस्कार अब केवल औपचारिक मात्र ही रह गया था तथा विवाह के अवसर पर ही उनका उपनयन संस्कार किया जाने लगा। मनु के अनुसार पति ही कन्या का आचार्य है, विवाह ही उसका उपनयन संस्कार, पति की सेवा ही उसका आश्रम निवास और गृहकार्य ही दैनिक धार्मिक अनुष्ठान है।¹² मनु ने कन्याओं के उपनयन में वैदिक मंत्र नहीं पढ़ने का निर्देश दिया।

मनु के परवर्ती स्मृतिकार याज्ञवल्क्य ने नारियों के उपनयन की औपचारिकता पर भी प्रतिबन्ध लगा दिया। कालान्तर में वे शुद्रों की तरह वेद मंत्रों के उच्चारण तथा यज्ञों में सम्मिलित होने के अधिकार से वंचित कर दी गई। अब केवल माता-पिता, भाई आदि से घर पर ही शिक्षा प्राप्त कर सकती थी।¹³

साधारण परिवारों में शिक्षा का प्रचार-प्रसार अवरूद्ध हो गया किन्तु उच्च वर्ग की कन्याओं को शिक्षा के पर्याप्त अवसर प्राप्त थे। वात्स्यायन ने कामसूत्र में राजकुमारियों व सामन्तों की बालिकाओं द्वारा शास्त्रों के अध्ययन करने का उल्लेख किया है। नारियों को चौसठ कलाओं की शिक्षा प्रदान की जाती थीं।¹⁴ इन कलाओं के अन्तर्गत नारियों को पढ़ने-लिखने, अनेक भाषाओं को समझने, अभिनय श्रृंगार, पाक शास्त्र, संगीत, व्यायाम, मनोरंजन, गृहसज्जा, बच्चों के खिलोने बनाना हस्तकला, वस्त्रों की सिलाई करना आदि में कुशल होने का सुझाव दिया है।¹⁵

इनके द्वारा कोई भी नारी स्वस्थ, सुन्दर व गुणवान बन सकती थी तथा उन कलाओं को सीखने के पश्चात् विभिन्न आर्थिक क्रियाओं में महत्वपूर्ण योगदान देती थी। व्यावहारिक शिक्षा में पाक शास्त्र, कढ़ाई, सिलाई, वस्त्र रंगने, माला, गूँथने, सुगन्धित पदार्थ निर्माण, पुस्तक शिक्षा, चिकित्सा विज्ञान, संगीत, राजनैतिक शिक्षा, सम्यक् दर्शन, सम्यक् धर्म आदि की भी शिक्षा प्रदान की जाती थी जो शायद आज भी अज्ञात है। कुछ बालिकायें प्राचीन इतिहास तथा पौराणिक कथायें भी पढ़ती थी और इतनी शिक्षित थीं कि काव्य रचना कर सकती थीं।

काव्य मीमांसा में उल्लेख मिलता है कि पुरुष के समान नारियाँ भी कवि होती थीं। साहित्य के क्षेत्र में इनकी कृतियों का महत्वपूर्ण योगदान था। हाल ने दक्षिण भारतीय लेखकों व कवियों की रचनाओं का संकलन "गाथा सप्तशती" नामक ग्रन्थ में किया है जिनमें सात कवयित्रियों की रचनायें हैं। रेवा, रोहा, माधवी, अनुलक्ष्मी, पाहई, बद्धवही, शशिप्रभा उल्लेखनीय हैं।¹⁶ राजशेखर की पत्नी अवन्ति सुन्दरी कवयित्री व विदुषी थी। वह उत्कृष्ट काव्य रचना करती थी तथा उसने स्थानीय शब्दों का शब्द कोष बनाया था।¹⁷ शंकर व मण्डन मिश्र के मध्य हुए शास्त्रार्थ की निर्णायिका मण्डन मिश्र की पत्नी भारती थी जो तर्क साहित्य वेदान्त मीमांसा जैसे विषयों की पण्डिता थी।¹⁸

अल्तेकर के अनुसार "कोमुदी महोत्सव" नाटक की रचना विद्या अथवा विज्जका नामक लेखिका द्वारा की गई। आठवीं शताब्दी में अरबी भाषा में अनुवाद की गई पुस्तक प्राप्त होती है जिसकी लेखिका चिकित्सक

रूसा थी। इस कृति में धातु-कर्म (मिडवाइफ) पर प्रकाश डाला गया है। इससे स्पष्ट होता है कि नारियों की रूचि आयुर्वेद नारी चिकित्सा में भी थी।

बारहवीं शताब्दी के अन्त में भास्कर द्वितीय ने अपनी पुत्री लीलावती को गणित का अध्ययन कराने के लिए "लीलावती ग्रंथ" की रचना की। इससे सिद्ध होता है कि नारियों की गणित में रूचि थी। चौहान शासक गूवक की बहन कलावती चौसठ कलाओं में प्रवीण थी।

निर्धन परिवारों की कन्याएँ शिक्षा से वंचित थीं। वही साधारण परिवार की कन्याएँ घर पर ही माता-पिता भाई-बन्धु आदि से गृह संबंधी तथा साहित्यिक शिक्षा प्राप्त करती थी। किन्तु अभिजात्य व राज-परिवारों की कन्याओं के लिए विशेष व्यवस्था सुविधाएं उपलब्ध हो जाने के कारण वे सभी प्रकार की साहित्यिक, कलात्मक, राजनैतिक तथा युद्ध संबंधी शिक्षा प्राप्त कर लेती थीं। नारियों का यही वर्ग तदयुगीन नारी समाज को गौरव प्रदान करता है किन्तु ऐसे सम्पन्न परिवार नगण्य थे।

राजघराने की राजकुमारियों एवं सामंत कुमारियों को राजनीति व युद्ध कौशल से संबंधित शिक्षा प्रदान की जाती थी। विवेच्य युग में कुछ ऐसी नारियों के प्रसंग मिलते हैं, जिन्होंने पति तथा पुत्र के अभाव में स्वयं प्रशासन का संचालन व युद्ध में सेना का नेतृत्व किया। इस प्रकार स्पष्ट होता है कि प्राचीन काल से पूर्व मध्यकाल तक नारियों की शिक्षा पर उनकी सामाजिक परिस्थितियों का प्रभाव था।

निष्कर्ष

भारत में ही नहीं वरन् विश्व के अन्य धर्मों में नारी की स्थिति समयानुसार बदलती रही है। युगों से उत्थान-पतन की तरंगों में झूलती नारी को कभी सम्मान का स्वर्णिम शिखर मिला तो कभी अधोपतन की मझधार स्त्रियों की स्थिति में वैदिक युग से लेकर पूर्व मध्य युग तक अनेक उतार-चढ़ाव आते रहे हैं तथा उसे अधिकारों में भी तदनु रूप परिवर्तन होते रहे। वैदिक ग्रंथों से ज्ञात होता है कि प्राचीन काल में नारियों को शिक्षा, धर्म, विवाह आदि विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में स्वतंत्रता प्राप्त थी व पुरुषों के समान अधिकार प्राप्त थे। वे स्वतंत्रतापूर्वक पुरुषों के साथ विद्वानों की गोष्ठियों में और दार्शनिक वाद-विवादों में भाग लेती थी। उन्हें हर क्षेत्र में पुरुषों के समान अवसर उपलब्ध थे। मौर्यकाल पर लिखी गयी पुस्तकों के अध्ययन से भी ज्ञात होता है कि मौर्यकाल में भी महिलाओं को प्राचीन काल की भांति गौरवशाली व सम्माननीय स्थान प्राप्त था। उन्हें भी शिक्षा प्राप्त करने, यज्ञ करने के समान अवसर प्राप्त थे। गृहकार्य से लेकर कृषि, पशुपालन, प्रशासन, यज्ञ, कर्म से लेकर आध्यात्म साधना तक के कोई भी क्षेत्र स्त्रियों के विशिष्ट व्यक्तित्व, प्रतिभा एवं कौशल की छाप से अछूते नहीं थे। किन्तु परवर्ती काल में उसकी स्थिति में परिवर्तन प्रारम्भ हो गया तथा पूर्व मध्यकाल में शैक्षणिक अधिकारों में हास होता गया। अतः यह तुलनात्मक अध्ययन यह स्पष्ट करता है कि नारी प्रत्येक समय में अनेक संकटों से जूझते हुए भी अपने अस्तित्व को बचाकर रखती है।

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भारतीय स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन एवं आंदोलन में संघर्षरत महिला

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सारांश

इतिहास हमेशा व्यक्तित्व के बारे में भावनात्मक जुड़ाव से अलग है। महिलाओं के साथ असमानताकारी व्यवहार व शोषण, उत्पीड़न एवं अपराध का इतिहास लंबा एवं पुराना है। फिर भी भारतीय संदर्भ में यदि हम बात करें तो स्वतंत्रता से पूर्व भारतीय समाज का स्त्री संघर्ष थमा नहीं था। यह गौरतलब है कि संसार में परमात्मा ने स्त्री-शक्ति का मुकाबला करने वाली कोई दूसरी शक्ति उत्पन्न नहीं की। वास्तव में भारतीय इतिहास में गौरवपूर्ण अध्याय के निर्माण कार्य में जितना सहयोग स्त्री शक्ति ने दिया है उतना अभी तक किसी ने नहीं दिया। भारत के स्वाधीनता संग्राम में आक्रमणकारियों के विरुद्ध सदैव स्त्री शक्ति अग्रणी रही। अंग्रेजी शासन के विरुद्ध भारतीय स्वतंत्रता संग्राम अनेक दौरों से गुजरा। 1857 के विद्रोह में विश्व के सबसे महान् व शक्तिशाली साम्राज्य ब्रिटिश को चुनौती दी गई। 1857 के इस विद्रोह में झांसी की रानी लक्ष्मीबाई, बेगम हजरत महल जैसी वीरांगनाओं का योगदान विशेष उल्लेखनीय रहा। गांधी युग में राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन जन आंदोलन में परिवर्तित हो गया। इस युग में सभी धर्मों व सम्प्रदायों के अनुयायियों तथा जनता के प्रत्येक वर्ग ने बढ़-चढ़ कर भाग लिया। इस कार्य में महिलाएँ भी पीछे नहीं रही। आरंभ से लेकर अंत तक उन्होंने न केवल शांतिपूर्ण आंदोलनों में सक्रिय भाग लिया अपितु वे क्रांतिकारी गतिविधियों में भी सक्रिय रही। राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन में भाग लेकर महिलाओं ने न केवल ब्रिटिश शासन के विरुद्ध तीखी प्रतिक्रिया व्यक्त की बल्कि गिरफ्तार भी हुई। कुल मिलाकर महिलाओं के अंदर इस समय जो राष्ट्रचेतना पैदा हुई थी उसने यह सिद्ध कर दिया कि वे एक ऐसी राष्ट्रीय शक्ति हैं जो राष्ट्र की स्वाधीनता और अधिकारों लिए सभी बंधनों से उन्मुक्त होकर लड़ सकती हैं। इस समय जिन स्त्रियों ने इतिहास में अपना नाज दर्ज कराया था। राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन का इतिहास तमाम ऐसी महिलाओं के साहस, त्याग व बलिदान से भरा पड़ा है। बहरहाल, राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन के इतिहास में अपने आपको महिलाओं की भागीदारी के स्रोतों को प्रस्तुत आलेख में इंगित करता है।

मुख्य शब्द:

1857, ब्रिटिश, राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन, विद्रोह, महिलाएँ, देशीय चरित्र, देश, अंग्रेज, भारतीय इतिहास,

प्रस्तावना

भारतीय स्वतंत्रता-आन्दोलन का इतिहास स्वतंत्रता के लिए भारतीयों के संघर्ष की अद्भुत गाथा है। इस संघर्ष में पुरुषों और महिलाओं ने समान रूप से भाग लिया। भारतीय महिलाओं का योगदान इसमें इसलिए भी महत्वपूर्ण हो जाता है कि उनका सामाजिक उत्थान हुए बहुत लंबा समय व्यतीत नहीं हुआ था। घर का मोर्चा हो या राजनीति का रणक्षेत्र, महिलाओं ने जिस साहस, सहिष्णुता और वीरता से स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन में अपनी भूमिका निभाई, वह इतिहास की अनमोल धरोहर है। 1857 के महान विद्रोह, जिसे भारत का प्रथम स्वतंत्रता संग्राम माना जाता है। इस आंदोलन ने भारत में अंग्रेजी राज की जड़ों को हिला दिया था। भारतीय स्वतंत्रता के इस महान संग्राम में दो वीरांगनाओं का नाम प्रमुखता से लिया जाता है—एक तो लखनऊ की बेगम हजरत महल और दूसरी झाँसी की रानी लक्ष्मीबाई। इनके पूर्व 1824 में कितूर (कर्नाटक) की रानी चैनम्मा ने अंग्रेजी सत्ता के विरुद्ध 'फिरंगियों भारत छोड़ो' का बिगुल बजाया था। सर हयूरोज ने झाँसी की लक्ष्मीबाई के अद्भूत पराक्रम से चकित होकर कहा कि विद्रोह की नेताओं में लक्ष्मीबाई सर्वाधिक बहादुर एवं सर्वश्रेष्ठ है। हालांकि रामगढ़ की रानी ने जहाँ रणक्षेत्र में लड़ते-लड़ते अपने प्राणों का आहूति दी। वहीं बेगम हजरत महल अंग्रेजों के समक्ष आत्म समर्पण कर अपमानित होने के बजाए नेपाल की ओर चल पड़ी, जहाँ वनवास में उनकी मृत्यु हुई और जीनत महल को बर्मा में निर्वासित कैदी के रूप में जीवन व्यतीत करना पड़ा।

1857 महाविद्रोह की पृष्ठभूमि

भारत को स्वतंत्र कराने का जो अभियान था वह यद्यपि गांधी जी के राजनीति में आगमन के बाद व्यापक स्तर पर शुरू हुआ। परन्तु देश को स्वतंत्र कराने का अभियान बहुत पहले ही शुरू हो चुका था। 1857 के विद्रोह ने ब्रिटिश सत्ता का अंत करने के प्रयास को

लेकर सर्वप्रथम शक्तिशाली साम्राज्य को चुनौती दी। “1857 के संग्राम का शुभारंभ सर्वप्रथम सैनिक छावनियों से हुआ। जवान मंगल पांडे द्वारा अपने सार्जेंट पर गोली चलाने के साथ ही क्रांति का बिगुल बज उठा।”

देखते ही देखते यह स्वतंत्रता संग्राम कानपुर, लखनऊ, बनारस, इलाहाबाद, बरेली, जगदीशपुर और झाँसी आदि जगह पर फैल गया तथा नाना साहब, तात्या टोपे, महारानी लक्ष्मीबाई, मौलवी अहमदशाह, कुंवर सिंह जैसे अनेक नेता इस संग्राम से जुड़ गए। 1857 ई. की क्रांति को अंग्रेज विद्वान ‘सिपाही विद्रोह’ की संज्ञा देकर तथा एक आकस्मिक घटना बताकर टाल देते हैं। लेकिन “1857 का विद्रोह कोरा विद्रोह नहीं था बल्कि स्वाधीनता संघर्ष था। जिससे प्रायः सभी राष्ट्रवादी नेताओं ने बाद में प्रेरणा ली।” 1857 के स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में जहाँ वीर योद्धाओं ने अपनी जान दाँव पर लगाई वहीं हमारी वीरांगनाओं ने भी अंग्रेजों का डटकर मुकाबला किया। झाँसी की रानी लक्ष्मीबाई, बेगम हजरत महल, अवन्ती बाई लोदी, टेस बाई और अजीजन जैसी अनेक वीरांगनाओं ने युद्ध में अंग्रेजों के सम्मुख अपना लोहा मनवाया।

1857 ई. के प्रथम भारतीय स्वतंत्रता संग्राम और उसके बाद के आंदोलनों में स्त्री का सराहनीय योगदान होते हुए भी इतिहास में उसके साथ न्याय नहीं किया गया। इन साहसी स्त्रियों में उदादेवी पासी, आशा देवी, झलकारी बाई, अवन्ती बाई, वीरांगना अजीजन बाई आदि नाम उल्लेखनीय हैं। चारु गुप्ता उल्लेख करती हैं कि ‘वीरांगनाओं के आख्यान भारतीय अतीत में उनकी सधन उपस्थिति से भरे हुए हैं। दरअसल 1857 के सशस्त्र संघर्ष में महिला प्रतीकों की संख्या पुरुषों से कहीं ज्यादा है।’

सन् 1857 की आजादी की लड़ाई हमारे देश के इतिहास की अमर गाथा है। ब्रिटिश ईस्ट इंडिया कंपनी के कुशासन के खिलाफ भारतीय जनता का यह देशव्यापी युद्ध था। अंग्रेज और उनके चाटुकार इतिहासकारों ने इस युद्ध को म्युटिनी अर्थात् गदर का नाम दिया। गदर का मतलब होता है, राजा के खिलाफ बगावत। भारतीय जनता ने शस्त्र उठाए थे विदेशी इजारेदारों के विरुद्ध, न कि भारतीय नरेशों के विरुद्ध। आजादी की इस लड़ाई में राजा-बहादुरशाह ने साफ कहा था कि अंग्रेजों को देश से निकाल देने के बाद जनता जिसे चाहे अपना शासक बनाए। यह घोषणा साफ बताती है कि 1857 का संघर्ष गदर नहीं, बल्कि

राष्ट्र की मुक्ति के लिए जनता का सशस्त्र स्वातंत्र्य युद्ध था। 1857 के गदर में देशवासियों ने जमकर अंग्रेजों से लोहा लिया।

बेगम हजरत महल और रानी लक्ष्मीबाई के दल में तमाम महिलाएं शामिल थीं। लखनऊ में बेगम हजरत महल की महिला सैनिक दल की लीडर रही थी, जिसने फौजी भेष धारण कर अनेकों महिलाओं को तोप और बंदूक चलाना सिखाया। रहीमी के नेतृत्व में इस दल ने अंग्रेजों के छक्के छुड़ा दिए। लखनऊ में एक तवायफ हैदरीबाई थी जिसके कोठे पर अनेकों 'अंग्रेज अफसर आते थे और क्रांतिकारियों के खिलाफ योजना पर चर्चा करते थे। हैदरीबाई उनकी योजनाओं को क्रांतिकारियों तक पहुँचा देती थीं। इस प्रकार हैदरीबाई ने देश की प्रति अपने फर्ज को निभाया।

तुलसीपुर रियासत की रानी राजेश्वरी देवी और अवध की बेगम राजेश्वरी देवी और अवध की बेगम आलिया ने भी अपने अद्भुत कारनामों से अंग्रेजी हुकुमत को चुनौती दी। रानी लक्ष्मीबाई का महिला दल 'दुर्गा दल' का नेतृत्व झलकारीबाई के हाथों में था जो कि कुश्ती, घुड़सवारी और धनुर्विद्या में माहिर थीं। झलकारीबाई ने कसम ली थी कि जब तक झाँसी स्वतंत्र नहीं होगा तब तक न ही मैं श्रृंगार करूंगी और न ही सिंदूर लगाऊँगी। रानी की सेना में मोतीबाई और रानी के साथ चौबीस घंटे साये की तरह रहने वाली सुन्दर-मुन्दर, काशीबाई, जूही और दुर्गाबाई भी दुर्गादल की ही सदस्य थी। इन सभी ने अपनी जान की बाजी लगाकर रानी लक्ष्मीबाई की रक्षा की और अंत में वीरगति को प्राप्त हुईं।

कश्मीर की प्रसिद्ध कवयित्री ललहद स्वतंत्रता के गीत रचती रहीं और आंदोलनकारियों में उत्साह भरती रहीं। सीधे तौर पर सर्वप्रथम स्वतंत्रता की जंग लड़ने वाली स्त्रियों में नवाब वाजिद अली शाह की पत्नी बेगम हजरत महल का नाम आता है। नवाब के नजरबंद होने के बाद बेगम हजरत महल ने 7 जुलाई 1857 से अवध का शासन अपने हाथ में ले लिया और हाथी पर सवार होकर वे युद्ध क्षेत्र का दौरा करती जिससे अंग्रेज चिढ़ जाते। स्वतंत्रता को लेकर उनके अंदर जो आग थी उसका पता उनकी कविता से लगता है।

इतिहास में पीछे चलें तो एक और नाम सुनने को मिलता है वह है सन् 1824 में अंग्रेजों के खिलाफ भारत छोड़ों का बिगुल बजाने वाली कित्तूर (कर्नाटक) की रानी चेनम्मा का। चेनम्मा ने अपने साहस और दृढ़ निश्चय के बल पर अंग्रेजों के छक्के छुड़ा दिए। चेनम्मा को अंग्रेजों से लोहा लेने वाली प्रथम वीरांगना माना जाता है।

झाँसी की रानी लक्ष्मीबाई जिन्होंने भावी पीढ़ी की महिला स्वतंत्रता सेनानियों के लिए वीरता एवं महान नेतृत्व का उदाहरण प्रस्तुत किया, उन्होंने झाँसी के राज्याध्यक्ष गंगाधर राव से विवाह किया था। अपने पति की मृत्यु के बाद उन्हें अंग्रेजी सरकार ने उत्तराधिकारी गोद लेने की अनुमति प्रदान नहीं की तथा अंग्रेजों ने लैप्स की नीति के द्वारा झाँसी को अपने कब्जे में कर लिया। क्रांति का आरंभ होने पर उन्होंने लड़ने का निश्चय किया। रणभूमि में उन्होंने पुरुषों की भांति भाग लिया। अपने घोड़े की लगाम अपने मुँह में लेकर वे दोनों हाथों से तलवार चलाया करती थीं। उनके नेतृत्व में रानी के दल ने निर्भीक साहस का परिचय दिया तथा हर वार का बदला वार से लिया। अंग्रेजों के द्वारा विद्रोहियों में सबसे बहादुर सेनानी कही जाने वाली इस साहसिक स्त्री ने रणभूमि में वीरगति हासिल किया। तब से जब भी स्त्रियों के विषय में चर्चा की जाती है तो मस्तिष्क में सबसे पहला नाम झाँसी की रानी लक्ष्मीबाई उभर का आता है। पुरुषों की वेशभूषा ओढ़े एक बहादुर स्त्री जो अंग्रेजी दल के विरुद्ध अपनी सेना का नेतृत्व करती है। यहाँ तक कि उसके दुश्मन भी उसकी बहादुरी का लोहा मानते हैं। वे शूरवीरों की तरह लड़ीं और यहाँ तक कि घायलावस्था में भी उन्होंने आत्मसमर्पण करने से इंकार कर दिया और एक सेनानी की तरह वे आखिरी दम तक लड़ती रहीं। उनकी विशिष्ट बहादुरी भारत में अनेक पुरुषों और स्त्रियों को विदेशी शासन के विरुद्ध उठ खड़े होने की प्रेरणा देती रही है।

ऐसा नहीं था कि केवल राज परिवार से जुड़ी वीरांगनाओं ने ही स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन में भाग लिया था। आम भारतीय महिलाओं का योगदान भी किसी मायने में कम नहीं था। अजीजन बाई ऐसी ही महिला थी जो राज परिवार से ताल्लुक नहीं रखती थीं पर उन्होंने आजादी की जंग में अपना योगदान दिया। अजीजन बाई ने अपने समान युवतियों को इकट्ठा कर एक टोली बनाई। यह टोली सदैव मर्दाना भेष में रहती और घोड़ों पर सवार होकर

नौजवानों को देश की आजादी में अपना सर्वस्व न्यौछावर कर देने के लिए आमंत्रित करती। इसी के साथ अंग्रेजों से लड़ाई में घायल हुए सैनिकों का उपचार भी करती। अजीजन दिन रात मिलिट्री की यूनिफार्म पहने रहती। अजीमुल्ला खाँ जो नाना साहब के खास वफादार थे वे अजीजन की बहादुरी से बहुत प्रभावित थे। इसी कड़ी में मैना देवी जो नाना साहब की बेटी थी का नाम भी शामिल है। मैना को क्रांति का महत्वपूर्ण काम सौंपा गया था, इसी कार्य के दौरान एक दिन उसे अंग्रेजों ने पकड़ लिया और उससे उसके साथियों का नाम पूछा। उसे अनेक तरह की प्रताड़ना दी गई परंतु उसने मुँह नहीं खोला। परिणामतः उसे अंग्रेजों ने जिंदा जला दिया।

निष्कर्ष

इस प्रकार राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन में महिलाओं ने सक्रिय भूमिका निभाई। वे घर की चार दिवारी से बाहर निकली और अपनी अपूर्व राष्ट्रीय भावना का परिचय दिया। कई ने तो देश की आजादी के लिए हथियार भी उठा लिए। 10857 ई. का विद्रोह हमारे इतिहास का एक ऐसा अध्याय है जिसने भारतीय राष्ट्रीय स्वतंत्रता संग्राम का प्रारंभ किया तथा इतिहास में कालजयी परिवर्तन कर दिया। इस विद्रोह को एक युगांतकारी घटना भी माना जाता है क्योंकि इस विद्रोह ने भविष्य में होने वाले भारतीय स्वतंत्रता संग्राम की पृष्ठभूमि तैयार की। इस विद्रोह में देश के अधिकांश क्षेत्रों के लोगों ने भाग लिया दरअसल, सिपाही विद्रोह से शुरू होकर यह क्रमशः देश के व्यापक क्षेत्रों में फैलता गया जिसमें विभिन्न तबकों, संप्रदायों, जातियों और स्त्री-पुरुषों की भागीदारी हुई। विद्रोह की व्यापकता ही इसे भारत का प्रथम स्वतंत्रता संग्राम बनाती है। इस विद्रोह में हिन्दु-मुसलमानों ने एकजुट होकर भाग लिया। इसके अलावा राजा-महाराजा, किसान, मजदूर, शिल्पकार आदि लोगों ने भी सक्रिय रूप से भाग लिया।

महिलाओं ने देश के स्वतंत्रता समर की प्रत्येक रणनीति में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई है। स्त्रियों के द्वारा अपने लिए मताधिकार की माँग को लेकर लड़ना हो या देश को स्वतंत्र कराने में अपना सर्वस्व न्यौछावर करने की बात हो, स्त्रियों ने सभी क्षेत्रों में पूरी तत्परता के साथ

काम किया। वैदिक काल के बाद भले ही नारी इस समय पुरुषों से अनेक क्षेत्रों में पीछे थी लेकिन इन्होंने पुरुषों के साथ कंधे से कंधा मिलाकर अपने देश के स्वतंत्रता संघर्ष में भाग लिया। असंख्य महिलाओं के स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन में भाग लेने के कारण ही आजादी का यह महान आंदोलन सक्रिय बन पड़ा। स्त्रियों ने देश के प्रति प्रेम भावना का परिचय देते हुए व उसे स्वतंत्र कराने के लिए सभी तरीको से अपना योगदान दिया। शांति प्रिय आंदोलनों से लेकर क्रांतिकारी आन्दोलनों में स्त्रियों ने महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई। महिलाओं ने राष्ट्रीय आन्दोलन के इतिहास में अपने आप को विविध आयामों के साथ प्रस्तुत किया।

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हिन्दी नव जागरण और प्रेमचंद के उपन्यासों में नारी-मुक्ति

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सहायक प्राध्यापक (हिन्दी)

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सारांश

आज भारतीय और पश्चिमी दोनों नजरिये से नारी-स्वातंत्र्य, नारी-अस्मिता और नारी-मुक्ति पर बहस हो रही है। साहित्य का केन्द्रीय विषय आज स्त्री-विमर्श ही है। भारत के स्वाधीनता संग्राम के समय स्वतंत्रता की चरम कामना के कारण कितनी रुढ़ियाँ खंडित हो गईं और स्त्री भी स्वतंत्रता आन्दोलन में कूद पड़ी तथा वह भी पुरुषों के साथ कंधे से कंधा मिलाकर संघर्ष करती रही। मानव सृष्टि की मूलाधार वास्तव में स्त्री ही है। स्त्री की भूमिका सृष्टि के विकास के साथ समाज और परिवार के निर्माण में भी अतिविशिष्ट रही है। पुरुष और स्त्री एक-दूसरे के पूरक हैं। पौराणिक मान्यता है कि प्रलय के बाद निःशक्त मनु को श्रद्धा की क्रियाशीलता ने चेतनशील किया। भारतीय संस्कृति में यह माना जाता है –“जहाँ नारियों की पूजा होती है, वहाँ देवताओं का वास होता है।” स्त्रियाँ सदा से सृजन शक्ति के रूप में पूजित रही हैं। स्वतंत्रता प्राप्ति के पश्चात स्त्री संघर्ष करती हुई दशक दर दशक विकास की सीढ़ियाँ चढ़ने लगीं। उसे पुरानी सामन्ती पुरुष परम्पराओं से लगातार जूझना पड़ा फिर घरेलू परतंत्रता से आजाद होकर वह शिक्षित हुई, नौकरी की, राजनीतिक तथा सामाजिक स्तर की कितनी ही ऊंचाइयों को छुई, विकास जारी है।

आज भारतीय और पश्चिमी दोनों नजरिये से नारी-स्वातंत्र्य, नारी-अस्मिता और नारी-मुक्ति पर बहस हा रही है। साहित्य का केन्द्रीय विषय आज स्त्री-विमर्श ही है। भारत के स्वाधीनता संग्राम के समय स्वतंत्रता की चरम कामना के कारण कितनी रुढ़ियाँ खंडित हो गईं और स्त्री भी स्वतंत्रता आन्दालन में कूद पड़ी तथा वह भी पुरुषा के साथ कंधे से कंधा मिलाकर संघर्ष करती रही। मानव सृष्टि की मूलाधार वास्तव में स्त्री ही है। स्त्री की भूमिका सृष्टि के विकास के साथ समाज और परिवार के निर्माण में भी अतिविशिष्ट रही है। पुरुष और स्त्री एक-दूसरे के पूरक हैं। पौराणिक मान्यता है कि प्रलय के बाद निःशक्त मनु को श्रद्धा की क्रियाशीलता ने चेतनशील किया। भारतीय संस्कृति में यह माना जाता ह –“जहाँ नारियों की पूजा होती है, वहाँ दवताओं का वास हाता है।” स्त्रियाँ सदा से सृजन शक्ति के

रूप में पूजित रही हैं। आधुनिक युग को सर्वाधिक सशक्त व्यक्तित्व सम्पन्न कवयित्री महादेवी वर्मा जी ने नारी के महत्व को इन शब्दों में व्यक्त किया है—“नारी केवल मास—पिंड की संज्ञा नहीं है, आदि काल से आज तक के विकास पथ पर पुरुष का साथ देकर, उसकी यात्रा को सरल बनाकर, उसके अभिशापों को स्वयं झेलकर और अपने वरदानों से जीवन में अक्षय शक्ति भरकर मानवी ने जिस व्यक्ति—चेतना और हृदय का विकास किया है, उसी का पर्याय नारी है।” स्वतंत्रता प्राप्ति के पश्चात स्त्री संघर्ष करती हुई दशक दर दशक विकास की सीढ़ियाँ चढ़ने लगीं। उसे पुरानी सामन्ती पुरुष परम्पराओं से लगातार जूझना पड़ा फिर घरेलू परतंत्रता से आजाद होकर वह शिक्षित हुई, नौकरी की, राजनीतिक तथा सामाजिक स्तर की कितनी ही ऊंचाइयों को छुई, विकास जारी है।

