

Indian Women Through The Ages: A Socio-Feminine Perspective

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Abstract

Women comprise pretty much fifty percent of the populace of the planet. Be that as it may, the authoritative manly convictions influenced them to endure a great deal as they were denied to meet open doors in various parts of the world. The ascent of women's activists' contemplations has, in any case, prompted the enormous enhancement in the women's condition all through the world in present day times. Access to training has been a standout amongst the direst requests of these women's rights developments. Women's instruction in modern India has additionally been a noteworthy discussion for both the administration and the common society as taught women can assume a very momentous job in the advancement of the nation. The women instruction not just aides the advancement of half of the population, yet in addition enhances the quality of life at home and outside. Taught women can have the ability to advance the instruction of their young woman kids and to give better direction to all their kids. In addition, instructed women can help in the decrease of the newborn child death rate and the development of the populace.

Keywords: Women, Modern, Society, Condition, Situation, Liberation

One approach to pass judgment on the condition of a country is to consider the status of its women. In fact, the status of women speaks to the standard of culture of all ages. It is, along these lines, important to follow this situation from the verifiable point of view. Over the span of Indian history, from pre- memorable to modern times there were unmistakable phases of the ascent and fall in the status and job of women. The status enjoyed by the Indian women can only be surveyed with significant effort. The writing on Indian history overflows with opposing and clashing perspectives on the status of women. It can legitimately be comprehended inside the socio-cultural state of the general public. There is recorded proof to demonstrate that woman was not generally without rights nor was she continually in subjection. There is in any case, more noteworthy proof to demonstrate that the opposite was similarly valid; for a long time, her position was one in which she did not have either lawful or social rights only but rights that make her autonomous in the family into which she was conceived or married. The progressions that have occurred in their position are a piece of the procedure of change of a conventional society.

The historical backdrop of the changing position and job of women in India, as considered by the social scientists are given under five classifications. Viz:

1. Rig Vedic Period (2005 B.C. - 1500 B.C.)
2. Later Vedic Period (1500 B.C. - 500 B.C.)
3. Post Vedic Period (500 B.C. - 1100 A.D.)
4. Muslim Period (1100 A.D. - 1700 A.D.)
5. British Period (1700 A.D. - 1947 A.D.)

It might be noticed that these periods regularly cover women's condition however researchers contrast with regards to the correct dates. This broader classification is like a strategy to view and understand various stairs climbing on which the new woman has entered in the modern times. It provides an interesting scientific study which works as a base for anyone who really wants to connect with any type of study related with womanhood.

Status of women in Vedic India

Worldwide among numerous social orders, India has seen the absolute most praising respect for women in Vedic culture. Women held critical positions in the antiquated Indian culture. It was a position better than men. There are abstract confirmations to propose that women controlled wrecked kingdoms and forceful rulers. The Vedic custom has held a high respect for the characteristics of women, and has held the most extreme regard inside its convention comparable to that of the Goddess, who is depicted as the woman-like encapsulation of vital characteristics and forces. These structures incorporate those of Lakshmi (the goddess of fortune and ruler of Lord Vishnu), Sarasvati (the goddess of learning), Subhadra (Krishna's sister and favorability represented), Durga (the goddess of solidarity and influence), Kali (the influence of time) and other Vedic goddesses that embody inward quality and awesome characteristics. Indeed, even awesome power as 'Shakti' is viewed as womanlike.

In the Vedic culture, women had dependably been given the most elevated amount of regard and self-rule along with additional security and wellbeing. Women were permitted to have various spouses. Widows could remarry. They could leave their spouses. In the Vedic culture, women took an interest in religious services and ancestral congregations (Sabha and Vidata). There is no proof of isolation of women from societal gatherings yet somewhere they are presented as subject to their male relations for the duration of their lives. The arrangement of Sati existed among the Aryans in the prior period. By the time they entered India it had anyway left vogue however it may have existed in the state of a formal custom. It was not alluded to in the songs of the Rig-Veda, however the Atharva Veda demonstrated that it was as yet standard for the widow to lay emblematically by the side of her significant other's body on the memorial service fire.

