

Status of Women in Today's Society

Ranjita Singh

(Assistant Professor, Sociology, S.S.JainSubodh P.G.(Autonomous) college,India)

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.

KEYWORDS:Equal, Exploited, Independent, Injustice,Responsibility

I. WOMEN : EARLIER AND PRESENTLY

In earlier times, women were exploited through every possible means by the society. They suffered a lot of criticism, lacked freedom and stood nowhere next to men. They were even deprived of the basic birthrights of a human being. It took a lot of effort and courage for them to mark an impression of "women power" and make a significant place in society. Poetesses such as Charlotte Bronte inspired women by quoting, "I am no bird and no net ensnares me, I am a free human being with an independent will." Through this she tried to convey that women are no longer to be treated as birds in the cage, instead they should be given equal liberty and opportunities as men. Such supportive sections of society led to the developments that are responsible for the improved status of women in today's society.

II. FACTORS LED TO THE ENHANCEMENT OF STATUS OF WOMEN IN MODERN SOCIETY

The improvement in the status of women in the society can be analyzed in the light of the major changes that have taken place in areas such as legislations, education, economic and employment sector, political participation and awareness of their rights on the part of women, etc. Following are some changes:

2.1 Women in the field of education

The effects of women's education on development constitute a significant area of research within international development. An increase in the amount of women's education in regions tends to correlate with high levels of development. Some of the effects are related to economic development. Women's education increases the income of women and leads to growth in GDP. Other effects are related to social development. Educating girls leads to a number of social benefits, including many related to women's empowerment. Recent research in human development has established a strong link between women's education and international development. In particular, researchers seek to determine what factors explain differences in rates of development. Women's education is one of the major explanatory variables behind the rates of social and economic development. According to notable economist Lawrence Summers "investment in the education of girls may well be the highest-return investment available in the developing world."

2.2 Women in economic and employment fields

In both villages and cities, there has been a remarkable increase in the number of women going out of the four walls of the household and becoming workers. In the "employment market", they are giving tough competition to menfolk. In some fields the number of women employs is steadily increasing. For example, women working as teachers, doctors, nurses, advocates, bank employees, clerks, typists, telephone operators, receptionist, personal assistants and so on. Since 1991, though in a smaller number, women are getting recruited into armed force, air force and naval force also.^[1] In order to give protection to the economic interests and rights of the womenfolk the government has undertaken various socio-economic legislations, which cover areas such as right to property or inheritance, equal wages, working conditions, maternity benefits and job security.

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The Texas Education Agency (TEA) recently reported facts about women in education fields in Texas in the including the following:

2.2.1 Women represent three-fourths (75.6 percent) of the 493,440 public education employees.

2.2.2 Women represent one-fourth (25.5 percent) of public education employees.

2.2.3 Women represent 1.4 percent of superintendents; 9.1 percent of assistant superintendents; 6 percent of principals; and 9 percent of assistant principals.

2.2.4 More than half (56.5 percent) of the female teachers in public schools worked in early childhood and elementary schools. ^[2]

2.3 Women in political field

Every country deserves to have the best possible leader and that means that women have to be given a chance to compete. If they're never allowed to compete in the electoral process then the countries are really robbing themselves of a great deal of talent" says Madeleine K. Albright, Chairman of NDI^[3]. It is believed that equitable participation of women in politics and government is essential to build and sustain democracy. Comprising over 50 percent of the world's population, women continue to be under-represented as voters, political leaders and elected officials. Democracy cannot truly deliver for all of its citizens if half of the population remains underrepresented in the political arena. Women's participation in mainstream political activity has important implications for the broader arena of governance in any country. Governance relates to a set of rules, institutions, and values that are involved in the management of state and society. Governance institutions and processes include political parties, parliaments, government and their interactions with society. Although governance is a generic term which could mean good government or management, the governance values, types of government, the nature of political processes, the political parties and organizations, which/whose interests are represented and protected, and the extent of power that the masses have to challenge the state or in suggesting alternatives in methods of governance etc.

