

CHAPTER-8

Conclusion

In the course of the last seven chapters, we have surveyed that How role and position of Indian women changed from 1829 to 1950. We have already seen that in general role and position of women changing from age to age. The attitude of Indian society towards Indian women could not remain the same in different periods. During our research we saw how the position, power, status and capabilities of the daughters, wives and the widows went on changing in course of time.

As women during Vedic period enjoyed considerable freedom and rights in the field of family, religion and public life. They enjoyed very respectable position, scholars believe that women in Vedic age enjoyed complete equality with men in all spheres of life. Daughters enjoyed as much freedom as sons. They were capable to carrying religious discussions were admitted in assemblies. Women were encouraged to enhance their scholarships.

But in later Vedic period, approximately the condition of women began to decline with Smritis (Manusmriti). Then Islamic invasions of Babur, rule of Mughals and later Christianity was also responsible for the downfall of the status of women.

Although Jainism came as a boon to the Indian women, because the Jain thinkers granted them equality and freedom but the practice of child marriage is believed to have started from around sixth century.

During the medieval period the position of women in the society further deteriorated. It was the time when sati, child marriage, polygamy, purdah system, devadassi system and a ban on widow remarriages became part of the social life. The Mughal rule brought the purdah system in the Indian society. Although the evil of purdah was more prevalent among the Muslims but the middle and lower castes both among the Hindu and Sikhs did not remain far from it. Among the Rajputs of Rajasthan, the practice of Jauhar was common. Some parts of India Devadasis or the temple women were sexually exploited.

The Bhakti Movement tried to restore the position of women. Mirabai, Akka Mahadevi, Rami Janabai and Lal Ded were some female saint-poets of this period. Many Hindu Bhakti sects like Mahanubhav, Varkari and others openly advocate social justice and equality between males and females.

Guru Nanak Dev ji, the first Sikh Guru preached the message of equality between both the sexes. Guru Nanak said that all creatures are equal before God, so make any distinction among them on the ground of birth or sex is sinful. He had many bold and Sympathetic words to say in favor of women especially. The role of women in society is an important subject of discussion in the Guru Granth Sahib (religious book of Sikhs). Other Sikh Gurus were also in favour of women, and they preached against the discrimination against women very boldly.

Towards the end of 18th century, India's social condition came to such a low level that it considered impossible to control for the ruler and the leaders of the people. Society became narrow-minded. When Moghuls rule came to an end the India was facing turmoil politically. It was the time when there was no single rule which people of India governed, one force was vying with another.

It was the circumstances in which child marriage became very common even among respectable Hindus. Child marriage was spread in Muslims too. Sati was observed in almost all parts of the country. Sikhs also began to observe Sati although their Gurus criticized this custom. Purdah prevalent among Muslim women spread as a custom, gradually it was imposed on Hindu women especially on Rajputs. It was believed that education brings most evils to women. Even women belonging to royal families, felt it to be beneath their dignity, to speak out openly that they know fine arts such dancing and singing. Polygamy was very common, Prostitution became rampant.

Due to the child marriages, widowhood also became common. Even below one year of age, one girl in every 100 was married. 9066 girls married before one year in 1921, and their number increased to 44082 in by the year of 1931.

Widowhood considered an offshoot of child marriages. In the year of 1921 the number of widows were 759 and their number increased to 1515 within the period of 10 years. Sati was another evil which took its toll also.

British government was not prepared to tinker with the personal laws and customs of the Indian people. Though the leaders gave statements against the social evils, but they could not bring about any drastic changes because they were no rulers.

The contacts with western culture, literature, traditions and education influenced deeply on the minds of Indian leaders and people. With the result social reform movements started against the social evils prevalent in Indian society. The leaders and social reformers who struggled for women emancipation were Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Swami Vivekanand, Keshav Chandra Sen, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and many others.

Brahmo Samaj of 1828, Prarthana Samaj, Arya Samaj of 1875 and other institutions advocated in favor of widow remarriage, decried Sati and Child marriage and emancipation of women. Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj worked hard to save child wives from physical sufferings, which were given by their husband and in laws. Then Indian Penal Code 1860 prohibited the marriages of girls less than the age of 10 years. Native Marriage Act fixed the marriage able age for girls is 13 years and 16 years for boys. By The Indian Christian Marriage Act of 1872 should not be certified when either of the parties intending to be married had not completed eighteen years.