Monogamy was exceptionally normal. Polygamy was not normal. Kid relational unions were obscure. Women could pick their spouses through a sort of marriage called Swayamvara. In this sort of marriage, potential grooms amassed at the woman's place and the woman of the hour chose her life partner. Occasions of Swayamvara function can be found in stories like Ramayana and Mahabharata. This proceeded even in the later period in high class families. There is a Vedic saying that where women are loved, there the Gods abide; where the women are upbeat, there will be prosperity. A Woman must be regarded and decorated by their fathers, siblings, spouses, and brothers by marriage, who want their own welfare. Where women are respected, there the Gods are satisfied; however, where they are not regarded, no sacrosanct ceremony yields rewards. Where the female relations live in sorrow, the family soon completely perishes; however, that family where they are not miserable ever thrives. The houses in which female relations, not being appropriately regarded, and reviled, die totally. Subsequently men who look for their own welfare ought to dependably respect women on celebrations with endowments of adornments, garments and dainty food.

Moreover, in the Vedas, when a woman is welcomed into the family through marriage, she enters "as a stream enters the ocean" and "to control their alongside her better half, as a ruler, over alternate individuals from the family" (Altekar 163). This sort of fairness is seldom found in some other religious sacred writing. Additionally, a woman who is dedicated to God is more exceptionally respected than a man

who has no such commitment, as found in the Rig-Veda: "Yea, numerous a woman is all the firmer and more superior to the man who gets some distance from Gods, and offers not" (337). Due to this convention, India's history incorporates numerous women who have ascended to extraordinary statures in otherworldliness, government, composing, instruction, science, or even as warriors in the combat zone. In the matter of dharma, in the times of Vedic culture, women remained as an unequivocal power in otherworldliness and the establishment of good advancement. There were additionally women rishis who uncovered the Vedic learning to other people. For instance, the 126th psalm of the principal book of the Rig-Veda was uncovered by a Hindu woman whose name was Romasha; the 179 song of a similar book was by Lopamudra, another roused Hindu woman. There were names of woman revealers of the Vedic insight, for example, Visvavara, Shashvati, Gargi, Maitreyi, Apala, Ghosha, and Aditi who trained Indra, one of the Devas, in the higher information of Brahman. All of them carried on with the perfect existence of otherworldliness, being immaculate by the things of the world. They were well versed in Sanskrit Brahnavadinis; the orators and revealers of Brahman.

Status of women in Moghul rule

In India, shockingly these norms have been declined fundamentally because of the outside impacts that have sneaked in due to remote intruders, either militarily or socially. These remote intruders who overwhelmed India for the most part saw women as objects of sexual pleasure and misuse, and as the crown jewels of war to be taken like a prize. The mistreatment of women expanded in India as a result of Moghul rule. In that capacity nonnatives influenced the society and changes of norms crawled into Indian and Vedic culture. The instructive criteria of Vedic culture additionally changed and the education of the holiness of parenthood was nearly lost. The society changed from accentuation on the advancement of individual independence to reliance and administration of other people. In this way, rivalry traded in place of truth; self-centeredness and possessiveness supplanted the soul of renunciation and separation. Also, bit by bit women were seen as not so much heavenly but rather more as objects of delight or property to be held and controlled.

Status of women in English Period

There had been, from early occasions, a relentless weakening in the situation of Indian women as the centuries progressed. The interruption of the Moghul Empire in the eighteenth century and the ensuing political disarray all through the nation just upgraded the torments of Indian women. Accordingly, when the British time frame began, the situation of women in India was the most exceedingly bad ever in the nation. Altekar finds the period between 500 A.D. to 1800 A.D. was one of dynamic disintegration in the position of women. As a result of these dim and discouraging long periods of aggregate bad form, narrow mindedness and imbalance will stay as the darkest spot until the end of time.

Child marriage was the general standard for every single decent rank of Hindus and had even spread to a few segments of the Muslim populace. Sati was generally common and even the Sikhs rehearsed it, however declared illegal by their Gurus. Purdah was entirely authorized on Muslim women and to some degree on Hindu women. Female proficiency was viewed as a wellspring of good risk with apprehension that young women could peruse and compose. Polygamy was drilled by each one of the individuals who could manage the cost of it. Prostitution was uncontrolled and each city and town was crowded with singing and moving young women. Nearly all Hindu sanctuaries disparaged devadasis.