2.4 Women given equal rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, enshrines "the equal rights of men and women", and addressed both the equality and equity issues. In 1979, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) for legal implementation of the Declaration of elimination of discrimination against sex. Described as an international bill of rights for women, it came into force on 3 September 1981. The Convention defines discrimination against women in the following terms, "Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field." It also establishes an agenda of action for putting an end to sex-based discrimination for which states ratifying the Convention are required to enshrine gender equality into their domestic legislation, repeal all discriminatory provisions in their laws, and enact new provisions to guard against discrimination against women. They must also establish tribunals and public institutions to guarantee women effective protection against discrimination, and take steps to eliminate all forms of discrimination practiced against women by individuals, organizations, and enterprises.

2.5 Women in the field of sports

Female participation in sports rose dramatically in the twentieth century, especially in the last quarter, reflecting changes in modern societies that emphasized gender parity. Although the level of participation and performance still varies greatly by country and by sport, women's sports have broad acceptance throughout the world, and in a few instances, such as figure skating, rival or exceed their male counterparts in popularity. The main purpose of participation of women was to bring equality between the sexes in educational institutions. Today there are more females participating in athletics than ever before. As of the 2007-2008 school year, females made up 41% of the participants in college athletics. In 1971-1972 there were 294,015 females participating in high school athletics and in 2007-2008 there were over three million females participating, meaning there has been a 940% increase in female participation in high school athletics. In 1971-1972 there were 29,972 females participating in college athletics and in 2007-2008 there were 166,728 females participating, that is a 456% increase in female participation in college athletics. Increased participation in sports has had direct effects on other areas of women's lives. These effects can be seen in women's education and employment later on in life; a recent study found that the changes set in motion by participation of women explained about 20 percent of the increase in women's education and about 40 percent of the rise in employment for 25-to-34-year-old women. This is not to say that all women who are successful later on in life played sports,

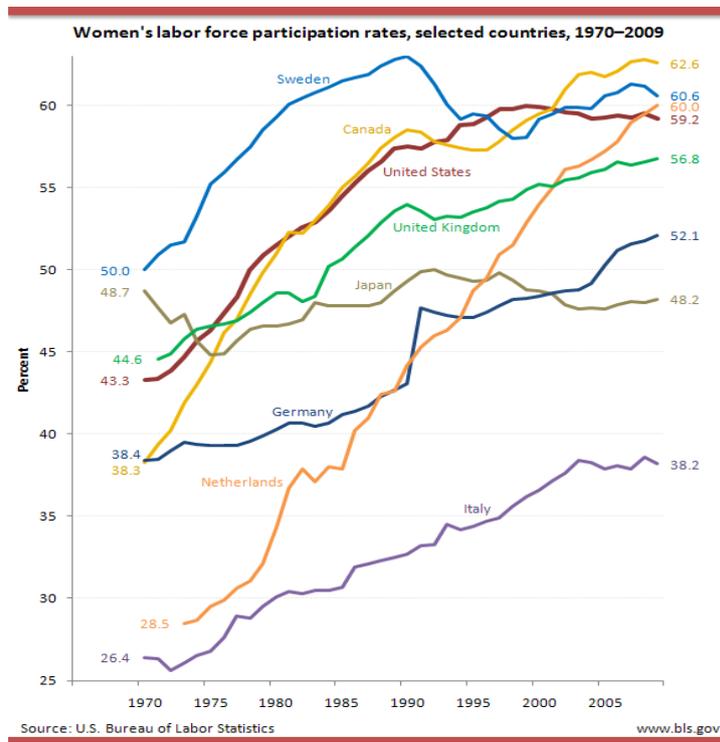
but it is saying that women who did participate in athletics received benefits in their education and employment later on in life.