In 1874 the Married Women's Property Act the enacted. Under this Act the separate property of the women was included. With the efforts of Dr.Muthulakshmi Reddi evil practice of Devadassi finally banned by the Act of Abolition of Prostitution in the year of 1929.

Many Muslim reformers such as Sir Syed Ahmed Khan also advocated for women's education. Muslim reformer Badruddin Tayabji fought against purdah system. He also financed the Zenana schools. Begam Abdullah and Amina Tayabji started schools for girls. Hydari was another enlightened Muslim who propagated the value of women education with full of enthusiasm.

In Punjab during the second half of the nineteenth century, initiated a progress of regeneration of the cultural and social customs. The purpose of this process was incorporated ‘upliftment of women’ or ‘emancipation of women’. Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj also worked very hard in Punjab also. Besides these movements Dev Samaj Movement, Namdhari Movement, Nirankaris and the Singh Sabha also campaigned against the social evils related to women and they worked hard for the upliftment of women.

The socio-religious movement among the Hindu, Sikhs and Muslims worked a lot for the emancipation of women and it changed the outlook and attitude of Indian women. With the efforts of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Lord William Bentinck, abolished sati, in Bengal by promulgating 17th Regulation Act on December 1829. In course of time such Acts later came in states like Bombay and Madras. With the efforts of some prominent Indians such as Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, finally in 1856 permitting widow remarriage and fourteen years as the minimum age of marriage for a girl was stipulated through the efforts of Mohamed Ali Jinnah.

It was the time which totally changed the outlook and attitude of Indian women. It encouraged the women to participate Indian women in public spheres. In the south ‘The Women’s Indian Association’ established in 1917 and in the North ‘All India Women’s Conference (AIWC)’ was established in 1927. These were the first organized attempt by women to look after the issues related to women.

In the field of women’s education achieved very little till the end of the 19th century. Women deprived from education because of number of reasons. Due to the evils like early marriage and purdah system many girls were devoid of education. There were also a dearth of women teachers due to general backwardness of girl’s education.

So realizing the difficulties of women reformers made the cause of women’s education a part of their missions. There were some prominent women also, who contributed to the cause of women’s education. Pandita Ramabai’s name is foremost. She was an outstanding scholar and she devoted her whole life to the cause of women. Pandita Ramabai’s life is a source of great

inspiration to the younger generation. Ramabai Ranade also laid solid foundation for Indian women, freedom and education. She threw herself with full of devotion in the campaign for women's suffrage. Both of they started widow sadans and schools for girls. They spoke openly against the social evil customs which effecting women.

Some other outstanding women who distinguished herself by the courage and conviction such as Dr. Anandi Bai Joshi (1865-1887). She worked as physician. She had knowledge about poor medical aid in India. So Anandi Bai took the degree of Doctor of Medicine in 1886 from women's Medical College in Philadelphia.

Francina Sorabji proved herself also a pioneers among Indian women, she established three large schools in Poona. One of them was for Muslim girls who were not allowed to attend mixed schools and third for training teachers, it was only one of its kind in the Bombay presidency. It was the time when one could count the number of educated ladies on one's finger tips, then Sorabji gave thought and energy to the cause of women's education and emancipation. Anne Jagannadhan obtained her triple qualification of the Scottish College in 1892 and in India she take up the post of House Surgeon, at the Cama Hospital in Bombay.

Rukma Bai was another name who rebelled against the tradition in order to enter a Medical College. She took degree of Doctor of Medicine in 1895 from London University. In India she was in charge of a hospital for women in Rajkot and worked for the cause of women's upliftment.

Thus above mentioned males and females of the nineteenth century, from Raja Ram Mohan Rai to Rukma Devi laid the solid foundation for next progress for the upliftment of Indian women.

The Arya Samaj organized women's education through the many institution. Mahakanya Vidyalaya was one of them in Punjab. It opened Primary and Secondary schools all over the India. Same like Arya Samaj, The Prarthana Samaj and th Deccan Education Society made strides for women education.

J.E.Drinkwater Bethune opened the Hindu Balika Vidyalaya in Calcutta in 1849. Wood's Dispatch of 1854, emphasized on women's education.