Widows' condition was regrettable. Widows came to be viewed as foreboding; they were not allowed at the

relational unions of even their very own kids. Altekhar contends, "They needed to have a terrible existence of implemented abstinence, and society did not demonstrate much sensitivity to them... Some called the fundamental subjugation and liked to escape from life through the horrible entryway of the sati custom, which thusly started to end up commoner"(Altekhar 337). In specific locales the widow was not permitted to look happy or wear brilliant garments or trimmings. The head of the widow was shaved so as to make her ugly and she was maintained a strategic distance from all as an evil sign. Margaret Cousins, alluding to the status of women toward the finish of the nineteenth century expresses, "The state of women was at its absolute bottom of education, of singularity, of wellbeing, of societal position, of opportunity of development, of activity of monetary status, of intensity" (Cousins 13).

The British were the primary rulers who brought together the nation overall and were liberal in their reasoning. They trusted that normal reasoning must be the reason for all traditions and establishments. In the event that these traditions and establishments are not founded on reason they must be discarded. Consequently, amid the British guideline, Indian culture confronted noteworthy alterations. The British government worked gradually with regards to giving an elective lifestyle for the individuals who needed change, by presenting another kind of economy, state structure, instructive framework and furthermore by passing new social enactments.

The Indians were inspired by the exclusive requirements of British society. P. Thomas opines:

The opportunity delighted in by European women, their appearance openly works without humiliation or shock to unobtrusiveness, the benefits of monogamy, the soundness of conjugal relations among utopians in spite of the nonattendance of the purdah, their family life, all awed the better class of the Hindus and Muslims, who started to think about whether their thoughts of society with its detachment of women were the best possible (Thomas 58).

This change in mental frame of mind and access to western training were preeminent in changing the situation of Indian women for better. Things started to make strides. A few variables contributed towards the inspiration of Indian women. The general arousing of Asians in the twentieth century was a vital factor. Additionally, the immediate impact of the British, people noted for their gallantry towards women, was no less critical. Lastly the political battle for Indian autonomy under the authority of Gandhi and others gave an enormous force to the women's activist development in India.

All through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, critical patterns in thought and belief system, for example, westernization, revivalism, patriotism and modernization were concerned about the subject of women of India. The main endeavors persuaded by reformist cognizance were endeavors by individual men to annul oppressive social practices that influence women. Men, for example, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Behramji Malabari framed affiliations, composed leaflets, and campaigned for enactment to permit widow remarriage and to deny child marriage. While laws were passed regarding these matters, a couple of widow remarriages occurred, and kid relational unions kept on being normal.

Status of women in modern India

Agreeing India's constitution, women are lawful nationals of the nation and have equal rights as per men. Due to the absence of acknowledgment from the male oriented society, Indian women endure enormously. Women are in charge of bearing kids, yet they are malnourished and suffer from weakness. Women exhaust in the field and finish the majority of the local work. Most Indian women are uneducated. In spite of the fact that the nation's constitution says that women have measured up to status of men, women are

frail and are abused inside and outside the home.

India is a country where in general male is significantly respected. Subsequently women, particularly the young women, get no regard and respect in the society. The women of the family unit are required to set up the dinner for the men, who eat the majority of the nourishment. Simply after the males have completed the process of eating, can the females eat. Normally the remaining sustenance is pitiful, considering the families are poor and have little in the first place. This makes a noteworthy issue with lack of healthy sustenance, particularly for pregnant or nursing women.

Not many women look for medicinal consideration while pregnant on the grounds that it is thought of as a brief condition. This is one fundamental motivation behind why India's maternal and baby death rates are so high. Beginning from birth, young women do not get as much consideration and respect from their folks and society as a kid should be given. For instance, an infant young woman would just be bosom nourished for a brief timeframe, scarcely providing her with the supplements she needs. This is with the goal that the mother should get pregnant at the earliest opportunity.

