



GENDER SENSITIZATION AND CONDITION OF WOMEN

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History reveals that the women have been ill treated by the men, their own family and by the society on the whole. At one time she was called a Goddess and at the other she was considered subservient to the males. In Vedic era, birth of a male was more welcome than the birth of a female child. In Rig Veda, there is a prayer for the birth of a son. In Brahamnas, the birth of son was greatly favoured. The Atharva Veda clearly mentions the unpleasantness at the birth of girl as it was prayed to God that kindly grant birth of boy here and grant the birth of girl somewhere else. Manu did not treat women at par with men. In Mughal period, the women were considered an object of contempt and ridicule, a play for sex and a human machine to be employed for procreation of male lineage. But the Buddhist period was the best period for women. Women were given more importance than men. Again in British period, the evils committed on women as early marriage, sati system ,pardah system, infanticide etc were criticized and abolished. But the gender bias could not be abolished. Our constitution framer Dr. B.R. Ambedkar tried his best to provide equal status to women in every field in the form of fundamental rights but this equality is still in the statute. Various articles have been written for uplifting the status of women. Article 14 ensures gender equality. Article 15 prohibits discrimination on the ground of sex .Article 16 provides for opportunity in public employment. Article 15(3) permits the state to make special provisions for women and children. Article 39 permits the state to provide an adequate means of livelihood to men and women. Article 51 A(c) makes it a duty of every citizen to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women, But it is ridiculous to enjoy the right to life provided in our constitution. With conversion of infanticide into female foeticide, the foetus of the sex is identified, then females are put to sleep. Indian women are still burnt for bringing insufficient dowry, tormented for not providing money to their alcoholic husbands and raped by men to satisfy their lust. So women prefer sons as it increases their status in the

family, otherwise leading a subordinate life.

A women is vulnerable to abuses and threats pertaining to physical , sexual, psychological, emotional and financial issues. To deal with such issues affecting the lives of women. Gender discrimination in India has developed several social and economical constraints. It is found that number of girls as compared to boys is declining. Women are facing difficulties in completing their schooling and entering colleges. When this is estimated that 2/3 of Indian children who do not attend schools are girls, the country cannot boast of its commitment to equality. Basically Indian society is male dominated. It seriously under valued the status of women in the society. Man occupies a superior status and woman is his appendage. Its her father before marriage, husband after marriage and sons after the death of her husband who dictate her the extent of her rights. The Hindu Succession Act-1956, though gives women the right to succession on her father's property but if she puts claim on it she is socially bycotted or isolated. In Hindu religion a son only can give offering to the ancestors, perform funeral ceremonies of parents so that their souls may achieve salvation. Then there is the religious obligation over people to carry on the Vansha and in order to get the boon of male child, a number of female foetuses are sacrificed. Sons are more likely than daughters to provide labour on farm or in family business, earn wages and support their parents in old age. Upon marriage, a son brings a daughter -in- law as well as economic rewards in the form of dowry payments. Declining ratio of the girl child in India is a matter of shame for all of us individually and collectively.

The devaluation of women begins even before life begins. Starting from the stage of birth women are discriminated in areas like access to nutrition, childcare, education and work etc. In spite of specific laws and rules by the government brought into force to stop discrimination against women but under the complex cultural beliefs and practices associated with patriarchal monopolistic behaviour, the efficiency of such isolated efforts remains doubtful. In India discriminatory attitude towards men and women have existed for generations and affected the lives of both genders. Census 2011 shows the decline of girl population under the age of seven, with activists estimated that eight million female foetuses may have seen aborted in the past decade. The demand for sons among wealthy parents is being satisfied by the medical community through the provision of illegal service of foetal sex determination and sex selected abortion. Discrimination against women has led to their lack of autonomy and authority. Although equal rights are given to women, equality may not be well implemented. In practice land and property rights are enforced with customary laws widely

practised in rural areas women do not own property under their own names and usually do not have any inheritance rights to obtain a share of parental property.

Preference for a male child persists, quite often out of mere practical, financial concerns because the parents might not be able to afford the marriage dowry for a daughter. This leads to some of the most gruesome and desperate acts when it comes to gender discrimination as selective abortions ,murdering of female babies and abandonment of female babies.

