

A paradigm shift from women's studies to gender studies

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There is a Paradigm shift because earlier women were needed to be motivated and their family members had to be counseled to allow the women to contribute to the nation. It could be by means of studying or getting employment or involving in politics.

The studied shifted to gender because now, both men and women have the same status. They can equally participate in all the fields that require their contributions. So, a study is required to analyse their “social, behavioural and cultural attributes”. What are their expectations etc.

This is mainly due to the rising awareness among the people and whole of the society, the rights of women now equal to the men so they can also do the same like an independent person and whatever they want. This is why you always see women participate in every field.

Introduction:

A reform movement is a kind of social movement that aims to make a gradual change or change in certain aspects of society rather than rapid or fundamental changes. A reform movement is distinguished from more radical social movements such as revolutionary movements.

These social reform movements arose among all communities of the Indian people. They attacked bigotry, superstition and the hold of the priestly class. They worked for the abolition of castes and untouchability, purdah system, sati, child marriage, social inequalities, and illiteracy.

Social reform became an integral part of religious reform in India and this was equally true of Brahma Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Arya Samaj, Ramakrishna Mission, and Theosophical Society in Hinduism as also among the Muslims, the Parsis and the Sikhs. The social reform movement in India has aimed at uprooting social evils and inculcating in men and women the spirit of sacrifice for the general good of the society.

Some of these reformers were supported directly or indirectly by the British officials and some of the reformers also supported reformative steps and regulations framed by the British Government.

Sati and Child Marriages:

The term sati literally means a 'pure and virtuous woman'. It was applied in case of a devoted wife who contemplated perpetual and uninterrupted conjugal union with her husband life after life and as proof, thereof burnt herself with the dead body of her husband. Enlightened Indian rulers like Akbar, the Peshwas had imposed restrictions on its performance.

Though the East India Company broadly adhered to its declared policy of noninterference with the social customs of the people, yet early Governors-General like Cornwallis, Minto and Lord Hastings had taken some steps to restrict the practice of sati by discouraging compulsion, forbidding administration of intoxicating drugs to the sorrow-stricken widows, putting a ban of the sati of pregnant women or widows below

the age of 16 years and above all, making compulsory the presence of police officials at the time of sacrifice who were to see that no compulsion was used.

Enlightened Indian reformers led by Ram Mohan Roy launched a frontal attack on the evil of sati. With an eye, to the coming Charter debates in the British Parliament and anxious to get a renewal of its charter for another 20 years by presenting a creditable image of its activities in India, the Court of Directors encouraged William Bentinck to enact legislation to suppress sati.

Regulation XVII of December 1829 declared the practice of satis or burning or burying alive of widows illegal and punishable by criminal courts as culpable homicide. The Regulation of 1829 was applicable in the first instance to Bengal Presidency alone, but was extended in slightly modified forms to Madras and Bombay. Legislative action in prohibiting child-marriage came in 1872 when by the Native Marriage Act marriage of girls below the age of 14 and boys below 18 years were forbidden.

However, this act was not applicable to Hindus, Muslims and other recognized faiths and as such had a very limited impact on Indian society. B.M. Malabari, a Parsi reformer of the 19th century, started a crusade against child marriage and his efforts were crowned by the enactment of the of Consent Act which forbade the marriages of girls below the age of Sharda Act 1929 further pushed up marriage age and provided for penal action of boys under 18 and girls under 14 years of age. An improvement was made by the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1978 which raised the age of presage for girls from 15 to 18 years and for boys 18 to 21.

Education of Women:

Hindu society in the 19th century suffered from religious illusions that Hindu scriptures did not sanction female education of girls wrought wrath of gods leading to their widowhood.

The Christian missionaries, whatever their motive, were the first to set up to Calcutta Female Juvenile Society in 1819. However, the celebrated name of J.E.D. Bethune, President of the Council of Education, will always be remembered with respect. In 1849 he founded a Girl's School in Calcutta.

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar also did a lot in popularising the cause of education and was associated with no less than thirty-five girl's schools in Bengal.

In Bombay, the students of Elphinstone Institute became the spearhead of the movement for women education and founded the Students Literary Society.

Charles Wood's dispatch on Education laid great stress on the need for female education. In the broad perspective, women education became a part of the general campaign for an amelioration of the plight of women in society.

Abolition of Slavery:

Slavery of the Greek or Roman or American Negro type did not exist in India. Slavery in India was more akin to what may be termed as a bonded-servant, bonded-labor type and slaves in India were treated in a humane manner unknown to Western countries.

