

Status of Women & Stratification



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Abstract

Today, even after several years of independence, the condition of women in India cannot be said to be satisfactory. There is a tremendous expansion of modernity, but the number of crimes against women is still rising day by day, and the status of woman in the Indian society is staggering. A variety of religious customs, slanderous stereotypes, sexual offenses, gender discrimination, domestic violence, low-end lifestyle, illiteracy, malnutrition, dowry harassment, female feticide, social insecurity, and neglect still surround them and develop them a pessimistic approach in them.

However, the last few decades during which a change was seen, reveal and reflect the increasing participation of women in almost all government and non-government sectors, including defence and administration, their autonomy and legal and political protection of rights, rapidly changing positive social attitudes, improved educational levels, their participation in international sports competitions.

Changes are emerging in several other fields relating to the women, such as, and important fields like cinema, creativity, business, communication, science and technology. With this beginning, our freedom is going to be considered incomplete until women are assured equal participation of men in every section of society, they are not educated, safe and protected in every way.

The paper interprets the status of woman in the stratified Indian society. The findings reveal that the status of the Indian woman is constantly improving.

Keywords: Status, Stratification, Mobility, Changes, Transformation, Equality, Destiny, Modernization.

Introduction

As per the sayings and details available in the literature, in the Vedic era, women had same rights as men. They were to join yagyas, recite the Vedas and receive education. The Rig Veda and Upanishads are full of the details about many female students such as Gargi, Appala, Ghosha, Maitreyi.

In the Indian context, the women are paid a high honour saying that where women are respected, the gods reside there. However, the practice says that several bans had been imposed on women too early. The Manusmriti is an evidence to this truth. This is where the situation of women started declining. Their condition and status got worse after the Islamic invasion on India.

The undesirable practices like purdah, child-marriage, sati-pratha, jauhar and devadasi came into vogue, and the woman found herself surrounded by all this. In the medieval era, even the efforts of the Bhakti movement to improve the condition of women proved futile. Only few of the women partaker, such as, Mirabai, Akka Mahadevi, Rami Janabai and Laldeed, got success in taking their voice to the public.

The teachings of Sikhism relating to the equality of women and men in war, leadership and religious management committees also could not work. However, various reformist movements started in the mid-19th century by Brahma Samaj (Raja Ram Mohan Roy), Arya Samaj (Swami Dayanand Saraswati), Theosophical Society, Ramakrishna Mission (Swami Vivekananda), Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar (Female Education), Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, Savitribai Phule (Education of Dalit Women) etc. brought new hopes to the women of those times.

In 1829, Lord William Bentick, succeeded in getting many legal provisions passed, and one of them was the abolition of the Sati System that forced several innocent married women to die with their husbands. Razia Sultan (the only female empress to rule Delhi), Gond Queen-Durgavati, Shivaji Maharaj's mother- Jijabai, Kittur's Queen- Chennamma, Karnataka's Queen- Abbakkah, Awadh's co-ruler Begum Hazrat Mahal,

Agra The names of Nur Jahan and Maharani of Jhansi - Lakshmi Bai are prominent and unforgettable in this regard.

Mata Tapaswini, Madam Cama, and Sarla Devi, Shanti Ghosh, Smriti Chaudhary, Bina Das, Pritilata Wadekar, Banalata Das Gupta, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Aruna Asaf Ali, Sucheta Kripalani, Kasturba Gandhi, Durgabai Desmukh, Captain Lakshmi Sehgal, and Sarojini Naidu proved their potential in the Freedom Struggle Movement.

The Constitution of India guarantees equal rights for women (Article-14), no discrimination by the state (Section-15), equality of opportunities (Section-16), equal pay for equal work (Section-14) 39), abandonment of abusive practices (Section 51 (A) (E)), maternity assistance (Section 42). The Immoral Trade (Prevention) Act 1956, Dowry Prohibition Act 1961, Kutumb Court Act 1984, Shaggy Formation of Women (Prohibition) Act 1986, Prohibition of Sati Act 1987, National Commission for Women Act 1990, Prevention of Pregnancy Prevention Selection 1994, Domestic Violence From Protection of Women Act 2005, Child Marriage Prohibition Act 2006, Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prohibition) Act 2013, Criminal Law (Amendment) are some of the legal steps taken by the Government to ensure safety, security and honour the Indian woman.