भारतेन्दु युग से हिन्दी उपन्यास की विकास यात्रा का श्रीगणेश माना जाता है। यद्यपि भारतेन्दु ने स्वयं कोई मौलिक उपन्यास नहीं लिखा, किन्तु उन्होंने ‘पूर्ण प्रकाश’ और ‘चन्द्रप्रभा’ नामक हिन्दी का मराठी से अनुदित करके प्रथम सामाजिक उपन्यास अवश्य प्रस्तुत किया तथा उनका मौलिक उपन्यास ‘हमीर हठ’ अपूर्ण रहा। सन् 1882 में लाला श्रीनिवास दास के कलकत्ता से प्रकाशित “परीक्षा गुरु” उपन्यास को आचार्य रामचन्द्र शुक्ल सहित अनेक साहित्यिक समीक्षकों ने प्रथम उपन्यास के रूप में मान्यता प्रदान किया है। डॉ० सुरेश सिन्हा, श्रद्धाराम फुल्लौरी कृत उपन्यास ‘भाग्यवती’(1877) से हिन्दी उपन्यास का प्रारंभ मानते हैं— “भाग्यवती” निर्विवाद रूप से हिन्दी का पहला मौलिक एवं आधुनिक उपन्यास है।” राधाकृष्ण दास रचित ‘निस्सहाय हिन्दू’ (1890) को डॉ० गोलाराय हिन्दी का प्रथम उपन्यास स्वीकारते हैं। उनका मानना है कि यह रचना अपने शिल्पगत वैशिष्ट्य के कारण ‘परीक्षा गुरु’ से श्रेष्ठ है। लेकिन नयी खोजों के अनुसार वर्तमान में समीक्षकों ने ठाकुर जगमोहन कृत उपन्यास ‘श्यामा स्वप्न’ को हिन्दी का प्रथम उपन्यास सिद्ध किया है। विद्वाना के अनुसार सन् 1882 ई० से लेकर 1918 तक का कालखण्ड पूर्व प्रेमचंदयुग के रूप में माना जाता है। जबकि 1857 से 1900 ई० तक की कालावधि पुनर्जागरण काल के रूप में प्रसिद्ध है। भारतेन्दु युग और नवजागरण काल परस्पर, पर्याय के रूप में दिखाई पड़ते हैं। इस काल में तिलस्मी, सामाजिक, ऐतिहासिक, ऐय्यारी, रुमानी तथा जासूसी उपन्यासों की रचना होती रही। देवकीनन्दन खत्री की ‘चन्द्रकांता’, बालकृष्ण भट्ट की ‘रहस्यकथा,’ लज्जाराम शर्मा की ‘आदर्श हिन्दू,’ राधाकृष्ण दास की ‘निस्सहाय हिन्दू’ आदि इस समय की प्रतिनिधि औपन्यासिक रचनाएँ हैं। प्रेमचंद पूर्व का उपन्यास साहित्य उद्देश्य की दृष्टि से मूलतः दो जीवन—दृष्टिया पर आधारित है— पहली मनोरंजन की प्रवृत्ति है तथा दूसरी उपदेश की। इस तथ्य के प्रति तत्कालीन लेखक भी सजग थे। ब्रजनंदन सहाय कृत उपन्यास “लालचीन” की भूमिका में भी अवधशरण ने लिखा है—“हिन्दी साहित्य म उपन्यास के प्रायः दो ही उद्देश्य समझे जाते हैं, एक तो मनोरंजन करना और दूसरे कोई उच्च भाव या आदर्श प्रदर्शित करना।” प्रारंभिक उपन्यासकारों का मूल उद्देश्य सुधारवादी दृष्टि को सामने रखकर सनातन धर्म के प्रचार—प्रसार, पश्चिमी संस्कृति, सभ्यता और उनसे प्रभावित उन्मुक्त जीवन और फैशन परस्ती को अपने आक्रमण का लक्ष्य बनाकर प्राचीन नैतिक आदर्शों और भारतीय संस्कृति को प्रतिष्ठित करता रहा। प्रेमचन्द पूर्व औपन्यासिक धारा, विशेषकर— ऐतिहासिक, सामाजिक, प्रेम—रोमांस संबंधी उपन्यासों की मूल प्रवृत्ति उपदेशात्मक रही है, जिसमें सत्य की असत्य पर, पुण्य की पाप पर जीत की

शाश्वत् परम्परागत नैतिकता का निर्वाह किया गया है। नवजागरण कालीन उपन्यासकार अपने सुधारात्मक औपन्यासिक कथ्य के जरिये पाठकों के सामने ऐसा आदर्श पस्तुत करता है जिससे प्रेरित हो पाठक अपने जीवन को उर्ध्वमुखी बना सके। इस काल के स्त्री-प्रधान सामाजिक उपन्यासों में 'रहस्यकथा' (1889), 'देवरानी-जठानी की कहानी' (1870), निस्सहाय हिन्दू (1890), कुसुम कुमारी (1884), आदर्श दम्पति (1904), सुशीला विधवा (1907), आदर्श हिन्दू (1915), माधव-माधवी व मदन-मोहनी (1914), अंगूठी का नगीना (1917) आदि मुख्य हैं। लज्जाराम शर्मा परम्परागत रीति रिवाजों एवं रूढ़ियों का समर्थन करते हुए अपने उपन्यास आदर्श न हिन्दू म सती प्रथा के पक्ष में लिखते हैं - "लोग कहते थे कि उसकी समझ मोटी है परंतु आज उसने दिखा दिया कि पढ़ी-लिखी औरतों वह हजार दर्जे अच्छी निकली। दोनों की बैकुठिया साथ निकलीं, दोनों एक ही चिता पर जलाए गए.....वास्तव में ऐसे ही लोगों का जन्म सार्थक है। भारत में ऐसे ही सज्जनों की आवश्यकता है। पतिव्रत की पराकाष्ठा, सरकारी कानून भी परमेश्वर के कानून के आगे कुछ नहीं।"

लज्जाराम शर्मा का "आदर्श हिन्दू" सबसे बड़ा और प्रतिनिधि उपन्यास है। इस उपन्यास की रचना उन्होंने अपनी पत्नी प्रेमकुंवारी के निधन के पश्चात् आबू-प्रवास में की थी। उनकी दिवंगता पत्नी की स्मृतियाँ इस उपन्यास में स्पष्ट: परिलक्षित होती हैं। पूर्व प्रेमचंद युग के उपन्यासकार किशोरीलाल गोस्वामी ने वेश्या जीवन का हृदयस्पर्शी एवं मार्मिक वर्णन किया है। कुसुम कुमारी को देवदासी-प्रथा के अन्तर्गत किस प्रकार वेश्या के रूप में जीवन समर्पित करना पड़ता है, व्यथित हाकर ही वह कहती है- "संसार में यदि सचमुच किसी का जीना मरने से करोड़ों दर्जे बुरा होता है तो वह वेश्याओं का है।"

'कुसुमकुमारी' उपन्यास हिन्दी का ही नहीं बल्कि सम्पूर्ण भारतीय भाषा का प्रथम उपन्यास है। इस उपन्यास में देवदासी-प्रथा जैसी दूषित प्रथा के खिलाफ आवाज उठायी गयी है। प्रेमचन्द जी के आगमन से हिन्दी उपन्यास जगत में रचनात्मक क्रान्ति हुई। प्रेमचन्द जी हिन्दी साहित्य के क्षेत्र में ऐसे युग-पर्वतक, अमर कलाकार हैं, जिन्होंने जासूसी, ऐय्यारी, मनोरंजनात्मक परिधि में विन्यस्त उपन्यासों की सीमाओं को भंग कर उसमें चिंतन की ऊंचाई, स्वाधीनता का भाव और तत्कालीन राजनीतिक, सामाजिक समस्याओं का वर्णन मानवीय संवेदनाओं की यथार्थता के साथ किया। प्रेमचन्द के उपन्यास के क्षेत्र में अपवू उपादेयताओं को ध्यान में रखते हुए इनके नाम पर एक युग ही चल पड़ा, जिसे हम प्रेमचन्द युग के नाम से जानते हैं। हिन्दी साहित्य में यह कालखण्ड 1936 अपने विशिष्ट पहचान के साथ उपन्यास विधा को अपनी पूरी क्षमता के साथ स्थापित करता है। यह कालखण्ड सांस्कृतिक संकट, राष्ट्रीय चेतना और सांस्कृतिक उथल-पुथल का रहा। राष्ट्रवाद को साम्राज्यवादी शक्तियों ने कुचला था। इसी प्रकार महाजनी सभ्यता और सामंती सभ्यता में टकराव था। ये शक्तियाँ श्रमिकों और किसानों का शोषण कर रही थीं। इस सारे परिदृश्य ने आंदोलन के रूप में जिस चेतना का उदय हुआ उससे राष्ट्रीय एकता की प्रबल भावना का जन्म हुआ। प्रेमचन्द युग में राजाराम मोहन राय से लेकर गोविंद महादेव रानाडे, गांधी, तिलक, गोखले का काल आता है, जिसमें धार्मिक, राजकीय, सामाजिक, आंदोलन से नवचेतना का स्वर मुखरित हा उठा। स्त्री की आत्मशक्ति को इस स्वर से तीव्र रूप से जागृत करने की क्षमता पैदा हुई। प्रेमचन्द

की मानवीय जीवन दृष्टि के मूल में गांधीवादी दर्शन, भारतीय अध्यात्म, समाजवादी विचारधारा और रूसी साहित्य (टालस्टाय, गोर्की आदि) निहित है। उनकी जीवन-दृष्टि का निर्माण इन्होंने सबके मेल से हुआ है, उनकी रचनाओं में जिसका स्पष्ट प्रभाव दिखाई पड़ता है।

प्रेमचन्द के जीवन-दर्शन को यदि हम एक ही शब्द में कहें तो 'मानवतावाद' कहना ही सार्थक प्रतीत होता है। सन 1905 से ही प्रेमचन्द ने उर्दू में लेखन कार्य शुरू कर दिया, लेकिन हिन्दी में उनका पहला उपन्यास सेवासदन सन 1918 में प्रकाशित हुआ और सन 1936 में अन्तिम उपन्यास गोदान प्रकाशित हुआ। इन्द्रनाथ मदान का यह कथन प्रेमचन्द जी के रचना काल के सामाजिक, राजनीतिक, आर्थिक, धार्मिक परिवेश के सम्बन्ध में उल्लेखनीय है "1918 में 1936 तक का समय वह संक्रान्तिकाल है जिसमें किसान जड़ दरिद्रताग्रस्त, उत्पीड़ित और अपने दुर्भाग्य पर रोने वाला था और हाथ पर हाथ धरे बैठी हुई सरकार, जमींदार, साहूकार, अफसर, पुलिस, वकील और पंड पुजारियों द्वारा शोषित हा रहा था।" इस काल में दो नये वर्ग निर्मित हुए—पूँजीपति और मजदूर। सबसे अधिक समस्याएँ मध्यवर्गीय परिवारों में थी क्योंकि उनकी आर्थिक दशा खोखली थी लेकिन उनमें उच्च वर्ग की तरह महत्वाकांक्षाएँ थीं। इस तरह की समस्याएँ निम्न वर्ग में दिखाई नहीं पड़ती इसका कारण यह है कि वे अपनी स्थिति से संतुष्ट थे। यही कारण है कि पूँजीवाद में मध्यवर्ग का संघर्ष अनिवार्य हो गया था और शोषण के खिलाफ यही वर्ग अत्यन्त सजग था। यह काल नारों का उत्थान काल था, जिसने महात्मा गांधी के राजनीतिक आह्वान को सुना। विजयलक्ष्मी पंडित, सरोजनी नायडू, अमृत कोर आदि नारियाँ परम्परागत रुढ़ियों को भंग कर राष्ट्रीय आन्दोलनों सक्रिय रूप से भाग लेने लगीं लेकिन उस समय स्त्री की दशा समाज की परम्परागत अंधविश्वासों, रुढ़ियों, आर्थिक जड़ताओं से ग्रस्त थी। नारी-समाज सुधारिका एनीबेसेन्ट, सरस्वती, रमाबाई, नारी-शिक्षा के लिए आग कदम बढ़ा रही थीं। भारतीयों के जीवन में पाश्चात्य सभ्यता के सुधारवादी दृष्टिकोण के प्रभाव से भी परिवर्तन आया। सामाजिक कुप्रथाओं, कुरीतियों के प्रति आक्रोश बढ़ने लगा। स्त्री के पतनोन्मुख स्थिति को सुधारने के अनेकानेक प्रयत्न किए गए। परम्परा और आधुनिकता का संघर्ष भी इस युग में चल रहा था। जहाँ अपने युग की परिस्थिति को रचनाकार प्रभावित करता है, वही अपने सृजन में वह उससे प्रेरणाएँ भी ग्रहण करता है। दोनों का यह अन्तर्सम्बन्ध आदान-प्रदान का है। अपने युग को रचनाकार कुछ देता है, और उससे कुछ लेता भी है। विशुद्धतः वैचारिक और सांस्कृतिक धरातल पर यह लेन-देन होता है। एक प्रतिभाशाली रचनाकार सामयिक संदर्भों से अपने को अलग करके नहीं देखता, उनसे गहरी संपृक्ति में ही वह अपनी सार्थकता समझता है और यह सही भी है क्योंकि अपने युग के यथार्थ संदर्भों से संपृक्त हुए बिना कोई रचनाकार महती रचना-सृष्टि में समर्थ नहीं हो सकता है। उपन्यास सम्राट प्रेमचन्द की सार्थकता इसी बात में है कि प्रेमचन्द जी ने अपने युगीन संदर्भों की यथार्थता से अपना गहरा संबंध बनाए रखा और 'गोदान' की रचना कर सके। नारी के प्रति प्रेमचन्द जी की अभिव्यक्ति स्नेहमय और सहानुभूतिपूर्ण रही है। इसलिए नारी से जुड़ी समस्याओं के लिए उन्होंने समाज को ही कठघरे में खड़ा करने का प्रयास किया है, व्यक्ति को नहीं। उनके नारी-पात्र प्रायः सामाजिक समस्याओं को लेकर अवतरित हुए हैं। यही कारण है कि पथभ्रष्ट नारी घृणा का पात्र नहीं बल्कि दया का पात्र बनती है। यहाँ पर डॉ० इन्द्रनाथ मदान की पंक्तियाँ

उल्लेखनीय हैं— “वह पाप से घृणा करते हैं, पापी से नहीं जो कि सुधारा जा सकता है। वह प्रत्यक्ष रूप से समाज सुधार की भावना से अनुप्राणित दिखाई देते हैं।” प्रेमचन्द जी स्त्री शिक्षा के प्रबल समर्थक रहे तथा वे भारतीय स्त्रियों की दीन-हीन दशा का वर्णन और चित्रण करके उनके प्रति समाज की धारणा में परिवर्तन लाना चाहते थे, ताकि समाज की प्रमुख धुरी अपने उचित स्थान को प्राप्त कर सक।

‘सुमन’ ‘सेवासदन’ की एक मध्यवर्गीय नारी है, जिस सामाजिक रुढ़ियों के कारण ही कई अनचाहे मार्गों से होकर गुजरना पड़ता है। अपनी थोथी प्रतिष्ठा की रक्षा करने के लिए ही कृष्णचन्द ने घूस लिया और अपने घर की मर्यादा के कारण ‘गजाधर’ ने ‘सुमन’ को घर से बाहर निकाल दिया। मध्यमवर्ग की इस थोथी मर्यादा की जड़ में सामाजिक रुढ़ियों का ही हाथ है। “भीतर-भीतर चाहे जितना व्यभिचार और अनाचार होता रह परन्तु उसे बाहर नहीं प्रकट होना चाहिए।” प्रेमचन्द ने सेवासदन में वेश्या समस्या को उठाया है। वेश्या-समाज के सुधार के लिए उन्होंने लक्ष्य निर्धारित किया। इसके साथ ही उन्होंने अर्थ की समस्या के कारण अनमेल विवाह के परिणाम को भी स्पष्ट किया है। अनमले विवाह की वजह से ‘सेवासदन’ की सुमन असंतुष्ट है और भारतीय नारी के तौर पर पति से समझौता करने का प्रयास करती है। आर्थिक स्थिति ठीक न रहने के कारण आखिर में खिंचाव इतना बढ़ जाता है कि वह दिन भी आता है जब गजाधर (पति) के द्वारा सुमन घर से बहिष्कृत कर दी जाती है। ऐसी स्थिति में किसी का सहारा न पाकर सुमन भोली वेश्या के पास जाती है, जो उसके घर के सामने ही रहती है। वह कुलीन होकर भी वेश्या का जीवन स्वीकार करती है, लेकिन प्रेमचन्द सुमन को वेश्यालय से निकाल ‘सेवा-सदन’ (विधवा आश्रम) में ले आते हैं जहाँ उसका कार्य होता है— वेश्याओं की कन्याओं को पढ़ाना, स्वावलम्बी बनाना और उनका पालन-पोषण करना। इस तरह हम देखते हैं कि प्रेमचन्द व्यक्ति-चरित्र का नहीं बल्कि सामाजिक समस्याओं का उद्घाटन करते हैं। प्रेमचन्द जी ने ‘सेवा-सदन’ उपन्यास में वेश्याओं के हृदय-परिवर्तन के द्वारा समाज से जुड़ी समस्याओं के समाधान और नारी-मुक्ति का सुस्पष्ट संकेत किया है। इस प्रकार यह स्पष्ट है कि प्रेमचन्द-युगीन उपन्यासकारों ने नारी-समस्याओं को प्रभावकारी ढंग से चित्रित किया है। प्रेमचन्द-युग, भारतीय तथा पाश्चात्य-संस्कृति के संघर्ष का समय था। नारी उद्धार का सबसे प्रमुख और आवश्यक समझा गया। प्रेमचन्द-युगीन उपन्यासों में सामाजिक चिंता का बहुत बड़ा हिस्सा नारी जीवन की विषमताओं और उसके विविध प्रकार के प्रतिबन्धों से संबंधित है। बाल-विवाह, दहेज-प्रथा, विधवा-विवाह, वेश्या-व्यवसाय, आदि इस काल की प्रमुख समस्याएँ रही हैं। हिन्दी उपन्यास प्रारंभ से इन समस्याओं से ही परिचित है लेकिन प्रेमचन्द जी के द्वारा इस समस्याओं को व्यापक तथा गंभीर चिंतनभूमि मिल सकी। प्रेमचन्द जी का चित्रण रोमांस मूलक नहीं है बल्कि वस्तुनिष्ठ और अपेक्षाकृत व्यापकत्व से संपृक्त दिखाई पड़ता है। प्रेमचन्द और उनके समसामयिक उपन्यासकारों द्वारा इन सभी विषयों पर मानवीय तथा व्यापक दृष्टि से विचार किया गया है।

इस युग में उपन्यासकार मनोविज्ञान से प्रभावित हो पात्रों के स्वभाव, विशेष-व्यक्तिगत आदि का चित्रण मनोवैज्ञानिक सत्य के आधार पर करने में तल्लीन दिखलाई पड़ते हैं। प्रेमचन्द पूर्व के उपन्यासों में केवल दो प्रकार के ही पात्रों का चित्रण किया जाता था— सत् और असत् पात्र। वस्तुतः “प्रेमचन्द युग की

समाज सुधार की भावना ने 'मानवी' को जन्म दिया और मानवतावादी दृष्टिकोण का विकास किया है।⁹ अतः सुस्पष्ट रूप से हम यह कह सकते हैं कि इस युग में नारी को परखने व देखने के नजरिये में पर्याप्त परिवर्तन दिखलाई पड़ता है, नारी-मुक्ति, नारी-स्वातंत्र्य, आत्मविश्वास युक्त-स्वर, आत्म गौरव, व्यक्तिवादी चेतना इत्यादि अनेकानेक गुणों से आवेष्टित नारी, समाज के विकासोन्मुख पथ पर बढ़ती हुई सुस्पष्ट दिखाई पड़ती है।

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“ भारत की वीरांगनाओं का ऐतिहासिक अनुशीलन”

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शताब्दियों तक भारत वर्ष को एक ओर जहाँ विदेशी आक्रान्ताओं से लड़ना पड़ा वहीं उन्हें अपने पड़ोसी राज्यों से भी संघर्षरत रहना पड़ा । प्राचीन काल से ही हम भारतीय वीरांगनाओं के बारे में सुनते आ रहे हैं । सिकन्दर के आक्रमण की चर्चा करें तो हम देखते हैं कि जब उसने छोटे-छोटे गणराज्यों पर आक्रमण किया तो पुरुषों के पराजित होने पर वहाँ की महिलायें भी युद्ध क्षेत्र में उतर गईं जिसमें एक नाम 'कारुकी' का आता है । इसी प्रकार मध्यकाल और अंग्रेजी शासन में हम भारतीय वीरांगनाओं के कार्यों को भुला नहीं सकते । जब भारत वर्ष का अधिकांश हिस्सा काशी, कौशल, अंग, मगध , कुरु , पांचाल , गांधार ,कम्बोज आदि राज्य जब विदेशी आक्रान्ताओं के हाँथों में चला गया तब महाराष्ट्र , गुजरात , राजस्थान,मध्यप्रदेश आदि राज्यों के राजाओं ही नहीं अपितु रानियों को बलिदान देकर अपने राज्य की रक्षा करने के अनेकों उदाहरणों से हमारा इतिहास गौरवान्वित हो रहा । ऐसे अनेकों अवसर आये, जब राज्य की बागडोर भारतीय वीर माताओं , रानियों को संभालना पड़ा और उन्होंने हँसते- हँसते अपनी जान को न्योछावर करने में तनिक भी संकोच नहीं किया । चाहे वह मध्यकाल की रानी पद्मिनी हों चाहे पन्ना धाय , चाहे रानी दुर्गावती हों चाहे कर्मावती , चाहे रानी फूलकूँवर हों चाहे रानी रत्नावती । इसी प्रकार स्वतंत्रता की लड़ाई में रानी चेन्नमा हों या रानी गिदालू , रानी लक्ष्मीबाई हों या झलकारी बाई ऐसी अनेक विरांगनाएँ हैं जिन सबको यहाँ अंकित करना सम्भव नहीं है । । कहने का तात्पर्य भारतीय इतिहास में वीर नारियों का योगदान भरा पड़ा है । अपने शोध पत्र के माध्यम से मैं कुछ वीरांगनाओं के गौरव गाथा का सूक्ष्म एवं नवीन वर्णन करने का प्रयास करूँगी ।

सिकन्दर के आक्रमण के समय भारतीय राजाओं के संघर्ष का इतिहास हम पढ़ते हैं। सिकन्दर जब कठ गणराज्य पर आक्रमण करता है तो एक वीरांगना का नाम आता है राजकुमारी 'कार्विका'। जिस प्रकार भारतीय शासक पोरस आदि सिकन्दर का डट कर सामना किये उसी प्रकार राजकुमारी कार्विका शेरनी की भाँति सिकन्दर से युद्ध लड़ी और सिकन्दर के शरीर पर तलवार से अनेकों प्रहार किये। हमारा दुर्भाग्य है कि आर्यावर्त की एक ऐसी वीरांगना हैं जिनके बारे में इतिहास में ना तो विस्तापूर्वक लिखा गया है और ना ही कभी सुना गया है।

कठ प्राचीन पंजाब का प्रसिद्ध गणराज्य था। इतिहास में राजकुमारी कार्विका के स्वरूप का वर्णन इन शब्दों में मिलता है— राजकुमारी की शारीरिक ऊँचाई छः फीट, रंग उगते हुए सूर्य की लालिमा की भाँति, मुख पर सौम्यता और क्षात्र तेजयुक्त माँ दुर्गा जैसी तेजस्वी आँखें। उनका प्रिय कार्य था शास्त्र अध्ययन एवं शस्त्र अभ्यास। मात्र दस वर्ष की छोटी आयु में ही धनुर्वेद के ज्ञान में पूर्ण रूप से पारंगत हो चुकी थीं। इसके अलावा उन्होंने कई सारी युद्धकलाओं में विशेषता हासिल कर चुकी थीं। जैसे 1. यन्त्रमुक्त युद्धकला (अस्त्र शस्त्र के उपकरण जैसे धनुष और बाण के उपयोग से विभिन्न प्रकार के तरीके से शत्रु पर प्रहार करने की पद्धति)। 2. पाणिमुक्त युद्धकला (हाथ से फेंके जाने वाले अस्त्र जैसे कि भाला पर बारूद लगा कर फेंकने की पद्धति)। 3. तांगथा युद्धकला (आँखों में पट्टी बांध कर दोनों हाथों में तलवार लिये युद्ध करने की पद्धति)। 4. हस्त अस्त्र युद्ध विद्या (जिसमें हवाओं की रफ्तार से तलवार चलाया जाता था) और 5. नियुद्ध अर्थात् बिना हथियार के युद्ध करना जिसे आज हम 'मार्शलआर्ट' कहते हैं। सिकन्दर जब सिंध की ओर से सर्वप्रथम कठ गणराज्य में भयंकर तबाही और नरसंहार करते हुए बढ़ा तब राजकुमारी कार्विका ने अपने सैन्यबल को एकत्रित कर हुंकार भर रणभेरी फूँक कर युद्ध की घोषणा कर दिया। राजकुमारी ने स्त्री सेना का निर्माण कर उसका नाम चंडीसेना रखा। इतिहास में मिले साक्ष्यों के अनुसार इस चंडीसेना में 1300 अश्वारोही स्त्रियाँ, 3500 पैदल स्त्रियाँ, कुछ हजार के लगभग धनुर्धारी एवं ढालधारी स्त्रियाँ थीं। कुल लगभग 10 से 12 हजार तक का सैन्यबल था। सम्पूर्ण विश्व धरा के इतिहास में ऐसी पहली सेना बनी थी जो केवल वीरांगना नारियों की सेना थी। इस युद्ध में कार्विका ने बहुत ही सूझ-बूझ, शांत चित, कुशल एवं अचूक रणनीति और अपने युद्ध व्यूह से सिकन्दर को पराजित करने का निश्चय किया। सिकन्दर से युद्ध करने में कार्विका ने युद्ध की विभिन्न नीतियों का सहारा लिया। प्रथम 'ल्यूर द टाइगर ऑफ द डेन' अर्थात् 'शेर को उसकी माँद से बाहर ले आना'। इस नीति से राजकुमारी ने सिकन्दर की सेना की 35000 सैन्यबल को अपने मूलस्थान से दूर ले जाकर बुरी तरह परास्त किया। द्वितीय 'डिसेप्शन' अर्थात् भ्रमजाल नीति को अपना कर कार्विका ने सिकन्दर के 40000 सैनिकों के दस्ते में से 8 हजार को जान बचा कर भागने पर विवश किया। इस 'डिसेप्शन युद्ध' की चर्चा सन् जू के पुस्तक 'युद्धकला' में भी प्राप्त होता है। तीसरी नीति में राजकुमारी कार्विका ने 'औरमी व्यूह पद्धति' का प्रयोग किया। इस बार सिकन्दर स्वयं 75000 सैन्यबल के साथ आ खड़ा हुआ। इस बार राजकुमारी ने औरमी व्यूह में सेना को इस प्रकार सुसज्जित किया जिस प्रकार समुद्र में लहरें दिखाई देती हैं। इस व्यूह की विशेषता यह होती है कि इसमें संख्या की कमी को छुपाया जा सकता है। इस युद्ध में राजकुमारी ने सिकन्दर को अंत तक अपने सैन्यबल की कमी का अनुमान नही होने दिया। इस भीषण प्रलयकारी युद्ध में राजकुमारी ने तलवारों के प्रहारों से

सिकन्दर की बाँह और पेट को चीर दिया था जिससे सिकन्दर के आंतों पर गहरा घाव हो गया। इस युद्ध में सिकन्दर को सिंध के पार खदेड़ने में राजकुमारी सफल हुई। सिकन्दर की डेढ़ लाख की सेना में से 25000 के लगभग ही सेना शेष बची थी। इस युद्ध में सिकन्दर ने दुबारा कठ गणराज्य में आक्रमण न करने का आश्वासन दिया और दंडरूपी जुर्माना देकर वापस लौट गया। इस युद्ध में कठ गणराज्य के 8500 में से 2750 साहसी वीरांगनाएँ बलिदान हुईं जिसमें से कुछ वीरांगनाओं के ही नाम इतिहास के पन्नों में मिलते हैं। इनमें से कुछ के नाम हैं— गरिण्या, मृदुला, सौरायमिनि, जया इत्यादि। राजकुमारी कारुकी की युद्ध की निपुणता को देखकर मन सोचने पर विवश हो जाता है कि भारतवर्ष का दुर्भाग्य है इतनी वीर महिला वीरांगना का इतिहास क्यों अंधेरे में है। हमें ऐसी वीरांगनाओं को अपने शोध कार्य के माध्यम से आगे लाना चाहिए एवं उनके इतिहास को उजागर कर उनको न्याय दिलाना चाहिए जो कि राजकुमारी के प्रति हमारी सच्ची श्रद्धांजलि होगी।¹

इसी क्रम में महिला वीरांगनाओं के नाम में सिन्धु नरेश राजा दाहिर की पत्नी, पुत्री एवं बहन का नाम बड़े ही सम्मान से लिया जाता है। सिन्धु के राजा दाहिर सेन ने युद्धभूमि में लड़ते हुए प्राणाहूति दे दी। जिसके पश्चात् उनकी पत्नी, बहिन और दोनों पुत्रियों ने भी अपना बलिदान देकर भारत में एक नवीन परम्परा का सूत्रपात किया। राजा दाहिर सेन एक प्रजावत्सल सम्राट एवं गोरक्षक के रूप में विख्यात थे। 712 ई0 में ईरान के शासक हज्जाम ने अपने सेनापति मोहम्मद बिन कासिम को एक विशाल सेना देकर सिन्धु पर हमला करने के लिए भेजा। धोखे से उसने राजा दाहिर सेन की हत्या कर दी। दाहिर सेन के बलिदान के पश्चात् उनकी पत्नी लाडी देवी बहिन पद्मा ने भी युद्ध का मोर्चा सम्भाला। फरिश्ता कहता है – 'रानी लाडी पहले तो मुहम्मद कासिम से लड़ी फिर गढ़ सजकर वह वीरांगना शस्त्र पकड़े शत्रु से युद्ध करती हुई स्वर्गलोक को सिधारी।'²

कासिम ने राजा का कटा सिर, छत्र और उनकी दोनों पुत्रियों सूर्या और परमाल को बगदाद के खलीफा के पास उपहार स्वरूप भेज दिया। जब खलीफा ने उन वीरांगनाओं का आलिंगन करना चाहा, तो उन्होंने रोते हुए कहा कि कासिम ने उन्हें अपवित्र कर आपके पास भेजा है। इससे खलीफा भड़क गया। उसने तुरन्त दूत भेजकर कासिम को सूखी खाल में सिलकर हाजिर करने का आदेश दिया। जब कासिम की लाश खलीफा के पास पहुँची तो उसने गुस्से से लात मारी। दोनों बहिनें महल के छत पर खड़ी देखकर हँसते हुए कही कि हमने अपने देश के अपमान का बदला ले लिया है। यह कहते हुए उन्होंने एक दूसरे के सीने में विषभरी कटार घोप दी और नीचे खाई में कूद पड़ी। खलीफा अपना सिर पीटता रह गया।³

राजपूत काल में स्त्रियों का बड़ा आदर होता रहा और वे वीर पत्नी, वीरमाता कहलाने में अपना गौरव मानती थीं। उन वीरांगनाओं का पातिव्रत धर्म, शूरवीरता और साहस भी जगद् विख्यात है। इसके अनेक उदाहरण इतिहास में पाये जाते हैं। उनमें से कुछ के अंश यहाँ पर अपेक्षित हैं— चौहान राजा पृथ्वीराज ने जब महोबा के चन्देल राजा परमर्दिदेव पर चढ़ाई की तो उसके संबंध में यह प्रसिद्ध है कि उस समय उक्त राजा के सामंत आल्हा व ऊदल वहाँ उपस्थित नहीं थे, वे पहले किसी बात पर स्वामी की अप्रसन्नता हो जाने के कारण

कन्नौज के राजा जयचन्द्र के पास जा रहे थे। पृथ्वीराज की सेना से अपनी प्रजा का अनिष्ट होता देख चंदेल राजा की रानी ने आल्हा-ऊदल को बुलाने के लिए दूत भेजे। उन्होंने अपने साथ किये हुए पूर्व के अपमान का स्मरण कर महोबा जाना स्वीकार नहीं किया।⁴ उस समय उनकी वीर माता ने जो वचन अपने पुत्रों को सुनाये उनसे स्पष्ट है कि क्षत्रिय कुलांगना किस प्रकार स्वामी के कार्य और स्वदेश रक्षा के निमित्त अपने प्राणों से प्यारे पति और पुत्रों को भी सहर्ष रणांगण में भेजती थीं। आल्हा-ऊदल की माता अपने पुत्रों का हठ छुड़ाने हेतु बोली 'हा विधाता तूने मुझको बांझ ही क्यों न रखा?' क्षत्रिय धर्म का उल्लंघन करने वाले इन कुपुत्रों से तो मेरा बांझ रहना ही अच्छा है। धिक्कार है उन क्षत्रिय पुत्रों को जिनका स्वामी संकट में पड़ा हो और आप सुख की नींद सोवें। जो क्षत्रिय मरने-मारने से डर कर संकट के समय स्वामी की सहायता के लिए सिर देने को प्रस्तुत न हो जाय वह असल का बीज नहीं कहलाता है। हा! तुमने बना कर सब कीर्ति डुबो दी।⁵