In this context, the observation of the Committee of Circuit deserves to be quoted. It reads, "The ideas of slavery borrowed from our American colonies will make an even modification of it appear in the eyes of our countrymen in England a horrible evil.

But it is far otherwise in this country here slaves are treated as children of the families to which they belong and often acquire a much happier state by their slavery than that

could have hoped for by the enjoyment of liberty. If in northern India slaves generally served as domestic servants, in south India slaves were mostly employed in cultivation. Of course, European slave-owners in India treated their slaves in the same inhuman manner characteristic of Western slave-owners.

SOCIAL REFORMERS PERTAINING TO WOMEN:

BRAHMO SAMAJ & RAJA RAMMOHAN ROY:

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was popularly known as the 'Father of Indian Renaissance' was born on 22nd May 1772 in a Brahmin family in Bengal. He founded the Atmiya Sabha in 1815 and the Brahma Samaj on 20th August 1828. Through these organizations/Institutions, he fought against Orthodox Hindus and the fanatic Christian Missionaries.

He was against of Sati system, Polygamy, Child marriage, Caste system, and Untouchability. He was the great supporter of Inter-caste marriage, women education, Widow Remarriages etc.

Raja Rammohan Roy was not merely a religious reformer but a social reformer also. His greatest achievement was the abolition of Sati in 1829. Raja Rammohan Roy realized that the practice of Sati was due to the extremely low position of Hindu women. Therefore he started working as a stout champion of women's rights. He worked very hard for years to stop this practice of 'Sati'. In early 1818 he set out to rouse public opinion on the question of Sati. On the one hand, he showed by citing the authority of the oldest sacred books that the Hindu religion at its best as opposed to the practice and on the other, he appealed to reason and humanity and compassion of the people. He visited the burning Ghats of Calcutta to try and persuade the relatives of widows to give up their plan of self-immolation. His campaign against Sati aroused the opposition of the orthodox Hindus who bitterly attacked him.

He advocated the abolition of polygamy (a practice of a man having more than one wife) and child marriage. He wanted women to be educated and given the right to inherit property. He condemned the subjugation of women and opposed the prevailing ideas that women were inferior to men in intellect or in a moral sense. He advocated the rights of widows to remarry.

ARYA SAMAJ & SWAMI DAYANAND SARASWATI (1824-1883):

Swami Dayanada was born in 1824 in a small town of Gujarat. Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of the 'Arya Samaj' in 1875 in Bombay and he was one of the makers of Modern India. His Arya Samaj gave emphasis on the liberation of the Hindu Society. He called people 'Go back to the Veda' created consciousness among the people.

Dayanand Saraswati undertook a tour of the entire county, made fiery speeches condemning the caste system, idolatry, and child marriages and encouraged remarriage of widows. He advocated the ideal age for a girl to be between 16 and 24, and for men between 25 and 40. Dayanand Saraswati was the first leader in the field of theology who welcomed the advances of sciences and technology. To him, the Vedas as the sourcebook contains the seed of science, and to him, the Vedas advocate the philosophy of dynamic realism.

PRARTHANA SAMAJ & RANADE:

The Prarthana Samaj was established in Bombay by Dr. Atma Ram Pandurang (1825-1898) in 1876 with the objective of rational worship and social reform. The two great members of this Samaj were Shri R.C. Bhandarkar and Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade. They devoted themselves to the work of social reform such as inter-caste dining, inter-caste marriage, widow remarriage and improvement of a lot of women and depressed classes.

Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842-1901) devoted his entire life to Prarthana Samaj. He was the founder of the Widow Remarriage Association (1861) and the Deccan Education Society. He established the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha as well. To Ranade, religious reform was inseparable from social reform. He also believed that if religious ideas were rigid there would be no success in social, economic and political spheres. M.G.Ranade was the leader of social reformation and cultural renaissance in Western India.

Ranade's great message to the persons who were involved in social service was "Strength of numbers we cannot command, but we can command earnestness of conviction, singleness of devotion, readiness for self-sacrifice, in all honest workers in the cause."

SATYA SHODHAK SAMAJ & JOTIRAO GOVINDRAO PHULE:

Jyotirao Govindrao Phule, who was a prominent activist, thinker and social reformer from the Indian state of Maharashtra during the 19th century, was also famous by the name of Mahatma Jyotiba Phule. During his time, he tried bringing in positive renovations in the spheres of education, agriculture, caste system, the social position of women et al. Out of everything that Phule ever did, he's most remembered for his selfless service to educate women and lower caste people.