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III. FIGURES SUPPORTING THE GROWTH OF STATUS OF WOMEN

3.1 Women labor force participation rates

This data clearly shows the improvement in the status of women in field of employment in about 39 years. As we can see, countries like Netherlands and Canada have shown a drastic improvement. Other countries like Germany, United States, United kingdom and Sweden have also shown distinguishable improvement except Japan who faced a fall of 0.5 units.



3.2 Comparison of literacy rate report of 2000 and 2012

Clearly, there is no country whose women have not prospered in the field of education. Bangladesh showed a drastic change in literacy rate over a span of 12 years followed by Nepal, India, Bhutan and Pakistan.

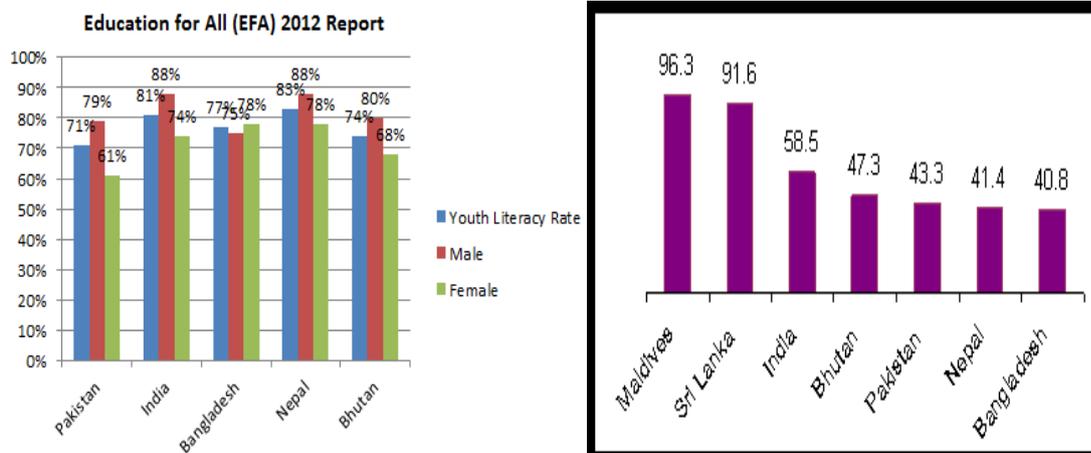


Fig.1Fig.2

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IV. CONCLUSION

It is largely held that women all over the world have been made to suffer discrimination and deprivation of various kinds since the beginning of time that they have all along been denied even such basic rights as access to literacy and property. This global concern has steadily grown through the past few decades and has resulted in efforts to bring women into the mainstream of life, mainly through socio-economic activities aimed at empowering them and thus restoring equality between the sexes. Real empowerment of women, however, lies in helping them unfold the spiritual aspect of their personality, build up their character and manifest their purity and motherhood. It is these that make up the character of the ideal Indian woman; earning capacity and public status are secondary. All women are parts of the same infinite divine Power, and hence divine. Fully realizing the importance and urgency of the uplift of women, if we are to save our cultural traditions and spiritual values and counter the negative trends that are now affecting our body politic. SHGs too organize cultural and value-orientation programs and other meetings on their own for their all-round development. Recently, one such conference was attended by 1700 members. Empowerment is complete only when a given community takes full control of its own development and the implementing agency, much like a catalytic agent, remains in the background after initiating the process of change. This is exactly what the Ashrama does: once the machinery it has set up is in working order, it hands over the management of affairs to the grass-root organization or SHG, and itself remains in the background to provide motivation and guidance from time to time. As Swami Vivekananda said, 'Our duty is to put the chemicals together, the crystallization will come through God's laws. Let us put ideas into their heads, and they will do the rest.'

REFERENCES

- [1] Dr. Y.K. Sharma, *Indian society; issues and problems*(Lakshmi NaraiyanAgarwal, Agra,2007)
- [2] www.bls.gov/spotlight/women
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