Despite the fact that the constitution ensures free essential tutoring to everybody up to fourteen years not many young women go to school. Just around thirtynine percent of all women in India really go to elementary schools. There are a few reasons why families decide not to instruct their girls. One reason is that guardians receive nothing as an end- result of instructing their girls. Another reason is that every one of the females in a family unit have the obligation of the housework. So despite the fact that training does not monetarily load the family, it costs them the time she spends at school when she could do household tasks.

Furthermore, regardless of whether a woman is taught, particularly in the poorer areas, there is no expectation for work. Most occupations women perform are farming or household work which do not require a formal instruction. Another reason young women are not instructed is on the grounds that families are required to supply a modest little girl to the group of her future spouse. With most instructors in India being men and students doing studies predominately male, placing little girls in school, where boys encompass them throughout the day could represent a conceivable danger to their virginity.

Since women are not instructed and cannot hold a lofty activity, they go up against the most physically troublesome and unwanted occupations. A commonplace day for a woman in a rural position keeps going from four AM to eight PM with just an hour break in the center, contrasted with a man's day, which is from five AM to ten AM and after that from three PM to five PM. Most women are exhausted with no maternity leave or uncommon breaks for the individuals who are pregnant. In addition, women do most of the physical work that utilizes a great deal of vitality contrasted with the men who do for the most part machine working. Despite the fact that women work twice the number of hours as men, the men complain that 'women eat nourishment and do nothing.' This is fundamentally in light of the fact that the work the women perform does not require a great deal of aptitude and are littler assignments.

One of the remarkable endeavors to enhance the status of women was women' cause taken up by Brahma Samaj in the Bengal Presidency and the Prarthana Samaj in the Bombay Presidency. These affiliations were dynamic in bringing changes in Hindu society. Despite the fact that it was the illuminated individual men who propelled starting endeavors to nullify laws and traditions which smothered Indian women.

In course of time women themselves came forward for their development and liberation, the most punctual models being Bharat Stri Mahamandal (1910), the Women's Indian Association (1917) and All India Women's Conference (1927). The women' development in the mid nineteenth century was basically worried about the issues of the high society women. Social reformers endeavored to put a conclusion to

the act of social indecencies like sati, tyke marriage, authorized widowhood and polygamy.

The twentieth century women' development in India was inseparably bound with the opportunity development. Amid the swadeshi period (1904-1911) endeavors at mass preparation, and the capable strategies of a few women pioneers added to an expansion in general social interest of women. The swadeshi development was activated by the British choice to segment Bengal in 1905, and the development included blacklisting of British merchandise, and supporting of indigenous self-improvement efforts to counter fear-based oppression.

Emphasis on mass preparation amid the swadeshi period encouraged the support of women in a few different ways. English women pioneers like Annie Besant and Margaret Cousins had presented an example before Indian women who got affected by western women's activist belief systems, and the spread of women' training produced new thoughts. The essential distinction in the movement related with women' thoughts and also circumstances was made amid the opportunity development.

From the earliest starting point, the Indian women' movement was arranged toward tip top portrayal of elite class and not toward mass preparation. The early women' movement was very little in size and structure: its individuals were women from a bunch of families noticeable in the associational legislative issues of the urban, instructed upper class. Gradually women' instructive organizations and affiliations came to be acknowledged inside the informed class, however a vast hole between the elite and the majority remained. After 1910, women who had obtained involvement in nearby women' affiliations began national and commonplace women' movements. Sarla Devi Choudurani established Bharat Stri Mahamandal in 1910. The greater part of the associations, for example, Poona Seva Sadan, Servants of India Society or Maharishi Karve University for Hindu women underlined social change and training.

It was viewed as helpful to arrange these autonomous exercises on an all-India premise. Thus, Women's Indian Association was shaped in Madras in 1917 with the endeavors of Annie Besant, Margaret Cousins and Dorothy Jinarajdas. This might be viewed as the main association that could talk with power for the women of the nation all in all. Its official organ Stri Dharma gave compelling articulation to the woman perspective on Indian issues.

Three other vital women' associations climbed later – The National Council of Women, which was associated to the International Council in 1925, The All India Women's Conference in 1927 and The Federation of University Women which was primarily worried about women' scholarly and proficient interests.