As a result girls are often treated differently from male children in terms of nutrition and health care where limited food or financial resources are available, the insufficient means are prone to be allocated unevenly in favour of male children. The nutritional deprivation has two harmful consequences for women firstly they never reach their full growth and second is the anaemia. Constitution of India guarantees free primary school education for girls and boys upto age 14. But primary education in India is not universal and often at times not seen as really for girls. Their parents might consider it more important that they learn domestic care as they will need to perform them for their future husbands and in-laws. Another disincentive for sending daughter to school is a concern for the protection of their virginity. When schools are located at a distance, when teachers are male and when girls are expected to study along with boys, parents are often unwilling to expose daughters to the potential assault or their virginity. This results in one of the lowest literacy rate of Indian women in the world.

The prohibition of child marriage Act 2006 bans marriage below age 18 for girls and age 21 for boys but 40% world's child marriages occur in India. In this case many child wives are inclined to experience domestic violence, marital rapes, deprivation of food and lack of access to informative, health care and education. Thus the vicious cycle of illiteracy and abuse is likely to be continue and pass on to their daughters. A girl child is supposed to remain in the custody and care of her parents, after marriage she becomes the property and responsibility of her husband who is supposed to take care of her and keep her in his custody. Woman is no longer considered to be the part of her family of her birth. After marriage the woman leaves her parental home and lives with her husband's family, where she is required to assume all household labour and domestic responsibilities. Sati system has been abolished by Indian laws. Widow is still seen as a liability in the Indian society which might result in her being abandoned by her in-laws. She is subjected to many restrictions and might be required to shave her head permanently or wear white clothes for the rest of her life. She is not allowed to enter any celebration because her presence is considered to be inauspicious. Moreover a widow might face trouble securing her property rights after the death of her

husband. The condition of women is very pathetic in India. 450 women per lakh die during delivery in India due to lack of good medical facilities. Women are being raped daily. But a few cases are highlighted. Number of women prisoners in jails is increasing day by day because if women use weapons for their self respect they are put into jails. Women are compelled to become surrogate mothers due to their poverty. Great persons from Lord Buddha to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, many saints as Sant Ravidas ji, Sant Kabir ji and Sikh Gurus ,all sacrificed their lives for upliftment of women and downtrodden. But still women are facing discrimination to the extent. Indian male dominated society will have to change its view point. Women population is half of the total population. Lord Buddha said that progress of a nation can be analyzed through the progress of women of that nation. But Indian society is on the edge of decline because the condition of Indian women is very miserable. So if we want India to be a strong nation equal status will have to be provided to women. Unless gender inequality is abolished we cannot make progress. It is the time to develop the concept of gender sensitization among people of India. Education is the best method for understanding gender sensitization because theories of gender sensitization claim that modification of behaviour of teachers and parents towards children can have a causal effect on gender equality. This concept stands for equal human rights and gender equality.

Researches has been conducted and it has been found that parental attitude and support has a great deal of influence on girls' participation and level of success attained in education. Parents and community attitude are mainly prejudiced by traditional beliefs regarding the ideal roles of women and girls in soceity. India a staunch believer of patriarchal soceity, still lags behind in converting the biased mind set of its people. It is the country of Manu, the representative of males who advocated that Indian Women are always dependent on men. throughout their lives. Even though the tremendous change in the soceity has occured due to technological advancement but still Indian women are far behind to acheive honorable place for themselves in the soceity. There is negligilbe change about the perception towards females. People still have conservative attitude towards females. In the 21st century, the change has been noticed but this change in the status of women perhaps is more stressful to the women. Traditionally, women were thus seen as nurturer and mainly as providing support for men who worked to provide for the family. They were considered physically weaker, also perceived as being less capable and requiring the protection and guidance of men. These attitudes have prevailed even in current times when socio- economic changes have resulted in changes to roles women are expected to undertake. Socio- economic changes have made

education necessary, not just for the purposes of providing income earning opportunities, but also for the potential to contribute to the improvement in the standards of living of individuals, families and communities.