Jotirao Govindrao Phule popularly known as Jotiba. They worked for the upliftment of women, took up the cause of women and downtrodden masses. Jyotiba with his wife started a girls school in Poona, in 1857. He also opened a school for the children of the depressed classes. Jotiba Phule was also a pioneer of the widow remarriage movement in Maharashtra. He challenged the dominance of Brahmins and worked for organizing and activating the masses. He championed the cause of villagers and actively worked for rural development in Maharashtra. Jotiba was given the title of 'Mahatma' for his work for the cause of the oppressed. In 1873, he founded the Satya-Shodhak to give strength to his movement and make it popular.

ISHWAR CHANDRA VIDYASAGAR:

Another outstanding reformer in Bengal was Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891). A scholar of great depths, he dedicated himself to the cause of the emancipation of women. It was due to his sincere efforts that obstacles to the marriage of widows were removed through a law in 1856. He played a leading role in promoting the education of girls and started and helped the setting up a number of schools for girls. Vidyasagar did not concern himself much with religious questions. However, he was against all those who opposed reforms in the name of religion.

Vidyasagar championed the uplift of the status of women in India, particularly in his native Bengal. Unlike some other reformers who sought to set up alternative societies or systems, he sought, however, to transform orthodox Hindu society from within. Vidyasagar introduced the practice of widow remarriages to mainstream Hindu society.

In earlier times, remarriages of widows would occur sporadically only among progressive members of the Brahma Samaj.

KANDUKURI VEERESALINGAM:

Kandukuri Veeresalingam was born on April 16th, 1848, in Rajahmundry was a renowned scholar and a versatile intellectual who stood strongly for several social causes, like widow remarriages and abolition of child marriages. With his rational and dynamic thinking and views, he battled vehemently for women's equal rights.

In 1878, the Rajahmundry Social Reform Association was founded that emphasized on the anti-nautch movement to discontinue the hiring of nautch girls. However, the association started concentrating on widow remarriage at a later stage. Under this association, Kandukuri Veeresalingam organized the first widow remarriage on December 11, 1881, of Gogulapati Sreeramulu and Gowramma. Though he faced severe criticism from the society he was successful in convincing people on accepting widow remarriage.

He later took up the cause of opposing child marriages and Kanyasulkam, a kind of dowry given by the groom to the bride's parents. In 1884, Kandukuri Veeresalingam set up another school for girls at Innispeta in Rajahmundry. He was honored with the title of "Rao Bahadur" in 1893 by the government in appreciation of his work towards the society.

Kandukuri Veeresalingam was highly influenced and moved by the Brahma Samaj leader, Atmuri Lakshmi Narasimha. Further, the ideologies and principles of Raja Rammohun Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Keshub Chunder Sen made a great impact on him. Following the footsteps of Brahma Samaj, Kandukuri Veeresalingam established the first Brahma Mandir in Andhra at Rajahmundry in 1887. This was followed by a widows' home and a similar structure for Social Reform Association at Madras. He began the first theist high school, the Hithakarini School at Rajahmundry in 1908. In the same year, he donated all his wealth and property for the social activities of Rajahmundry Widows' Home and the school. All these donations were kept under the management of Hithakarini Samaj Association.

VIRCHAND GANDHI:

Virchand Gandhi was from Mahuva. He advocated female education. He is a 19th-century Indian patriot who was a friend of Mahatma Gandhi and contemporary to Swami Vivekananda. He and Swami Vivekananda drew equal attention at the first World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. He won a silver medal in same. His statue still stands at the Jain temple in Chicago. He was a key member of Indian National Congress and as a reformer established.

Society for the Education of Women in India (SEWI), under the banner of SEWI, several Indian women came to the USA for higher studies.

Gandhi Philosophical Society,

School of Oriental Philosophy,

Jain Literature Society in London and he delivered 535 lectures in the USA and Europe.

He also died at age of 37 like Swami Vivekananda. Today Government of India has recognized his service by issuing a postal stamp in his memory.

DHONDO KESHAV KARVE:

Dhondo Keshav Karve (18 April 1858 – 9 November 1962) was a social reformer of his time in India in the field of women's welfare. Karve was one of the pioneers of

promoting women's education and the right for widows to remarry in India. The Government of India recognized his reform work by awarding him its highest civilian award, Bhārat Ratna, in 1958 (Incidentally his centennial year). The appellation Maharshi, which the Indian public often assigned to Karve, means “a great sage”. Those who knew Karve affectionately called him Annā Karve. (In Marāthi-speaking community, to which Karve belonged, the appellation Annā is often used to address either one's father or an elder brother).