Numerous noticeable women like Sarojini Naidu, Annie Besant. Margaret Cousins, Malathi Patwardhan, Dorothy Jinarajdas, Muthulakshmi Reddi, Abala Bose and a large group of others were related with these associations. These affiliations were worried about affecting government approach on women' suffrage, instructive and social change issues.

The pioneers of these organisations, while contrasting the women' development in India and the 'Suffragette Movement' in the West, were mindful so as to underline the distinction. Hindu philosophical and religious writing consolidated the ideal of equity among people. Rameshwari Nehru in a discourse conveyed at a women' school in England accentuated the contrast between the two developments. "The Suffragette Movement in India was a battle against conventionality, numbness and not against the other sex. The Indian women wanted to vote not from a feeling of self-glorification but rather from a longing to satisfy their obligations and duties" (Everett 80).

The All India Women's Conference was established as an instructive gathering; however, from its first session, it remained concerned with both social and instructive inquiries. By the 1930s the All India

Women's Conference was broadly perceived as the most vital women' association in India and it had branches and workplaces all through India.

Annie Besant and Sarojini Naidu were two noticeable spokespersons of the early women' development. Works and talks of Naidu and Besant introduced the objectives of the women' development. Those two associated women inspire for national improvement by pointing out the vital and unmistakable commitments that women could make to advancement.

Margaret Cousins, the leader of the All India Women's Conference, had played dynamic role in the Indian women' development. She was instrumental in the arrangement of both the Women's Indian Association and the All India Women's Conference. Muthulakshmi Reddi, AIWC president in 1931 was one of the principal Indian women to end up a specialist of female issues. Her perspective of women' inspired unprivileged and established the importance of women in the society.

The Khilafat and Non-cooperation crusades (1918-1922) denoted the start of Gandhism in the administration of Indian patriot development. The thoughts and exercises related with Gandhi energized the development of the women' movements. His philosophy was extremely conscious of women and bolstered their issues. Gandhi's exercises encouraged the support of women in the patriot development; however, the inheritance of male course remained.

Gandhi incorporated a few women among his lieutenants. In the 1918-1922 period there were Anasuya Sarabhai and Sarojini Naidu, however Gandhi remained the prominent leader. He included women in the vast majority of his Satyagraha crusades and cautiously coordinated their support. He was against women joining his Salt Satyagraha in 1930. Despite the fact that women participation lastly was considered, Gandhi kept on admonishing women to channel their political energies into productive work like weaving and picketing alcohol stores. Gradually, G a n d h i became aware of women' interest in the 'Salt Satyagraha' and other such movements during that time and supported their participation.

Under Gandhi, the Indian National Congress started a procedure of mass activation, which empowered Indian legislative issues from the 1920s to the present day. A couple of women contributed in valuable work amid the Non-cooperation crusade and the impact was increasingly far reaching amid resulting campaigns. Desh Sevikas (National Service Societies) were framed amid the 'Civil Disobedience Movement' and women were out to blacklist foreign material, empower home businesses, and picket alcohol stores. Gandhi's systems enlivened women to take part in broad daylight exercises and eradicate restrictions on their entry into social administration and patriot affiliations.

For sure, his crusades filled in as a preparation ground for some women' development pioneers - Hansa Mehta, Durgabai, Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya, Renuka Ray, and Jaishri Rajji. There was a slow move in objectives of these associations for women' upliftment to rise to rights for women. The greater part of the pioneers of the women' development were close partners of Gandhi and the nationalist women's liberation embraced by them fitted in well with the philosophy of patriotism amid independence movement.

After Independence, women' gatherings and associations like Mahila Sangharsha Vahini, Shramika Sangathana, and Stree Mukti Sangathana have taken up women's activist issues from an absolutely new point of view. Their exercises were not limited to simply setting goals or sending designations to different experts as prior. These gatherings connected with aggressive activism to affirm women' rights yet in addition made genuine endeavors to explain their contemplations on the foundations of mistreatment of women. Western women' freedom development, its writing and the issues raised, impacted numerous women with advanced education. It was basically a rebel against women' treatment as articles and not as

individual people.