Gender relations do not operate in a social vacuum but are products of the ways in which institutions are organised and recognised. Even before girls and boys enter the school system, sex role standards have been constructed in the family particularly through child rearing practices. These patriarchal beliefs have been found to foster negative attitudes which limit family and community support for girls' education. Indian women are over burdened at home and are victims of discrimination and sexual harassment at work place. Though, Indian Constitution guarantees freedom to its citizens but female is denied so far. The males still have the authoritative attitude towards the women. The most significant persons (parents) themselves are biased against the female child, how can one expect the girl child to behave like a leader? The girl child in the society is being taught since childhood to imbibe the qualities of tolerance, sympathy, caring and flexibility. As a result when the girlchild reaches the womanhood behaves in the same manner she has been dealt with. Identification and examination of these attitudes is necessary before any decisions can be taken on what should and can be done to bring about change. However it is an indisputable fact that without parents and community support, any effort to improve girls' participation in education will be greatly hampered.

In Indian tradition and culture, women are expected to exclusively assume the roles of mothers and wives. Women were seen as nurturing beings and were expected to be the home makers rearing of the children is their main tasks. They were also expected to be obedient and subservient to the men. Even working women were found to having opinion that even if they are working they have to be tolerant and subservient many a times. They also emphasize if they tend to be aggressive and outspoken, the situation is going to be aggravated. They stress that women are less capable , physically, mentally and in all areas outside their accepted role, than men. Women are seen as requiring protection, guidance, supervision and leadership from men. It was thus accepted that men would resume decision making leadership role in society, while women will primarily confined to the household chores and nurturing role. With time socio- economic changes have resulted in an expansion of the roles that women play, out of necessity and sometimes choice. However, the perception of women and their accepted roles and perceived capabilities have remained the same i.e. traditional. Many people therefore have difficulty accepting that there is a need to equip women with the skills

and knowledge necessary, through education, to enable them to take up their new roles and function effectively in the modern world. The traditional views of women's ideal gender roles and the perceptions of their abilities has a negative effect on parents' attitude towards educating girls. The perceived ideas roles and characteristics of women and girls influence how girls and boys are socialized in the home, community and school. Because girls and women in general are considered physically weaker and less capable than men, they are often overtly protected and supervised to their safety i.e. physical, sexual, mental and emotional safety. Some parents are reluctant to send their daughters to school because of the belief that education and school could be an adverse influence. In some communities there was the view that in coeducational schools girls' morals would be corrupted because of the amount of time they spend with boys. There is also fear for the physical and sexual safety of girls in school due to cases of physical and sexual harassment and abuse from peers and teachers in the school. Perceived gender roles and characteristics influence the way children are expected to behave, the kind of work they do and even the way they play. Girls are for example rarely the ones allowed to do shopping neither are they allowed to play outside the home for a long periods of time as boys often do. This denies girls the opportunities to explore and experiment with diverse activities and situations outside the home. Confined to the home also hinders in developing their socialized skills to a better degree. Girls are preferably expected to stay at home and learn the art of cleaning the house, washing the clothes and to some extent to take care of their younger siblings. It is expected that girls will in adulthood only take on the roles of wives and mothers. Many parents and community members believe that a formal education is not necessary in order for girls to prepare for these expected roles as they can be learnt from their mothers and others in the community. As a result many parents do not enroll their daughters in school or withdraw them before completion. This denies these girls an opportunity for formal education. Even if the educated parents are very much concerned about their daughters safety. Parents tend to accompany their daughters if it is compulsory to go out. Girls are expected to take up the roles of wives and mothers in adulthood and their socialization at home, in community and school is geared towards providing them with experiences that will prepare them to carry out these roles effectively. These expectations determine the division of labour within the household, with girls being assigned home making household chores like food preparation, cooking, cleaning, fetching water from outside, washing clothes and caring for younger siblings. In some areas girls are also expected to participate in farming activities. The number of hours spent performing

household chores and other tasks means that girls have little time and energy left to devote to their academic work. Girls have an added disadvantage in that while the types of chores that boys do, like herding allow them an opportunity to study, the chores that girls do are difficult to combine with study. Girls are overburdened at home and are victims of discrimination and sexual harassment at work place. Girls are considered less capable, they often receive less encouragement and are rarely challenged at home or school to strive to succeed in their academic work.