महाराणा रायमल के पाटवी पुत्र पृथ्वीराज की पत्नी तारादेवी का अपने पति के साथ टोडे जाकर पठानों के साथ युद्ध में पति की सहायता करना प्रसिद्ध है।⁶ मारवाड़ के महाराजा जसवन्तसिंह जब औरंगजेब से युद्ध में हारकर फतिहाबाद के रणखेत से अपनी राजधानी जोधपुर को लौटे तब उनकी पटरानी ने गढ़ के द्वार बंद कर पति को भीतर पैठने से रोका था।⁷ इसी प्रकार शत्रु से अपने सतीत्व की रक्षा के निमित्त हजारों राजपूत महिलाएँ निर्भयता के साथ जौहर एवं युद्धभूमि में कूदने से बिल्कुल नहीं घबराती थीं। जौहर की अग्नि में रानी पद्मिनी, रानी कर्मवती के अतिरिक्त चंपानेर के पताई रावल (जयसिंह) की राणियाँ⁸ जैसलमेर के रावल दूदा की रमणियाँ⁹ आदि अनेक उदाहरण हैं जो इतिहास के पन्ने से भरे पड़े हैं।

1303 में रानी पद्मिनी ने प्रथम जौहर किया ऐसा अनेकों ऐतिहासिक प्रसंगों में परिलक्षित होता है। जौहर करना राजपूत रानियों की वीरता का संकेत है। सर्वप्रथम राजपूत स्त्रियाँ डट कर शत्रु से संघर्ष करती थीं। अन्ततोगत्वा जौहर स्वीकार करती थीं। रानी पद्मिनी सिंहल द्वीप के राजा गंधर्व सेन और रानी चंपावती की अद्वितीय सुन्दर पुत्री थीं। इनका विवाह चित्तौड़ के रावल रतन सिंह के साथ हुआ था। रानी पद्मिनी की सुन्दरता पर अलाउद्दीन खिलजी की दृष्टि पड़ गई। अलाउद्दीन किसी भी कीमत पर रानी पद्मिनी को प्राप्त करना चाहता था। इसीलिए उसने चित्तौड़ पर आक्रमण कर दिया। गौरी शंकर हीराचन्द्र ओझा का कथन है कि पद्मावत, तारीखे फरिश्ता और टाड के सकलनों में तथ्य केवल यही है कि चढ़ाई और घेरे के पश्चात् रतन सिंह मारा गया और उसकी रानी पद्मिनी ने राजपूत रमणियों के साथ जौहर की अग्नि में आत्माहूति दे दी।¹⁰

अमीर खुसरो अलाउद्दीन के चित्तौड़ अभियान का साक्षी रहा। वह लिखता है कि 28 जनवरी 1303 में सुल्तान ने दिल्ली से प्रस्थान किया। सुल्तान ने अपना शिविर चित्तौड़ी नामक पहाड़ी पर लगाया। 8 महीने के परिश्रम के पश्चात् भी जब सफलता नहीं मिली तो उसने रतन सिंह से सन्धि कर ली। अलाउद्दीन दुर्ग भ्रमण के दौरान पद्मिनी का दर्पण में प्रतिबिम्ब देखा। लौटते समय धोखे से उसने राणा को बन्दी बना लिया एवं पद्मिनी की माँग की। पद्मिनी ने अपने सामन्तों से मंत्रणा करके छल से ही राजा रतनसिंह को छुड़ाने का निश्चय किया।

1600 पालकियों में रानी पद्मिनी की सहेलियों के वेश में राजपूत सैनिक बिठाये गये और उन्हें सुल्तान के शिविर में पहुँचाया गया। रानी ने सुल्तान को यह संदेश भिजवाया कि अंतिम बार अपने पति से मिलना चाहती हैं। सुल्तान ने उसकी स्वीकृति दे दी। जब सुल्तान को इसका पता चला तो वह ससैन्य राजपूतों से लड़ा जिसमें रतनसिंह एवं रानी के सगे-सम्बन्धी एवं गोरा-बादल वीरगति को प्राप्त हुए। रानी ने अन्य 1600 राजपूत वीरांगनाओं के साथ जौहर कर आत्मोत्सर्ग किया। अलाउद्दीन ने किले पर अधिकार करने के पश्चात् 30000 राजपूतों का कत्ल कर अपने नाम काला अध्याय जोड़ दिया।¹¹

राजपूताना इतिहास में दूसरा जौहर महारानी कर्णावती के समय में हुआ। जब गुजरात के शासक बहादुर शाह जफर ने 1535 ई0 में चित्तौड़ पर आक्रमण किया। इसी समय रानी कर्णावती ने दिल्ली के शासक हुमायूँ को राखी भेजकर सहायता माँगी थी। कर्णावती ने शत्रु की अधीनता स्वीकार नहीं की भले ही 13 हजार राजपूतानियों के साथ जौहर कर लिया। रानी कर्मवती राणा सांगा की पत्नी थी जो अल्प समय के लिए बूँदी की शासिका भी रही। 1534 में मेवाड़ का शासक उदयसिंह के बड़े भाई विक्रमादित्य शासक जो कि अयोग्य थे जिस कारण बहादुरशाह मेवाड़ पर हमला कर दिया। विक्रमादित्य के कुछ न करने पर राजमाता कर्णावती ने सभी बड़े एवं योग्य सरदारों को बुलाया। उन्होंने सिसोदिया कुल के सम्मान की बात कह कर सबको मेवाड़ की रक्षा के लिए तैयार कर लिया। सबको तैयार देख विक्रमादित्य भी मैदान में उतरा। मेवाड़ी वीरों का शौर्य, उत्साह और बलिदान भावना तो अनुपम थी परन्तु बहादुरशाह के तोपखाने चित्तौड़ दुर्ग की दीवारें गिराने लगे तथा बड़ी संख्या में राजपूत हताहत होने लगे।

यह देखकर विक्रमादित्य मैदान से भाग खड़ा हुआ। अब यहाँ इसी समय यह भ्रम फैलाया गया है कि रानी कर्णावती ने हुमायूँ को राखी भेजकर सहायता माँगी थीं तब हुमायूँ यह संदेश पाकर मेवाड़ की ओर चल दिया, परन्तु उसके पहुँचने से पहले ही युद्ध समाप्त हो गया। वस्तुतः हुमायूँ स्वयं मेवाड़ पर अपना कब्जा करने आ रहा था पर उसने जब यह देखा कि एक मुसलमान शासक मेवाड़ से लड़ रहा है तो वह सारंगपुर में ही रुक गया। अब जब मेवाड़ पर पराजय की स्थिति मँडराने लगी तब जौहर की तैयारी होने लगी, परन्तु विक्रमादित्य की पत्नी जवाहरबाई सच्ची छत्राणी थी। वह स्वयं युद्धकला में पारंगत थी, तथा उन्होंने शस्त्रों में निपुण वीरांगनाओं की एक सेना भी तैयार कर रखी थी। जब राजमाता कर्णावती ने जौहर की बात कही तो जवाहरबाई ने दुर्ग में एकत्रित वीरांगनाओं को ललकारते हुए कहा—‘जौहर से तो केवल नारीधर्म का पालन होगा पर देश की रक्षा नहीं होगी। इसलिए यदि मरना ही है तो शत्रुओं को मारकर मरना उचित है’। सबने हर-हर महादेव का उद्घोष कर इसे स्वीकृति दे दी। इससे पुरुषों में भी जोश आ गया। सभी वीरों ने केसरिया बाना पहना और किले की फाटक खोलकर जवाहरबाई के नेतृत्व में शत्रुओं पर टूट पड़े। महारानी तोप को अपने कब्जे में करना चाह रही थी, परन्तु उनका प्रयास असफल रहा। वह दिवस 8 मार्च 1535 का था जब हिन्दू सेना के किले से बाहर निकलते ही रानी कर्णावती के नेतृत्व में 13,000 नारियों ने जौहर कर लिया। बहादुरशाह का चित्तौड़ पर अधिकार हो गया परन्तु

लौटते समय हुमायूँ ने उसे घेर लिया किसी प्रकार वह जानबचा कर मांडू भाग गया। इन दोनों के आपसी संघर्ष का लाभ उठाकर हिन्दू वीरों ने चित्तौड़ को फिर मुक्त करा लिया।¹²

यहाँ एक बात और कहना चाहूँगी कि हुमायूँ पहले तो रानी कर्णावती की सहायता के लिए चला, और ग्वालियर तक पहुँचा लेकिन ग्वालियर में हुमायूँ को बहादुरशाह का पत्र मिला जिसमें उसने लिखा था कि वह तो काफिरों के खिलाफ जेहाद कर रहा है। यह सुनकर हुमायूँ ने भारतीय संस्कृति उस भाई-बहन के महत्व को भुला दिया जब भगौड़े के रूप में कभी उसे अमरकोट के शासक ने शरण दी और वह ग्वालियर से आगे नहीं बढ़ा। जबकि हुमायूँ की बहादुरशाह से शत्रुता भी थी। चित्तौड़ विजय के पश्चात् बहादुरशाह हुमायूँ से युद्ध के लिए गया और मन्दसौर के पास मुगल सेना से युद्ध में हार गया। उसकी हार की सूचना मिलते ही चित्तौड़ के 7000 राजपूत सैनिकों ने चित्तौड़ पर हमला कर रहे उसके सैनिकों को भगा दिया और विक्रमादित्य को बूंदी से लाकर पुनः गद्दी पर आरूढ़ कर दिया। दुष्ट प्रचारियों ने हुमायूँ को इसका श्रेय दे दिया कि हुमायूँ ने बहादुरशाह से चित्तौड़ को वापस दिलवाया, जबकि हकीकत में हुमायूँ ने बहादुरशाह से चित्तौड़ के लिए कभी युद्ध नहीं किया, जबकि शत्रुता होते हुए वह चित्तौड़ मामले में बहादुरशाह के विरुद्ध नहीं उतरा।¹³ पन्ना धाय के राष्ट्र प्रेम से हम सभी भलीभाँति परिचित हैं। कैसे उन्होंने राज्य के उत्तराधिकारी कुँवर उदय सिंह की बनबीर से रक्षा करने के लिए अपने स्वयं के पुत्र चन्दन के प्राणों की आहुति दे दी। जो कि आज स्वर्ण अक्षरों में अंकित है। ऐसी वीरांगनाओं को नमन।

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बौद्ध साहित्य में महिलाओं की स्थिति : एक विश्लेषणात्मक अध्ययन

सौरभ कुमार मीना

शोध छात्र

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सारांश

प्राचीन भारतीय महिलाओं की स्थिति की ऐतिहासिकता समय, शासक व स्थान के अनुसार बदलती रही है जैसे तो बौद्ध संघों के माध्यम से हमें महिलाओं की सामाजिक, आर्थिक एवं राजनीतिक स्थिति के बारे में बहुत कुछ जानकारी प्राप्त होती है। जैसे कुछ ग्रंथों से ज्ञात होता है कि बुद्ध कालीन समाज में स्त्रियों की दशा उत्तरवैदिक काल के समान ही थी। महात्मा बुद्ध के शिष्य आनंद के कहने पर स्त्रियों के लिए मोक्ष प्राप्ति के द्वार खोल दिये। उन्हें निर्वाण प्राप्ति का अधिकार प्रदान किया। बौद्धकाल में महिलाओं को विज्ञान की शिक्षा भी प्रदान की गयी। बौद्ध महिलाओं के निर्वाण संबंधी प्रमाण विनय पिटक जैसे पाली बौद्ध ग्रंथों में प्राप्त होते हैं। उनके गीतों को भविष्य में भिक्षुणियों हेतु थैरी गाथा में संकलित किया गया।

मुख्य शब्द: वैदिक-उत्तरवैदिक, बौद्ध भिक्षु-भिक्षुणियां, थैरीगाथा, बौद्धमठ, बौद्ध संघ

भूमिका

बौद्ध धर्म में महिलाओं की स्थिति अन्य प्राचीन धर्मों जैसे वैदिक धर्म, जैन धर्म आदि से भिन्न थी। जहां ऋग्वैदिक काल में महिलाओं की स्थिति संतोषजनक थी वहीं उत्तरवैदिक काल में इसमें गिरावट हुयी। महिलाओं को धार्मिक क्रियाकलापों से वंचित कर दिया गया। बौद्ध धर्म में महिलाओं के लिए दो स्तर पर सहभागिता सुनिश्चित की गयी प्रथम निर्वाण प्राप्ति हेतु प्रयास एवं द्वितीय उनके लिये दीक्षा प्राप्ति हेतु पृथक बौद्ध संघ बनाये गये। बौद्ध भिक्षु महिलाओं से दूर रहते ठीक उसी तरह बौद्ध भिक्षुणियां भी अपने नियम कायदो से बंधी रहती और पुरुषों से दूरियां बनाकर रखती थी। ये नियम आचरण की पवित्रता अर्थात् ब्रह्मचर्य को कठोरता से निभाने के लिये थे।¹

यह भी सत्य है कि अपने प्रिय शिष्य आनंद के कहने पर ही भगवान बुद्ध ने स्त्रियों को बौद्ध धर्म अपनाने की अनुमति प्रदान की। हालांकि शुरुआती समय में भगवान बुद्ध महिलाओं के बौद्ध संघ में प्रवेश व भिक्षुणी संघ की स्थापना के प्रति अनिच्छुक थे। महाप्रजापति गौतमी जो प्रथम बौद्ध भिक्षुणी एवं बुद्ध की मौसी थीं व आनंद के आग्रह पर कठोर नियमों के साथ बौद्ध मठों के द्वारा स्त्रियों हेतु खोले गये।

बौद्ध ग्रंथ विनयपिटक भगवान बुद्ध की महिलाओं के बौद्ध संघ में प्रवेश की अनुमति को भगवान बुद्ध की अनिच्छा पूर्वक दी गयी अनुमति मानता है इसमें लिखा कि बौद्ध ने आनंद से कहा कि स्त्रियों को प्रवेश देने पर बौद्ध धर्म 500 वर्ष चलेगा अन्यथा यह 1000 वर्षों से अधिक चलता।²

महिलाओं के बौद्ध संघ में प्रवेश से पहले उन्हें गर्भवती नहीं होना चाहिए। आने वाली महिलाओं के लिए परिवार की अनुमति आवश्यक थी। बौद्ध संघ में भिक्षुणियों को संघ के नियमों का कठोरता से पालन करना अनिवार्य था।

महिला बौद्ध भिक्षुणियों को बौद्ध संघ के वातावरण में ढालने के लिए आठ नियमों का अनुसरण करना आवश्यक था। ये आठ नियम भगवान बुद्ध की मृत्यु के बाद बनाये गये होंगे ऐसा बौद्ध ग्रंथ विनयपिटक में वर्णित है।³

1. महिला बौद्ध भक्त को अपने समकक्ष या वरिष्ठ या अन्य सभी बौद्ध भिक्षु-भिक्षुणियों को सरलता पूर्वक अभिवादन करना अर्थात् उसकी उपस्थिति तक सम्मान में हाथ जोड़कर खड़े रहना।⁴
2. बौद्ध महिला भक्त को हर महीने के प्रत्येक पक्ष में बौद्ध संघ के भिक्षुओं से दो बातें सीखनी आवश्यक थी जैसे उपोसथ की तिथि कौनसी है। साथ ही महिला भक्त को बौद्ध संघ के भिक्षु से किस बौद्ध सिद्धांत का उपदेश लेकर उसका अनुसरण करना चाहिए।
3. बौद्ध संघ की महिला भक्त किसी दुर्व्यवहार में संलिप्त पाई जाती है तो उसे दोनों संघों के समदिन मनन्ता अनुशासन की परीक्षा देनी होगी अनुशासनहीनता दिखायी देने पर भिक्षुणी को गहन परीक्षण का दौर पास कर संघ में वापसी करनी चाहिए।
4. खासकर वर्षा काल में महिला बौद्ध भिक्षुणियों को एकांतवास से बंधना होगा क्योंकि यदि वे ऐसा नहीं करती तो उनके व्यभिचारग्रही होने की संभावना बढ़ जायेगी।
5. त्रिपठनीय निमंत्रण अर्थात् भिक्षुणियों का भिक्षुणियों द्वारा निमंत्रण तथा भिक्षुणियों को भिक्षुओं द्वारा निमंत्रण और भिक्षुओं द्वारा भिक्षुओं को निमंत्रण जिसमें सभी को संयुक्त रूप से आहूत किया गया हो स्वीकार करना चाहिए।
6. दोपहर में भोजन का व्रत भिक्षुणियों को अन्य पांच व्रतों के अतिरिक्त करना होगा। ऐसा महिला बौद्ध भिक्षुणियों को प्रारंभ के दो वर्षों तक करना चाहिए।
7. महिला बौद्ध भिक्षुणियों को हमेशा इस बात का ध्यान रखना होगा कि किसी भिक्षु-भिक्षुणी की निंदा नहीं करें। ऐसा उन्हें अनुशासन में रहना सिखाता है।
8. बौद्ध संघ का भिक्षु स्वतंत्र है कि आचरण की पवित्रता पर खरी नहीं उतरने वाली भिक्षुणी को बौद्ध भिक्षु निर्देश दे सकता है लेकिन भिक्षुणी भिक्षु को निर्देश नहीं दे सकती परंतु यदि उन्हें असुविधा है तो वरिष्ठ भिक्षु से हाथ जोड़कर इस संबंध में प्रार्थना कर सकती है।

बौद्ध ग्रंथों से ज्ञात होता है कि स्त्रियों का परिवार में महत्वपूर्ण स्थान था, परंतु उनके समाज में स्वच्छंदतापूर्ण विचरण पर कुछ बंधन लग गये थे। स्त्रियां समाज के उत्सवों में पुरुषों के समान भाग लेती थी। परिवार के सदस्यों की देखभाल व आगंतुकों का स्वागत सत्कार करती थी।

परिवार में माता का स्थान बहुत आदरपूर्ण और गौरवमय था। नारी की सार्थकता उसके मातृत्व में मानी जाती थी। माता की वृद्धावस्था में उसका भरण-पोषण पुत्र का कर्तव्य था। 'असातमत्त जातक' से ज्ञात होता है कि एक सुशिक्षित आचार्य अपनी एक सौ बीस वर्षीय बूढ़ी माता को अपने हाथ से नहलाता, खिलाता और सभी प्रकार से उसकी सेवा करता था।⁵

बौद्ध साहित्य में कन्या की संतोषजनक स्थिति का चित्र मिलता है। बौद्धधर्म यज्ञादि में विश्वास नहीं करता था, अतः मोक्ष प्राप्ति हेतु पुत्र का होना अनिवार्य नहीं था। पुत्री को पुत्र के समान महत्व दिया जाता था, "संयुक्त निकाय" में भगवान् बुद्ध का एक स्थान पर कथन है कि कभी-कभी पुत्र की तुलना में पुत्री श्रेयस्कर होती है।⁶

ज्येष्ठ भ्राता अपनी बहनों का भरण-पोषण तथा संरक्षण प्रायः पिता तुल्य ही करते थे। पिता के न रहने पर कन्या को विवाह पर्यन्त अपने बड़े भाई के संरक्षण में रहते हुए जीवन व्यतीत करने का अधिकार था।⁷

इनमें भगवान् बुद्ध के पूर्व जन्म की कथाएँ हैं। काल्पनिक होने पर भी ये कथाएँ उस समय की तथा उससे पूर्व समय की जानकारी उपलब्ध करवाती है। महिलाओं की स्थिति, विधवा-विवाह व स्थिति, गणिकाओं तथा दासियों की स्थिति की जानकारी इन जातक कथाओं से ज्ञात होती है।

बुद्ध काल में स्त्रियों के सुशिक्षिता होने की चर्चा है। अनेक स्त्रियाँ तो शिक्षिका बनकर अध्यापिकाओं का जीवन व्यतीत करती थीं, वे अपना शिक्षण कार्य उत्साह व लगन के साथ निष्ठापूर्वक सम्पन्न करती थीं।⁸

पारिवारिक जीवन में पुत्रवधु पर उसके सास-ससुर का कठोर नियंत्रण रहता था। उसे प्रत्येक कार्य के लिए सास व ससुर से अनुमति लेना आवश्यक होता था। तत्कालीन समाज में विधवा होना अभिशाप था। पारिवारिक स्वतंत्रता परतंत्रता में परिवर्तित हो जाती थी। जीवन निर्वाह के लिए शिक्षा ही एकमात्र संबल रह जाता था।

बौद्धयुगीन समाज में दास प्रथा विद्यमान थी। इनका जीवन पालन बहुत कठिन था। दासियों का क्रय-विक्रय किया जाता था। अधिकांश दासियाँ गृहकार्यों में समय व्यतीत करती थीं। कुछ दासियाँ वीणा, मृदंग, गायन आदि में पारंगत होती थी और स्वामी परिवार के आमोद-प्रमोद के लिए विविध आयोजनों में हिस्सा लेती थी।

गणिकाओं का समाज में महत्वपूर्ण स्थान था। बौद्ध साहित्य में अनेक सम्पन्न गणिकाओं का उल्लेख मिलता है। इनका रहन-सहन राजसी और एश्वर्ययुक्त होता था। गणिकाओं से उत्पन्न पुत्र यदि प्रतिभावान होता तो उसे सम्मान और योग्यतानुसार उच्च पद प्राप्त करने में कोई बाधा आड़े नहीं आती थी।

जिस प्रकार वेदों से अनेक महिला विदुषियों का उल्लेख हुआ है वैसे ही बौद्ध ग्रंथों में भी अनेक महिला विद्वानों जैसे संयुक्त निकाय में खेमा, बौद्धग्रंथ अंगुत्तर निकाय में विशाखा, भिक्षुणी धम्मदीना जैसी विदुषियों का वर्णन हुआ है। बौद्ध ग्रंथों से ज्ञात होता है कि संघमित्रा ने श्रीलंका जाकर बौद्ध शिक्षा का प्रचार किया। शुभा, सुलभा व अनोपमा आदि नारियां आदि धर्म व दर्शन में पारंगत थी।⁹ बौद्ध ग्रंथों में तत्कालीन युग की उच्च शिक्षा प्राप्त भिक्षुणी खेमा उल्लेखनीय है।¹⁰

विशाखा नामक महिला विद्वान का गुणगान स्वयं बुद्ध ने किया तथा कहा कि विशाखा ज्ञानवान गुणी महिला है जिससे सबको सीखना चाहिए तथा उसका सम्मान करना चाहिए। विशाखा ने धम्मदीना से प्रश्नोत्तर किये तथा धम्मदीना ने सहजता से उनका उत्तर दिया। धम्मदीना थेरी विशाखा सच में विद्वान बौद्ध महिलाएं रही जिनका गुणगान बुद्ध ने स्वयं किया इसका वर्णन बौद्धग्रंथ अंगुत्तर निकाय से मिलता है।

निष्कर्ष

दो महत्वपूर्ण बौद्ध ग्रंथ थेरीगाथा और थेरगाथा में से थेरीगाथा में महिला संगीत का संकलन है।¹¹ ऐसी वशिष्ठ बौद्ध भिक्षुणियां अपने गीतों को चिरस्थायी रखने के लिए वरिष्ठ बौद्ध भिक्षुणियों को कंठस्थ कराया करती थी जिनका संकलन थेरी गाथा में है। थेरीगाथा प्राचीन भारत के उन ग्रंथों में से एक है जो पूर्णतया महिलाओं को समर्पित है।¹² तंविज्जा में अनेक महिला बौद्ध भिक्षुणियां निपुण थी, जिसमें अरहत ही निपुण माने जाते थे। इन गीतों के अर्थ से पता चलता है कि अनेक बौद्ध महिला विदुषियों को भी निर्वाण प्राप्ति हुयी जो अन्य अरहतों के समान थी।¹³ थेरीगाथा में एक कहानी चंदा नामक ब्राह्मण कन्या की है जो माता-पिता की मृत्यु पर असहाय हो जाती है। कालांतर में एक बौद्ध भिक्षुणी पतचारा ने उसे संघ में प्रवेश दिलाया। इस सभी कथाओं का वर्णन महिलाओं को समर्पित ग्रंथ थेरीगाथा में है।

संदर्भ

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स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन में महात्मा गांधी, महिला और कुमाँऊ की महिलाओं का योगदान

महिपाल सिंह कुटियाल

अस्सिस्टेंट प्रोफेसर इतिहास

राजकीय स्नातकोत्तर महाविद्यालय बेरीनाग पिथौरागढ़

सारांश

पुरातन समय से आज तक भारतीय समाज व देश के कार्यो में महिलाएँ कभी पीछे नहीं रहे। अपितु देश की आजादी से लेकर आज तक विभिन्न कार्यक्रमों में भाग लेकर अपने योगदान को सिद्ध किया है। उन्होने देश के स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन में महात्मा गांधी को पूर्ण सहयोग और समर्थन दिया था। 1900 ई० में महिलाओं ने पहली बार कांग्रेस अधिवेशन में भाग लेकर निरन्तर आंदोलन में भाग लिया। महात्मा गांधी एक महान जन सेवक, महनायक, महामानव, उच्च कोटि के दार्शनिक और चिंतनशील शिक्षा शास्त्री थे। वे सत्य, अहिंसा, प्रेम और कर्म ही उनके जीवन दर्शन का आधार रहा। वह मानव जीवन में नैतिकता को महत्व देते थे। जो शक्ति हिटलर के कुटनीतिज्ञ, गोला बारूद में नहीं थी, वह महात्मा गांधी के सत्याग्रह में था। यदि भारतीय इतिहास को देखें तो समाज में जब भी कोई गिरावट या कुव्यवस्थाएं उत्पन्न हुईं तो समाज सुधारकों, चिंतकों, विचारकों ने समाज में परिवर्तन किया। इसमें भारतीय महिलाएं समाज और देश के उन्नति तथा विकास के साथ सत्याग्रह में शामिल रहकर नारी और पुरुष की परिकल्पना को पूर्ण करने में सक्षम रहे हैं। वहीं कुमाँऊ की महिलाएँ भी महात्मा गांधी के साथ देश की आजादी में अपना योगदान देने में सफल रहें थे।

मुख्य शब्द - महिलाएँ, आंदोलन, देश, आजादी, समाज

प्रस्तावना --- समाज में वर्तमान कुव्यवस्थाओं में बदलाव लाने के लिये समय समय पर सामाजिक सुधारक, चिंतकों, विचारकों ने भारतीय समाज में आये विकृतियों को दूर करने का कार्य किया।

इसलिये समाज सुधारकों ने महिलाओं की स्थिति में परिवर्तन करने की बात सोची। वर्तमान समय में जब सम्पूर्ण विश्व में सामाजिक भेद भाव, दरिद्रता और हिंसात्मक टकराव है, तब महिलाओं की सामूहिक शक्ति ने समाज की स्थिति को सुधारने का बहुआयामी कार्य किया। निसंदेह सुधार आंदोलन के प्रवर्तक राजा राममोहन राय स्वामी विवेकानंद, स्वामी दयानंद सरस्वती, ईश्वरचंद्र विद्यासागर ने समाज में जो महिलाएँ अंधविश्वास, रूढ़िवादिता में जकड़ी हुई थी। उन्हें मुक्ति दिलाने का कार्य किया साथ ही इन आंदोलनों में महिलाएँ खुद शामिल होने लगे। भारतीय महिला परिषद के प्रयासों से शिक्षा के प्रसार व प्रचार से पर्दा निषेध, दहेज प्रथा का विरोध महिलाओं ने ही सबसे अधिक किया था। 1919 के लोमहर्षक घटना ने महिलाओं को राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन में शामिल किया था। महात्मा गांधी स्त्री को अबला न मानकर उसके सशक्त पक्षों को रेखांकित करते हैं। वह कहते थे, कि स्त्री को अबला जाति कहना उनका अपमान करना है। सच तो यह है, कि आजादी के संघर्ष में, जेल जाने में, यातनाएँ सहने में स्त्रियाँ कभी पीछे नहीं रहे। प्रथम स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में अंग्रेजों ने अत्यधिक रक्तपात, हत्या करने के बाद भी भारतीयों के प्रति अंग्रेजों के दृष्टिकोण में कोई परिवर्तन नहीं आया। नतीजा देश की आजादी के लिये असंख्य महिलाओं ने स्वतंत्रता आन्दोलन में भाग लिया। भारतीय स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन में महिलाओं ने साहस, सहिष्णुता और वीरता से भाग लिया था। 1857 का विद्रोह भारतीय स्वतंत्रता संग्राम का पहला विस्फोट माना जाता है, जिसमें झांसी की रानी लक्ष्मीबाई ने अंग्रेजों के पसीने छुड़ा दिये थे। रामगढ़ की रानी ने जहाँ रणक्षेत्र में लड़ते लड़ते अपनी जान दी। वहीं बेगम हजरत महल अंग्रेजों से लड़कर अपने आत्म सम्मान के लिये नेपाल की तरफ चली गयी। भारत की विदुषी और उत्साही महिलाओं ने 1905 में बंगाल विभाजन के समय अंग्रेजों के खिलाफ आंदोलन किया था और बंगाल में एकता स्थापित करने के लिये रक्षाबंधन का आयोजन कर हिंदु - मुस्लीम को एक सूत्र में बांधा। वाध्य होकर 1911 में बंगाल विभाजन को रद्द करना पड़ा। भारतीय राष्ट्रीय कांग्रेस की 1885 में स्थापना ने महिलाओं को एक राजनीतिक मंच प्रदान किया। सन 1920-22 ई० में जब महात्मा गांधी ने अंग्रेजों के विरुद्ध असहयोग आंदोलन चलाया तो महिलाओं ने बहुत बड़ी संख्या में इस अभियान से जुड़कर गांधी को सहयोग किया था। जब असहयोग आंदोलन में महात्मा गांधी ने स्वदेशी वस्तुओं को अपनाने के लिये आंदोलन किया

तो इस आंदोलन में असंख्य महिलाओं ने खादी और चरखा के विक्रय हेतु गली गली गये। उन्होंने खादी को लोकप्रिय बनाने के लिये जलूसों का आयोजन किया और 20 लाख से अधिक चरखों का वितरण करने के साथ साथ इस आंदोलन में स्वयं सेवकों की संख्या में वृद्धि की, विदेशी वस्त्रों का वहिष्कार और स्वदेशी वस्तुओं को अपनाने पर बल दिया था। महात्मा गांधी के साथ मिलकर महिलाओं ने विदेशी वस्त्रों को जलाया साथ ही विदेशी वस्त्र विक्रेता के दुकानों में धरना देने के साथ स्वदेशी वस्त्रों के प्रयोग में महात्मा गांधी का साथ दिया था। दूसरी तरफ इस आंदोलन में मादक पेय द्रव्य के निषेध का प्रचार प्रसार भी भारतीय महिलाओं ने किया। भारतीय महिलाओं ने शराब की दुकानों में धरना देने के साथ साथ शराब के लाइसेंस की नीलामी में बाधाएँ उत्पन्न की थीं। जिससे अंग्रेजों को मादक द्रव्यों से राजस्व प्राप्त न हो सके और कम्पनी को हानि हों। 1921 ई० में मुम्बई में महिलाओं ने राष्ट्रीय स्त्री सभा का गठन किया। यह पहला महिला संगठन था जो पुरुषों की सहायता व सहयोग के बिना चला था। इसमें समृद्ध घरों की महिलाओं के साथ साथ श्रमिक वर्ग, निम्न वर्ग, गांव घरों की महिलाओं ने भी भाग लिया था।

