

Chapter 10: Conclusion

It is debatable that what kind of status was enjoyed by the ancient women. From the Indus valley civilization, we come to know that during that period women had a high reputation and status in the society and perhaps the societal structures was matriarchal. Even in the early Vedic age, women used to enjoy more or less an equal status like their male counterpart. They had the right to educate themselves and also got opportunities for political participation. From later Vedic age onwards situation had started to change. With the emergence of private property, the whole socio-economic infrastructure had witnessed a huge transformation which ultimately led to the rising of the notion of patriarchy. As the result of this, the exploitation of women had begun with a different connotation, where the main essence of the story was negligence, domination, deprivation and mental and physical torture. It also encouraged prostitution, which later on became the most important source of male's satisfaction. The prostitutes like *Vasantasena*, *Ambapali* had a higher status than the ordinary women, who had been entrusted with the responsibility of managing the household. The colourful life of the *Nagarakas* often became an interesting source for ancient literature, where their relationship with the prostitutes played the role of a catalyst. *Vatsayan's Kamasutra* was one of the examples of this. The projection of women as a medium of entertainment and a source of sexual pleasure was a common feature of ancient civilization. This trend even continued through the middle ages with the fascinating stories of the *harems* and with the advent of the British the situation got a slight change for Bengal in particular with the implementation of the CD Act (Contagious Disease Act). Though the '*Beshya*' emerged in the nineteenth century Bengal and under the colonial rule, the practice of prostitution was very popular among the British men. It is very

difficult to find the general history of Indian women without giving emphasis on their sexual beauty, capability for seduction and stories related to puberty. From this perspective, it can be said that we need a change or a shift for reconstructing the history of women in India. The present research lays stress on this particular aspect.

It is required to look at the international sphere and to notice that the international treaties or platforms are important to raise voice on “women’s rights are human rights”. The three international human rights instruments are the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR), 1948; the International Covenant on Economics Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1966 and these are referred by the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. These three instruments hold the principle of non-discrimination based on gender as a nucleus and fundamental necessity to their origin. Though different international human rights forum again and again caution that the human rights of women cannot be denied, but still it is ignored and thus it lays impact on culture too.

It is most important here to have a little brush of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 1979. Among the international treaties it takes a significant position in bringing the women, half of humankind, into the centre of human rights concerns. The CEDAW enumerates the legal status of women and focus on a number of particular rights, such as – political representation, education, employment and civil and business matters, etc. It adequately addresses reproductive rights and above all its focal point is culture and women’s human rights. It is noted in below,

The goal of the CEDAW was to provide women's rights in this context of cultural/ traditional patterns. USA is not signatory to it, which is very natural with their reactionary policies (Banerjee & Chanda 2008: 40).

The development, if any, of the relation between culture and the women owes a great deal to the international treaties and declaration of human rights. The United Nations World Conference on Human Rights (1993) and others did not mean that human rights opposes only the violence, torture and genocide, but economic and social inequalities too. The women especially become victimized, of all sorts of inequalities only because they are women. The Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing 1995) boldly attempts to pave the path for women empowerment along with other human rights. The concept "women rights are human rights" has been embalmed by the slogan of this women-empowerment, which has become an instrumental agenda breaking through all national barriers. The slogan "women-empowerment" invokes acknowledgement of women's significant role in the administration of museum like institution in particular.

The objective behind the research is the need to make people aware of the role of women in society. It can be said that perhaps the role of women in museum repeat the role of women in society. It is, in the last analysis, a replica of the role and status of women in the society at large.

There are varieties of museums scattered in various parts of India. It is obvious that there cannot be one set of norms and practices, which can be found useful to all museums of India. But, it is not expected from any museum that certain group is under-represented in exhibits, subjects, programmes and other instructional materials. Here certain group refers the women of the

society. If it is occurred in museums then it questions regarding the presence of gender bias. Gender inequality ultimately delivers no good for the society and male domination is also indulged in museums hampering its all-out flourishing.

Museums in the developing countries need a drastic change in view of the fast changing socio-economic conditions. The growing trend of consumerism would gradually lead to exploitation and commodification of women. Advertisements and mass media have a profound impact in shaping the perceptions and consciousness of large section of society particularly on gender. Society at large with a few exceptions sees things not with their own eyes but the eyes of the media. People become accustomed to believe what media tell and what media show. And it is more than definite, media present a partial world and the problem of media is the problem of revealing the truth. The way images of women are subtly constructed or exhibited either as sex objects focusing on looks and glamour or as typical stereotypes make it difficult for ordinary people especially young formative minds to distinguish imaginary life from the real life. The recent trends towards commercialization and consumerism since corporatisation of media commodify and devalue women in an unimaginable degree. A jewellery shop is expected to advertise and certify its commodity with the display of the ornaments but the reality is different. A necklace is exhibited around an almost undressed woman's neck unnecessarily. Almost all the commodities with female figures, sexually hallowed are meant for men in advertisement. Media emphasis to portray women as weak, very obstinate and unreasonable, nagging and demanding. Macdonald's company to market its goods pointing out its cheap rate has come up with its advertisement like this – A seven or eight year old boy replied to a girl of same age group as no she is not her girlfriend because girlfriend are very demanding, when the girl friend asked him whether they