The Manusmriti also known as *Manav Dharam Shastra*, is the earliest metrical work on Brahminical Dharma in Hinduism. According to Hindu mythology, the Manusmriti is the word of Brahma, and it is classified as the most authoritative statement on Dharma. The scripture consists of 2690 verses, divided into 12 chapters. It is presumed that the actual human author of this compilation used the eponym 'Manu', which has led the text to be associated by Hindus with the first human being and the first king in the Indian tradition.

Although no details of this eponymous author's life are known, it is likely that he belonged to a conservative Brahman class somewhere in Northern India. Hindu apologists consider the Manusmriti as the divine code of conduct and, accordingly, the status of women as depicted in the text has been interpreted as Hindu divine law. While defending Manusmriti as divine code of conduct for all including women, apologists often quote the verse: "*yatr naryasto pojyantay, ramantay tatr devta [3/56]* (where women are provided place of honor, gods are pleased and reside there in that household), but they deliberately forget all those verses that are full of prejudice, hatred and discrimination against women.

Here are some of the 'celebrated' derogatory comments about women in the Manusmriti :

1. "Swabhav ev narinam" – 2/213. It is the nature of women to seduce men in this world; for that reason the wise are never unguarded in the company of females.
2. "Avidvam samlam....." – 2/214. Women, true to their class character, are capable of leading astray men in this world, not only a fool but even a learned and wise man. Both become slaves of desire.
3. "Matra swastra" – 2/215. Wise people should avoid sitting alone with one's mother, daughter or sister. Since carnal desire is always strong, it can lead to temptation.
4. "Naudwahay....." – 3/8. One should not marry women who have reddish hair, redundant parts of the body [such as six fingers], one who is often sick, one without hair or having excessive hair and one who has red eyes.
5. "Nraksh vraksh" – 3/9. One should not marry women whose names are similar to

constellations, trees, rivers, those from a low caste, mountains, birds, snakes, slaves or those whose names inspire terror.

6. “Yasto na bhavet ” – 3/10. Wise men should not marry women who do not have a brother and whose parents are not socially well known.

7. “Uchayangh.....” – 3/11. Wise men should marry only women who are free from bodily defects, with beautiful names, grace/gait like an elephant, moderate hair on the head and body, soft limbs and small teeth.

8. “Shudr-aiv bharya.....” – 3/12. Brahman men can marry Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaish and even Shudra women but Shudra men can marry only Shudra women.

9. “Na Brahman kshatriya..” – 3/14. Although Brahman, Kshatriya and Vaish men have been allowed inter-caste marriages, even in distress they should not marry Shudra women.

10. “Heenjati striyam.....” – 3/15. When twice born [dwij=Brahman, Kshatriya and Vaish] men in their folly marry low caste Shudra women, they are responsible for the degradation of their whole family. Accordingly, their children adopt all the demerits of the Shudra caste.

11. “Shudram shaynam.....” – 3/17. A Brahman who marries a Shudra woman, degrades himself and his whole family ,becomes morally degenerated , loses Brahman status and his children too attain status of shudra.

12. “Daiv pitrya.....” – 3/18. The offerings made by such a person at the time of established rituals are neither accepted by God nor by the departed soul; guests also refuse to have meals with him and he is bound to go to hell after death.

13. “Chandalash” – 3/240. Food offered and served to Brahman after Shradh ritual should not be seen by a chandal, a pig, a cock,a dog, and a menstruating women.

14. “Na ashniyat.....” – 4/43. A Brahman, true defender of his class, should not have his meals in the company of his wife and even avoid looking at her. Furthermore, he should not look towards her when she is having her meals or when she sneezes/yawns.

15. “Na ajyanti.....” – 4/44. A Brahman in order to preserve his energy and intellect, must not look at women who applies collyrium to her eyes, one who is massaging her nude body or one who is delivering a child.