इन आंदोलनों में कुमाऊं की महिलाओं का प्रारम्भ में प्रत्यक्ष रूप से जुड़ पाना सम्भव न था। क्योंकि उस समय पारम्परिक रूढ़िवादिता अपनी चरम सीमा पर थी, तो उस समय कुमाऊं के समाज में बाल- विवाह, बहु विवाह और अन्य कुरीतियां के साथ विधवाओं को हेय नजरों से देखा जाता था, ऐसे समय में अल्मोडा की महिलाओं ने अंग्रेजी सरकार के विरुद्ध गौर्दा के राष्ट्रीय गीत गाकर देश के प्रति जन चेतना जगाया। जिससे महिलाओं ने सभाओं में भाग लेना शुरू किया। कुमाऊं की महिलाओं ने सामाजिक उत्सवों में राष्ट्रीय गीत गाकर स्वदेशी चरखा तथा खादी, के प्रसार प्रचार में योगदान दिया था। इस राजनीतिक चेतना के कारण 24 जनवरी 1922 को जयंती पांडे ने महिलाओं को आपसी कलह छोड़ कर महात्मा गांधी के चरखा, सूत कातना, और स्वदेशी वस्त्रों को अपनाने के लिये जलूस निकाला, 5 अक्टूबर 1923 को मौलाना मुहम्मद अली अपनी बेगम हमीदा और गुलजार के साथ अल्मोडा आये और 6 अक्टूबर 1923 को बेगम साहिबा ने 400 महिलाओं की एक सभा कर हिंदू-मुस्लिम एकता पर जोर देकर अंग्रेजों को देश से बाहर निकालने की योजना बनाई। कुमाऊं की महिलाओं ने गांधी के आंदोलनों के साथ विदेशी शराब को रोकने के लिये शराबों की दुकानों में धरना, और जलूस निकाला। महात्मा गांधी

ने शराब को चोरी और व्यभिचार से भी अधिक बुरा मानते हुए यंग इण्डिया में लिखा कि अगर मुझे केवल एक घण्टे के लिये भारत का शासक बना दिया जाय , तो पूरे देश से शराब को बंद करवा दूंगा ।

1930 तक महिलाओं की भागीदारी ओर अधिक बढने से महिलाओं ने अपने अधिकार के लिये कम्पनी के विरुद्ध संघर्ष किया ।1930 में ही महात्मा गांधी ने नमक आंदोलन के लिये डांडी यात्रा की और इस आंदोलन से अंग्रेजों के नमक बनाने के एकाधिकार को समाप्त करना चाहते थे ।उन्होंने इस यात्रा में जहां जहां अंग्रेजो के खिलाफ नमक कर तोड़ने के लिये सभाओं का आयोजन किया उन सभाओं में वहां सबसे अधिक महिलाओं ने ही प्रतिभाग किया था । लेकिन सच यह भी है, कि नमक कर के एकाधिकार को तोड़ने के लिये की गई यात्रा में महात्मा गांधी ने महिलाओं को इसलिये शामिल नहीं किया कि अंग्रेज उन्हें कायर न समझे । डांडी पहुंचने के बाद गांधी ने महिलाओं का एक सम्मलेन आयोजित किया और भारत के स्वतन्त्रता के लिए उनके योगदान के लिए कार्यक्रम तैयार किया तथा डांडी यात्रा के बाद गांधी जी ने महिलाओं को अपने आन्दोलन में शामिल कर लिया । महिलाओं ने नमक बनाने से लेकर नमक विक्रय का कार्य किया । इस आन्दोलन में कमलादेवी चट्टोपाध्याय, एनीबेसेंट, सरोजनी नायडू मुख्य थे दूसरी तरफ महिलाओं ने सम्पत्ति के नीलामी का भी विरोध किया । 14 जून 1929 को कस्तूरबा देवदास गांधी , सचिव प्यारे लाल ,जवाहर लाल नेहरू, आचार्य कृपलानी व सुचेता कृपलानी नैनीताल नगर के साथ ताकुला आये । वहां गोविंद बल्लभ पंत , बद्रीदत्त पाण्डे ,हीराबल्लभ पाण्डे व मोहन सिंह मेहता भी नैनीताल पहुंचे उन्होंने अंग्रेजी सरकार के खिलाफ जलूस निकाला और स्वदेशी वस्तुओं को अपनाने पर जोर दिया था। इस आंदोलन से प्रभावित होकर कुमांड की महिलाओं ने अपने आभूषण को आंदोलन के आर्थिक सहायता के लिये गांधी को भेंट किया । उसके बाद गांधी 19 जून को कौसानी आये ।

गांधी जी द्वारा 6 अप्रैल 1930 को समुंद्र तट पर नमक बनाते हुए नमक कानून को भंग किया तो इसका प्रभाव कुमांड पर भी पडा । सबसे पहले देहरादून के स्थानीय जनताओं ने नमक बनाकर कानून को तोडा । वहीं नमक सत्याग्रह के समय नैनीताल ,अल्मोडा ; बागेश्वर के महिलाओं जैसे बिमला, पदमा जोशी, सावित्री देवी, शकुंतला देवी , दुर्गा देवी पंत ने भाग लिया था ।

1942 के भारत छोड़ो आंदोलन में हजारों की संख्या में महिलाओं ने देश की स्वतंत्रता के लिये पुरुषों के साथ मिलकर भाग लिया। अरूणा आसफ अली, सुचेता कृपलानी और ऊषा मेहता ने आंदोलन का नेतृत्व किया। एक समय देश के सभी राजनेताओं को अंग्रेजों ने गिरफ्तार किया तो यह आन्दोलन महिलाओं के हाथों में आ गयी जिस कारण महिलाओं, छात्राओं, घरेलू महिलाओं के नेतृत्व में आंदोलन फलने-फूलने लगा। ऐसे समय में महिलाओं ने अपने राज नेताओं की सहायता के लिये धन एकत्र किये, महिलाओं के प्रशिक्षण की व्यवस्था भी की थी। पुलिस के द्वारा पीडीत लोगों की सहायता की। वहीं कुमाऊं में 1942 अप्रैल में राष्ट्रीय सप्ताह मनाया गया। इसी बीच राम मनोहर लोहिया के अध्यक्षता में झलतोला बेरीनाग में भी द्वितीय जिला अल्मोडा सम्मेलन हुआ। 29 अप्रैल 1942 को कांग्रेस कमेटी का एक खुला अधिवेशन प्रयाग इलाहाबाद में हुआ जिसमें गोविंद बल्लभ पंत ने कांग्रेस की नीति को रखा था। भारत छोड़ो आंदोलन के समय महिलाओं के सक्रिय योगदान के कारण बागेश्वर में जनता द्वारा एक विशाल जुलूस निकाला गया जिसका नेतृत्व हरगोविंद पंत ने किया। इसमें सरला बहिन, शांतिलाल, मथुरा दत्त जोशी, ने महिलाओं को भारत छोड़ो आंदोलन के लिये प्रेरित किया इस बीच हल्द्वानी में भागीरथी देवी को आंदोलन कर्ताओं के साथ गिरफ्तार करके चुनार फिर हल्द्वानी के जेल में लाया गया। वहीं 12 अगस्त 1942 को बद्रीदत्त पाण्डे, देवी दत्त पंत, गांगा सिंह बिष्ट, प्यारे लाल को भी अंग्रेजों ने गिरफ्तार कर बरेली जेल में डाल दिया था। भारत छोड़ो आंदोलन में बोरारों क्षेत्र भी सक्रिय रहा। 9 अगस्त 1942 को अल्मोडा में राष्ट्रीय ध्वज के साथ जुलूस निकाला गया और अंग्रेजों भारत छोड़ो, इंकलाब जिंदाबाद का नारा लगाया गया। उसी समय कुमाऊं कमिश्नर एक्टन, कमिश्नर के.एस. मिश्र, हाकिम मेहरबान सिंह के साथ पुलिस दल पहुंचा। जिस कारण छात्रों और पुलिस के बीच मुठभेड़ में पत्थराव के कारण कमिश्नर एक्टन के सिर में गहरी चोट लगी। यह स्पष्ट होता है कि देश की आजादी के लिये छात्र भी आंदोलित थे। इस प्रकार 1942 के स्वतंत्रता आंदोलनों में अल्मोडा तथा पर्वतीय शहरों से अधिक ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में अधिक फैला। इन आंदोलन में कुमाऊंनी जनता और महिलाओं ने त्याग और बलिदान का परिचय दिया।

निष्कर्ष

भारतीय स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन में भारतीय महिलाओं के योगदान को भुलाया नहीं जा सकता है। 1857 की क्रांति से लेकर देश की आजादी तक विभिन्न क्षेत्रों के महिलाओं ने प्रतिभाग किया। इस भागीदारी से न तो उनके धरेलू जीवन और न पारिवारिक जीवन के सभी कारणों में कोई नहीं अंतर आया। खादी वस्त्र, सूत कातना, स्वदेशी वस्तुओं को अपनाने, चरखा का प्रचार प्रसार महिलाओं ने सबसे अधिक किया था। वहीं इन स्वतंत्रता आंदोलनों में उत्तराखण्ड के महिलाओं का योगदान कम नहीं आंका जा सकता है। नमक कानून को तोड़ा गया, जुलूस निकाला गया और महिलाएँ देश के लिये जेल भी गये। भारत छोड़ो आंदोलन के समय जब राज नेताओं को गिरफ्तार किया गया, तब महिलाओं ने आंदोलन का नेतृत्व किया था।

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नारी के जीवन की अभिव्यक्ति करते मिथिलांचल के मौखिक इतिहास

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(लोक-गीतों और लोक-कलाओं में जानकी के रूप में नारी अभिव्यक्ति)

अमूर्त

लोक-गीत और लोक-कलाएं अभिव्यक्ति के शक्तिशाली माध्यम के रूप में स्वीकार्य किए गए हैं। जो मनुष्य जीवन के सूक्ष्म पहलुओं को दर्शाते हैं और मौखिक इतिहास के रूप में रेखांकित किए जाते रहें हैं। मिथिलांचल के औरते अपने जीवन से जोड़े प्रश्नों को लोक-गीत और लोक-कलाओं के द्वारा प्रकट करती हैं। जहाँ वे जानकी अर्थात् सीता के रूप में अपने जीवन को अभिव्यक्ति करती हैं साथ ही साथ कई सवालों से पुरुष प्रधान समाज की सत्ता को आलोचना भी करती हैं। जैसे की एक लोक-गीत में वह रामायण के मुख्य चरित्र मर्यादा पुरुष उत्तम से सवाल करती है की उन्होंने सीता का त्याग क्यों किया ?¹ जब राजा दशरथ के तीन रानियों थी। यह प्रश्न पुरुष प्रधान समाज के नियमों और विचारों में निहित असमानताओं को रेखांकित करती हैं। इसके साथ ही साथ मिथिला के लोक-गीतों और लोक-कलाओं में जेंडर की अभिव्यक्त जानकी (सीता) के रूप किस प्रकार और नारी की कितनी प्रधानता दी गई है ?

परिचय:-

“रामायण”, भारत में कई रूप और रंगों में अभिव्यक्त होते हैं। जो की भारत के अलग-अलग क्षेत्रों में अलग-अलग तरह से व्यक्त किया जाता है। कभी राम-लीलाओं के द्वारा तो कभी लोक-गीतों के द्वारा और कहीं चमड़े के बने पुतलियों के द्वारा (आंध्रप्रदेश, केरल ...) तो कभी लोक-चित्र कलाओं के द्वारा अभिव्यक्ति का माध्यम बनता है।

लोक- कलाओं में रामायण का वर्णन, उस स्थल के लोक-जीवन से प्रभावित होता है। इसके साथ ही साथ वे रामायण को अपने अनुसार समझते हैं एवम् उसे नये रूप में अभिव्यक्त भी करते हैं। बिहार के मिथिलांचल के लोक-कलाओं में रामायण का सहज ही चित्रण और वर्णन देखने और सुनने को मिलता है। विशेष रूप से मुधुबानी लोक-चित्र और लोक-गीतों में जानकी(सीता) का वर्णन उल्लेखनीय है।

रामायण के मुख्य पात्रों में जानकी (सीता) के जन्म भूमि का उल्लेख मिथिला प्रदेश किया जाता है। जिसकी राजधानी जनकपुर और राजा जनक माने गये हैं। जिसका वर्णन भागवतपुराण, स्कंदपुराण, वाल्मीकि रामायण, रघुवंश आदि प्राचीन ग्रंथों में किया गया है।²

बिहार के उतरी-पूर्वी भाग और नेपाल के कुछ भू-भाग जो बिहार के उतरी सीमा से जोड़ा हुआ है, उसे मिथिलांचल कह कर आज भी संबोधित किया जाता है। जिसमें मुख्यतः प्राचीन राज्य अंग, वैशाली तथा विदेह भूभाग शामिल थे।³ जो वर्तमान में बिहार राज्य के मुजफ्फरपुर, दरभंगा, सहरसा, भागलपुर, पूर्णिया, देवघर तथा नेपाल के तराई के रोतहट ,

¹ राम जी से पूछे जनकपुर की नारी, वता दा बबुआ लोगवा देत कहे गारी, वता दा बबुआ। तोहरा से पुछु मैं ओ धनुषधारी, एक भाई गोर काहे एक काहे कारी, वता दा बबुआ

² ताराकान्त मिश्र; मैथिली लोक साहित्य का अध्ययन; नेशनल पब्लिशिंग हॉउस, २/३५ अंसारी रोड, दरियागंज, नई दिल्ली-२, पृष्ठ स. ४१

³ Subhadra jha; Formation of the Maithili language, Introduction, London, 1958.

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सरलाही, महोत्तरी, सप्तरी तथा मोरंग ज़िले आते हैं। किसी क्षेत्र की सीमा उस क्षेत्र में बोली जाने वाली भाषा से भी निर्धारित होती है। इस क्षेत्र का नाम 'मिथिलांचल' होने के कई कारणों में से इन जिलों में बोली जाने वाली भाषा मैथिली भी एक कारण है।



मिथिला का मानचित्र

मैथिली लोक गीत :-

मिथिला में लोक गीतों के प्रचलन की परंपरा को विदेहवंशी राजाओं के समय काल से जोड़ा जाता है। फिर महाराजा नान्यदेव (१०९७-११३३) का उल्लेख, संगीत कि विभिन्न राग-रागनियों के निर्माण और विकास के लिये किया जाता है। जहाँ उनकी कृति 'सरस्वती हृदयअलंकार हार'⁴ विशेष उल्लेखनीय है। बारहवीं शती के जयदेव, फिर गणपति ठाकुर और मैथिल कोकिल विद्यापति ठाकुर के नाम मैथिली लोक गीतों में विशिष्ट स्थान रखते थे।⁵ मैथिली लोक गीतों के कई रूप हैं, जैसे : तिरहुत, नचारी, महेशवाणी, वटगबनी, मान, रास, समदाउन, लगनी, मलार, जोग, उचती, सोहर, चैतावर इत्यादि हैं।⁶ मिथिला के लोक गीतों को विद्वानों ने मुक्तक और प्रबंधात्मक दो भागों में विभक्त किया है। मुक्तक के उप विभाग में धार्मिक गीत, संस्कार गीत, ऋतू गीत, त्योहार गीत, व्यवसाय गीत, शिशु गीत तथा विविध गीत आदि हैं। वहीं प्रबंधात्मक के मुख्य दो भाग हैं – गाथात्मक गीत और महा गाथात्मक गीत। जिसके कई उप – भाग हैं।⁷

मिथिला लोक- चित्र कला :-

लोक चित्र कला को लेखक ताराकांत मिश्र जी "लोक मानस के अभिव्यंजना के प्रमुख साधनों में से एक मानते हैं।" ये लोक चित्र मिथिला के जीवन के अभिगंग अंग हैं क्योंकि यह मात्र घरों के दीवाल और जमीन सजाने के तत्व मात्र नहीं हैं, यह उनके रीती-रिवाज और परंपरा के साथ जोड़े हुए हैं। जिस तरह से लोक संगीत विवाह, उपनयन, संस्कार और व्रत- त्योहार में गाया जाता है।

⁴ Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona

⁵ तेज नारायण लाल; मैथिली लोक गीतों का अध्ययन, विनोद पुस्तक मन्दिर, आगरा, १९६२, पृष्ठ स. १०५

⁶ J.K. Mishra: History of Maithili Literature, Vol. I, Tribhukti Publication, Allahabad, 1949, PP. 77-80.

⁷ ताराकान्त मिश्र; मैथिली लोक साहित्य का अध्ययन; नेशनल पब्लिशिंग हाँउस, २/३५ अंसारी रोड, दरियागंज, नई दिल्ली-२, पृष्ठ स. १०७

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उसी तरह इन चित्रों का चित्रण भी किया जाता है। इन चित्रों का चित्रण स्त्रियों द्वारा किया जाता है। चित्राकन से पहले भूमि या दीवाल पर गोबर से लीपते हैं। फिर प्रकृति रंगों और कुची से चित्रण करते हैं। जो मधुबनी लोक-चित्र कला के नाम से विश्व-विख्यात है। इस कला की नींव रामायण के मुख्य पात्र राम और सीता के विवाह से जोड़ा जाता है। एवम् सीता के विवाह के समय जनकपुर के राजा जनक ने मिथिलांचल की औरतों से, नव विवाहित जोड़े के कुहबर (कमरे) को सुंदर चित्रों से सजाने का आग्रह किया था। तभी से नव विवाहित के कमरों को सुंदर चित्रों से सजाने का प्रचलन/ रिवाज है। अर्थात् मधुबनी चित्र उस अंचल के रीति-रिवाजों का एक अंश है।

मधुबनी लोक-चित्र में पहले दीपक के स्याही से बने काले रंग से सम्पूर्ण रेखांकन करने के बाद उसमें रंग भरे जाते हैं। इन चित्रों का चित्रण शैली मुख्यता दो तरह के होते हैं। १) जिसमें मात्र रेखाओं के उपयोग से चित्रण किया जाता है। जिसका चित्रण समाज के निम्न वर्ग के स्त्रियाँ करती हैं। २) जिसमें रेखाओं से आकारों के परिधि बनाने के बाद रंगों को भरा जाता है। जिसे उच्च वर्ग के औरते चित्रण करती हैं। इन चित्रों के विषय-वस्तुओं में देवी-देवताओं के गाथा, पशु-पंछीयों, वृक्ष-फलों, इत्यादि के चित्रण किये जाते हैं।⁸ जिसमें रामायण के विषय-वस्तु पर कई चित्रण देखने को मिलता है। जिसमें से सीता से संबंधित विषय-वस्तु के चुनाव और अंकन उल्लेखनीय है।

संस्कार लोक गीत :-

संस्कार गीत में जन्म संस्कार के गीतों के पुत्र लालसा के गीतों में कौशल्या, कैकेयी रानियों का जड़ी पीस कर पीने का वर्णन है :

कहाक सिलोट कहाक लोढी कहा से जड़ी लाऊ रे।

ललना, पिस घिस राखल कटोरी भरि कौशल्या रानी औखद है।

एक बूँट पिलनी कौशल्या रानी दोसर सुमित्रा रानी रे।

ललना, लोढी धोई पिलनी केकई रानी, तीनू भेली गर्भवती रे।⁹.....

इस लोक गीतों के उल्लेख करने का मेरा उद्देश्य इन गीतों में औरतो से संबंधित विषयों की चर्चा की गयी है। जो आंध्रप्रदेश के औरतों द्वारा रामायण के गीतों से औरतों के विषय-वस्तु की चर्चा में मेल रखता है।¹⁰ जहाँ लोक गीतों के माध्यम से औरते अपने इच्छाओं को प्रकट करती हैं और उनके मोहोल का अनुभव से वे हमें परिचित करवाती हैं।

विवाह संस्कार के कुमार के गीतों में सीता का वर्णन मिथिला के कुमारी लड़की के रूप में वर्णन कुछ इस तरह किया गया है :

⁸ Upendra Thakur; Madhubani painting; Publisher shakti malik, Abhinav publications, E-37, houz khas, New Delhi-110016; page no-28-48

⁹ ताराकान्त मिश्र; मैथिली लोक साहित्य का अध्ययन; नेशनल पब्लिशिंग हाँउस, २/३५ अंसारी रोड, दरियागंज, नई दिल्ली-२, पृष्ठ स. १२०, १२७, १२८

¹⁰ Paula Richman, comp. *Ramayana Stories in Modern South India*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008. [from Tamil, Kannada, Telugu, and Malayalam]

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आमक डारि कोइली सब बजाए, बिजुवन बाजे मयूर हे,
जनकपुर में सखी सब बजाए, आब सिया रहली कुमारी हे।
जाहक बाबा नग्न अयोध्या राजा दशरथ दरबार है,
राजा दशरथजी के चारि बालक, छन्हि चारु एक समान हे।

अपन जोग बाबा समधी खोजब, सोजन जोग बरिआत हे,
सिया जुगति बाबा वर खोजि लएब, देखत जनकपुर लोक हे।
गाइयक गोबर ठांक कएल सीता, धनुखा देलेने ओंग्रठाय हे,
जे वीरईहो धनुखा तोडत, देब में सीता वियाही हे।¹¹

लेखक ने इस गीत को मिथिला के पारिवारिक जीवन की सुंदर झांकी बताया है। जहाँ सीता के कुमारी होने की चिंता को राजा जनक से उसकी सखियाँ अवगत करती है। जहाँ सीता के विवाह करने की इच्छा को उसकी सखियों गीतों से कहती है। जिसमें सीता को एक साधारण बेटे के रूप में और राजा जनक को एक साधारण पिता के रूप में वर्णित किया गया है। ये लोक-गीते, ओरतों के पुरुष समाज में अपनी इच्छा व्यक्त के माध्यम एवम् सीमाओं को दर्शाती है।

सीता के स्वयंवर का चित्रण ((Stories of Rama(1).

Janaka's bow-sacrifice and Ram breaks the bow at king Janaka's bow-sacrifice to win sita as his bride.) चित्र स.१)में तीनों लोक से आये हुए राजाओ के साथ रावण का चित्रण भी है। राम, लक्ष्मण के साथ विश्वामित्र ऋषि एवंम उपर (आकाश) में ब्रम्हा, शिव और गणेश का चित्रण किया गया है। जो इस घटना के महत्व को दर्शाते है। जिसमें रावण दस सिर और बीस हाथों वाला, एक विशाल धनुष के पास आत्म विश्वास के साथ बैठा है। वहीं राम और लक्ष्मण को उनके सिर के पीछे बने आलोक चक्र से महत्वपूर्णता प्रदान किया गया है। इसके बाद के चित्र में राम धनुष के दो टुकड़ो के साथ चित्र में सबसे बड़े भू-भाग में चित्रित है। (चित्र स.२)जहाँ लक्ष्मण, ऋषि विश्वामित्र और फूलों कि वर्षा करते देवी-देवताओं का चित्रण किया गया है। इस प्रकार 'सीता के स्वयंवर' का विस्तृत चित्रण, जनकपुर और सीता के मिथिलांचल में इस विषय के महत्व को दर्शाता है। जो की वहाँ के प्रबंधात्मक लोक-गीतों में भी गाया जाता है।¹²

¹¹ ताराकान्त मिश्र; मैथिली लोक साहित्य का अध्ययन; नेशनल पब्लिशिंग हॉउस, २/३५ अंसारी रोड, दरियागंज, नई दिल्ली-२, पृष्ठ स. ११२-१४५, १४६

¹² Jyotindra Jain;Ganga Devi Tradition and Expression in Mithila painting; Mapin Publishing Pvt. Ltd., Ahmendabad,India in association with The Mithilia Museum, Niigata, Japan; page no-80

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(चित्र स.१) Stories of Rama(I).King Janaka's Bow-Sacrifice.



(चित्र स.२)(Stories of Rama(I); Rama breaks the bow at king Janaka's bow-sacrifice to win sita as his bride.)

प्रबंधात्मक गीतों के 'सम्मर' खंड गाथा गीत में सीता स्वयंवर का वर्णन किया जाता है | जिसमे सीता को अपने लिये वर चुनने की चर्चा होती है | जो स्त्री के इच्छाओं को गीत के रूप में प्रकट करती है | तो दूसरी ओर सीता द्वारा चुने गए वर के रूप और शक्ति की तारीफ करती है | जो की इस प्रकार है –

विवाह संस्कार के 'समदाउन' के एक गीत में सीता के ससुराल जाने का वर्णन किया जाता है¹³:-

¹³ राम इकबाल सिंह 'राकेश' : मैथिली लोक गीत, हिंदी साहित्य सम्मेलन, प्रयाग, २०१२ वि.स., प१०१७

नारी के जीवन की अभिव्यक्ति करते मिथिलांचल के मौखिक इतिहास

बर रे यतन से सीताजी के पोसलो,

सेहो रघुवंसी नेने जाय /

मिलि लिय मिलि लिय सखि सब मिलि लय,

सीता बेटी जइति ससुरार /

कथि केर डोलिया केहन ओहरिया,

लागि गेल बतिसो कहार /

चाननक डोलिया सबजि ओहरिया,

लागि गेल बतिसो कहार /

आगु आगु रघुवर पाछ पाछ डोलिया,

तकरा पाछ लछुमन भाय /

प्रस्तुत गीत में मिथिला के एक पुरानी प्रचलन का उल्लेख किया गया है। जो आज भी मिथिला में कभी-कभी देखने को मिलता है। सीता के ससुराल जाने के करुण प्रसंग का विशद चित्रण तुलसीदास ने अपने रामचरितमानस में किया है।

प्रेम विवस नर नारि सब सखिन्ह सहित रनिवास /
मानहुं किन्ह विदेहपुर करुनाँ विरहँ निवासु ॥ दोहा ३३७ ॥

भावार्थ:-सब स्त्री-पुरुष और सखियों सहित सारा रनिवास प्रेम के विशेष वश हो रहा है। (ऐसा लगता है) मानो जनकपुर में करुणा और विरह ने डेरा डाल दिया है।

सीय बिलोकि धीरता भागी। रहे कहावत परम बिरागी॥
लीन्हि रायँ उर लाइ जानकी। मिटी महामरजाद ग्यान की॥ ३॥

भावार्थ:-वे परम वैराग्यवान कहलाते थे, पर सीताजी को देखकर उनका भी धीरज भाग गया। राजा ने जानकीजी को हृदय से लगा लिया। (प्रेम के प्रभाव से) ज्ञान की महान मर्यादा मिट गई (ज्ञान का बाँध टूट गया)।¹⁴

इन दोनों ही में सीता के विदाई का वर्णन में भिन्नता है। लोक गीत में मैथिली लोक परंपरा की छाप डोली के वर्णन में स्पष्ट होता है। जहाँ डोली को उठने वालो कि

¹⁴ तुलसीदास : रामचरितमानस, बालकाण्ड, गीता प्रेस गोरखपुर, २०१८, पृष्ठ. २२२

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संख्या और डोली चलने से उसे हुने वाली गीत का वर्णन, गीत कर के लोक जीवन के अनुभव को दर्शाता है। अर्थात् उस विदाई के द्रश्य का वर्णन है, जबकि तुलसीदास के दोहों में राजा जनक के मन के भाव का चित्रण किया गया है। वहीं लोक-गीत में लोक-जीवन के रूप का अनुभव होता है। एक और 'समदाउन' में सीता के ससुराल जाने और उसके वियोग में मिथिला नगर की अवस्था का वर्णन है, जो की लोक-गीतों में कलाकार के द्वारा अनुभव किये गये अपने आस-पास के वातावरण को वर्णित रूप है।

समापन :- इन लोक गीतों में जिस तरह से औरतों के जीवन की सूक्ष्मता को सरल शब्दों में अभिव्यक्ति किया गया है, वह उनके नजरिया और अनुभवों को रेखांकित करता है। जहाँ विवाह के लोक गीत लडकियों के जीवन महत्वपूर्ण अंश और पारिवारिक जीवन की सुंदर घटनाक्रम को दर्शाते हैं वहीं उनके नये जीवन के संघर्ष के प्रति चिंताओं को भी उल्लेखित करते हैं। वहीं लोक चित्रों में सीता के द्वारा औरते उन अधिकारों की चर्चा भी करती हैं जहाँ उन्हें अपने लिए वर चुनने का अवसर दिया जाता था, जो उनके जीवन का एक महत्वपूर्ण निर्णय भी होता था जहाँ उनकी इच्छा को भी स्थान प्राप्त होता था। जो आज के पुरुष प्रधान या पितृसत्ता के प्रभाव में कहीं दबती नजर आती है। जहाँ रामायण पर आधारित ये लोक-गीत और लोक-कला में सीता के रूप में नारी अपनी पहचान को स्थापित करते हैं वहीं समाज में निहित असमानताओं और नारी के अधिकारों के संघर्ष के परिचय भी देते हैं।

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सामाजिक सुधार आंदोलन में महिलाएं

Dr. Manjula Chaurasia

उन्नीसवीं सदी में भारतीय समाज धार्मिक अंधविश्वासों और सामाजिक कुरीतियों द्वारा निर्मित एक दुष्चक्र में फंस गया था। प्राचीन धार्मिक ग्रंथों व साहित्य आदि के अवलोकन से पता चलता है कि स्त्रियों की सामाजिक दशा, उनकी प्रकृति व उनके कार्य क्षेत्र से संबंधित विचारों में परिवर्तन आते रहे हैं।¹ भारतीय समाज में स्त्रियों के परंपरागत स्थान की चर्चा करते समय इस बात को मद्दे नजर रखना आवश्यक है कि हम किस काल के समाज की व्याख्या कर रहे हैं। एक काल में भी समाज के विभिन्न स्तरों में स्त्रियों की स्थिति और कार्यों में बहुत अंतर पाया जाता है।

उन्नीसवीं शताब्दी में महिलाओं के लिए प्रमुख सुधार आंदोलनों का नेतृत्व पुरुषों द्वारा किया गया क्योंकि पुरुषों के लिए पश्चिमी शिक्षा और पूर्व में ही सोचा गया था। हालांकि 19 वीं शताब्दी के अंत में महिलाएं इस प्रक्रिया में सक्रिय रूप से शामिल हो गईं। इस सदी के महिला आंदोलन की प्रथम लहर की खास बात यह थी कि यह विश्वव्यापी लहर थी। महिला अधिकारों की मांग केवल यूरोप और अमेरिका के देशों-उपनिवेशों में ही नहीं बल्कि पाश्चात्य जगत के बाहर एशिया में भी उभर रही थी। इस प्रकार महिलाओं द्वारा उनके समर्थन में आयोजित अनेक आंदोलन दुनिया के कई भागों में उभरकर आ रही थी हालांकि इन्हे एक-दूसरे के बारे में कोई जानकारी नहीं होती थी

नारियों के लिए सामाजिक सुधार आंदोलन मुख्य रूप से परंपरा और आधुनिकता अर्थात् भारतीयता और ब्रिटिश प्रशासन के मुठभेड़ के कारण परिलक्षित हुई। दोनों ही संस्कृतियों में आकाश और पाताल का अंतर था। हिन्दू नारी की परंपरागत छवि की आलोचना की जाने लगी। स्त्री कही भी सुरक्षित नहीं थी चाहे वह घर हो या समाज, चाहे उच्चवर्णीय हो या निम्नवर्णीय समाज में उसका मान-सम्मान नहीं था। उसका जीवन भी उसका नहीं था वह जिंदा होते भी अस्तित्वहीन थी। उनका कई प्रकार से शोषण होता था जिसमें बालविवाह, तलाक, विधवाविवाह, अंतरजातीया विवाह, परदा प्रथा, देवदासी प्रथा आदि प्रमुख थे।

उन्नीसवीं शताब्दी का भारतीय आंदोलन मुख्य रूप से उच्च वर्णीय और उच्च जातीय महिलाओं की समस्याओं से संबंधित था। उक्त दोनों वर्गों का जीवन यापन उनके विवाह और विधवापन से जुड़ी हुई परम्पराओं ने उस समय काफी ध्यान आकर्षित किया। तात्कालिक समाज सुधारकों ने मुख्य रूप से महिला जीवन से जुड़े तीन समस्याओं पर अपना ध्यान केंद्रित किया - महिला विवाह की उम्र, विधवा महिला का जीवन और पुनर्विवाह का अधिकार तथा महिला शिक्षा।² आमतौर पर पुरुष आंदोलनकारियों ने महिला आंदोलनकारियों के मुद्दों को अधिक महत्त्व देने की मांग का समर्थन नहीं किया और अनेक बार उनकी चिंताओं का खुलेआम उपेक्षा और उपहास किया। इस प्रकार के नकारात्मक विचारधारा ने महिलाओं को

एक अलग आंदोलन को संचालित करने के लिए प्रेरित किया। जिसमें पुरुष वर्चस्व चाहे वह किसी भूमिका में हो, लिंगभेद, पितृसत्ता तथा महिलाओं के दमन जैसे मसलों पर गम्भीरता से विचार किया जायें।