SCHEMES & PROGRAMMES FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Indian government takes some schemes and programmes for the solution to this problem. These are –

- **National Women’s Commission (1992)**-To protect the rights of women in general
- **Kasturba Gandhi Educational plan (1997)**-Educational institutions in those areas where women’s literacy rate is very low. ~ 788 ~ International Journal of Applied Research
- **Balika Samruddhi Yojna (1997)**-For girls child development
- **Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (2000)**-To impart quality education to girls and SC, ST also.
- **Swayamsidha Yojna (2001-2002)**-Self-reliance and empowerment of women.
- **Kishori Shakti Yojna (2000-2001)**-Adolescents strength and awareness (11-18) years of age.
- **Kanya Vidhya Dhan Yojna (2004)**-To promote higher education among girls
- **Moulana Azad National Scholarship Scheme (2003)**- For the promotion of girls education in the country.
- **Gaurav NariNiti (2002)**- Women’s pride, gender equality etc.
- **Ladli (2005)**- To raise the status of the girl child in the society providing them the right to birth and right to survival.
- **Krishi TalimYojna (2010)**-Field of agriculture is imparted to women farmers
- **Nari Adalat (2007)**- For women justice in society. 33% reservation in panchayet has already for women and reservation bill is pending to parliament separate reservation to women education and empowerment

SCHEMES FOR ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY AND EMANCIPATION OF RURAL WOMEN

The Ministry of Women and Child Development is implementing various schemes/programmes for achieving gender equality and emancipation of women including rural women such as:

- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)**: to address the declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and related issues of empowerment of women over a life-cycle continuum. It is a tri-ministerial effort of Ministries of Women and Child Development, Health & Family Welfare and Human Resource Development. .
- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)**, (erstwhile Maternity Benefit Programme) to contribute towards the better enabling environment by providing cash incentives for improved health and nutrition to pregnant and nursing mothers.

- **Scheme for Adolescent Girls** aims at girls in the age group 11-14, to empower and improve their social status through nutrition, life skills, home skills and vocational training.
- **National Nutrition Mission (NNM)**: aims to attain a "Suposhit Bharat" and has also the objective of improving the nutritional status of pregnant women and lactating mothers and reducing anaemia among women along with children.
- **RastriyaMahilaKosh (RMK)**, for extending micro-finance services to bring about socio-economic upliftment of poor women,
- **Mahila e-Haat**, a unique direct online digital marketing platform for women entrepreneurs/ SHGs/ NGOs,
- **Pradhan MantriMahila Shakti Kendra**, which will empower rural women through community participation to create an environment in which they realize their full potential,
- The Ministry also conducts **Training of Trainers of Elected Women Representatives of Panchayati Raj** to deliberate upon issues related to empowerment of women and functioning of PRIs; describe processes of participatory planning in local governance; and enable women to identify their own leadership potential to contribute effectively as change agents.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development is implementing various schemes/programmes for combating all forms of discrimination and violence against women in the country including rural women such as:

- **One Stop Centres (OSCs)**: for facilitating access to an integrated range of services including police, medical, legal, psychological support and temporary shelter to women affected by violence.
- **Women Helpline**: to provide women with a 24x7 service, Women Helplines with the uniform code 181 have been set up across the country. These Helplines provide 24 hour emergency response to women affected by violence, and also provide counselling through phone and awareness about government schemes.
- **Mahila Police Volunteers**: The Ministry, in collaboration with MHA has recently started the engagement of Mahila Police Volunteers (MPVs) in States/UTs. These MPVs will act as a link between police and community and facilitate women in distress.
- **SwadharGreh**: this scheme caters to the primary needs of women in difficult circumstances.
- **Ujjawala**: a comprehensive scheme to prevent trafficking of women and children for commercial sexual exploitation, to facilitate rescue victims and placing them in safe custody, to provide rehabilitation services by providing basic amenities/needs, to facilitate the reintegration of victims into the family and society, to facilitate repatriation of cross border victims.

Equal Remuneration Act, 1973 provides for payment of equal remuneration to men and women workers for the same work of similar nature without any discrimination. In order to ensure social security to the workers including women in

the unorganised sector, the Government has enacted the Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act 2008.

The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 regulates the employment of women in certain establishments for a certain period (12 weeks) before and after childbirth and provides for maternity and other benefits.

Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY) Scheme is being implemented as Conditional Maternity Benefit for pregnant and lactating women to improve health and nutrition status to better enabling environment by providing cash incentives to pregnant and nursing mothers to partly compensate wage loss both prior to and after delivery.

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 has been enacted, which covers all women, irrespective of their age or employment status and protect them against sexual harassment at all workplaces both in public and private sector, whether organised or unorganised.