16. “Mrshyanti.....” – 4/217. One should not accept meals from a woman who has extra marital relations; nor from a family exclusively dominated/managed by women or a family whose 10 days of impurity because of death have not passed.

17. “Balya va.....” – 5/150. A female child, young woman or old woman is not supposed to work independently even at her place of residence.

18. “Balye pitorvashay.....” – 5/151. Girls are supposed to be in the custody of their father when they are children, women must be under the custody of their husband when married and under the custody of her son as widows. In no circumstances is she allowed to assert herself independently.
19. “Asheela kamvrto.....” – 5/157. Men may be lacking virtue, be sexual perverts, immoral and devoid of any good qualities, and yet women must constantly worship and serve their husbands.
20. “Na ast strinam.....” – 5/158. Women have no divine right to perform any religious ritual, nor make vows or observe a fast. Her only duty is to obey and please her husband and she will for that reason alone be exalted in heaven.
21. “Kamam to.....” – 5/160. At her pleasure [after the death of her husband], let her emaciate her body by living only on pure flowers, roots of vegetables and fruits. She must not even mention the name of any other men after her husband has died.
22. “Vyabhacharay.....” – 5/167. Any women violating duty and code of conduct towards her husband, is disgraced and becomes a patient of leprosy. After death, she enters womb of Jackal.
23. “Kanyam bhajanti.....” – 8/364. In case women enjoy sex with a man from a higher caste, the act is not punishable. But on the contrary, if women enjoy sex with lower caste men, she is to be punished and kept in isolation.
24. “Utman sevmansto.....” – 8/365. In case a man from a lower caste enjoys sex with a woman from a higher caste, the person in question is to be awarded the death sentence. And if a person satisfies his carnal desire with women of his own caste, he should be asked to pay compensation to the women’s faith.
25. “Ya to kanya.....” – 8/369. In case a woman tears the membrane [hymen] of her Vagina, she shall instantly have her head shaved or two fingers cut off and made to ride on Donkey.
26. “Bhartaram.....” – 8/370. In case a women, proud of the greatness of her excellence or her relatives, violates her duty towards her husband, the King shall arrange to have her thrown before dogs at a public place.
27. “Pita rakhshati.....” – 9/3. Since women are not capable of living independently, she is to be kept under the custody of her father as child, under her husband as a woman and under her son as widow.
28. “Imam hi sarw.....” – 9/6. It is the duty of all husbands to exert total control over

their wives. Even physically weak husbands must strive to control their wives.

29. “Pati bharyam” – 9/8. The husband, after the conception of his wife, becomes the embryo and is born again of her. This explains why women are called Jaya.

30. “Panam durjan.....” – 9/13. Consuming liquor, association with wicked persons, separation from her husband, rambling around, sleeping for unreasonable hours and dwelling -are six demerits of women.

31. “Naita rupam.....” – 9/14. Such women are not loyal and have extra marital relations with men without consideration for their age.

32. “Poonshchalya.....” – 9/15. Because of their passion for men, immutable temper and natural heartlessness, they are not loyal to their husbands.

33. “Na asti strinam.....” – 9/18. While performing namkarm and jatkarm, Vedic mantras are not to be recited by women, because women are lacking in strength and knowledge of Vedic texts. Women are impure and represent falsehood.

34. “Devra...sapinda.....” – 9/58. On failure to produce offspring with her husband, she may obtain offspring by cohabitation with her brother-in-law [devar] or with some other relative [sapinda] on her in-law’s side.

35. “Vidwayam.....” – 9/60. He who is appointed to cohabit with a widow shall approach her at night, be anointed with clarified butter and silently beget one son, but by no means a second one.

36. “Yatha vidy.....” – 9/70. In accordance with established law, the sister-in-law [bhabhi] must be clad in white garments; with pure intent her brother-in-law [devar] will cohabit with her until she conceives.

37. “Ati kramay.....” – 9/77. Any women who disobey orders of her lethargic, alcoholic and diseased husband shall be deserted for three months and be deprived of her ornaments.

38. “Vandyashtamay.....” – 9/80. A barren wife may be superseded in the 8th year; she whose children die may be superseded in the 10th year and she who bears only daughters may be superseded in the 11th year; but she who is quarrelsome may be superseded without delay.