भारत में महिला आंदोलन का विकास समाज-सुधार आंदोलन से जुड़ा हुआ है। 19 वीं शताब्दी में नारी मुक्ति के लिए जिन वैधानिक सुधारों और उपायों को अपनाया गया, उन्हें महिला आंदोलन के रूप में जाना गया हालांकि इस वक्त महिला समस्याओं का प्रतिनिधित्व करने वाला कोई औपचारिक संगठन मौजूद नहीं था। भारतीय समाज में नारियों की गिरी हुई स्थिति स्वीकार करते हुए पुरुष समाज सुधारकों ने नारी आंदोलन को नेतृत्व प्रदान किया। भारतीय समाज में हिन्दू महिलाओं की दशा को सुधारने वाला आंदोलन क्रमशः धीमा था फिर भी वह लगातार जारी रहा।

ब्रिटिश शासन काल के प्रारंभ से ही बहुत से ऐसे कानून बने जिनका उद्देश्य नारियों की स्थिति में सुधार करना था। समाज सुधार के क्रम में सुधारकों का ध्यान तत्कालीन सामाजिक व्यवस्था के विभिन्न पक्षों की ओर गया। नारियों की स्थिति में सुधार कैसे करना है। यह यक्ष प्रश्न चुनौती के रूप में सामने आया। नारियों से जुड़ी इन समस्याओं के लिए जहां एक ओर सरकार द्वारा वैधानिक सुधार किए जाने पर जोर दिया गया वहीं दूसरी ओर महिला जागृति पर भी जोर दिया गया जिसमें एक "परिवर्तित महिला" की बात की गई। जो न सिर्फ भावनात्मक स्तर पर पुरुष के साथ सहभागी बने बल्कि

महिलाओं की समस्याओं का निराकरण कर सके। जिसका प्रमुख माध्यम औपचारिक शिक्षा थी। इसी समय पाश्चात्य शिक्षा प्राप्त बुद्धिजीवियों ने नारियों की पतनोन्मुख दशा की उन्नति के लिए अनेक सार्थक प्रयास शुरू किये सर्वप्रथम ब्रिटिश सरकार ने 1793 एवं 1804 के बंगाल रेगुलेशन एक्ट द्वारा शिशु हत्या पर प्रतिबंध लगाने की कोशिश की गई पर ये सभी प्रयास बेकार चले गये और महिलाओ से संबंधित कुरीतियाँ समाज में जस की तस बनी रही।

भारत में स्त्रियों की दशा सुधारने के लिए सर्वप्रथम संगठित प्रयास राजा राम मोहन रॉय ने किया। राजा राम मोहन रॉय पहले भारतीय थे जिन्होंने सतीप्रथ के विरुद्ध आंदोलन चलाया। उन्होंने वैचारिक आंदोलन चलाए जाने के साथ-साथ व्यावहारिक स्तर पर भी कई प्रयास किये प्रारंभ में तो ब्रिटिश संसद सती विरोधी कानूनों को बनाने से यह कहकर बचती रही कि यह हिन्दू धार्मिक मामलों में हस्तक्षेप है। बाद में जो कानून बनाये गये उसमे जबरन सती और स्वेच्छा से सती में अंतर करते हुए इसे कानून बनाने की कोशिश की गई। जिसमे सती प्रथा विरोधी कानून बनाने वालों को झकझोर कर रख दिया। सन् 1817 में प० मृत्युंजय विद्यालंकार ने घोषणा की कि सती की कोई शास्त्रीय मान्यता नहीं है। इसमे एक वर्ष पश्चात 1818 में बंगाल के तत्कालीन प्रांतीय गवर्नर जनरल विलियम बैंटिक ने प्रांत में सती पर रोक लगा दी और सन् 1829 में जब वे भारत के गवर्नर जनरल बने तो उन्होंने सती उन्मूलन एक्ट पास किया।⁴

राजा राम मोहन रॉय से लेकर वीरेशलिंगम जैसे समाज सुधारको ने सतीप्रथ, बाल-विवाह, बहुविवाह, पर्दाप्रथा, कन्यावय, देवदासी प्रथा जैसी कुरीतियों को दूर करने व महिलाओं की स्थिति को सुधारने के लिए बड़े पैमाने पर आंदोलन चलाये। सती उन्मूलन आंदोलन स्त्रियों की स्थिति सुधारने की दिशा में प्रथम प्रभावकारी प्रयास था तो स्त्रियों की शिक्षा का आंदोलन दूसरा प्रयास था। बालिकाओं की शिक्षा में प्रारम्भिक पहल 1820 में अंग्रेज और ईसाई मिशनरियों द्वारा किए गए थे।⁵ जिसके परिणामस्वरूप बंगाल में हिन्दू और ब्राह्मण कन्याओं के लिए पाठशालाएं खोली गईं। जहां मिशनरी स्कूलों में गरीब लड़कियां पढ़ने आती थी वहीं इन नये स्कूलों में ऊंची जाती की लड़कियां पढ़ने गईं।⁶ पुणे में ज्योतिबा फुले ने अछूत लड़कियों की शिक्षा के लिए स्कूल खोलें। तत्कालीन स्त्री-शिक्षा समर्थकों का ऐसा विश्वास था कि स्त्रियों की शिक्षा ऐसी होनी चाहिए जिससे वे अपनी घर-गृहस्थी में परिपक्वता ला सके।⁷

महिलाओं की शिक्षा पर बल देते हुए विश्वविद्यालय शिक्षा आयोग (1948) के ये ऐतिहासिक वक्तव्य थे "शिक्षित स्त्री के बिना शिक्षित पुरुष हो ही नहीं सकता यदि पुरुषों और स्त्रियों में से केवल एक के लिए सामान्य शिक्षा का प्रावधान हो तो यह अवसर स्त्रियों को दिया जाना चाहिए क्योंकि यह शिक्षा स्वयं अगली पीढ़ी को प्राप्त हो जायेगी।" सन् 1963 के वनस्थली विद्यापीठ में भाषण देते हुए प० जवाहर लाल नेहरू ने भी यह स्वीकार किया था कि बालकों की शिक्षा सिर्फ एक व्यक्ति की शिक्षा है परंतु एक बालिका की शिक्षा सम्पूर्ण परिवार की शिक्षा है। विशेषतः केशवचन्द्र द्वारा चलाई जा रही कन्या

पाठशालाओं में बालिकाओं को गृह-कार्य में दक्ष किए जाने एवं सेवा-सुश्रूषा की शिक्षा दी जाती थी जिससे कि वे बच्चों के चरित्र निर्माण में माँ के रूप में महत्वपूर्ण दायित्व का निर्वाह कर सकें।

तत्कालीन समाज में बाल-विवाह होते थे इसी कारण विधवा समस्या श्राप बनकर उभरी। उच्च वर्ग में विधवा विवाह नहीं होते थे। यदि कोई विधवा स्त्री विवाह करने की कोशिश करे तो समाज न तो उसे मान्यता देती थी और न उसे समाज में रहने ही देती थी। इसप्रकार विधवा पुनर्विवाह की समस्या बहुत मुखर थी। ईश्वरचन्द्र विद्यासागर ने 1850 में विधवा पुनर्विवाह पर लगे प्रतिबंध को समाप्त करने के लिए अभियान चलाया और बंगाली भाषा में एक पुस्तिका प्रकाशित की जिसमें कहा गया कि विधवा पुनर्विवाह शास्त्र-सम्मत है। सन 1855 में विद्यासागर ने विधवा पुनर्विवाह के लिए कानून बनाने के लिए एक याचिका भारत के गवर्नर जनरल को दी। ईश्वरचन्द्र विद्यासागर व डी०के० कर्वे के प्रयासों से 1856 में विधवा पुनर्विवाह कानून पारित कर दिया गया किन्तु इसके बावजूद बहुत ही कम पुनर्विवाह हुए। परिणामतः समाज सुधारको ने इसे 'मुर्दा-पत्र' की संज्ञा दी। सन् 1890 में यह तथ्य दृष्टिगत हुआ कि विधवा पुनर्विवाह कानून बनने बाद पिछले 40 वर्षों में कुल 500 विधवा पुनर्विवाह हुए।⁸

इन समस्याओं के अतिरिक्त एक अन्य आंदोलन बालविवाह से संबंधित था। 19 वीं शतक में विवाह की लगभग आयु आठ और नौ वर्ष थी परंतु कुछ जातियों और क्षेत्रों में कुछ भिन्न थी।

बाल-विवाह की प्रथा सदियों से हिन्दू समाज का हिस्सा थी। सरकार ने कम वय की बालिकाओं की दशा को सुधारने के लिए 1860 में एक कानून पास किया परंतु यह कानून स्त्रियों को नाममात्र सुरक्षा प्रदान कर पाया।⁹ इस प्रकार 19 वीं सदी के अंतिम वर्षों में बरहम मालाबारी द्वारा इस मसले को उठाये जाने से पहले इसके विरोध में कोई आंदोलन नहीं चलाया गया तो सामाजिक व नैतिक दलीलों के आधार पर ठुकरा दिया गया। बालविवाह की प्रथा को समाप्त करने से संयुक्त परिवार तथा जाति व्यवस्था के टूट जाने का डर था।¹⁰ इस मुद्दे पर स्त्रियों के कूदने से और भी स्थिति वीमत्स हो गई। कलकत्ता की महिला चिकित्सकों ने विवाह की उम्र को बढ़ाने के लिए समाज सुधारकों द्वारा किए गए पहल का समर्थन किया। सोलह सौ हिन्दू नारियों ने कानूनी सुधार लागू करने के लिए महारानी विक्टोरिया के समक्ष 1890 में याचिका पेश की। नारियों की स्थिति को सुधारने के लिए 1929 में हरिविलास शारदा द्वारा स्त्री विवाह की उम्र को 14 वर्ष करने के लिए एक विधेयक प्रस्तावित किया गया। यह नारियों के लिए किया गया सबसे सराहनीय प्रयास एवं सुधार था।¹¹

उन्नीसवीं सदी के अंत में समाज सुधार आंदोलन का प्रभाव दिखाई देने लगा था। सार्वजनिक जीवन में विद्रोही स्त्रियों की संख्या में बढ़ोतरी हुई। जिनमें रमाबाई रसुंदरी देवी का उदाहरण ले सकते हैं। रसुंदरी देवी ने अपने स्वयं के प्रयत्नों द्वारा शिक्षा ग्रहण की तथा आत्मकथा लिखने वाली पहली भारतीय महिला बनी। इसके पश्चात बंगाल की महिलाओं ने इस

आंदोलन में विशेष रूप से भाग लिया। नारी शिक्षा प्रमुख रूप से बम्बई, पुणे और मद्रास जैसे शहरी क्षेत्रों तक सीमित थी। इस प्रकार समाज में "परिवर्तित महिला" ने 1880 के दशक में आवाज उठाना शुरू कर दिया था और अपनी पराधीनता की स्थिति के लिए जिम्मेदार कारकों पर प्रश्न करने लग गई थी। समानता के आधुनिक विचारों ने भी भारतीय स्त्री की सामाजिक स्थिति को प्रभावित किया ब्रह्म समाज, आर्य समाज आदि आंदोलनों ने पर्दा प्रथा का विरोध किया जिससे स्त्रियाँ शिक्षित होकर आर्थिक स्वावलंबन के योग्य बनीं।

सन् 1882 में एक युवती लेखिका तारा बाई शिंदे ने अपनी पुस्तक "स्त्री -पुरुष तुलना" में ब्राह्मणवादी पितृसत्तात्मक व्यवस्था की कटु आलोचना की। अनेक समाज सुधारवादी संगठन ने भी इस पुस्तक का बहुत तिरस्कार किया।¹² सबसे महत्त्वपूर्ण बात यह है की सुधार आंदोलनों के दौरान इन सारी प्रक्रिया में स्वयं स्त्रियाँ हाशिए पर रही। धर्मग्रंथों के उद्धरणों की व्याख्या के क्रम में कहीं भी महिलाएँ विषय वस्तु के रूप में नहीं ली गईं। 19 वीं शताब्दी के अंतिम दसको तक सामाजिक परिदृश्य में महिलाएं इतिहास की विषय वस्तु के रूप में उभर कर सामने नहीं आई थीं। जहां तक वामाबोधिनी पत्रिका का प्रश्न है जो हमेशा महिलाओं की स्थिति में सुधार की बात करती थी उसने भी सुधार के प्रयत्नों की सार्थकता को अस्वीकार कर दिया। दूसरी ओर नारियाँ परंपरावादी रूढ़िवादी पुरुषों द्वारा रचित संसार के सामाजिक स्तरीकरण के सबसे निचले पायदान पर थी जिसमें न केवल वह अपनी निम्न स्थिति

को स्वीकार करती थी बल्कि हिन्दू रूढ़िवादी 'स्त्रीत्व' की अवधारणा को मजबूती प्रदान कर रही थी। उनमें विधवा पुनर्विवाह के सिद्धान्त के इन्कार का भाव स्पष्ट परिलक्षित होता था। 19 वीं सदी के मध्य में समाज सुधारकों द्वारा प्रतिपादित सिद्धान्त वाक्य 'विधवा से विवाह करो मुक्तिदाता कहलाओ' सदी के अंत तक विकसित होकर कानूनी अभियानों के वजाय समाज सेवा का दर्शन बन गया था।

ब्रह्मसमाज, आर्य-समाज आदि आन्दोलनों ने पर्दा-प्रथा का विरोध किया और स्त्री शिक्षा का समर्थन किया। एक अन्य महत्त्वपूर्ण बात जो स्त्रियों के लिए आवश्यक था वह आर्थिक स्वावलम्बन के योग्य बनाना है तथा परिवार को शिक्षित बनाना है।

इसप्रकार हम देखते हैं की स्त्रियाँ ही संतति की परंपरा में मुख्य भूमिका निभाती है फिर भी प्राचीन समाज से लेकर आधुनिक कहे जाने वाले समाज तक स्त्रियाँ उपेक्षित ही रही हैं। समाज सुधार आंदोलन में स्त्रियों की जीवन दशा सुधारने की जरूरत इसलिए नहीं अनुभव की गई कि वे उपेक्षित जीवन व्यतीत कर रही थी बल्कि उनकी स्थिति में उन्नति उनके परिवार के लिए जरूरी था। यह विचारधारा काफी प्रबल थी कि नारी माँ के रूप में सर्वाधिक सम्मानित थी। इस संदर्भ में यह वक्तव्य की "जिन स्थितियों में स्त्रियाँ शिशुओं को जन्म देती है तथा जिन परिस्थितियों में बच्चे पलते हैं, वे इतने दयनीय कि 'भारतीय मूल' पूरी तरह से विकृत हो जाता है। माताओं और बच्चों की उपेक्षा से भारतीयों की एक पूरी पीढ़ी

उद्यमशीलता खो चुकी है, इसीलिए भारत को अंग्रेजों का गुलाम बनना पड़ा। अतः भारतीय राष्ट्र के लिए यह जरूरी था कि उसके बच्चे उत्तम परिस्थितियों में जन्म लेकर पले-बढ़े।¹³ नारियों को कम सुविधाओं, अधिकारों और उन्नति के अवसरों में रखा जाता रहा है, इसीकारण नारियों की स्थिति अत्यंत निचले स्तर पर है। इस त्रासदी पूर्ण जीवन के कारण ही कुछ समसामयिक पाश्चात्य आलोचक की यह अवधारणा है कि भारत में स्त्री सदा द्वितीय श्रेणी की नागरिक रही है।

निष्कर्षतः हम यह कह सकते हैं कि यद्यपि समाज सुधार आंदोलन में नारियों की स्थिति सुधारने और उन्हें आगे बढ़ाने के प्रयास किए लेकिन उन्हें स्त्रीपरक भूमिका दी गई और यही कारण है कि स्वतंत्रता के पश्चात भी समान अधिकारों के बावजूद नारियों की स्थिति में कोई विशेष परिवर्तन नहीं आया।

संदर्भ

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सामाजिक मन्वंतराची युगस्त्री — सावित्रीबाई फुले

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पार्श्वभूमी — सावित्रीबाई फुले या थोर समाज क्रांतीकारक महात्मा जोतीराव फुले यांच्या सहधर्मचारिणी. आपल्या दैदिप्यमान ज्योतीने जोतीबांनी सावित्रीबाईंच्या कर्तृत्वाची ज्योत प्रज्वलित केली आणि स्त्री सुध्दा पुरूषांच्या बरोबरीने युगप्रवर्तक कार्य करू शकते हे जगाला सिध्द करून दाखविले.

महात्मा जोतीराव फुल्यांचा कालखंड म्हणजे एकोणिसाव्या शतकातील अव्वल इंग्रजी कालखंड कृष्णावतारी मानल्या जाणा—या बाजीराव पेशव्याचा शेवट १८१८ मध्ये झाला. स्त्री स्वातंत्र्य आणि समानता हा विषय पेशवाईत वेड्याची कल्पना ठरावी अशी स्थिती होती. सुस्वरूप स्त्रियांना सुरक्षितता लाभणे कठीण होते. दुस—या बाजीरावाच्या अमानुष आणि अश्लील लीलांना बळी पडलेल्या कित्येक स्त्रियांनी मरणे पत्करली. ज्यावेळी पेशवाईचा शेवट झाल्याची बातमी पसरली, त्यावेळी वाईतील स्त्रियांनी पेढे वाटल्याची नोंद सापडते. हळूहळू संबंध हिदुस्थानवर इंग्रजांचा एकछत्री अंमल सुरू झाला. हा काळ स्त्रिया व शुद्र यांच्या दृष्टीने अन्याय व अत्याचारांच्या परिसीमेचा होता.

भारताच्या प्रदीर्घ इतिहासात स्त्री समाजाच्या अत्याचाराची करून कहाणी आजपर्यंत सातत्याने चालत आलेली आढळते. सनातनी हिंदू धर्मच नव्हे तर बौध्द, जैन आणि बंडखोर संप्रदाय स्थापन झाले, वाढले पण त्यामध्ये स्त्रीच्या समानतेला कुठे स्थान मिळाले नाही. एकूणच स्त्री जीवन उपेक्षित, अन्यायग्रस्त असेच होते. ही पार्श्वभूमी विचारात घेता एकोणिसाव्या शतकात एखादया स्त्रीने पुढे येवून शैक्षणिक क्रांती घडवून आणणे ही सोपी गोष्ट अजिबातच नव्हती.

परिचय — देशाच्या शैक्षणिक आणि सामाजिक इतिहासात फुले दांपत्याचे कार्य अलौकिक आणि क्रांतीकारक आहे हे सर्वमान्य झाले आहे. महाराष्ट्राच्या समाजक्रांतीच्या इतिहासात महात्मा जोतीराव फुले यांच्याबरोबर त्यांच्या पत्नी सावित्रीबाई यांच्या क्रांतीकार्याची नोंद घेणे अपरिहार्य आहे.

महात्मा फुलेंनी सावित्रीबाईना शिकविले शिक्षिका केले, त्यांनी शिक्षिका म्हणून उत्तम कार्य पार पाडले. एकोणविसाव्या शतकातील महाराष्ट्रात आणि भारतात ज्या अनेक सामाजिक कार्य हाती घेतलेल्या स्त्रिया होवून गेल्या त्यामध्ये सावित्रीबाई फुले यांचे कार्य तुलनेने कितीतरी पटीने मोलाचे आणि क्रांतीकारक आहे म्हणूनच त्या भारताच्या समाज कार्यातील आदय क्रांतीदेवता ठरतात.

सावित्रीबाई फुले यांचे माहेर नायगांव, ता. खंडाळ, जि. सातारा येथील खंडोजी नेवसे-पाटील हे त्यांचे वडील. ३ जानेवारी १८३१ मध्ये त्यांचा जन्म झाला. त्या लहानपणापासूनच हुशार, धीट आणि दयाळू स्वभावाच्या होत्या. गोरगरीबांविषयी त्यांना उपजतचं कणव होती. जोतीबांशी त्यांचा विवाह इ.स. १८४० रोजी नायगांव येथे मोठ्या धाटामाटाने विवाह झाला. त्यावेळी जोतीबांचे वय तेरा वर्षे तर सावित्रीबाईंचे वय सहा वर्षे होते.

शैक्षणिक क्रांती — स्त्री शिक्षणाचा भारतातील पहिला प्रयोग आपल्या शेतातील आंब्याच्या झाडाखाली महात्मा फुल्यांनी केला. याचे कारण म्हणजे स्त्री आणि शुद्र यांच्यावरील वाढलेले अत्याचार व भट ब्राम्हणांची भोंदूगिरी व लुबाडणूक आणि हे सर्व थांबवायचे असेल तर बहुजन समाज शिकला पाहिजे हे जोतीबांवांना जाणवत होते. सावित्रीबाई फुले आणि सगुणाबाई क्षीरसागर या ह्या शाळेतील पहिल्या विद्यार्थिनी होत. महात्मा फुल्यांनी विद्येचे महत्त्व ओळखून स्त्री शिक्षणास सर्वश्रेष्ठ स्थान दिले. १ जाने. १८४८ मध्ये महात्मा फुलेंनी त्यांचे स्नेही तात्यासाहेब भिडे यांच्या वाड्यात मुर्लीची पहिली शाळा सुरू केली. या शाळेत स्वतः प्रथम महात्मा फुले शिकवित असत. पेशव्यांच्या राजधानीत महात्मा फुलेंना दुसरा शिक्षक मिळेना. म्हणून म. फुलेंनी सावित्रीबाईना मुर्लीच्या शाळेत शिकविण्यासाठी नेमले. ज्या काळात स्त्री आणि शुद्रांनी शिक्षण घेणे हे धर्मबाहय व निषिद्ध मानले जाई, तेथे एका बहुजन समाजातील माळ्याच्या बायकोने शिक्षिका होणे हे पुण्यासारख्या धर्ममार्तंडाच्या व सनातनांच्या नगरीत आव्हानचं होते. मुर्लीना शाळेत पाठवणे हे धर्मबाहय आहे, हा कुमार्गाला लावण्याचा उदयोग आहे अशी त्या काळातील धर्ममार्तंडांनी आवई उठविली. थोडक्यात काय तर एकोणविसाव्या शतकात स्त्री आणि शुद्र यांच्यासाठी शाळा काढणे व ती सुरू ठेवणे ही अशक्य कोटीची बाब म्हणावी लागेल. त्यावेळचे मुंबईचे राजकीय ऋषी मामा परमानंद यांनी फुले दांपत्याविषयी म्हटले आहे. 'एका मराठ्याने आपल्या पत्नीस शिकवून तिच्याकरवी ब्राम्हणांच्या मुर्लीना

शिकविण्यासाठी त्यांच्या बालेकिल्ल्यात प्रवेश करणे हे मोठे धाडसाचे काम होते. परंतु त्यांच्या बालेकिल्ल्यात राहून महार, मांगासाठी शाळा उघडून आणि त्यांना समाजाचे घटक बनविणे म्हणजे सिंहाची आयाळ त्यांच्या गुहेतचं उपटण्यासारखी गोष्ट आहे.' यावरून फुले दांपत्याच्या कार्याचे मुल्यमापन स्पष्ट होते.

मुलींच्यासाठी म.फुलेनी शाळा का सुरू केली याची पार्श्वभूमी स्वतः फुलेनी सांगितली, ते म्हणतात — 'माझ्या देश बांधवांपैकी महार, मांग, चांभार ह्या कनिष्ठ जातीतील बंधू हे दुःख आणि अज्ञान यात साफ बुडालेले आहेत. त्यांची स्थिती सुधारण्यासाठी दयाळू देवाने मला प्रेरणा दिली. स्त्रियांच्या शाळेने प्रथम माझे लक्ष वेधले पूर्ण विचारांनी माझे मत असे झाले की पुरूषांच्या शाळेपेक्षा स्त्रियांच्या शाळेची अधिक आवश्यकता आहे.'

सावित्रीबाईंचे शैक्षणिक कार्य — सावित्री बाईंच्या कर्तबगारीस ख—या अर्थाने सुरूवात झाली, ती त्यांच्या पतीमुळे. सावित्रीबाई ह्या लौकीक अर्थाने जोतीबा फुल्यांच्या जशा अर्धांगी होत्या तशा क्रांतीकार्याच्याही अर्धांगी होत्या. जोतीबांच्या कार्यात सहभागी होताना त्यांना केवळ आनंदच नव्हे तर अभिमानही वाटत असे. त्यांनी शाळेत जावून शिकवू नये म्हणून किती अनंत यातनांना सामोरे त्यांना जावे लागले होते हे आपणा सर्वांना माहिती आहे. त्या नेहमी म्हणत 'मी माझ्या भगिनींना शिकविण्याचे पवित्र कार्य करत आहे असे करताना तुम्ही माझ्या वर शेण, खडे फेकीत आहात, ती मला फुलेच वाटतात. ईश्वर तुम्हाला सुखी ठेवो' अशा अत्यंत प्रतिकूल वातावरणात सावित्रीबाईंनी हे पवित्र कार्य हाती घेतले याला प्रलय कालच मानले पाहिजे. पुण्यातील सर्व भट भिक्षुकांनी खवळून अत्यंत शेलक्या शिव्या शाप देवून सावित्रीबाईंची निंदानालस्ती केली. पण सावित्रीबाई जरापण डगमगल्या नाहीत. त्या आपल्या पतीप्रमाणे जिद्दी, करारी आणि द्रष्ट्या होत्या. हे सर्व त्यांनी अत्यंत कठोरपणे पचविले. त्यांनी कोणत्याही लोकप्रवादांना किंमत न देता आपले शिक्षण प्रसाराचे कार्य अव्याहतपणे सुरूच ठेवले. या शाळेच्या सावित्रीबाई लवकरच मुख्याध्यापिका बनल्या. या शाळेत ६ मुली पैकी ४ ब्राम्हण, १ धनगर व १ मराठा अशा विद्यार्थिनी होत्या. ही पहिली शाळा, तिचे यश हे त्यांच्यासाठी आनंददायी व प्रेरणादायी होती. अल्पावधीतच त्यांनी पुणे व आसपासच्या परिसरात एका पाठोपाठ एक अशा शाळा सुरू केल्या व त्यातून त्यांनी शिक्षणास ऐतिहासिक चालना दिली. यापैकी काही शाळा पुढीलप्रमाणे — १८४८ भिडे वाडा, पुणे, १८४८

या प्रत्येक शाळा काढताना त्यांना अनंत अडचणीना सामोरे जावे लागले. अवघ्या चार वर्षात इतक्या शाळा एकोणिसाव्या शतकात काढून त्या नेटाने चालविण्याचे हे देशातील एकमेव उदाहरण होय.

शैक्षणिक प्रयोग — फुले दांपत्याने शिक्षिकांना तयार करण्यासाठी 'नॉर्मल स्कूल' काढले. त्यातून प्रशिक्षित होवून बाहेर पडलेल्या विद्यार्थिनी म्हणजे फातिमा शेख. एकोणिसाव्या शतकातील त्या पहिल्या मुस्लिम स्त्री शिक्षिका होत्या. सावित्रीबाई आणि फातिमा या दोघी एका एका मागासलेल्या समाजातील मुलींच्या शाळेवर काम करत असत. या शाळेतील विद्यार्थिनींची परिक्षा (आजची चाचणी परीक्षा) ही सावित्रीबाईंनी आपल्या स्वानुभवावरील सिद्धांताद्वारे घेतली. त्यावरून शिक्षणाच्या प्रगतीस परंपरा व परिस्थिती कारणीभूत असते असा मुलभूत विचार त्यांनी मांडला.

सनातन्यांचा होणारा अनन्वित अत्याचारांची पर्वा न करता त्यागबुद्धीने व चिकाटीने सावित्रीबाईंनी प्रभावीपणे काम करावे, यास एकोणिसाव्या शतकातच काय पण विसाव्या शतकात सुध्दा तोड नाही. त्यांच्याबद्दल १८५३ च्या अहवालात म्हटले आहे — Savitribai the school mistress has nobly volunteered to devote herself to improvement of female education without any remuneration.

सावित्रीबाईंनी आनंददायी शिक्षणाचा दुसरा प्रयोग अवलंबला. शाळेत शिकविताना उपयोगी पडतील अशा अनेक कविता त्यांच्या संग्रहात आहेत. सावित्रीबाईंची मुलींना शिकविण्याची निष्ठा, त्यांचे वय, त्यांची प्रतिभा, त्या सांस्कृतिक दडपशाहीच्या चौकटीत स्त्रीच्या एकूण प्रतिभेचा व मनाचा कोंडमार या सर्व घटकांचा एकत्रित विचार केला तर या आनंददायी शिक्षणामधून त्या निश्चितच सुखावल्या जात असाव्यात, हा त्यांचा प्रयोग अलौकीकचं म्हटला पाहिजे.

सावित्रीबाईंचा शिक्षणक्षेत्रातील पुढचा प्रयोग हा प्रौढ व रात्रीचे शिक्षण असा होता. यासाठी दुर्दम्य इच्छाशक्ती, प्रामाणिकपणा, सहनशीलता, जिद्द, निष्काम कर्मयोग्याचे व्यक्तीमत्व त्या दोघांमध्ये ही होते. याचसोबत मुलांचे पर्यावरण त्यांची क्षमता त्यांचा शैक्षणिक इतिहास यांचा अभ्यास करून त्यांनी या विद्यार्थ्यांसाठी वेगळा अभ्यासक्रम तयार केला. शिक्षणाच्या

यशस्वीतेसाठी, उपयुक्ततेसाठी, नवा मार्ग त्यांनी शिक्षणतज्ञांना दिला. निश्चितच सावित्रीबाईंनी शैक्षणिक क्षेत्रात केलेल्या या क्रांतीकारक बदलांचे अनुकरण आज आपण नव्याने करित आहोत. मी तर म्हणून आज आपण जे Bridge Course, Remedial Coaching करतो. त्याचे मुळ कुठेतरी सावित्रीबाईंच्या कल्पनेतूनच आले असावे असे म्हटले तरी चुकीचे ठरणार नाही.

बालहत्या प्रतिबंधक गृह व सावित्रीबाई

बालहत्या ही समस्या सा—या भारतातील असली तरी तिला प्रतिबंध करणारी 'बालहत्या प्रतिबंधक गृह' ही पहिली संस्था महात्मा फुलेंनी इ.स. १८६८ मध्ये पुणे येथील जुन्या गंजपेटेत स्वतःच्या घरात सुरू केली. या बालहत्या प्रतिबंधक गृहाची सर्व जबाबदारी सावित्रीबाईंवर होती. हे काम फुले दांपत्याने अत्यंत आनंदाने स्वीकारून त्या संदर्भातील माहिती देणारी भीत्तीपत्रके घराघरांवर लावली होती. यासाठी सावित्रीबाईंनी बाल संगोपनाची आधुनिक पध्दतीची माहिती करून घेतली होती. स्वतःला अपत्य नसतानाही या अनाथाश्रमातील लहान मुलांचे संगोपन सावित्रीबाई अत्यंत प्रेमाने आणि वात्सल्याने करत असत. या अत्यंत स्तुत्य उपक्रमाचा परिणाम म्हणजे अशा प्रकारच्या अनैतिक संबंदातून जन्मणारी मुले खिस्ती मिशन—यांकडे जाण्यापासून थांबली. यामुळे ब्राम्हणांच्या समाजविघातक चालीरीतींना प्रतिबंध बसला. थोडक्यात ज्या समस्येमुळे स्वतःला नुकसान नाही पण मानवी मूल्यांची विटंबना होते आहे अशा विरूद्ध या फुले दांपत्याने बंड केल्याचे दिसते.

सत्यशोधक समाज व सावित्रीबाई — समाजाच्या उन्नतीसाठी महात्मा फुलेंनी २४ सप्टेंबर १८७३ मध्ये सत्यशोधक समाजाची स्थापना केली होती. यानंतर सावित्रीबाईंनी या समाजाचे कार्य मोठ्या निष्ठेने पुढे नेले. १८९३ मध्ये सासवड येथे २० व्या परिषदेस त्या अध्यक्ष म्हणून उपस्थित होत्या. त्यांनी विविध ठिकाणी सभांचे आयोजन करून सत्यशोधक समाजाचे कार्य नेटाने पुढे नेले.