However, despite all this and theoretical implications, atrocities on women in the country are increasing rather than decreasing. According to UNDP (Human Development Report) 1997, 88% of women in India are anemic. Very few measures are being used to control fertility in rural areas of India, due to which many types of health problems are seen every day due to repeated pregnancies and physical disability.

According to a recent report by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), in 2014, 100 women were raped every day and 364 women were subjected to harassment. According to the UNICEF report 'Hidden in Plain Sight', 34% of married women aged 15 to 19 years in India have suffered sexual violence at the hands of their spouse. According to the International Center for Research on Women, 6 out of 10 men in India have violently treat a wife or girlfriend at some time.

This situation is very frightening. Apart from this, there are many other concerns such as health, education, social concerns, lack of role in making important decisions at home, double social attitude, lack of training, economic dependence on men, poverty and religious restrictions. However, the women personalities like Smt Indira Gandhi, Pratibhadevi Singh Patil, Sushma Swaraj, Nirmala Sitharaman, Mahadevi Verma, Subhadrakumari Chauhan, Amrita Pritam, Mahashweta Devi, Lata Mangeshkar, Asha Bhoshale, Shreya Ghoshal, Sunidhi Chauhan, Alka Yagnik, Ms. Mayawati, Jayalalitha, Mamta Banerjee, Medha Patkar, Arundhati Roy, Chanda Kochhar, P.T. Notable names are Usha, Saina Nehwal, Sania Mirza, Sakshi Malik, PV Sindhu, Hima Das, Jhulan Goswami, Smriti Mandhana, Mithali Raj, Harsan Preet Kaur, Geeta Phogat and Mary Kom motivate the common woman

of India to get over her circumstances and to prove herself where and when she gets an opportunity for it.

Objectives of the Study

1. To develop a passion about the understanding of the Indian society
2. To have an idea about the patriarchy system in the Indian society
3. To learn about the bases of social stratification
4. To concentrate on the sex as the base of social stratification in the Indian society
5. To interpret the gender discrimination in the Indian society
6. To discuss the authoritative status of man in the Indian society
7. To come to the status of women in the Patriarchal Indian society
8. To discuss the dependence of woman on the man in the Indian society
9. To explore the emerging changes in the status of the woman in India
10. To explore the contemporary social scenario keeping in centre the woman

Review of Literature

Dan A. Chekki (1970), in the study Social Stratification and Trends of Social Mobility in Modern India, draws the attention toward the ongoing trends of social mobility in the modern India and that the traditional phase of social stratification that had been there for centuries, is going to be over giving liberty to woman to be self depend through linkage to education and career in various fields and through potential proving.

Brian Ridsdale and Adrian Gallop (2010), in the study Mortality by cause of death and by socio-economic and demographic stratification 2010, report that the impact of specific causes of death on historical trends in mortality, international trends in mortality by cause and by socio-demographic classification, the availability and use of data suitable for underwriting, pricing and analysis, modelling of mortality by cause and the use of "by cause" information in mortality projections. There is a strong relationship between socio-economic group and mortality: poorer, less socially advantaged people are likely to die sooner than their more advantaged peers at every level of the social structure; in other words, there is a society-wide gradient in mortality risk. It is important to try to understand the links between socio-economic group and cause of death. Many of the papers we have examined stress that social change and health education can actually contribute more to future improvements in longevity than can medical treatments.

Rahul Tiwari (2010), in the research paper entitled Caste System and Social Stratification in India, observes that the Castes are hereditary endogamous group with fixed traditional occupations, observing commensal prohibition and social restrictions on interaction. It is believed that there are about 3,000 castes in the country. These castes are grouped as upper castes (like Brahmins, Rajputs, Baniyas, Kayasthas, etc.), intermediate castes (like Ahir, Sunar, Kurmi, etc.) and lower caste (like Dhobi, Nai, etc.). The castes are linked with the four varnas

(Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisya, and Sudra) for determining the status in ritual hierarchy. The author believes that the caste system in Hinduism has been unduly highlighted by the media and state that one way to discredit any system is to highlight its excesses, and this only adds to the sense of inferiority that many Indians feel about their own culture. Caste system is often portrayed as the ultimate horror, in the media. Thus Caste system is going to stay permanently in India and all slogans denouncing the system is a pure and mere eye wash. The caste system although was not sanctioned by Vedas made inroads into the society and got entrenched. With Government policies, further irreparable damage has been done to the society and it would be impossible to eradicate the evil. Vested interests have developed due to various reservations where merit is thrown to winds.