39. “Trinsha.....” – 9/93. In case of any problem in performing religious rites, males between the age of 24 and 30 should marry a female between the age of 8 and 12.

40. “Yambrahmansto.....” – 9/177. In case a Brahman man marries Shudra woman, their son will be called ‘Parshav’ or ‘Shudra’ because his social existence is like a dead body.

Bless me with son and bless female child somewhere else (Atharvaveda-6/1/23)

O God save my son who is going to take birth . Donot make him a girl.(Atharvaveda-8/6/25
God Indra Said" Women cannot be educated because they are always stupis".(Rigvaeda
8/33/17)

Friendship cannot be made with women because their hearts are like the hearts of Leopards
(Rigveda-10/95/15)

Women, Shudras,Dogs and Crows are big liars (Yajurveda -6/5/8/2)

Women give sorrows (Atharvaveda-7/3/11)

Manu was the father of Hindu religion. He made the condition of women miserable and worst
to worst.He formulated and implemented various laws which made condtion of women
miserable. His laws were responsible for the deteriorating condition of women in
India.Widows were not allowed to lead a happy life. Widows were deprived of all the
facilities. He started sati system , devdasi system for women. Widows were considered the
property of everyone.

After the struggle of Lord Buddha for the equality of women and shudras, Various Sants and
Guru Saheban also fought for the sake of equality of women and downtrodden.Because of the
struggle fought by Gurus for the equality of women, Mira Bai, Queen Jhalli, Mata Bhago,
Mata Gujri, Queen Sadaa Kaur, Queen Saheb Kaur, Queen Jinda and many others could
establish their position in the society. Hinduism does not not allow women to get education
and equality of women to men.Again in modern India a great person Mahatama Jyoti Rao
Phule was born. He again started his movement for the equal status of women and shudras.He
considered women superior to men. So he taught his wife Mata Svitri Bai Phule and his aunt
Saguna Bai and they became the first trained teachers in Indian history. He compelled British
Govt. to formulate various laws for the upliftment of women and downtrodden.He opened
first school for girls and downtrodden. Various laws were formulated as women education,
widow remarriage, prohibition of sati and devdasi system.He was opposed by orthodox
brahmins but he continued with his mission. After him Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj great
follower of Lord Buddha and Mahatama Jyoti Rao Phule widow remarriage registration act.
1917. Again orthodox brahmin Bal Gangadhar Tilak opposed him and accused Shahuji of
becoming anti Brahminism. Shahuji passed intercaste marriage act 1918. After him Dr. Bhim
Rao Ambedkar strictly compelled British Govt to formulate and implement laws for the
upliftment of women and downtrodden as maternity leave law, equal wage law , labour laws,
right to vote for women. He also condemmed Hindu literature for deteriorating the
condition of Women. He framed constitution of India and he established histoty in providing

such a valuable constitution which is based upon justice, equality, liberty and fraternity. It guarantees the equal status of women to men.

Lord Buddha Was the first great man who felt the miserable condition of women in India.

Lord Buddha found Brahmin literature responsible for miserable condition of women in India.He declared that women cannot be inferior than men because women is the creator of this world.He gave equal rights to women by making women the integral part of his sangha.With the struggle of Buddha for the providing equal status to women to men, many prostitutes like Moma, Matta, Ambapali, Vimla, Visakha and Malka became great women in Indian history.

There is gender discrimination in India throughout centuries. Right from the birth the girls are discriminated against the boys preferred. Kill them in the womb or if it does not succeed, abandon them after they are born.Shocking as it may sound, this is what many parents are worried about having a daughter.Daughter is an unwanted lot virtually, especially in Indian society.The arrival of son in the family is greeted with jubilation. The daughters on the other hand are considered a burden.This blatant bias cannot only be attributed to poverty, illiteracy or superstition or rural labourhood.After the invention of ultra sound scan,the girls are not allowed to take birth and infanticide has been converted into female foeticide.Killing female child in the womb is also a sort of terrorism.The womb of the mother becomes the tomb for girl child.

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