महिला सेवा मंडळ व सावित्रीबाई — स्त्रियांची सुधारणा करण्यासाठी सावित्रीबाईंनी महात्मा फुलेंच्या मार्गदर्शनाखाली महिला सेवा मंडळाची स्थापना केली. या संस्थेमार्फत जानेवारी १८५२ मध्ये मोठ्या प्रमाणावर तिळगुळाचा कार्यक्रम आयोजित केला होता. यासाठी जी छापील पत्रिका

काढली होती त्यावर स्पष्ट म्हटले होते की, सर्व जाती धर्मातील स्त्रिया एकाच जाजमावर बसतील. या समारंभासाठी झालेला खर्च व समारंभातील उपस्थिती लक्षात घेता सावित्रीबाईंची संग्राहक वृत्ती, सेवा वृत्तीची कल्पना येते हे उदाहरण त्यांच्यातील पुरोगामित्वाची साक्ष देणारे आहे.

सावित्रीबाई व क्रांतीकारक कार्य — ज्या घटनेने संपूर्ण देशभर त्याकाळात वादळ उठले ती घटना प्रत्यक्ष सावित्रीबाईंच्या पुढाकारानेच घडली होती. २५ डिसेंबर १८७३ मध्ये पहिला सत्यशोधक विवाह सावित्रीबाईंनी स्वखचनि त्यांची मैत्रीण वजुबाई ग्यानोबा निंबाळकर यांची मुलगी राधा हिचा सिताराम बजाजी आल्हाट यांचेशी लावून दिला. या घटनेने देशभर खळबळ माजली पण सावित्रीबाईंनी अगदी धाडसाने या प्रसंगाला तोंड दिले.

नारायण मेघाजी लोखंडे यांच्या सहकार्याने ब्राम्हण विधवांच्या केशवपनाविरुद्ध नाभिकांचा जो संप झाला त्यामागचीही प्रेरणा सावित्रीबाई होत्या.

मुल्यमापन — सावित्रीबाई या केवळ महात्मा फुलेंच्या अर्धांगिनीच होत्या असे नाही तर त्या उपजत आणि संपादित प्रेरणांनी स्वयंप्रेरित झालेल्या एक शक्ती होत्या. त्या अखंड भारताच्या इतिहासातील पहिल्या क्रांतीकारक कार्यकर्त्या होत्या. सावित्रीबाईंच्या रूपाने स्त्री सेविकेचा प्रारंभ होता. देशाच्या इतिहासात सावित्रीबाईंनी यशस्वी सर्वसमावेशक समाजसेवा करून एक थोर आणि अपूर्व क्रांतीकारी परंपरा निर्माण केली. त्या एकोणिसाव्या शतकातील एक मागासलेल्या समाजातील स्त्री म्हणून विचार केल्यास उत्तर पेशवाईत, इंग्रजी अंमलाच्या प्रारंभी त्यांना किती भयानक संकटांना तोंड द्यावे लागले असेल हे तात्कालिन सामाजिक परिस्थितीवरून लक्षात आल्याशिवाय रहात नाही.

१८९७ साली महात्मा फुल्यांनी आपल्या मृत्यूपूर्वी सत्यशोधक समाजाच्या प्रमुख कार्यकर्त्यांना बोलावून सांगितले, ते म्हणाले 'तुम्ही पेशवाईत जसे गुरांसारखे वागत होता तसे न वागता वाघासारखे वागा, गायीप्रमाणे कसायापुढे मान देवू नका. मोगलाई आज आहे, उदया नाही. पण जोपर्यंत आहे तोपर्यंत सा—या शुद्रादी शुद्रास विदया देवून शहाणे करा. विदया ही माणसास मनुष्यत्व प्राप्त करून देते. सावित्रीने माझ्याबरोबर ५० वर्षे प्रवास केला. तिच्यामुळेच मी लोकांचे भले करू शकतो.'

सावित्रीबाईच्या अलौकिक कार्यास स्वतः महात्मा फुलेनी जी कृतार्थता व्यक्त केली आहे ती उल्लेखनीय आहे. प्रखर विरोध, आर्थिक चणचण आणि अनेक संकटे यांना टक्कर देवून सावित्रीबाईनी आपल्या निर्वाणापर्यंत समाजक्रांती कार्याची ज्योत अखंड तेवत ठेवली. संपूर्ण भारतात समाजक्रांतीच्या नेत्या म्हणून त्या पहिल्या युगस्त्री ठरल्या.

१० मार्च १८९७ रोजी या युगस्त्रीचे महानिर्वाण झाले. ज्योतीने प्रज्वलित केलेली ही ज्योत अनंतात विलिन झाली. आज या घटनेस सव्वाशे वर्ष पूर्ण होत आली. या प्रदीर्घ कालखंडात आपल्या देशात अनेक सामाजिक, राजकीय उलथा पालथी झाल्या. परंतु सावित्रीबाई या दिव्य ज्योतीने स्त्री आणि शुद्र या समाजाच्या सर्वांगीण मुक्तीचे जे आंदोलन पराकोटीच्या प्रतिकूल सामाजिक परिस्थितीत केले त्याला इतिहासात तोड नाही.

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विहार में नक्सलवाद का पतन

पप्पू ठाकुर¹; डॉ. नारद सिंह²

सार:

नक्सलीय समस्या हमारे देश के लिए बड़ा आंतरिक खतरा बन गया है। खासकर 2007 में प्रधानमंत्री मनमोहन सिंह की टिप्पणियों के बाद, यह एक चिंता का विषय बन गया है और साथ ही अकादमिक बहस का विषय भी है। इस मुद्दे को बड़े पैमाने पर और गहनता से संबोधित करने के लिए नवीन विचार और नए सिरे से योजना बनाई गई है। इस पृष्ठभूमि में, मध्य बिहार का एक मामला अध्ययन इस मुद्दे पर प्रकाश को केंद्रित करने के लिए प्रासंगिक हो जाता है। यह एक स्थापित तथ्य है कि बिहार में नक्सलवाद ने मध्य बिहार के माध्यम से अपना रास्ता बनाया था। जब काउंटरसिर्जेंसी तंत्र ने पश्चिम बंगाल और आंध्र प्रदेश में नक्सलवाद के पहले बुलबुले को कुचल दिया, तो उसे मध्य बिहार में अपना प्रजनन क्षेत्र मिला। मध्य बिहार में बार-बार नरसंहार और नक्सल आतंक देश के लिए 1980 और 1990 के दशक में चिंता का विषय बन गया। यह तर्क देता है कि बदलती सामाजिक-आर्थिक परिस्थितियों के साथ-साथ अन्य कारकों ने मध्य बिहार में माओवादी लोकप्रियता और ताकत को व्यापक रूप से प्रतिबंधित कर दिया।

संकेत: नक्सलवाद, सामाजिक परिवर्तन, आसद्धार परियोजना

परिचय:

झूलन देवी संध्या ब्लॉक के अंतर्गत पांडुरा गाँव की पहली महिला ऐसी नक्सली नेता थीं। उन्होंने सन् 2000 के पंचायत चुनाव में नक्सली उम्मीदवार के लिए प्रचार किया था। पंडुरा पंचायत के लिए माओवादी मुखिया चुनने में उनका योगदान महत्वपूर्ण था। लेकिन बहुत जल्द वही फायर ब्रांड बूढ़ी महिला माओवादी ताकतों के खिलाफ हो गई। झूलन देवी ने कहा, "सभी माओवादी नेता राजनीतिक टग हैं। वे सवर्ण सामंती से भी बदतर हैं। वे हिंसा और हत्या का उपयोग सामाजिक न्याय लाने के लिए नहीं बल्कि अपने निहित स्वार्थों के लिए करते हैं।" झूलन देवी की तरह, अन्य लोग जो कभी नक्सली के हमदर्द और प्रमोटर हुआ करते थे लेकिन उनके खिलाफ हो गए हैं। जिसने बिहार में माओवादी ताकतों की स्थिति में मूलभूत परिवर्तन कर दिया है।

बिहार से नक्सलवादी घटनाओं में नाटकीय गिरावट आई है। एक से अधिक कारकों ने इस गिरावट में अपना योगदान दिया है। पिछले कुछ वर्षों में भोजपुर पटना, गया, अरहबद, अरवल, भभुआ, रोहतास और जहानाबाद में तेजी से गिरावट देखी गई है। परन्तु बिहार के कई अन्य जिलों में नक्सल संगठनों का विस्तार हुआ है। पश्चिम चंपारण, पूर्वी चंपारण, शेहर, सीतामढ़ी, मुजफ्फरपुर, दरभंगा और मधुबनी जिलों सहित नेपाल की सीमा से लगे उत्तर बिहार के कुछ हिस्सों में अतिवाद की स्थिति रही है। धीरे धीरे नक्सलियों ने शाहरसा, बेगूसराय और वैशाली और उत्तर प्रदेश के साथ सीमावर्ती क्षेत्रों में भी अपना प्रभाव

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बढ़ाया है।

बिहार में नक्सलवाद की शुरुआत भोजपुर से हुई। एकवारी गाँव ने नक्सलवाद की होड़ को शुरु करने में अग्रणी भूमिका निभाई है। जिसकी चिंगारी आसपास के जिलों पटना, जहानाबाद, गया और तक फैल गई। नक्सल आंदोलन की शुरुआत अपने ही गुस्से और सामाजिक न्याय के घोर उल्लंघन से हुई। भोजपुर में कई बड़े जमींदार नहीं थे। लेकिन मुट्टी भर लोगों ने भूमि सुधार के लिए बहुत विषम परिस्थितियों का निर्माण किया। जदीशपुर और डुमराव के अलावा, केशात, चौगाई, कसाप के जमींदार अन्य जिलों में मौजूद थे। चरम सामाजिक और आर्थिक द्वंद्ववाद ने माओवाद को मध्य बिहार में फलने के लिए सौहार्दपूर्ण उपजाऊ आधार प्रदान किया। ऐसे कई कारण हैं जिनकी पहचान की जा सकती है जिसके कारण बिहार से नक्सलवाद धीरे-धीरे समाप्त हो गया। जिसका विशद विवेचन निम्न वर्णित है—

सामाजिक एवं आर्थिक परिस्थितियों में परिवर्तन:

मध्य बिहार में जनसंख्या घनत्व बहुत अधिक है। मध्य बिहार के विभिन्न जिलों में दलितों और निचली जातियों का अनुपात अधिक है। यह ध्यान रखना महत्वपूर्ण है कि बिहार के 30 जिलों को देश के पिछड़े जिलों के रूप में निरूपित किया गया है। मध्य बिहार के लगभग सभी जिले इस श्रेणी में आते हैं। ये जिले हैं भोजपुर, जहानाबाद, रोहताश, पटना और गया। इन जिलों में उच्च जातियों की आबादी का प्रतिशत लगभग 12 प्रतिशत है। निम्न जाति का हिस्सा लगभग 50 प्रतिशत है। लेकिन इन जिलों में दो प्रमुख पिछड़ी जातियाँ यादव और कुर्मी की आबादी का हिस्सा लगभग 16 प्रतिशत है। मध्य बिहार में नक्सल आंदोलन ने जाति के पहिये के द्वारा अपना कदम रखा। मुख्य रूप से यादव को उच्च जाति के खिलाफ युद्ध छेड़ने के लिए पहचाना गया था। एम.सी.सी. के संस्थापक *कनई चटर्जी* ने माओवादी आंदोलन के ध्वजवाहक के रूप में यादव समुदाय को चुना। मध्य बिहार में बदलते सामाजिक ताने-बाने की दो विपरीत घटनाएँ हैं। एक जहानाबाद जिले के मथिया गाँव का है, जहाँ अक्टूबर 1989 में उच्च जाति के पुरुषों द्वारा निम्न जाति के युवाओं से जोड़ कर देखा जाता है। वास्तव में, धोबी जाति (धोबी के आदमी) के द्वारा तथाकथित सामाजिक व्यवस्था की अवज्ञा की गई। वे कुर्सी पर बैठे रहे और खड़े नहीं हुए जबकि ऊंची जाति के लोग उनके पास से गुजर रहे थे।

भोजपुर जिले के संघेश ब्लॉक में 12 पंचायत हैं। हर पंचायत में एक छठ पूजा समिति होती है। छठ पर्व बिहार का सबसे लोकप्रिय सांस्कृतिक त्योहार है। कुछ दशक पहले, छठ की समिति में एक पिछड़ी जाति का प्रतिनिधि होना अकल्पनीय था। परन्तु वर्तमान में आश्चर्यजनक रूप से सभी पंचायत में अलग-अलग जातियों को समिति में शामिल किया जा रहा है। जिससे सामाजिक समरसता का संचार हो रहा है। सामाजिक व्यवस्था के इस नए रीमेक ने नक्सलवादियों को चुनौती दी है। निचली जातियों की जनसंख्या का 50 प्रतिशत और अनुसूचित जातियों का 18 प्रतिशत समाज में समायोजित है। गाँव में हर गतिविधि का नेतृत्व लोगों के एक समूह द्वारा किया जाता है जिसमें विभिन्न जातियाँ शामिल होती हैं। बिहार में नक्सली आंदोलन ने सामाजिक और आर्थिक मामलों में शोषणकारी संबंधों के खिलाफ लड़ाई लड़ी है। इज्जत (गरिमा या सम्मान) एक महत्वपूर्ण सामाजिक स्वतंत्रता है जिसे उसने बहाल करने का प्रयास किया है। सबसे महत्वपूर्ण बात यह है कि नक्सली आंदोलन उच्च जातियों के दिमाग के सेट को बदलने और दलितों की मानवीय गरिमा को बहाल करने में प्रभावी रहे हैं।

नक्सल विरोधी बलों का अंत:

वर्तमान बिहार में उच्च जातियों के कई ऐसे युवा हैं, जो अपने गाँवों में संघर्षपूर्ण स्थिति नहीं लाना चाहते हैं, जो हिंसा और आतंक को बढ़ावा देता है। नक्सल आतंक की पृष्ठभूमि में

बिहार में यह एक बहुत ही महत्वपूर्ण विकास है। रणवीर सेना, ऊंची जातियों के लिए अप्रासंगिक और पुरानी हो गई है। उदाहरण स्वरूप *जहानाबाद के पुष्पोत्तम सिंह ने नक्सल के खिलाफ लड़ने के लिए रणवीर सेना को चंदा (वार्षिक राशि) 1000 रुपये देना बंद कर दिया*। इसके दो कारण हैं एक तो वित्तीय संकट व दूसरा रणवीर सेना से मोहभंग था। रणवीर सेना के कमजोर पड़ने के कारण बिहार में एक सामाजिक व्यवस्था का प्रादुर्भाव हुआ है, जो बिहार की अन्य जातियों खासकर अनुसूचित जातियों को समायोजित करने में काफी हद तक समावेशी रही है। यह विश्लेषण करना बहुत दिलचस्प है कि राज्य में उच्च जातियों के प्रभाव का अस्तित्व कैसे समाप्त हो गया। 1960 के दशक के उत्तरार्ध में नक्सलियों के समूह को शामिल करने और उच्च जातियों से संबंधित भूमि की रक्षा करने के उद्देश्य से निजी जातियों या सेनाओं का गठन करके उच्च जातियों के भू-स्वामियों ने जवाबी कार्रवाई की। राजपूतों ने 1969 में *कुनेर सेना* का गठन किया, 1988 में *सूर्य सेना* का गठन किया। ब्राह्मणों ने *गंगा सेना* की स्थापना की और भूमिहारों ने 1981 में *ब्रह्मर्षि सेना* और 1990 में *सवर्ण मुक्ति मोर्चा* का गठन किया। 1980 के दशक तक नक्सली समूहों और अभिजात वर्ग के बीच दुश्मनी बढ़ने के कारण, जाति और सामुदायिक एकता में गहरा ध्रुवीकरण हुआ। इसके चलते रणवीर सेना की शुरुआत हुई।

रणवीर सेना का जन्म 1994 में भोजपुर के सभी उच्च जाति के जमींदारों के समर्थन से हुआ था। इसने पहली बार जुलाई 1996 में *बथानी टोला* पर हमले के साथ अंतरराष्ट्रीय सुर्खियां बटोरीं। रणवीर सेना प्रमुख *ब्रह्मेश्वर सिंह*, 36 नरसंहारों के पीछे का मास्टरमाइंड, जिसने पिछले छह वर्षों में कम से कम 400 लोगों की जान ले ली, रणवीर सेना दलितों के कई नरसंहारों में शामिल रही है। इनमें लक्ष्मणपुर-बाथे, मियांपुर (36), शंकरबिघा (18), सरथुआ (8), नागरी (10), हैबसपुर (15), बथानी थोला (21) और संतानी (13) की घटनाओं से संबंधित मामले शामिल हैं। ये गाँव मध्य बिहार के भोजपुर, जहानाबाद और गया जिलों में स्थित हैं। बिहार का इतिहास, तीन दशकों से अधिक समय से, नरसंहारों से भरा हुआ है। जो विभिन्न जमींदार सेनाओं और इसके विपरीत दलित जातियों के ग्रामीण गरीबों के नरसंहार से सम्बन्धित है।

वर्तमान में सवर्णों में गरीबी और बेरोजगारी तेजी से बढ़ी है। जिससे उच्च जातियों के बीच जमींदारों की संख्या में गिरावट आई है। जिसके कारण जीवकोपार्जन एवं अगली पीढ़ी को हिंसक परिस्थितियों से बचाने के लिए कई गाँवों के लोग शहरों में चले गए हैं। इसने उच्च जातियों के समग्र ढांचे को कमजोर कर दिया है तथा केंद्रीकृत शक्ति संरचनाएं ध्वस्त हो गईं। वर्तमान में उच्च जातियों की युवा पीढ़ी जबरदस्त आर्थिक कठिनाई से गुजर रही है। संयुक्त परिवार बंट गए हैं। घर के विभाजन ने भूमि के स्वामित्व को सिर की गिनती पर निचोड़ लिया है। सरकारी नौकरियां बहुत कम हैं, इस सामाजिक-आर्थिक परिवर्तन ने राज्य में उच्च जातियों से जमींदारी की स्थिति को कमजोर कर दिया है। इससे सभी जातियों को एक समूह में समायोजित करने और तदनुसार काम करने के नए सामाजिक क्रम की शुरुआत हुई। नए सामाजिक व्यवस्था की शुरुआत ने न केवल उच्च जातियों के प्रभाव को अप्रासंगिक बना दिया बल्कि नक्सल संगठनों को भी चुनौती दी।

बिहार में नक्सल समूहों ने अनुसूचित जातियों से सबसे बड़ा हिस्सा भर्ती किया है। परस्पर विरोधी सामाजिक व्यवस्था ने अनुसूचित जातियों को अपराधों के क्षेत्र में धकेल दिया था। उनमें से कई नक्सली समूहों में शामिल होकर अपराधी बन गए और अपने परिवारों को गाँवों में पीड़ित होने के लिए छोड़ दिया। कई मामलों में नया सामाजिक क्रम अन्य सभी जातियों को स्थान प्रदान करता है। इसने बिहार में नक्सल समूहों के लगातार विस्तार वाले चरणों को चुनौती दी है। अनुसूचित जातियों की युवा पीढ़ी अपने परिवारों के साथ अपने गाँवों के भीतर अपनी खुशी और आर्थिक गतिविधियों में लिप्त रहना चाहते हैं। वे पुलिस बल द्वारा शिकार नहीं होना चाहते और न ही नक्सल संगठनों द्वारा जबरदस्ती किया जाना चाहते हैं। राज्य और केंद्र सरकार की नई योजनाओं के कार्यान्वयन ने एक सामंजस्यपूर्ण सामाजिक

व्यवस्था बनाने में मूल्यवान भूमिका निभाई है। जिसके कारण सामाजिक समरसता को बढ़ावा मिला है एवं माओवादी सोच पर आघात किया है।

सामाजिक उद्यम द्वारा नक्सल आंदोलन को चुनौती:

जमीनी स्तर पर व्यापक शोध से कई अलग-अलग दृष्टिकोणों का पता चलता है। ज्ञात तथ्यों में से एक नक्सली ताकतों के मूक हत्यारे की भूमिका के बारे में ध्यान में आया है। जो सामाजिक उद्यमियों की भूमिका की ओर इंगित करता है। बिहार का एक मामला अध्ययन इस तथ्य को बढ़ाता है। यह जानना बेहद दिलचस्प है कि सामाजिक उद्यमी नक्सल आउटफिट को कैसे हरा सकते हैं, उनके खिलाफ युद्ध किए बिना। हाल ही में बिहार के एक सामाजिक उद्यमी, निदान के श्री अरविन्द सिंह ने 2009 में विश्व आर्थिक शिखर सम्मेलन में वर्ष का सामाजिक उद्यमी पुरस्कार जीता। निदान बिहार के विभिन्न जिलों में काम करता है। इसके लक्षित समूह दलित और समाज के बेहद हाशिए पर रहने वाले लोग हैं। निदान की यात्रा, बहुत बारीकी से, स्वयं सहायता समूहों के साथ शुरू हुई। 1996 में पटना में तीन समूहों से, प्रारम्भ हो कर, वर्तमान में (2009 के अनुसार) लगभग 57,433 की कुल सदस्यता के साथ छह जिलों में फैले 23 ब्लॉकों में लगभग 4800 है। लगभग 72 फीसदी एसएचजी ग्रामीण क्षेत्र में हैं। एसएचजी की लगभग 62 प्रतिशत सदस्यता अनुसूचित जातियों की है। सामूहिकता की यह प्रक्रिया सामाजिक पूंजी उत्पन्न करती है, जो दलित समुदाय के अधिकांश गरीबों की आवाज का प्रतिनिधित्व करती है। निदान की पहलों ने समाजों के हाशिये के वर्गों के लिए अच्छे और स्थिर जीवन के बारे में जागरूकता अभियान उत्पन्न किया। इसने राज्य के खिलाफ कानूनी लड़ाई लड़ने के लिए दलितों की एक मजबूत आवाज विकसित की है। स्वयं समूहों का निर्माण और उन्हें बैंकिंग प्रणाली के माध्यम से जोड़ने से गरीबों के जीवन में जादुई परिवर्तन आया है। इसने उन्हें कई सबक सिखाए। पहला, समाज में शांति और सहयोग विकास की आदर्श स्थिति है। नक्सलियों की हिंसक पद्धति उनके जीवन में कोई ठोस बदलाव लाने वाली नहीं है। वास्तव में, इसने उन्हें असुरक्षा की अधिक अनिश्चित स्थिति में धकेल दिया है। दूसरा, आमदनी के एकत्रीकरण ने एकजुटता और भाईचारे की भावनाओं को विकसित किया। उनके संकट के समय बैंक से मिले ऋण से सामाजिक और राजनीतिक व्यवस्था में विश्वास पैदा हुआ। इसके अलावा, संगठन का संघ जो उनके प्रमुख मुद्दों को संबोधित करता है, ने समग्र समाज की आशा को जन्म दिया, जिसके पास हिंसा के लिए कोई जगह रिक्त नहीं है।

मजबूत लोकतान्त्रिक भावना:

चारु मजुमदार के 'बंदूक के बैरल के तर्क' और कनु सान्याल की किसी भी तरह से राजनीतिक सत्ता हथियाने का सिद्धान्त विफल साबित हुई है। वास्तव में, भूमिगत गतिविधियों और हिंसा पर उनकी अत्यधिक निर्भरता के कारण, नक्सली समूहों को वर्तमान भारतीय राजनीतिक परिदृश्य में एक तुच्छ राजनीतिक बल के लिए कम कर दिया गया है। उनके पास भारतीय समाज के क्रांतिकारी परिवर्तन के पक्ष में बलों के संतुलन को झुकाव के लिए किसी भी निर्णायक शक्ति की कमी है। भारतीय गरीबों की वर्ग एकजुटता का हमेशा एक नाजुक आधार रहा है और नक्सली इन वर्गों को नहीं जुटा पाए हैं। आज यह आम तौर पर स्वीकार किया जाने वाला विश्वास यह है कि नक्सलवाद आम लोगों के आर्थिक और सामाजिक अभाव में निहित है और राज्य अपने मौलिक कर्तव्यों का पालन करता है। मीडिया में ऐसी कई रिपोर्टें हैं, जो बताती हैं कि, बिहार में प्रभावित इलाकों में किसी भी विकास कार्य को अंजाम देने के लिए, ठेकेदारों को आवंटित धन का 30 प्रतिशत कमीशन नक्सलियों के स्थानीय क्षेत्र कमांडर को देना पड़ता है। कुछ क्षेत्रों में, नक्सली संग्रह सरकार द्वारा एकत्र किए गए वाणिज्यिक कर से कहीं अधिक है। अन्य रिपोर्टों के अनुसार, बिहार के कुछ हिस्सों में कई सरकारी अधिकारी क्षेत्र के नक्सलियों द्वारा उत्पन्न खतरे के कारण अपने कार्यालयों

में भी नहीं जाते हैं। लेकिन सरकार के धन का उपयोग किया जा रहा है। जबरन वसूली का धंधा इतना लचर हो गया है कि कई क्षेत्रों में बेरोजगार युवाओं और छोटे-मोटे अपराधियों ने नक्सलियों को पैसा दे दिया है। पैसे की लालच और विचारधारा की घटती भूमिका ने नक्सलवादी आंदोलन को जमीनी स्तर पर प्रभावित किया है। इसने कैडर बेस के बढ़ते अपराधीकरण को बढ़ावा दिया है, जो बिहार में सबसे अधिक दिखाई देता है। आम कैडर, जिनके पास बहुत कम शिक्षा है और जिनमें उचित आवास का अभाव है, स्थानीय मुद्दों के साथ अधिक शामिल हैं, एक प्रवृत्ति जो नक्सली विचारधारा के खिलाफ है। अपने कब्जे में हथियारों के साथ, ये युवा, निचले-नक्सली नक्सली सामान्य हुड़दंगियों और अपराधियों की तरह व्यवहार नहीं करते हैं। जातिगत विचार और कुछ स्थानीय नक्सल नेताओं की आपराधिक पृष्ठभूमि भी एक शक्तिशाली, प्रभावशाली भूमिका अदा करती है।

ऊँची जाति से निम्न जाति को सत्ता केंद्र परिवर्तन:

मध्य बिहार के पांच जिलों के ब्लॉक के आकड़ों से पता चलता है कि एक विशेष जाति यानी यादव जाति के व्यक्तियों ने कुल बेची गई भूमि का लगभग 30 प्रतिशत खरीदा है। भूमि पर उच्च जाति की पकड़ धीरे-धीरे उच्च जाति से निम्न जाति तक हो गई। नतीजतन, यादव समुदाय ने माओवादी आंदोलन से दूरी बनाने की कोशिश की। एक बार जब यादव आर्थिक रूप से शक्तिशाली हो गए तो उन्होंने खुद माओवादी हमले की आशंका जताई। अन्य पिछड़ी जातियों ने एक ही पंक्ति में सबसे ऊपर हैं। वास्तव में, अनुसूचित जाति समुदाय को भी नया सामाजिक सामंजस्य पसंद आया जो जातिगत प्रतिद्वंद्विता के चरम विरोधाभास से उभरा था।

संधेश की कहानी:

संधेश ब्लॉक में नक्सलियों का क्रमिक उन्मूलन देखा गया है। संधेश भोजपुर जिले के अंतर्गत आता है। संधेश ब्लॉक के अंतर्गत 11 पंचायतें हैं। संधेश ब्लॉक की पंचायतों में नक्सल प्रभुत्व के अंत का एक जमीनी स्तर दृश्यमान होता है। बिहार में नक्सलवाद बिहार के दो ब्लॉकों से शुरू हुआ। संधेश उनमें से एक थी। एक अन्य समीपवर्ती ब्लॉक सहार था। सबसे महत्वपूर्ण कारक, जो नक्सल प्रभुत्व को खत्म करने में महत्वपूर्ण साबित हुआ, वह था बिहार में पंचायत चुनाव। बालू प्रखंड में 2000 पंचायत चुनाव के तहत छह पंचायतों में मुखिया थे। दूसरा पंचायत चुनाव संधेश ब्लॉक में 2006 में आयोजित किया गया था। यह गांवों में माओवादियों की अलोकप्रियता का पहला महत्वपूर्ण संकेत था। इसने माओवादी नेताओं और समुदाय के बीच एक महत्वपूर्ण दूरी बनाई।

माओवादी के खिलाफ सामाजिक सामंजस्य की प्रक्रिया संधेश ब्लॉक की कई पंचायतों में शुरू हुई। उन्होंने गांवों के विकास के लिए किसी भी निर्णय लेने की प्रक्रिया में निचली जातियों का सम्मान करना और उन्हें समायोजित करना शुरू कर दिया। सामाजिक व्यवस्था का यह नया रवैया नक्सलियों के सहानुभूति रखने वालों पर दबाव डालता है कि वे अपना रास्ता बदलें या गांवों को छोड़ दें। सामाजिक दबाव ने खेती करने के लिए कई नक्सलियों को बदल दिया और नक्सली संगठनों के साथ अपने सहयोग को खत्म कर दिया। सामाजिक परिवर्तन की प्रक्रिया ने संधेश ब्लॉक के तहत कई गांवों से नक्सलियों की संख्या को नाटकीय रूप से कम कर दिया है। हार्ड कोर नक्सल नेताओं ने गांवों को छोड़ दिया। धीरे-धीरे संध्या ब्लॉक जिसमें 11 पंचायतें हैं, को नक्सल हिंसा से मुक्त कर दिया गया है। सूरज ढलने पर अब गांवों में दरवाजे बंद नहीं होते। लोग देर रात तक खुलेआम घूमते हैं। पंचायत राज व्यवस्था के तहत माओवादी नेताओं की भ्रष्ट प्रथाओं ने उनके असली रंग को उजागर किया। मुखिया के रूप में उनके कार्यकाल के दौरान, वे लोगों से कटे रहे। उनके द्वारा सभी तरह की कुप्रथा का पालन किया जा रहा था। उन्होंने पैसे का दोहन किया और अपने निहित स्वार्थ के लिए सत्ता का इस्तेमाल किया। जिससे माओवादी नेताओं की असली तस्वीर सामने आई। उच्च जातियों के खिलाफ नफरत की उनकी कैलिब्रेटेड योजना निचली

जातियों के सामने आ गई। नक्सल रणनीति का उन्मूलन विभिन्न जातियों के बीच सामाजिक सामंजस्य लाया। वे एक नेता का चुनाव करने के लिए एक साथ आए जो गांवों के विकास के लिए काम कर सकने में सक्षम हो।

जहानाबाद में आसद्वार परियोजना:

जहानाबाद डायट में नक्सली हिंसा पर लगाम लगाने के लिए राज्य सरकार द्वारा कई पहलें शुरू हुई हैं जो दो दशकों से अधिक समय से नक्सल हिंसा के लिए चर्चा में बनी हुई हैं। लेकिन जहानाबाद में आसद्वार परियोजना की हालिया पहलों ने नक्सल आधार को एक बड़े स्तर पर गिरा दिया है। वर्तमान में जिले के पांच नक्सल प्रभावित पंचायतों में यह योजना चल रही है। ये सिकरिया, सेवनन, मंडेबीघा, सुरंगपुर— भवानीचक और जामुक, सभी जहानाबाद सदर ब्लॉक में हैं। इन पांच पंचायतों के अंतर्गत आने वाले गांवों में युद्धस्तर पर विकास गतिविधियों की सुगबुगाहट देखी जा रही है। राज्य सरकार ने आसद्वार के तहत कल्याण योजनाओं का एक उदार पैकेज दिया है, जिसमें इन पंचायतों में सीमेंट लेन, नालियों, चौपालों और लिक सड़कों का निर्माण किया गया है। अन्य कार्यों में स्कूलों और आंगनबाड़ी केंद्रों, पुलियों और व्यक्तिगत शौचालयों के लिए भवनों का निर्माण शामिल है। सरकार ने वन अधिकारों (वन अधिनियम 2008), विस्थापन (आर एंड आर पॉलिसी), आजीविका (नरेगा) के संबंध में कुछ अच्छी कार्यवाई की है, सभी नक्सल जिले शामिल हैं। बड़े पैमाने पर लोगों ने राज्य के आसद्वार कार्यक्रम को बड़े पैमाने पर अपनाया है। अतः इस मामले के रूप में संघेश के अध्ययन से नक्सलवाद को पराजित किया जा सकता है और विकास और नई सामाजिक व्यवस्था की प्रक्रिया को समाप्त किया जा सकता है लेकिन परिवर्तन को भीतर से आना होगा। झूलन देवी के रूप में लोग सबसे पहले नक्सलियों को अस्वीकार करना प्रारम्भ किया और दूसरे लोगों ने इनका अनुसरण किया और आज भी अनुसरण कर रहे हैं।

