

Status of Women in Hindu Society

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Abstract: Women play an important role in Indian society. The status of women in any society is the index of the standard of its social organization. The standard of a society rises and falls in correlation with the rise and falls in the status of women. The Hindu society has always dynamic. The status of women in it has consequently always changed. In this paper discuss the changing status of women from ancient to modern society.

Key points: Women, Ancient, Medieval, Modern, Status.

INTRODUCTION:

“The best thermometer to the progress of a nation is its treatment of its women. There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved.”

- Swami Vivekananda

Any study of society is incomplete without studying the status, role, and even position of girls in it. Women played the most important role in the Indian social structure. The status of women refers to the position of women in society in relation to men. Although, geographically, men and women share the same space, they are not treated equally in the world. In reality, there is inequality in women's access to education, health care, physical and financial resources, and opportunities in the political, economic, social, and cultural fields. Males in general have a conventional perspective when it comes to women. Many of his issues stem from his attitude toward women. Furthermore, women feel that males should defend us since, in the society that values masculinity, men are actually superior to women and they are inferior. Women's life is thus being negatively impacted by the gender-based mindset that has been ingrained in society. Men and women are both part of society, but society does not view them equally—it views them from various angles. It also handles things differently without treating them in an identical manner. In other words, men and women are treated differently in society. The purpose of the study is to raise awareness and provide insight into the issues that women have faced from time to time and what their role has been. The study will enable us to imagine how women has been deprived their status in society from time to time and participated in the social, religious, economic, and domestic spheres in ancient and modern times.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

The present study is aimed to

- a) To study the social status of women.

b) To know the role and status of women from ancient to modern time.

METHODOLOGY:

The methodology of this paper is purely descriptive and required information are collected from different secondary sources like Epics, Vedas, Various book, Internet and other publications relating to women in Hindu society.

STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE ANCIENT HINDU SOCIETY:

In ancient India, religion was given major significance. Education also places primary emphasis on religious scriptures. It was believed that individuals would be able to enrich their lives by inculcating the traits of morality and ethics. Women were given recognition within society and participated in all activities and functions along with men. In the area of spirituality, women were not considered inferior to men, were not discriminated against, and were provided equal opportunities. The women were given equal status with men in almost every field of life. They received higher education and participated in discussions of political and philosophical nature with male scholars. The Vedas, the Upanishads, the Mahabharat, and the Purans mentioned the names of the lady scholars, philosophers, poets, and politicians in ancient India. In Mahabharat, the wife has been called the better half of the husband. In the Rig Veda, the wife has been blessed to live as a queen in the house of her husband. The word 'Dampati' so often used in the Vedas characterizes both wife and husband. According to Macdonell and Keith, this word signifies the high status of women in ancient India. The wife and husband cooperated in different functions of the household. They together performed religious duties, enjoyed themselves, and carried out other functions. In Mahabharat, the wife has been called the root of dharma, prosperity, and enjoyment. No man was allowed to perform religious duties without a wife. Thus, the status of women in ancient India was based on liberty, equality, and cooperation.

STATUS OF WOMEN IN MEDIEVAL INDIA:

The medieval period began with the entry of Muslim invaders into India. The status of women began to decline in the Muslim era. This period brought about changes in the lives of women to a major extent. They were regarded as inferior to their male counterparts. The birth of the girl children was not appreciated. In some communities, there was a prevalence of the practice of female infanticide. The practice of female infanticide is the killing of girl children after they are born. The scriptures prescribed rules for child marriages, which increased the number of widows. The rules of conduct for the widows were even more rigid. During this period, preference was given to the male members. It was believed that men were assets of the family. If their parents pay wholehearted attention to various factors and promote their upbringing in a satisfactory manner, they will be able to augment their competencies and abilities. When the male members are educated, they will make an important contribution to promoting the well-being of their families and communities. Hence, males were encouraged to acquire education. On the other hand, girls were regarded as liabilities. They were trained in terms of the implementation of household responsibilities and taking care of the needs and requirements of family members.

STATUS OF WOMEN IN MODERN INDIA:

Modern India refers to the period from A.D. 1700 to A.D. 1947. This period marks the advent of the British in India. One appreciative move the British made was the empowerment of women during their reign. They worked towards the abolition of Sati Pratha, the abolition of child marriage and the introduction of western education in the country, which encouraged a lot of Indian reformers to raise their voice against the wrong happenings in society. Education was started during the British period. After the Bhakti movement, Christian missionaries took an interest in the education of girls. A girl's school was started for the first time in Bombay in 1824. During the British period, there were two major movements that affected the position of women. These were the Social Reform Movement of the nineteenth century and the Nationalist Movement of the twentieth century. Overall, the condition of women improved because of some supportive fathers and husbands who wanted the women to get recognition, and especially because of social reformers such as Raja Ram

Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Jyotiba Phule. These social reformers had undergone a number of challenges and rendered an effective contribution towards enhancing the status of women in society.

CONCLUSION:

God created both men and women. Since the dawn of human civilization, both man and woman have carried the burden of mankind. But from the ancient period on, it was found that only a few well-to-do and higher-class women received the honor and rights of women. Most women throughout history were denied their rights. They were treated as being a little more than animals. They were not allowed to have education or other facilities. Girls were not allowed education, nor were they allowed to go out. When the British came to India, they enhanced the status of women in society. There has been a steady transformation in the status of women in comparison to earlier periods. Women of today take part completely in areas such as politics, military sectors, economic, service, and technology sectors. Moreover, they have contributed wholly to sports too. Thus, they have occupied a dignified position in family and society. However, ending crime against women is still a challenge. Even after significant advancements in women's rights in India, they are still exploited, harassed, and abused in a variety of ways, such as through rape, sex discrimination, and so on. We can prevent illness by ensuring women's autonomy and increasing participation and decision-making power in family and public life.

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