Irshad, A.W., Ahrar, A.H. and Zuber, S.M. (2013), in *Revisiting Social Stratification in Indian Society: A Review and Analysis with Focus on Kashmiri Society*, survey and suggest that a large number of Indian as well as western sociologists and social Anthropologists interested in understanding Indian society have paid specific attention to the analysis of traditional caste system and the changes taking place there in. But such studies are confined on Hindu society and culture, and throw insufficient light on different aspects of social life or particularly social stratification among Indian Muslims. The empirical realities demand that the caste stratification may also be studied among the non- Hindus in India. Though these studies are confined on Hindu communities in India, the Social Stratification among Kashmiri society has not been analysed so far. So the researcher hopes that the present study will fill the gap in the literature.

M. A. Uday Kumar & N. K. Rajalakshmi (2013), in their study *Social Entrepreneurship in India: Recent Trends and Change*, observe that the process of modernization resulted in provision of modern education, creation of modern institutions and setting up of industries. Consequently, a class society started emerging. Though the entry barriers to the new found class was (theoretically) visibly absent, for majority of the people from lower strata it was very difficult to walk over to new found class in modern society. Poor representation of down trodden in the modern institutions made strong case for state intervention.

Dan Little (2014), in *The status of women in India*, expresses that sociologists are often interested in making sense of processes of change that radiate along the axes of the great tectonics of social life, including class, race, and gender. These features of social life are particularly fundamental because they denote powerful determinants of opportunity, life-course, and personal outcomes for all of us. The positions into which individuals are born within the property system have great influence on the ways their lives unfold. The social filigree of race and ethnicity, and the ways in which these categories are socially constructed and projected, likewise creates determinative pathways of development and action for individuals in many social settings. And the social

freight of gender and family creates opportunities and obstacles, expectations and stereotypes, for boys and girls, women and men. There are other large dimensions of social embeddedness that might be brought forward as well -- religion, culture, normative communities, power and authority, for example. But class, race, and gender are especially profound. And each has given rise to movements of emancipation in reaction to the oppressions that they represent for specific groups in society.

Hypothesis

1. Social stratification is a universal phenomenon
2. All the societies whether primitive or modern approve stratification
3. There are several bases of social stratification
4. Sex is one of the main bases of social stratification world-wide
5. Woman is stratified as secondary and subordinate to man in all the societies of the world
6. The Indian society is a patriarchal society
7. The status of woman in the Indian society is not justified, and she is treated as subordinate to man
8. In the twenty-first century several remarkable changes are occurring in the status of woman
9. The current status of woman in the Indian society is improved
10. The Constitution guarantees right to equality to women

Method

Inductive in approach; qualitative in the type of research and explanatory and interpretative in design, the paper is a comprehensive study on the important issue of the status of woman in India granted to her by social stratification. For the purpose of preparing the paper, several important steps were undertaken and the process of social research was rigidly followed and worked out through defining the problem to be studied, defining and determining the generic and specific objectives, going through the related study material found available in the print-form in the various research studies already conducted and made in the various parts of the world, gathering and picking out the relevant contents in order to review and to arrive at conclusion, content analysis, collection, classification, explanation and interpretation of the gone through stuff, and finally, arriving at a comprehensive conclusion reflected through the findings.

Findings

1. Social stratification is a universal phenomenon and it is approved in all the societies of the world on certain bases
2. All the societies of the world are regulated through social stratification that maintains a balance in all the elements of the society
3. Birth, sex, education, property, job-status, intelligence etc. are some of major bases of stratification
4. Sex is the most approved base of stratification which is recognized in all the societies of the world

5. On the basis of sex, the man occupies the first place, and the woman occupies the second place in all the societies of the world
6. The Indian society is a patriarchal where the authority of man works successfully. All the important decisions about the family members and about important issues are taken by man who manages all the affairs independently in his own way
7. The status of woman in the Indian society is just secondary, and she is subordinate to man finding man over her as father, brother, husband and son to take decisions for her
8. In the twenty-first century several remarkable changes that are occurring include- Growing awareness of women to their rights, consciousness of honourable survival and existence, linkage with education and job, liberty to work and move, and liberty to live and marry the man of their own choice
9. The current improved status of the Indian woman reveals her changing destiny that allows her to educate herself, choose career, work both in public and private sector, choose her mate, and move any way she pleases provided the ways are not against the established country law

10. The right to equality guaranteed to the Indian woman by the Constitution of India is probably the best gift of the woman born in India in free India.

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