निष्कर्ष:

माओवादी समस्या अभी भी बिहार के कई अन्य जिलों में पनप रही है। यह केवल वोट बैंक के राजनीतिक कारकों के कारण है। सभी राजनीतिक दल दलितों के वोट पाने की प्रत्याशा में माओवादी को लुभाने की होड़ में हैं। बिहार में आगामी विधानसभा चुनाव बहुत महत्वपूर्ण होगा। वास्तव में, माओवादी राजनीतिक दल मतपत्र खो चुके हैं। यह केवल 1989 में आरा संसदीय सीट जीतने में कामयाब रहा। तब से इसका राजनीतिक स्थान तेजी से सिकुड़ गया है। लोगों ने राज्य में अपना विश्वास दोहराया है और हिंसक प्रथाओं का खंडन किया है। अभी भी माओवादी के पूर्ण उन्मूलन पर कड़ी मेहनत करने की जरूरत है। फिर भी, मध्य बिहार ने माओवादी ताकतों की गिरावट देखी है।

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वर्तमान भारतीय राजनीति में महिलाओं की स्थिति

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शोध पत्र का सार:-

भारतीय राजनीति में महिलाओं की सहभागिता को समझने से पूर्व हमें भारतीय परिवेश और सामाजिक संरचना को समझना होगा। हमारा सामाजिक ढांचा इस प्रकार का है कि जिसमें लड़कों के प्रति अतिरिक्त सजगता और लड़कियों के प्रति उदासीनता का रवैया अब तक देखा जाता रहा है। परिवार चलाने के लिए पुत्र लालसा और पुत्रियों के लिए दहेज की व्यवस्था की अवधारणा आज भी महिला और पुरुष में भेदभाव प्रदर्शित करती है और यही कारण है कि हमारी आजादी के 75 वर्ष पूरे हो चुके हैं और हम दुनिया के सबसे बड़े लोकतांत्रिक देश भारत के निवासी हैं आबादी के लिहाज से हम दुनिया में दूसरे नम्बर पर आते हैं लेकिन आधी आबादी कही जाने वाली महिलाएं भारतीय लोकतंत्र में कैसा योगदान कर रही हैं उनकी राजनीति में सहभागिता क्या है? अब सवाल यह उठता है कि राजनीति में प्रवेश करने वाली महिलाएं अब भी कठपुतली बनी रहेंगी या स्वविवेक से निर्णय करेंगी। प्रतिनिधित्व और सहभागिता दो अलगअलग अवधारणाएं हैं - सहभागिता से ही प्रतिनिधित्व का निर्धारण होता है। सहभागिता जितनी अधिक सक्रिय होगी प्रतिनिधित्व का गुण उतना ही उच्च होगा अब आवश्यकता इस बात की है यह सहभागिता सिर्फ दिखावे के लिए हो बल्कि सक्रिय सहभागिता हो। इसके लिए शिक्षा के प्रचार प्रसार को बढ़ाना होगा और-स्त्री शिक्षा के प्रति गम्भीर होना पड़ेगा और साथ ही योग्य महिलाओं को राजनीति में आने के लिए प्रेरित करना होगा तभी भारत में महिलाओं को राजनीति में आगे लाया जा सकता

Keywords:- विश्व राजनीति में महिलाएं, महिला वोटर, पंचायती राज में महिलाएं, महिला आरक्षण

यत्र नार्यस्तु पूज्यते रमन्ते तत्र देवता

अर्थात्, जहां महिलाओं की पूजा की जाती है, वहां पर भगवान प्रसन्न होते हैं, और “जहाँ महिलाओं का सम्मान नहीं होता , वहाँ हर प्रयास विफल हो जाता है”

आधुनिक भारतीय राजनीति में कई ऐसी महिलाएं रही हैं, जिनकी ऐतिहासिक भूमिका से हम भलीभांति परिचित हैं। स्वतंत्रता के आंदोलनों के दौरान से लेकर आज़ाद भारत में सरकार चलाने तक में महिलाओं की राजनीतिक भूमिका और पहल अहम रही है। बावजूद इसके जब राजनीति में महिला भागीदारी की बात आती है तो आंकड़ें बेहद निराशाजनक तस्वीर पेश करते हैं। प्रत्यक्ष (एक्टिव पॉलिटिक्स में महिलाओं की भागीदारी) और

अप्रत्यक्ष (वोटर्स के रूप में भागीदारी) दोनों स्तर पर ही भारी गैर-बराबरी से हमारा सामना होता है। हालांकि महिला वोटर्स की अगर बात करें तो स्थिति पहले से थोड़ी बेहतर हुई है। 1980 से 2014 के बीच महिला वोटर्स की संख्या में 15 प्रतिशत का इज़ाफा हुआ है। विश्वस्तर पर अगर भारत की एक्टिव पॉलिटिक्स में महिलाओं की स्थिति की बात करें तो भारत 193 देशों में 141वें स्थान पर है। विश्वस्तर पर संसद में 22.6 फीसदी महिलाओं की भागीदारी है। जिसमें भारत का औसत सिर्फ 12 फीसदी है। वहीं रवांडा में 63.8% प्रतिशत महिला सांसद हैं, नेपाल में 29.5 फीसदी, अफगानिस्तान में 27.7 फीसदी, चीन में 23.6 फीसदी हैं।

1. विश्व राजनीति और महिलाओं की भागीदारी:-

राजनीति में महिलाओं की भागीदारी को लेकर विकसित एवं विकासशील देशों में एक-सी स्थिति है। यद्यपि दुनिया के सभी संविधानों में पुरुषों के समान महिलाओं के लिए भी राजनीतिक अधिकारों का प्रावधान किया गया है किंतु व्यवहार में राजनीति में महिलाओं की भागीदारी बहुत कम है। जुलाई, 1995 से जनवरी, 1997 तक की अवधि में एक विश्वव्यापी सर्वेक्षण के अनुसार 179 देशों में हुए चुनावों में महिला सांसदों में केवल 0.4 प्रतिशत की ही वृद्धि हुई। इसी तरह विश्व में महिला सभापति (संसद) केवल 7 प्रतिशत हैं तथा पार्टी नेता केवल 11 प्रतिशत हैं। नई दिल्ली में हुए महिला अंतरराष्ट्रीय सम्मेलन में भी यह आवाज़ उठाई गई थी कि तमाम दुनिया में राजनीति में महिलाओं की सहभागिता बहुत कम है। केवल विकासशील देशों में ही नहीं अमेरिका, जापान और यूरोप जैसे विकसित देशों में भी यही स्थिति है। वर्तमान में दुनिया भर की संसदों में मात्र 11.7 प्रतिशत महिला प्रतिनिधि हैं। भारतीय संसद में भी 11% महिलाएँ ही हैं। यद्यपि अर्जेंटीना, बेल्जियम, उत्तरी कोरिया, नेपाल, ब्राज़ील, फ़िलीपींस आदि देशों ने अपनी-अपनी संसदों में न्यूनतम भागीदारी रखने के लिए क़ानून बनाए हैं, किंतु बहुत कम संख्या में आरक्षण की व्यवस्था की गई है। इसलिए 'अंतर संसदीय संघ' के नई दिल्ली में हुए अधिवेशन का लक्ष्य सांसदों में महिलाओं की बराबरी की भागीदारी प्राप्त करने का वातावरण बनाना था जिसमें 30 प्रतिशत महिलाओं के लिए आरक्षण करने की सिफ़ारिश की गई थी।

2. आज़ादी से लेकर वर्तमान समय तक भारतीय राजनीति में महिलाओं की स्थिति:-

भारत में आज़ादी के बाद पहली केंद्र सरकार (जवाहरलाल नेहरू की सरकार में) के 20 कैबिनेट मिनिस्ट्री में सिर्फ एक महिला (राजकुमारी अमृत कौर) थीं, जिन्हें हेल्थ मिनिस्ट्री का चार्ज सौंपा गया था। लाल बहादुर शास्त्री की सरकार में एक भी महिला को जगह नहीं दी गई। यहां तक कि इंदिरा गांधी की 5वीं, 6ठीं, 9वीं कैबिनेट में भी एक भी महिला यूनियन मिनिस्टर नहीं थीं। राजीव गांधी की कैबिनेट में सिर्फ एक महिला (मोहसिना किदवई) को शामिल किया गया। मोदी सरकार में महिलाओं की स्थिति पहले से बेहतर हुई है। आज 23 कैबिनेट मिनिस्ट्री में 6 महिलाएं हैं। यूनियन कैबिनेट मिनिस्ट्री में महिलाओं का प्रतिशत 5 प्रतिशत था जो 2014 में बढ़कर 26 प्रतिशत हुआ है। हालांकि, सीपीआई (एमएल) लीडर कविता कृष्णन का कहना है कि इससे स्थिति ठीक नहीं हुई है। इस सरकार ने सिर्फ कैबिनेट मिनिस्टर के रूप में महिलाओं को शामिल किया है लेकिन उनको कोई खास पावर नहीं है। वह रक्षा मंत्रालय का उदाहरण देते हुए कहती हैं कि एयर स्ट्राइक जैसे मामले में भी निर्मला सीतारमण का कोई इंगेजमेंट नहीं था, उन्हें बस राफेल मामले में प्रवक्ता के रूप में रख दिया गया है।

3. भारत में महिला वोटर्स की स्थिति:-

1980 से 2014 के बीच महिला वोटर्स की संख्या में 15 प्रतिशत इज़ाफा हुआ है। 1980 में महिला वोटर्स की संख्या जहां 51 प्रतिशत थी, वहीं 2014 में बढ़कर 66 प्रतिशत हो गई है। 1990 में महिला वोटर्स की संख्या में इज़ाफा होना

शुरू हुआ था और 2014 के लोकसभा चुनावों में अब तक का सबसे अधिक महिला मतदान हुआ। लेकिन अभी भी स्थिति को पूरी तरह से बेहतर नहीं माना जा सकता है। प्रतिशत के मामले में महिला वोटर्स की स्थिति कमज़ोर तो है ही साथ ही जो महिलाएं वोट देने जा भी रही हैं उनमें से एक बड़ा प्रतिशत वोट के मामले में खुद से निर्णय लेने में सक्षम नहीं है। उनका वोट किस पार्टी या किस लीडर को जाएगा इसका फैसला घर के पुरुष द्वारा ही होता है और वे उन्हीं निर्देशों का पालन करते हुए वोट देने जाती हैं।

4. पंचायती-राज में महिलाओं की भूमिका-:

भारत में पिछले 57 वर्ष में लोकतांत्रिक प्रक्रिया को मजबूत करने तथा महिलाओं में बढ़ रही चेतना के फलस्वरूप राजनीति में महिलाओं की भागीदारी बढ़ाने के प्रयत्न तो रहे हैं किंतु आधारभूत परिवर्तन सन् 1994 में संविधान में 73 एवं 74वाँ संशोधन कर पंचायती राज कानून लागू करने से आया है जिसमें पंचायत, पंचायत समिति एवं ज़िला परिषद् में एक हर अब हैं। गए किए आरक्षित लिए के महिलाओं स्थान तिहाई-की देश अर्थात् हैं पंच महिला तिहाई-एक में पंचायत 2,25,000 पंचायतों में 7,50,000 महिला सदस्य हैं तथा 75,000 महिला सरपंच हैं। हर पंचायत समिति में एक) तिहाई-17000) सदस्य महिलाएँ हैं तथा एक तिहाई-) तिहाई-एक में समितियाँ पंचायत 1700) प्रधान महिलाएँ हैं। इसी तरह ज़िला परिषदों में एक तिहाई-) 1583) सदस्य महिलाएँ तथा एक) तिहाई-158) ज़िला प्रमुख महिलाएँ हैं। कई राज्यों में उक्त आरक्षण के आधार पर चुनाव हो रहे हैं। कर्नाटक, पश्चिमी बंगाल एवं केरल में ग्राम पंचायतों में एक अधिक भी से तिहाई- और है आसपास के प्रतिशत ग्यारह सदस्यता की महिलाओं में विधानसभाओं और संसद किंतु हैं महिलाएँ पिछल बिल का सदस्यता महिला तिहाई-एके एक दशक से अभी भी लंबित है।

5. महिलाओं को राजनीति में कमज़ोर बताए जाने को लेकर दिए जाने वाले तर्क-:

1. महिला कैंडिडेट के जीतने की उम्मीद बहुत कम होती है।
2. महिलाएं अपने घरेलू काम के बीच राजनीति में एक पुरुष के मुकाबले समय नहीं दे पाती हैं।
3. महिलाओं को राजनीतिक समझ कम होती है इसलिए अगर वे जीतकर भी आती हैं तो महिला विभाग, शिशु विभाग जैसे क्षेत्र तक सीमित रखा जाता है। हालांकि आज इसके अपवाद भी देखने को मिल रहे हैं, जिसका एक बेहतर उदाहरण वित्त मंत्री निर्मला सीतारमण हैं।

जहां तक बात है महिला उम्मीदवार के जीतने की तो अंतिम तीन लोकसभा चुनाव में महिला कैंडिडेट के जीतने का प्रतिशत पुरुषों से ज़्यादा रहा है। 2014 के चुनाव में महिला कैंडिडेट का सर्वसेस रेट 9 प्रतिशत था जबकि पुरुषों का 6 प्रतिशत। 16वें लोकसभा चुनाव में जीतकर आई महिला कैंडिडेट की संख्या सबसे ज़्यादा थी। बावजूद आज भी कई राजनीति पार्टियां महिलाओं को तवज्जों नहीं देती हैं, इसका असर यह होता है कि बहुत कम ही महिलाएं एक्टिव पॉलिटिक्स में आ पाती हैं।

6.1952 से 2014 तक लोकसभा में महिलाओं की स्थिति

Table 1. Representation of Women in Lok Sabha 1952–2014

Lok Sabha	Total No. of Seats	Women Members Who Won	% of Total
First (1952)	489	22	4.4
Second (1957)	494	27	5.4
Third (1962)	494	34	6.7
Fourth (1967)	523	31	5.9
Fifth (1971)	521	22	4.2
Sixth (1977)	544	19	3.4
Seventh (1980)	544	28	5.1
Eighth (1984)	544	44	8.1
Ninth (1989)	529	28	5.3
Tenth (1991)	509	36	7.0
Eleventh (1996)	541	40*	7.4
Twelfth (1998)	545	44*	8.0
Thirteenth (1999)	543	48*	8.8
Fourteenth (2004)	543	45*	8.1
Fifteenth (2009)	543	59	10.9
Sixteenth (2014)	543	61	11.2

Source: Election Commission of India, New Delhi.

Note: *Including one nominated member.

सोर्स- <https://yka.io/2VxmrXO>

7.महिला आरक्षण बिल-:

राजनीति में महिलाओं की स्थिति बेहतर करने के लिए ज़रूरी है कि राजनीति में महिला रिज़र्वेशन लाया जाए, जो पिछले कई सालों से अधर में अटका पड़ा है। संसद में महिलाओं को 33 फीसदी आरक्षण का बिल 2010 में पास करा लिया गया था लेकिन लोकसभा में समाजवादी पार्टी, बीएसपी और राष्ट्रीय जनता दल जैसी पार्टियों के भारी विरोध की वजह से यह बिल पास नहीं हो सका। उस वक्त काँग्रेस की सरकार थी और काँग्रेस के पास बहुमत नहीं था लेकिन आज मोदी सरकार के पास बहुमत होने के बावजूद यह बिल पास नहीं हो पाया है।

देवेगौड़ा की सरकार ने सबसे पहले 1996 में संसद में महिला आरक्षण बिल पेश किया था। 2010 में राज्यसभा में बिल पास तो हो गया लेकिन लोकसभा में काँग्रेस को बहुमत नहीं होने की वजह से लोकसभा में यह बिल पास नहीं हो सका।

निष्कर्ष

अंत में निष्कर्ष के रूप में यह कहा जा सकता है कि भारतीय राजनीति में आज़ादी के इतने वर्षों बाद भी महिलाओं की भागीदारी बहुत कम बनी हुई है। वास्तव में भारत की आधी आबादी का एक बहुत बड़ा भाग अभी भी अपनी मूलभूत आवश्यकताओं से वंचित है। आज ज़रूरत इस बात की है कि इन्हें विकास की मुख्य धारा से जोड़ा जाए। भारत की राजनीति में वर्षों से पुरुषों का ही वर्चस्व रहा है, भारत की राजनीति में महिलाओं की भागीदारी कम होने के पीछे अब तक समाज में पितृसत्तात्मक ढाँचे का मौजूद होना है। लेकिन राजनीतिक दलों के भेदभावपूर्ण रवैये के बावजूद मतदाता के रूप में महिलाओं की भागीदारी नब्बे के दशक के अंत से उल्लेखनीय रूप से बढ़ी है ऐसे में यह अनिवार्य हो जाता है कि चुनावों के विभिन्न स्तर पर महिलाओं की भागीदारी का विश्लेषण किया जाए ताकि यह पता लगाया जा सके कि स्वंत्रता के छह दशक बाद भी इसमें असमानता क्यों है और चुनाव में कितने प्रतिशत महिलाओं को टिकट दिया जाता है महिलायें वर्षों से जुर्म और शोषण का शिकार हो रही हैं जिस कारण महिलाओं ने इसे स्वीकार कर लिया है। समाज में जब किसी भी प्रथा, शोषण और अत्याचार को सामाजिक स्वीकृति मिल जाती है तो उसे सामाजिक वैधता प्राप्त हो जाती है। इसी प्रकार जिस समाज में महिला रह रही हैं उन्हें यह ही नहीं पता की उनका शोषण हो रहा है और वह आज भी मानसिक रूप से गुलाम हैं। महिलाओं का सशक्तिकरण करने के लिए आवश्यकता इस बात है कि पहले महिलाओं को यह एहसास दिलाना होगा की उनका शोषण हो रहा है और वह आज भी मानसिक रूप से गुलाम हैं और उन्हें ही अपने सशक्तिकरण के लिए खुद संघर्ष करना है और समाज की मुख्य धारा में शामिल होना है। हमारे समाज में एक वाक्य बहुत ज्यादा प्रचलित है कि “कोई भी परिवर्तन होने में समय लगता है।” परन्तु परिवर्तन की शुरुआत तो कहीं से होनी ही चाहिए और इस परिवर्तन की पहल हमे खुद अपने घर से करनी होगी तभी समाज में परिवर्तन होगा और समाज के विकास में महिला की राजनीति में भागीदारी बढ़ेगी तभी महिला सशक्तिकरण के साथ-साथ भारत का भी सशक्तिकरण होगा

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भारतीय महिलायें – समाज सुधार आन्दोलन और स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में भूमिका (एक शोध पत्र)

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सारः— भारतीयों द्वारा अपनी आजादी के लिये किया गया स्वतंत्रता संग्राम या राष्ट्रीय आन्दोलन में पुरुषों के साथ-साथ महिलाओं ने भी अपनी उत्साह पूर्वक भागीदारी प्रस्तुत की थी, हालाँकि उन्होंने यह भागीदारी अप्रत्यक्ष रूप से या राष्ट्रीय आन्दोलन से दूर रहकर या घर पर रहकर प्रस्तुत की थी, लेकिन फिर भी उनके योगदान को नकारा नहीं जा सकता है।

प्राचीन भारतीय समाज में महिलाओं की स्थिति निम्न व दयनीय थी। वे कई प्रकार की परम्पराओं, प्रथाओं रूढ़ियों, रीति-रिवाजों से जकड़ी हुयी थी। बाल-विवाह, सती प्रथा, विधवा, पुर्न-विवाह आदि ऐसी सामाजिक बुराईयाँ थी, जिनकी वजह से महिलाओं का अस्तित्व अत्यंत निम्न था। ऐसी स्थितियों में महिलाओं के सामाजिक सुधार हेतु सर्वप्रथम पुरुषों अर्थात् राजा राम मोहन राय और ईश्वर चन्द्र विद्यासागर जैसे महापुरुषों ने महिलाओं को सामाजिक बुराईयों की जंजीरों से मुक्त कराया तत्पश्चात महिलायें स्वयं अपने सुधार हेतु मैदान में उतरी थी। पंडिता रमाबाई सरस्वती, सावित्री बाई, स्वर्ण कुमारी देवी, सरला देवी घोषाल, विद्यागौरी नीलकंठ और शारदा मेहता आदि ही ऐसी महिलायें थी, जिन्होंने शिक्षा से लेकर समाज सुधार तक के कार्यों में अपना भरपूर सहयोग दिया था।

शिक्षा और समाज सुधार के तहत जब भारतीय महिलाओं की स्थिति में सुधार हुआ तो उस समय जब भारत ब्रिटिश शासन का एक उपनिवेश था, के तहत भारतीय आजादी के लिये राष्ट्रीय आन्दोलन में भाग लेना आरंभ किया था। भारतीय इतिहास में महिलाओं द्वारा स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में भाग लेने के अंश सन 1817 से प्राप्त होते हैं, जब भीमाबाई होल्कर ने गुरिल्ला युद्ध में ब्रिटिश कर्नल मैल्कम के खिलाफ बहादुरी से लड़ते हुये उन्हें हराया था। उसके बाद बहुत बड़े पैमाने पर भारतीय महिलाओं ने राष्ट्रीय आन्दोलन में भाग लेकर भारत को आजाद कराने में अपनी महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका अदा की थी, जैसा कि भारतीय स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में प्राप्त किये गये तथ्यों या विवरणों से पता चलता है। सन 1857 के प्रथम स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में झॉसी की रानी लक्ष्मी बाई, जिन्होंने अपने अदम्य साहस, वीरता व बहादुरी से लड़ते हुये वीरगति को प्राप्त हुयी, कस्तूरबा गोंधी, जिन्होंने गुजरात के अहमदाबाद में स्थित साबरमती आश्रम से 37 महिला स्वयं सेवकों के साथ नमक सत्याग्रह में भाग लेना, सरोजनी नायडू तथा कमला देवी बड़ाला द्वारा शराब की दुकानों तथा विदेशी सामानों की दुकानों का विरोध करके स्वदेशी को अपनाना भीकाजी कामा द्वारा अपनी स्वतंत्रता के लिये देश भक्ति का परिचय देना, ऐनी विसेंट द्वारा महिला सुधार हेतु थियोसोफिकल सोसायटी की स्थापना करना आदि महिलायें हुयी थी, जिन्होंने अपनी-अपनी क्षमता के साथ भारतीय स्वतंत्रता आन्दोलन में भाग लिया और देश को आजाद कराया था, इसलिये इस बात से इंकार नहीं किया जा सकता है कि भारतीय राष्ट्रीय आन्दोलन में महिलाओं की भूमिका शून्य थी।

मुख्य बिन्दुः— महिला सुधार, पुरुषों द्वारा महिला सुधार, राष्ट्रीय आन्दोलन में भागीदारी।

प्रस्तावनाः— यह एक ऐसा देश है, जहाँ अपार मात्रा में विविधता के तथ्य विद्यमान हैं। सभ्यता, संस्कृति, मातृभाषा, रहन-सहन का स्तर तथा लोगों का जीवन यापन का तरीका आदि सभी में विविधता के अंश मौजूद हैं। इसी प्रकार की विविधता हमें भारतीय नारियों के संबंध में देखने की मिलती है। यहाँ एक तरफ नारियों को दुर्गा, सीता, राक्षसों का नरसंहार करने वाली माना जाता है, वही दूसरी तरफ अबला नारी, पुरुषों की जूती (गुलाम) तथा एक बच्चों के संदर्भ में कोमल, ममतामयी कहकर भी पुकारा जाता है। यही नहीं बल्कि कई सामाजिक बुराईयाँ जैसेः— सती प्रथा, पर्दा प्रथा, बाल-विवाह, विधवा विवाह का

विरोध इत्यादि समस्याओं का भी सामना करना पड़ा था, लेकिन जब भारतीय समाज सुधारकों जैसे – राजामोहन राय, ईश्वर चन्द्र विद्यासागर तथा ब्रिटिश शासन ने नारियों की समस्याओं का समाधान करने का बीड़ा उठाया तो उनकी स्थिति में सुधार हुआ था।

भारतीय समाज सुधारकों तथा ब्रिटिश शासन, ने न केवल सामाजिक बुराईयों (सती प्रथा, बाल-विवाह, विधवा पुन-विवाह का विरोध) को समाप्त करने में अपना योगदान दिया था, बल्कि उन्हें शिक्षित करने से लेकर सामाजिक-आर्थिक, राजनैतिक दृष्टि से अधिकार प्रदान करने में भी अपना भरपूर सहयोग दिया था, इन्हीं के सहयोग से महिलायें शिक्षित हुयी और सामाजिक-आर्थिक दृष्टि से समाज में अपनी उच्च स्थिति प्राप्त करने में सक्षय हुयी थी।

भारतीय समाज सुधारकों ने सुधार के क्षेत्र में महिला आन्दोलन को, जो मूल स्वरूप प्रदान किया था, वह 19वीं शताब्दी थी। इस सदी में ब्रिटिश शासन द्वारा संचालित ईसाई मिशनरियों ने महिलाओं को शिक्षित किया और परम्परागत अवधारणा के स्थान पर एक आधुनिक अवधारणा का जन्म हुआ। **जैसा कि सुमित सरकार ने स्पष्ट किया था कि** – “एक नये धार्मिक आन्दोलन ने पुराने मानवीय आवेगों को पुनर्जीवित तथा समेकित किया और कमजोर तथा असहाय को बचाने के लिये उत्सुक महान मानवता के एक पूल का नेतृत्व किया था।”¹ 19वीं सदी को उदारवादी भारतीय समाज सुधारकों ने महिलाओं को सामाजिक परिवर्तन का एक प्राप्तकर्ता बताया और अंत में उन्होंने व्यक्तिगत सुधारों और राजनैतिक अधिकारों के लिये मुकाबला किया था। यह वह अवधि थी, जिसके अन्तर्गत महिलायें अपने अधिकार व कर्तव्यों के बारे में अच्छी तरह से समझ चुकी थी, जिसका मूल आधार शिक्षा था।

भारतीय स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में महिलाओं की भागीदारी के अंश सन 1817 से मितले हैं। जब पहली बार भीमा बाई होल्कर ने ब्रिटिश कर्नल मैल्कम को एक बहादुरी के साथ गुरिल्ला युद्ध में हराया था।² इसके बाद अबध की रानी बेगम हजरत, किन्नूर की रानी चन्नम्मा, झॉसी की रानी लक्ष्मीबाई, विजय लक्ष्मी पंडित, ऐनीबिसेंट, कस्तूरबा गॉधी, मैडम कामा, सरोजनी नायडू, अरुणा आसफ अली आदि महिलायें हुयी, जिन्होंने भारतीय राष्ट्रीय आन्दोलन में अपनी सक्रिय भूमिका अदा की थी।

यह शोध पत्र भारतीय राष्ट्रीय आन्दोलन में अपनी भागीदारी करने वाली महिलाओं पर केन्द्रित हैं।

उपलब्ध साहित्य का अध्ययन:- किसी भी शोध विषय पर शोध कार्य करने से पहले उपलब्ध साहित्य का अध्ययन करना अति-महत्वपूर्ण होता है, क्योंकि यह न केवल शोधकर्ता को अपने शोध क्षेत्र में भटकने से राहत प्रदान करता है, बल्कि विषय के संबंध में भी उचित जानकारी प्रदान करता है ताकि स्पष्ट व सटीक निष्कर्ष प्राप्त किये जा सकें।

मैंने अपने इस शोध कार्य को पूर्ण करने हेतु उपलब्ध साहित्य के अन्तर्गत निम्नलिखित लेखकों की पुस्तकों का अध्ययन किया है-

पी.एन. चोपड़ा (1975) उन्होंने अपनी पुस्तक के अन्तर्गत भारतीय स्वतंत्रता आन्दोलन में भागीदारी करने वाली महिलाओं को एक यौद्धा और युद्ध नायक के रूप में प्रस्तुत किया है तथा उनकी बहादुरी, सच्ची भावना, निस्वार्थ एवं अदम्य साहस का वर्णन शामिल है।³

ओ.पी. रलहन (O.P. Ralhan, 1995) की इन्होंने अपनी पुस्तक में प्राचीनकाल से लेकर आधुनिक काल तक की अवधि में भारतीय महिलाओं सामाजिक-आर्थिक स्थिति का वर्णन किया है। इसमें उन्होंने ऐसी महिलाओं को शामिल किया है, जिन्होंने भारतीय समाज के विकास में अपना अहम योगदान दिया था।⁴

सुरुची थापर (2006) उनकी यह पुस्तक विशेष रूप से भारतीय स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में एकत्रित प्रॉतों में सामान्य मध्यवर्गीय महिलाओं की राष्ट्रवादी भागीदारी पर केन्द्रित हैं। इन्होंने सरोजनी नायडू, विजय लक्ष्मी पंडित, ऐनी बिसेंट और सुचेता कृपलानी जैसी राष्ट्रवादी क्रॉतिकारी महिलाओं का बहुत ही उचित तरीके से वर्णन किया हैं।⁵

मनमोहन सिंह कौर (1985) उन्होंने भारतीय स्वतंत्रता संग्राम की 1857 से 1947 तक की अवधि में महिलाओं द्वारा की गयी भागीदारी का वर्णन किया हैं।⁶

जूडिथ ब्राउन (Judith Brown, 1972) उन्होंने अपनी पुस्तक में उन महिलाओं की भागीदारी को शामिल किया हैं, जिन्होंने राजनैतिक दृष्टि से भारतीय स्वतंत्रता आन्दोलन में अपनी भूमिका प्रस्तुत की थी।⁷

भारतीय स्वतंत्रता आन्दोलन में महिलाओं की भूमिका:— हमने अंग्रेजों से 15 अगस्त सन 1947 में आजादी प्राप्त की थी, जिसमें भारतीय राष्ट्रवादी नेताओं से लेकर क्रॉतिकारियों ने अपना पूर्ण सहयोग दिया था, हालाँकि ऐतिहासिक दस्तावेज यह बताते हैं कि महात्मा गाँधी, पंडित जवाहर लाल नेहरू, सरदार बल्लभ भाई पटेल और अन्य कॉंग्रेसी पार्टी में सम्मिलित लोगों के सहयोग से अंग्रेजों से आजादी हासिल की थी, परन्तु इस बात से भी इंकार नहीं किया जा सकता कि महिलाओं ने भी आजादी प्राप्त करने के लिये अपना सबकुछ न्यौछाबर कर दिया था अर्थात् भारत के राष्ट्रवादी आन्दोलन में उनकी एक प्रमुख भूमिका रही थी। यदि हम उनके (महिलाओं) इस योगदान की अवहेलना करते हैं, तो उनके साथ सामाजिक-आर्थिक व राजनैतिक दृष्टि से अन्याय होगा। **डॉ नम्रता सिंह ने अपने लेख में प्रस्तुत किया हैं कि —** “भारतीय महिलाओं ने पितृ सत्ता को चुनौती देते हुये और समाज में अपना वैध स्थान प्राप्त करने के लिये आजादी हेतु भारतीय स्वतंत्रता आन्दोलन में राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर भाग लिया था।”⁸ महिलाओं ने आन्दोलन में सच्ची भावना, अदम्य साहस और अपनी पूर्ण क्षमता के साथ अपनी भागीदारी प्रस्तुत की थी।

भारतीय स्वतंत्रता आन्दोलन में महिलाओं की भूमिका का वर्णन करने से पहले हम यह समझने का प्रयास करेंगे कि भारत में महिलाओं की सामाजिक-आर्थिक तथा राजनैतिक स्थिति को सुधारने के लिये कौन-कौन से पुरुषों व महिलाओं ने अपनी सक्रिय भूमिका अदा की थी।