This information was given by Union Minister for Women and Child Development, Smt.Maneka Sanjay Gandhi in reply to a question in Rajya Sabha.

1. Pam Rajput Committee on Status of Women in India

The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) had appointed a 14-member High Level Committee, headed by Pam Rajput, in Feb 2012 to make a comprehensive study on the status of women since 1989 and give recommendations on necessary policy actions based on the present needs of women. Pam Rajput is a professor at Panjab University.

Recommendations

- Government should formulate a National Policy and Action Plan to end violence against women.
- It has strongly supported the passage of Women's Reservation Bill which has been hanging fire in Lok Sabha after being passed by the Upper House in 20 10. However, it has called for 50% reservation instead of the current 33% reservation provided in the bill.
- A separate committee should be set up to study the status of Muslim women in the country. Such a committee should study the impact of identity politics on Muslim women as such politics leads to communal riots and revives forces that impose outdated values on women, further alienating them from all empowerment initiatives.
- To reflect the government's concern on women's issues, Minister of Women and Child Development should be upgraded to the rank of a Cabinet Minister.
- Parliamentary Committee on the Empowerment of Women must examine the gender implications of all proposed legislation.
- The National Commission for Women must go beyond 'reactive interventions' to fulfill the proactive mandate of studying, recommending and influencing policies, laws, programmes and budgets to ensure full benefits to women.
- Focusing on the need to bring about major changes in the criminal justice system, the committee suggests initiatives ranging from a more gender sensitive enforcement machinery to greater awareness of different legislation and their inter-connectedness, along with accountability for securing women's rights.
- India should revisit its two-child norm as it is related to missing girl children.

- The government should initiate dialogues with Hindu religious leaders to arrest the falling sex ratio. Hindu religious leaders should be convinced to ask their community to include daughters in rituals and practices. This will bring down son preference related to socio-cultural practices. This will bring down son preference related to socio-cultural practices.
- Marital and sexual choices should be protected through amendments to IPC section 377

2. Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF)

Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF) is committed to maintaining a positive climate at work, in which individuals can work together in an environment free of all forms of violence, harassment, and discrimination on the basis of gender. DEF strongly believes and supports gender equality and opposes any form of gender discrimination and violence at the workplace.

In response to this, a 'Gender Committee' has been formed, which will act as a primary body to address the issues against Gender equality and harassment. This policy covers the mandate of the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) at workplaces as well.

GENDER COMMITTEE

The committee to review harassment would involve:

1. Chair of the Gender Committee
2. Presiding Officers- 2 members from the DEF Governing Board [One Female and One Male]
3. Internal Officers- 2 Members from Middle Level Management [One Female and One Male]
4. HR Department Head of DEF
5. An independent psychiatrist/psychologist
6. One Third party member/Lawyer (to avoid any undue pressure or senior level influence)

All the involved Committee members should have worked with the organization for at least 2 years. The committee shall be responsible for maintaining the workplace free from harassment.

The Committee will strive to maintain confidentiality to the full extent appropriate, consistent with applicable law and the need to resolve matters effectively and fairly. All persons involved in the proceedings will be advised of the need for discretion and confidentiality.

ROLE OF THE COMMITTEE

1. The Committee's role will include of following
 1. To play a preventive role by making efforts towards sensitization of the staff on gender issues by conducting periodic programs and in-house workshops/gatherings.
 2. To take cognizance of complaints about Harassment, conduct proper enquiries, provide assistance and redressal to the victims, recommend penalties and action against the harasser, if required.
 3. In case of any Sexual harassment complaint, to facilitate the complainant for filing a case to the Indian Penal Code (IPC), if required.
 4. Ensure Safety and equality at all levels in the workplace.
 5. To recommend arrangements for appropriate emotional, psychological and physical support (in form of counseling and other assistance), if desired by the victim.

THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR WOMEN ACT, 1990

The National Commission for Women Act, 1990 (Act No. 20 of 1990 of Government of India) constituted the National Commission for Women as a statutory body. The first

commission was constituted on 31st January 1992 with Mrs. Jayanti Patnaik as the Chairperson.

The Act of 1990 under Section 3 provides for the constitution of the commission. This section lays down that the commission will consist of one Chairperson, who is committed to the cause of women, five members from various fields and a member secretary who shall be an expert in the fields of management, organizational structure, sociological movement or a, member of the civil service of the Union. All the members of the commission are nominated by the Central Government.

Each person holds office for a period of five years or till he attains the age of seventy. At least one member each of the Commission must belong to a Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe. In addition to the abovementioned members of the Commission, the Commission has the power to set up committees with members from outside the Commission.