are girlfriend and boyfriend to each other. Thus the boy from his very formative age develops a very ungraceful notion about women. Media are unscrupulous to earn money. The statement of Michael Eisner, CEO, The Walt Disney Co. (Internal Memo), justifies the above view; "We have no obligation to make history. We have no obligation to make art. We have no obligation to make a statement. To make money is our only objective" (www.globalissues.org/article/162/some-examples, accessed on 20.09.2011). So, to media woman is no better than a commodity, which is enjoyable and at the same time sellable and of course is a parasite of the society.

The object of the museums is to protect our material culture for future generation by displaying in the exhibition and organizing various programmes. If museum perfectly confers the right status of women, through its exhibitions and programmes, then museum itself can contribute a lot to make the society aware of women's real ability as the member of the society and can help to stop exploitation of women.

The picture, the research has aimed to draw out all through; from the introduction to the Chapter 9 are women in relation to museums of India. The Chapter 1 hints at the principal theme of the research and simultaneously put together briefly the valuable discussion, through the literature review all through the ages. Lots of researches have been done on the relation between women and art, but it is possibly the humble beginning on women and museums.

A brief introduction of 10 museums visited has been incorporated in the Chapter 3, which is the basis of the research. While giving the short account of these museums, the research has equally depicted the museum movement of India and has invited a debate, whether this museum movement is an

outcome of the foreign, especially European influence or this preservation of art was already kept hidden in her bosom of Indian art and culture.

India is a country of full of diversities – multi castes and creeds and the country is multi linguistic and multi social and economic backgrounds. Therefore visitors of the museums also belong to different castes, groups and clans. Survey here is done only on the women visitors of different groups. Chapter 3 conveys the message that if museums prepare their programmes and exhibitions giving priority to the interests, likes and dislikes of the women belonging to different status/ groups, then these women feel themselves greatly honoured and they are likely to have their status in the society.

The 4th Chapter aptly focused on the fact, how the museums have shown the women in their displayed collection. That women have always been a very interesting and popular subject of art, whether oriental or occidental, has been distinctly proved here.

The role of women behind the displayed objects and their contribution in these objects has become the issue of discussion of the Chapter 5, again it has enlightened in its discourses that the principal theme of the display is none but the women.

Exhibitions in the museums are the sources of information for the people. The exhibition is generally prepared according to the mission of the respective institution. Chapter 6 has focused on the fact, that exhibition, permanent or temporary, very rarely is forged exclusively for and on women and the figure is so meagre which is beyond imagination. Among the surveyed museums, Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum has arranged three galleries exclusively on

women and Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya has organized an exhibition exclusively on women in few years back.

Different types of Programmes are the indispensable factors to become a museum more people oriented. Chapter 7 has also focused on the fact, that programmes, seldom is organized exclusively for women and the number of programmes is too little, which is very alarming. Among the surveyed museums, few museums have organized programmes for women exclusively. Chapter 8 and 9 unbared the fact that museums scarcely organize the exhibition exclusively for women. The endeavour to find the exhibition – programme towards women while surveying different museums has been put in these chapters.

The fact that the World comes to the drawing room hands-in-gloves with the information boom, is the common and significant characteristic of the 21st century's world. From children to old aged, all have various options to entertain themselves. Country like India is no exception in this regard. Museum is usually considered as a centre of education and entertainment. In today's world, museums are in very tough competition with other entertaining media. Museums have to shape and reshape themselves with the changing world order in terms of innovative practices and forms of cultural productions. The globalization of culture along with economic demands has also an important role behind this process of restructuring and redefinition. Attempts to this end, of the scholars, professionals, practioners and others cannot achieve full success because of museums' too much concern with the very feeble dualism prevailing in theoretical foundation, derived from narrow judgement. Museums in everywhere should practice dialogue more and more religiously changing its one way traffic. It bridges up the gaps and everybody may participate.

The present research attempts to reach its goal with all limitations. But assertive motion may find at the end, the researcher may conclude with the words of Carol Malt (2010: 45),

Museums can provide opportunities and empowerment for women in many ways: through employment, through reinterpretation of the patriarchal bias of collections and attributions, through increased exhibits of objects created by and related to women, through usage of the museum facility to teach their history, through literacy programs, and by providing economic benefit from the sale of women's museum-related publications and art. Museums should provide positive role models for women – models that help promote the positive identity and individuality of women, not just their existence in relation to males – and recognize that women are not a homogeneous or static group but comprise different age, class, race, ethnic, religious, educational, and economic identities.

References

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