Women's developments in the post-Independence period were started by Gandhians and Communists in the mid-1970s, however it was only later that they started to be viewed as women's activists. Amid mid-1970s some of women's associations had come up in significant urban areas like Bombay, Delhi, Madras, Pune, Patna, Ahmedabad, and some different spots. Despite the fact that there was no specific similarity among them, their individuals were drawn to a great extent from the urban taught white-collar class.

Amid the beginning periods, women's associations moved towards left and started to adjust themselves to communist ideological associations. They had an expansive perspective of woman's rights, as a continuous procedure, connected at the hip with class battle. The deplorable spell of crisis conveyed an end to these exercises.

Afterward a significant number of the women's activist belief systems of Europe was talked about at extraordinary length. Role balance, opportunity and social equity were the significant issues.

The United Nations, by announcing 1975 as Women's Year and the following decade as 'Women's Decade' called upon to grow new measures for liberation. In the long run a few women's associations and numerous women activists have thought that it was important to take up issues identified with mistreatment of women like settlement, viciousness in the family, liquor addiction and sexual separation of women at their workplace. Amid the International Women's Year, a meeting of women activists was held in Pune. In Bombay and Pune free and independent women's gatherings like Stree Mukti Sangathana appeared around the same time.

After the withdrawal of the Emergency, the issue of common freedom was fervently discussed. News of mass assault of poor, Dalit and innate women in Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra showed up in the press. Attention to popularity-based rights and monstrosities on women was made. Thus, incalculable women's activist associations were framed in real urban areas all over India. Manushi, the women's activist diary established in 1979, was treated as a mouthpiece for self-sufficient women's development in the nation.

During the 1980s associations like Mahila Daxata Samata Manch, Stree Sangharsh Samiti in Delhi, Socialist Women's Group in Bombay, Purogami Sangathana in Pune, Stree Shakti Sangathana in Hyderabad and Pennurimai Iyyakum in Madras appeared. These gatherings and their crusades had started taking up issues from the very beginning and extended support to matters like police assault to unionizing women laborers, local workers, and ghetto inhabitants. The issues of the murders and assaults were presented to open notice and got consideration of the press and general society. In the result of such efforts, there increased significant certainty and support. By the mid- 1980s, women could build up themselves in social orders dependent on a typical philosophy and program.

At this stage, diverse patterns in women's activist idea like middle class, radical and communist feminisms went to the fore. The individuals who simply needed to make some minor changes in the current social structure and stay placated with liberal statutory measures were known as average women's activists. The individuals who discovered men alone in charge of the agonies of women were known as radical women's activists.

What's more, the individuals were there who concede the job of male centric society in enslaving women in our general public and yet trust that in this framework other mistreated and abused masses like Dalits, tribals, regular workers were partners of women's freedom development and accordingly had faith in solidarity with these gatherings and these are known as communist women's activists.

The women's activists are partitioned over the way of liberation of women. By and by because of the weight

made by the women's development, alterations in the laws in regards to assault, share and marriage had to be made. Presently numerous women's associations are effectively chipping away at the issues of working women. As a rule, women's development in India is progressively embracing the position that every issue is a women's issue.

Women's associations have endeavored to present woman's issues amid masses through plays, productions, melodies, publications, shows, magazines, and so on. Numerous women's activist magazines like Manushi, Saheli, and Sabala are being distributed from Delhi, Calcutta and Bangalore individually. The critical contribution of the women's activist development in India is that it has spread some sort of women's awareness all through the nation. The present years of women's liberation in India have seen exceptional ideologies and additionally viable discussions over the issues identified with women. Ongoing patterns uncover that women's activists are progressively turning out to help in issues like social liberties, environmental wellbeing and other related social developments so as to look for options in each stroll of human life.

The development for social liberation of Indian women that began in the nineteenth century still has far to go before it will achieve its ideal objective. Anyway, there is significant improvement in the situation of women when contrasted with the medieval times. Women have left their cases and they appreciate certain measure of opportunity now. This is primarily because of Gandhian impact and women's activist development.

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