(i) पुरुषों द्वारा समाज सुधार:— ऐतिहासिक दस्तावेजों से यह पता चलता हैं कि यतापि भारतीय हिन्दू सामाजिक व्यवस्था के तहत पुरुषों ने महिलाओं पर कई प्रकार के प्रतिबंध लगाये थे और परम्पराओं, प्रथाओं व रूढ़ियों के नाम पर उनके साथ सदियों से अन्याय व अत्याचार करते आये थे, परन्तु इस बात से भी इंकार नहीं किया जा सकता हैं कि भारत में महिलाओं की स्थिति को सुधारने में पुरुषों ने ही बीड़ा उठाया था और आज जो महिला स्वतंत्रता पूर्वक जीवन-यापन से लेकर घूमने, अपनी बात कहने, पुरुषों के साथ कंधे से कंधा मिलाकर कार्य कर रही हैं, वह पुरुषों की ही देन हैं।

भारत में महिलाओं की स्थिति को सुधारने में सर्वप्रथम जिस पुरुष का नाम लिया जाता हैं, वह राजाराम मोहन राय जी हैं, जिन्होंने महिलाओं के प्रति सदियों से चली आ रही घृणित व जघन्य अपराध से संबंधित प्रथा “सती प्रथा” को समाप्त करने का बीड़ा उठाया था। इसके लिये उन्होंने सर्वप्रथम हिन्दू धर्म ग्रन्थों को फिर से परिभाषित किया और अपनी अमिटि सभा (1815) तथा ब्रह्म समाज (1828) का उपयोग करके सती प्रथा उन्मूलन हेतु बंगाली हिन्दूओं को राजी किया। उन्होंने उपनिषद शास्त्र की प्रधानता पर जोर दिया और किवदंतियों व संस्कारों का इस्तेमाल सती प्रथा को जड़ से मिटाने के लिये किया था। इस घृणित प्रथा के उन्मूलन के बारे में जैसे ही ब्रिटिश गवर्नर बेंटिक को पता चला वैसे ही गवर्नर ने ब्रिटिश भारत के कानून का समर्थन करते हुये बंगाल सती विनियमन अधिनियम (1829) पारित कर दिया था, जो बाद में एक जटिल कानून के रूप में उभरकर आया था। इसके बाद एक और अन्य पुरुष ईश्वर चन्द्र विद्यासागर, जिन्होंने विधवा महिलाओं की पीडा

को ध्यान में रखते हुये विधवा पुर्न विवाह का समर्थन किया। इसके लिये उन्होंने कानून का सहारा लेते हुये अदालत में एक याचिका दायर की, जिसमें वे सफल हुये तथा विधवा पुर्न विवाह अधिनियम 1856 पारित किया गया था।

इन पुरुषों द्वारा किये गये समाज सुधार से महिलाओं को राहत प्राप्त हुयी जिसे वे सदियों से अपने दुख के साथ झेल रही थी, तत्पश्चात भारतीय महिलाओं की स्थिति को सुधारने के लिये और अन्य कानून व अधिनियम पारित हुये जैसे – **बाल विवाह अधिनियम, देवदासी पर प्रतिबंद (1925) आदि।⁸**

(ii) महिलाओं द्वारा समाज सुधार:— भारतीय समाज सुधार के इतिहास में कुछ महिलायें ऐसी भी हुयी हैं, जिन्होंने अपनी स्वयं की सामाजिक-आर्थिक व राजनैतिक स्थिति को सुधारने के लिये स्वयं सामने आयी और सामाजिक रीतियों, परम्पराओं, प्रथाओं का एक अदम्य साहस के साथ विरोध करके अपनी कट्टरपंथी नीतियों का परिचय दिया था। उन्होंने विभिन्न महिला संगठनों के माध्यम से समाज सुधार किये थे। महिलाओं द्वारा किये गये समाज सुधारों का वर्णन मैने तिथियों व दशकों के माध्यम से प्रस्तुत किया है।

भारतीय महिलाओं की सबसे प्रमुख समस्या शिक्षा की थी, क्योंकि प्राचीन भारतीय समाज ने कभी-भी यह स्वीकार नहीं किया कि महिलायें/लड़कियाँ शिक्षा प्राप्त करें, इसलिये महिलाओं ने स्वयं अपने संगठन गठित किये और विद्यालयों की स्थापना की थी। इस कार्य में **नारीवादी पंडिता रमाबाई सरस्वती, ज्योतिषा फुले की पत्नी सावित्री बाई फुले** शामिल थी। जहाँ एक तरफ पंडिता रमाबाई सरस्वती ने सन 1880 के दशक की शुरुआत में अर्थात् 1889 में विधवाओं के लिये **बॉम्बे में शारदा सदन नामक विद्यालय शुरू किया।⁹** वहीं दूसरी तरफ सावित्री बाई फुले ने महाराष्ट्र के पुणे में दलितों के लिये विद्यालय स्थापित किया।¹⁰

सन 1882 में पश्चिम बंगाल के टैगोर परिवार से ताल्लुक रखने वाली स्वर्ण कुमारी देवी ने एक महिला थियोसोफिकल सोसायटी की स्थापना की थी, जिससे सम्मानित परिवारों की महिलायें एक-दूसरे से मिल सके और समाज सुधार के कार्यों को गति प्रदान कर सके।¹¹

इस तरह के महिला संगठनों का मुख्य उद्देश्य शिक्षा को बढ़ावा देकर उनको (महिलाओं) अपने अधिकारों के प्रति जागरूक करना और राजनैतिक प्रणाली के तहत उन्हें मताधिकार का उपयोग करने की सलाह प्रदान करना था ताकि सामाजिक-आर्थिक दृष्टि से महिलायें समाज व परिवार में उच्च स्थिति अर्जित कर सकें।

भारतीय महिलाओं के सदंर्भ में सन 1880 वह दशक था, जिसके तहत अधिकाँश महिलायें शिक्षित हो चुकी थी और इसीलिये उनमें राष्ट्रीय सूचनाओं तथा अखबारों को पढ़ने की जागरूकता के साथ अपने आपको संगठित किया। इसमें कुछ महिलाएँ विशेष रूप से उत्तर भारत की महिलाओं ने महादेवी वर्मा तथा सुभद्रा कुमारी चौहान के साहित्य को पढ़कर समाज सुधार व अपने अधिकारों को समझने में महारथ हासिल की थी। कभी-कभी महिलाएँ एक साथ या एक घर में एकत्रित होकर महिला अधिकारों एवं राजनैतिक कार्यक्रमों के संबंध में बात किया करती थी और देश भक्ति के संबंध में गीत गाया करती थी। उन्होंने कला त्रिपाठी द्वारा लिखी गयी कविता की कुछ पंक्तियाँ जैसे:— **“मर्द बनों, मर्द बनों सदा, हिन्दुस्तानी मर्द बनों, अवतार महात्मा गॉंधी हुये आजाद हिन्दुस्तान कर लो”¹²** – गाकर समाज की अधिकाँश महिलाओं को अपने साथ मिला लिया था। इसी प्रकार पश्चिम बंगाल के कलकत्ता शहर में स्वर्ण कुमारी देवी की बेटी सरला देवी घोषाल ने सन 1901 के दशक में महिलाओं को मुक्ति संघर्ष में शामिल करने के लिये एक गीत की रचना की थी, जिसमें 50 से अधिक लड़कियों ने भाग लेकर समाज सुधार का प्रशिक्षण प्राप्त किया था। सन 1902 में अहमदाबाद की विद्या गौरी नीलकंठ तथा शारदा मेहता गुजरात की पहली दो महिलाओं ने स्नातक उपाधि प्राप्त की थी।¹³ इन्होंने भारतीय राष्ट्रगान के द्वारा अनेक महिलाओं को एकत्रित किया था।

महिला सुधार आन्दोलनों ने शिक्षा और सामाजिक-आर्थिक अधिकारों के साथ-साथ उनसे संबंधित एक विकराल समस्या वैश्यावृत्ति के खिलाफ भी आवाज उठायी थी। इसके लिये

उन्होंने अपना पक्ष ब्रिटिश सरकार के समक्ष रखा, जिसके तहत ब्रिटिश सरकार ने यौन रोग के संक्रमण को ध्यान में रखते हुये चिकित्सीय परीक्षण को अनिवार्य कर दिया गया था और उन स्थानों पर पुलिस बल तैनात किया गया, जहाँ पर वैश्यावृत्ति अपनी चरम सीमा पर संचालित थी, इसके विरोध में सन 1895 में राष्ट्रवादी नेता सुरेन्द्र नाथ बैनर्जी ने यह हवाला दिया कि वैश्यावृत्ति को नियंत्रित करने के लिये ब्रिटिश शासन ने पुलिस को मनमानी शक्ति देकर व्यक्तिगत स्वतंत्रता को खतरे में डाल दिया है।¹⁴ राष्ट्रवादियों का कहना था कि वैश्यावृत्ति के नाम पर जबरदस्ती महिलाओं का शारीरिक परीक्षण कराया जा रहा है, जो कि भारतीय महिलाओं की व्यक्तिगत स्वतंत्रता को ध्यान में रखते हुये उचित नहीं है। 19वीं सदी के अंत में पश्चिम बंगाल में राष्ट्रवादी नेता सरला देवी घोसाल ने ब्रिटिश सैनिकों पर यौन हमलों और महिलाओं को छेड़ने का आरोप लगाया तथा महिलाओं को शारीरिक रूप से मजबूती प्रदान करने का आग्रह किया।¹⁵ ऐसा अनुमान था कि उस समय ब्रिटिश सैनिक महिलाओं के साथ छेड़छाड़ करके बलात्कार जैसी घटनाओं को अंजाम दे रहे थे, इसीलिये राष्ट्रवादी महिला नेता ने आवाज उठायी थी।

सन 1910 और 1920 के बीच की अवधि वह अवधि थी, जिसके अन्तर्गत अनेक महिला संगठनों का उद्भव हुआ। अनेक प्रकार के महिला क्लबों, संघों व समितियों की स्थापना भारत के ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों से लेकर शहरी क्षेत्रों में की गयी थी, जिसका उद्देश्य महिलाओं के क्षेत्र में सुधार और अपने अधिकारों को प्राप्त करना था। सन 1910 में सभी जातियों एवं पंथों की महिलाओं को एक साथ लाने के लिये सरला देवी चौधरानी ने भारत हड़ताल मंडल का गठन किया।¹⁶ इसी प्रकार सन 1917 में मार्गरेट के चचेरे भाई, ऐनी बिसेंट और डोटोथी जियाराजदासा द्वारा नयी-नयी शाखाओं के साथ महिला भारतीय संघ की स्थापना की गयी थी। इस संघ का एक प्रमुख उद्देश्य महिलाओं को राजनैतिक अधिकार प्रदान करने हेतु वोट के मुद्दे को सुदृढ़ करना था। इसके लिये उन्होंने मोंटाग चेम्सफोर्ड समिति से मिलने के लिये एक प्रतिनिधि मंडल का आयोजन किया गया और समिति के सामने अपनी बात रखी थी, जिसके परिणामस्वरूप महिलाओं के वोट देने का अधिकार प्राप्त हुआ था।

इस प्रकार कहा जा सकता है कि भारतीय महिलाओं ने स्वयं अपने उत्थान के लिये जिना महिला संघों, क्लबों और समितियों का गठन किया, वह काबिले तारीफ के योग्य हैं, क्योंकि इन्हीं के बल पर उन्होंने भारतीय समाज में अपनी स्थिति को सुदृढ़ किया और अनेक प्रकार की परम्परायें, प्रथायें व अंध-विश्वासों का विरोध करके समाज की मुख्य धारा से जुड़ी थी अर्थात् अनेक सामाजिक-आर्थिक, राजनैतिक, सांस्कृतिक व शैक्षिक अधिकारों को प्राप्त करने में सक्षम हुयी तथा इसी सक्षम व योग्यता की प्रक्रिया ने ही उन्हें भारतीय स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में भाग लेने की प्रेरणा प्राप्त हुयी थी।

भारतीय स्वतंत्रता संग्राम:- भारतीय स्वतंत्रता संग्राम के इतिहास में महिलाओं के योगदान के अंश सन 1817 से प्राप्त होते हैं। जब एक निडर व अदम्य साहसी महिला भीमा बाई होल्कर ने गुरिल्ला युद्ध में ब्रिटिश कर्नल मैल्कम के खिलाफ बहादुरी से लड़ते हुये उन्हें हराया था।¹⁷ यह लड़ाई उन्होंने उस समय लड़ी थी, जब भारत में अंग्रेज अपनी शक्तिशाली भूमिका में थे, उन्होंने (अंग्रेजों) सन 1799 में टीपू सुल्तान का नरसंहार, 1853 में महाराष्ट्र राज्य में मराठों का विध्वंस (बध) कर दिया था और सम्पूर्ण भारत में धीरे-धीरे अपने क्षेत्र का विस्तार करना आरंभ कर दिया था। ऐसी स्थिति में अंग्रेजों को हराना वास्तव में वह (भीमाबाई) प्रशंसा की पात्र हैं। उस समय उन्होंने यह लड़ाई जीतकर यह साबित कर दिया था कि यदि कोई भी शासक या राक्षस हमारी मातृभूमि को हड़पने का प्रयास करता है तो महिला भी उससे लड़ने में सक्षम हैं।

सन 1838 में पश्चिम बंगाल के प्रसिद्ध साहित्यकार एवं देशभक्त बंकिम चन्द्र चट्टोपाध्याय ने आनंदमठ नाम का एक उपन्यास लिखा था, जो 1882 में प्रकाशित हुआ।¹⁸ यह उपन्यास विशेष रूप से भारत को आजादी दिलाने वाले क्रॉंतिकारियों के जीवन का बलिदान करने वालों पर आधारित है।

उपन्यास में लिखा गया बंकिम का भावपूर्ण भजन “बंदे मातरम” पूर भारत में प्रसिद्ध हुआ। यह भजन भारतीय महिलाओं को राष्ट्रवाद के विचार से नारीत्व को जोड़ने वाला सिद्ध हुआ था।

सन 1857 में, जिसे प्रथम स्वतंत्रता संग्राम के नाम से जाना जाता है, के अन्तर्गत अनेक लोगों एवं महिलाओं ने अंग्रेजों से भारत को आजाद कराने में एक अहम भूमिका रही है। इसमें झाँसी की रानी लक्ष्मीबाई एक महान योद्धा के रूप में उभरकर आयी थी। उनकी निडरता, साहस व एक बेहतर योद्धा के रूप में आज भी अनेक लोग याद करते हैं तथा उनकी वीरता का गुणगान करते हैं, जैसा कि सुभद्रा कुमारी चौहान ने अपनी कविता के अन्तर्गत रानी का वर्णन किया है – “खूब लड़ी मर्दानी, वह तो झाँसी की रानी थी” – कवियत्री (सुभद्रा कुमारी चौहान) ने इस कविता के माध्यम से उनकी वीरता व बहादुरी का बेहतर वर्णन किया है और यह स्पष्ट करता है कि महिला भी संकट के समय हथियार उठाकर मर्दों की तरह लड़ने की क्षमता रखती हैं।

सन 1858 में एक ब्राह्मण परिवार में जन्मी रानी लक्ष्मीबाई मोर पंत तम्बे की लड़की थी, जिनका बचपन से लेकर हथियार सीखने तक पेशवा राजा बाजीराव द्वितीय के दरबार में बीता था।¹⁹ इसके दरबार में रहते हुये अपने साथी बाला साहेब और तात्या टोपे के साथ मिलकर युद्ध के सभी हथियार चलाना सीख गयी थी। रानी ने तलवार चलाने से लेकर घुड़सवारी तथा बंदूक चलाने तक एक विशिष्ट कौशल व योग्यता हासिल कर ली थी। यह सब योग्यता उन्होंने उस समय प्राप्त कर ली थी, जब भारतीय समाज में प्रत्येक प्रकार से महिलाओं के साथ अन्याय किया जाता था।

रानी की वीरता व बहादुरी की कहानी उस समय प्रारंभ होती है, जब झाँसी के राजा गंगाधर राव की मृत्यु हो गयी थी और उत्तराधिकार के रूप में वे अपने दत्तक पुत्र (दामोदर राव) को सत्ता की गद्दी पर बैठाना चाहती थी। इस दौरान ब्रिटिश गवर्नर लार्ड डलहौजी ने यह कहकर कि सत्ता की गद्दी पर केवल वंश (खून का रिश्ता) के उत्तराधिकार को ही बैठने के अधिकार हैं, खारिज कर दी थी, क्योंकि ब्रिटिश ईष्ट इंडिया कंपनी अपनी हड़प नीति के तहत झाँसी को अपने साम्राज्य में शामिल करना चाहती थी। ऐसी दुविधा भरी स्थिति में – “रानी लक्ष्मीबाई ने ब्रिटिश कंपनी के खिलाफ युद्ध लड़ने का निर्णय लिया था।”²⁰ इस युद्ध में उनके साथ हजरत महल, रानी तेस बाई, रामगढ़ की रानी आदि महिलायें थी। रानी लक्ष्मीबाई ने दोनों हाथों में तलवार लेकर घुड़सवारी के साथ बहादुरी से लड़ी थी, हालाँकि उनकी इस युद्ध में हार हुयी थी, परन्तु फिर भी अपनी वीरता, शौर्य व साहस के साथ इतिहास के पन्नों में अपना नाम अमरकर गयी और अंग्रेजों के सामने यह संदेश छोड़ गयी कि संकट की स्थिति में एक भारतीय महिला भी अंग्रेजों से लड़ सकती है।

सन 1885 में ऐ.ओ. हयूम ने भारतीय राष्ट्रीय कांग्रेस पार्टी का गठन किया। जिसमें देश के कौने-कौने से पुरुषों के साथ-साथ महिलाएँ भी शामिल हुयी थी। कांग्रेस पार्टी की बैठकों में पहली बार सन 1890 में महिलाओं ने अपनी भागीदारी प्रस्तुत की थी।²¹ कांग्रेस पार्टी में अधिक से अधिक महिलाओं का शामिल होना इस बात का संकेत था कि वह राष्ट्रवादी संघर्षों में अपनी भूमिका प्रस्तुत कर सके और राष्ट्रीय संघर्षों के द्वारा देश को अंग्रेजों से मुक्त किया जा सके। इन्ही उद्देश्यों को ध्यान में रखते हुये महिलाओं को एकत्रित किया गया था। सरोजनी नायडू ने इस हेतु अपने काँग्रेसी अध्यक्षीय भाषण में भारत को घर, भारतीय लोगों के बच्चे और भारतीय महिला को एक माँ के रूप में वर्णित किया था ताकि सर्वाधिक संख्या में महिलाएँ शामिल हो सके।

महात्मा गाँधी, जिन्हें राष्ट्रपिता, बापू और भारतीय स्वतंत्रता के प्रतीक आदि नामों से पुकारा जाता है, भारतीय स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में महिलाओं को शामिल करने में अहम भूमिका रही थी। उन्होंने महिलाओं से कहा कि वे आन्दोलन से दूर रहकर अपनी भागीदारी करें क्योंकि वे नहीं चाहते थे कि महिलायें घरेलू कार्य के साथ-साथ देश भक्ति के कार्य में भी शामिल हो, वे चाहते थे कि महिलायें घर पर ही रहकर

ब्रिटिश शासन का विरोध करें और स्वतंत्रता की लड़ाई में बाहर से क्रॉंतिकारियों की मदद करें। गॉंजी जी ने कहा था कि – “हमें स्वतंत्रता आन्दोलन के लिये ऐसी महिलाओं की आवश्यकता हैं, जैसे कि प्राचीन भारत में सीता, दमयंती तथा द्रोपदी की तरह शुद्र, दृढ़ और आत्म-नियंत्रित थी,”¹⁸ क्योंकि वे जानते थे कि इस प्रकार की महिलायें ही भारत को आजाद कराने में सहायक सिद्ध हो सकती हैं। इसी दौरान कस्तूरबा गॉंजी, जो कि महात्मा गॉंजी जी की पत्नी थी, ने अहमदाबाद में स्थित साबरमती आश्रम से 37 महिला स्वयं सेवकों के साथ नमक सत्याग्रह में अपनी भागीदारी प्रस्तुत की थी। उन्होंने अपने साथ सरोजनी नायडू और मणिलाल गॉंजी के साथ मिलकर मेहसाणा नमक बर्क्स पर छापा मारा था। इसी प्रकार कमला देवी बडाला ने 1500 महिलाओं के साथ, एक महिला जुलूस के माध्यम से विदेशी दुकानों, शराब की दुकानों पर छापा मारकर अपनी सक्रिय भूमिका अदा की थी। इसमें उनके साथ बंगाली महिलायें भी थी, हालाँकि भारतीय इतिहास यह स्पष्ट करता है कि बंगाली महिलाएँ बॉम्बे की महिलाओं की तुलना में कम उग्र थी, लेकिन फिर भी उनकी भूमिका अहम रही थी, क्योंकि कुछ क्रॉंतिकारी बंगाली महिलाओं ने स्वदेशी आन्दोलन के लिये पुरुषों के साथ कंधे से कंधा मिलाकर बंदूक व पिस्तौल चला रही थी।²²

सन 1905 में अँग्रेजों ने बंगाल का विभाजन किया। यह विभाजन करने वाले ब्रिटिश गवर्नर जनरल लार्ड कर्जन थे। इस दौरान भारत में बहुत बड़े पैमाने पर लोगों में देश भक्ति की एक नयी भावना का संचार हुआ, जिसमें महिलाओं ने भी बढ़-चढ़कर अपनी भागीदारी प्रस्तुत की थी। 16 अक्टूबर, 1905 में कलकत्ता में फेडरेशन हॉल की आधार शिला रखने के दौरान महिलाओं द्वारा विरोध प्रदर्शन किया गया। इस विरोध प्रदर्शन के दौरान महिला व पुरुषों को मिलाकर कुल 500 संख्या थी। सुमित सरकार ने अपने लेख में यह उल्लेख किया है कि – “बंगाल विभाजन के दौरान महिलाओं में स्वदेशी भावना जाग्रत हुयी थी, जिसके तहत उन्होंने विदेशी सामानों का विरोध कर स्वदेशी सामान, विशेष रूप से कपड़ों एवं चूड़ियों को बेचना आरंभ किया था।”²³ यह आन्दोलन मुख्य रूप से अँग्रेजों द्वारा इंग्लैण्ड में बनाया गया कपड़ों के विरोध में था, क्योंकि इससे भारतीय कपड़ा व्यवसाय प्रभावित हो रहे थे। यही कारण है कि गॉंजी जी ने स्वदेशी कपड़ों को महत्व देने के लिये चरखों द्वारा सूत कातने की सलाह दी थी।

सन 1919 में जब ब्रिटिश शासन ने सार्वजनिक विरोध प्रदर्शन तथा नागरिक स्वतंत्रता को रोकने (प्रतिबंध) के लिये रोलैक्ट एक्ट पारित किया,¹⁸ तो गॉंजी जी ने पूरे भारत की महिलाओं से यह आह्वान किया कि सत्याग्रह आन्दोलन में अधिक से अधिक महिलायें शामिल हो, इस आन्दोलन की सबसे मुख्य विशेषता यह थी कि इसमें सभी वर्गों, धर्मों, जातियों एवं समुदाय की महिलायें शामिल हुयी थी और इसीलिये ये आन्दोलन कुछ मात्रा में सफल रहा था।

सन 1920 में गॉंजी जी द्वारा खिलाफत या गैर-कानूनी आन्दोलन प्रारंभ किया गया था। जिसमें गॉंजी जी ने एक आमसभा को संबोधित करते हुये महिलाओं से अपील की कि वह अपने गहने (आभूषण) दान करें ताकि राष्ट्रीय आन्दोलन के सुचारु रूप से संचालन हेतु धन की समस्या का समाधान किया जा सके। इसके लिये उन्होंने महिलाओं को प्रेरित करने हेतु कहा कि – “प्रसिद्ध हिन्दू धर्म ग्रंथ रामायण के अन्तर्गत जिस प्रकार सीता ने रावण का साथ नहीं दिया था, ठीक उसी प्रकार भारतीय महिलाओं को ब्रिटिश शासन का साथ नहीं देना चाहिये।”²⁴ गॉंजी जी महिलाओं को आन्दोलन के लिये अति महत्वपूर्ण मानते थे, क्योंकि उनमें सच्ची भावना, पीड़ा सहन करने की क्षमता और अपना बलिदान करने में बिल्कुल नहीं हिचकिचाती थी। गॉंजी जी के इस कार्य में एक महिला शिष्या सुशीला नायर, जो कि उनकी शिष्या थी, ने रोहतक (हरियाणा) में एक आम सभा को संबोधित करते हुये कहा कि – “राष्ट्रीय आन्दोलन हेतु महिलाओं ने जो अपने गहने दिये थे, वह सब स्वयं गॉंजी जी ने अपने हाथों से प्राप्त किये थे।”²⁵

असहयोग आन्दोलन, जो कि महात्मा गॉंधी जी द्वारा सन 1920-22 में संचालित किया गया था, मैं महिलाओं ने विदेशी वस्तुओं का बहिष्कार करने हेतु अनेक महिलाओं ने बढ़-चढ़कर अपनी भागीदारी प्रस्तुत की गयी थी। विदेशी वस्तुओं का बहिष्कार और स्वदेशी वस्तुओं को अपनाने हेतु गॉंधी जी की पत्नी कस्तूरबा गॉंधी ने महिलाओं से चरखा द्वारा खादी कपड़ा बनाने हेतु सूत कातने की सलाह दी थी। ऐतिहासिक दस्तावेज यह बताते हैं कि खादी हेतु सूत कातने के कार्य लाहौर, अहमदाबाद, इलाहाबाद, बॉम्बे तथा भारत के विभिन्न हिस्सों में पहुँच गया था।

सन 1942 में गॉंधी जी द्वारा संचालित किया गया भारत छोड़ो आन्दोलन में पुरुषों के साथ-साथ महिलायें भी शामिल थी। यह आन्दोलन आमतौर पर महिलाओं को भारतीय स्वतंत्रता के अनुशासित सैनिकों के रूप में संबोधित किया गया था। इस आन्दोलन में उषा मेहता, जो कि एक प्रतिबद्ध देश भक्त थी, ने एक रेडियो ट्रान्समीटर स्थापित किया था, जिसके तहत आजादी की आवाज के नारे के साथ प्रतिदिन संचालित होता था, ताकि भारतीय स्वतंत्रता के मंत्र का प्रसार किया जा सके।

इस प्रकार यह कहा जा सकता है कि भारत को आजादी दिलाने में जितना हाथ पुरुषों का उतना ही महिलाओं का भी था। भले ही महिलाओं ने अप्रत्यक्ष रूप से अपनी भागीदारी दी थी, परन्तु फिर भी उनके योगदान को नकारा नहीं जा सकता है।

भारत की कुछ स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में भाग लेने वाली महिलाओं का विवरण इस प्रकार है।

भीकाजी कामा (मैडम):- यह एक ऐसी महिला थी, जिन्होंने भारत ओर विदेशों में क्रॉंतिकारी आन्दोलन का संचालन किया था। भारतीय स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में इनका नाम इसलिये दर्ज है, क्योंकि उन्होंने राष्ट्रीय आन्दोलन को जारी रखने के लिये विभिन्न क्रॉंतिकारी संगठनों को धन व सैन्य सामग्री उपलब्ध करायी थी। उन्होंने सन 1907 में जर्मनी में संचालित एक सम्मेलन में पहला राष्ट्रीय ध्वज फहराया था और कहा कि यह झण्डा भारतीय स्वतंत्रता का है, देखो, यह पैदा होकर पवित्र बन गया है, यह उन युवा भारतीयों का खून है, जिन्होंने अपने प्राणों की आहुति दी थी, मैं आप लोगों से भारतीयों की आजादी के इस ध्वज को उठने और सलाम करने का आहवान करती हूँ।²⁶ उन्होंने सन 1909 में एक मासिक पत्रिका बंदे मातरम्, जो कि जिनेबा से प्रकाशित की गयी थी, राष्ट्रीय आन्दोलन के लिये एक आवाज थी तथा जिसे साम्राज्यवादियों के विरोध में प्रस्तुत किया गया था। वह भारतीय महिलाओं के संदर्भ में शिक्षा हेतु एक कट्टरपंथी समर्थक थी और भारतीय संग्राम के बारे में उन्होंने कई देशों की यात्रा की थी।

बेगम हजरत महल:- बेगम हजरत महल एक महान स्वतंत्रता सैनानी और वाजिद अली शाह की पत्नी थी। उन्होंने सन 1857 के स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में अपनी उत्साहपूर्वक भागीदारी दी थी। वह राष्ट्र के पहले युद्ध में शामिल अन्य नेताओं के साथ जुड़ी हुयी थी।

ऐनी बिसेंट (Annie Besant):- ऐनी बिसेंट थियोसोफिकल सोसायटी की जन्म दाता और महिला सुधार जैसे आन्दोलनों में महिलाओं को समाज की मुख्य धारा से जोड़ने की समर्थक थी। वह भारतीय समाज में महिलाओं के लिये चली आ रही प्रथाओं, रीति-रिवाजों, रूढ़ियों की कट्टर विरोधी थी। वह समाज में संचालित बाल विवाह के लिये उठ खड़ी हुयी और उसे समाप्त करने के लिये हर संभव प्रयास किये थे। उनके अनुसार होम रूल आन्दोलन को महिलाओं की बड़ी संख्या के द्वारा अधिक प्रभावी बनाया गया था, जो इसे अदम्य साहस, वीरता, धीरज और स्त्री प्रकृति के आत्म बलिदान के लिये लायी थी।²⁶

अरुणा आसफ अली:- वह भूमिगत आन्दोलन की प्रमुख नेता तथा गॉंधी जी द्वारा संचालित किया गया भारत छोड़ो आन्दोलन की एक सक्रिय नेता बनी थी। स्वतंत्रता संग्राम के दौरान क्रॉंतिकारियों द्वारा बोला जाने वाला नारा इंकलाब को उन्होंने इंक की विजय पत्रिका के रूप में संपादित किया था।

कस्तूरबा गॉधी:— वह भारत के राष्ट्रपति या बाबू कहे जाने वाले महात्मा गॉधी जी की पत्नी थी। उन्होंने अपने पति के साथ रहते हुये कई वर्षों तक अनेक स्वतंत्रता आन्दोलनों में अपनी भागीदारी प्रस्तुत की थी। उन्होंने चम्पारण बिहार आन्दोलन और नमक कर (दौड़ी यात्रा) में अपने पति का सहयोग किया था।

सरोजनी नायडू:— सरोजनी नायडू बंगाली परिवार से थी, जिन्होंने अपनी शिक्षा मद्रास, लंदन और कैम्ब्रिज से अर्जित की थी। वह भारतीय स्वतंत्रता आन्दोलन के लिये प्रेरित हुयी और अपनी सक्रिय भागीदारी प्रस्तुत की थी। उन्हें सन 1925 में भारतीय राष्ट्रीय काँग्रेस का अध्यक्ष नियुक्त किया गया तथा 1947 में (भारत की आजादी के बाद) वे संयुक्त प्रॉत की गवर्नर बनी थी। वह एक सफल कवियत्री भी थी। जिनकी कविता में देश भक्ति से संबंधित अधिकांश कविताएँ थी और इसी देश भक्ति के कारण उन्हें स्वतंत्रता आन्दोलन की एक प्रमुख अग्रणी नेता कहा जाता है।

निष्कर्ष:— उपरोक्त विवरण के आधार पर यह कहा जा सकता है कि भारतीय स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में जितना योगदान पुरुषों का रहा है, उतना ही महिलाओं का भी है, भले ही उन्होंने अप्रत्यक्ष रूप से या आन्दोलन से दूर रहकर सहयोग किया हो परन्तु फिर भी उनके योगदान से इंकार नहीं किया जा सकता है। उन्होंने जिस प्रकार विदेशी सामान (कपड़ा) का बहिष्कार किया और स्वदेशी सामान को अपनाने की शुरुआत की थी, उससे यह स्पष्ट होता है कि यदि ये कार्य पुरुष करते तो शायद ही संभव हो पाता क्योंकि राष्ट्रीय आन्दोलन में पुरुषों के साथ-साथ महिलाओं का शामिल होने से ब्रिटिश शासन की नींव हिल गयी थी और अँग्रेजों को यह एहसास हो गया था कि अब यह आन्दोलन उग्र रूप धारण कर चुका है, यह सब संख्या में वृद्धि होने से हुआ था तथा यह वृद्धि महिलाओं के शामिल होने से हुयी थी, इसलिये भारतीय स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में महिलाओं की भागीदारी से इंकार नहीं किया जा सकता है।

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