Education Commission (1882) led to more liberal grants and consequently, the number of girls schools increased. But more progress was made in the 20th century. In 1937 number of girls schools increased from 3810 to 10,315. The number of girls scholars in the secondary and collegiate education were 108,660 and 14,435 in 1937 and during the period of 1947 their number increased 2,32,136 and 24,466 respectively.

Though Muslim community remained backward in English education for some time, but the Muslim leaders like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan were able to see the position in which the Muslims were. He was a man of deep learning, he did her best to raise the Mohhammadan Anglo Oriental College to the status of a University known as the Aligarh Muslim University. He also worked for women education. Anjumans played also a significant role in promoting the education to Muslim girls. With the efforts of Begum Safi, Begum Shah Din and their daughters Begum Shah Nawaz and Begum Muhammad Kafi, the All India Muslim Ladies Conference was held in Faridkot House at Lahore in March 1918. The main purpose of this meeting was social evils and spread of education among the Muslim women of Punjab.

So, it can be said that, there was an increase in the number of girls students and girl institutes at all stages during the period of discussion. It proved the psychological change in the people of India, and this period also marked a definite stage in the progress of women's education. It widens the mental horizon of women and now they began to understand that what was happening wrong and right with them. This phase of time opened new avenues, where women could play leading roles. It brought political consciousness and awareness among Indian women. The spread of education also exercised a fruitful influence in which they became economically independent by adopting many kinds of professions.

During the 20th century education brought a great change in India. It created social awakening and national consciousness among Indian women. A new class of women emerged in major towns and cities, who gave leadership to the

society with the elite of awakening. Then Indian National Congress gave them an opportunity to express themselves and motivate to taking action.

In the early 20th century a variety of organizations and associations founded which were concern with women issues. These organizations also became the source for the expression of women's views. At the same time these organizations proved as the training ground for women and these trained women later on took up the leadership roles in political and social spheres. Arya Samaj played a vital role in this matter and activities visited almost in whole country as a result, a good number of women were politicized and came forward to take part in the national movement along with their male counter parts. They formed the Istri Samaj (Ladies wing). It was managed by ladies themselves. It created tremendous momentum of courage in Punjab, then those Punjabi women who left oppressed by traditional customs, images of women took advantage of opportunities provided by the Samaj.

Rani of Jhansi, Lakshmi Bai was the pioneer of first war of independence and she became a symbol of resistance to the British rule for Indian freedom fighters. Maharani Zindan became the ruler of Punjab province after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, on the behalf of his son Dalip Singh. Maharani Zindan was the first woman who inspired patriotism and led the war of independence. Her love for freedom was the par excellence. She was the personality never to be forgotten.

In the opening years of the 20th century women of India experienced political awakening and national awareness. The social and cultural changes, which took place in that period, had improved the status of women. As a result, a number of women had began to organize themselves for the political purposes and participation in the local and national movement.

Gandhiji had taken up a hard task of liberating women. His call to Indian women had tremendous impact. It seemed that there was a sudden enlightenment. Women seemed to have come out overnight and worked along with men for the purpose of freedom of India. Gandhiji's ambition was to plan for a society, where opportunities are given to every individual to grow in

harmonious, social relations and where everyone is free. He said, “everyone is his own ruler.”

When Gandhiji launched his Satyagraha Movement in 1920, and he urged women to come forth and fight for their motherland’s independence and for the upliftment of the poor and unfortunates. His appeal touched the hearts of women. So thousands of them started wearing khadi and in every home women spin with wheel.

Although Gandhiji was keen on women joining the Congress and worked hard to the promotion of its cause. But to invite women to join the freedom struggle was not an easy task, because a number of women were living in seclusion and under the control of conservative men. Most of women were not permitted to participate in public activities.

Mahatma Gandhi launched number of movements such as Non-Cooperation Movement 1920-1922, Civil Disobedience Movement 1930-34, Individual Satyagraha 1940 and Quit India Movement 1942, and Indian women attracted towards the programme related to freedom of India. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur took a leading part in organizing meeting and processions. Smt. Sarla Devi Chaudharani and Smt. Rameshwari Nehru were also the prominent nationalist of Punjab. Prem Kaur, Mussammat Maqbul Begum, Smt. Bhagmati Devi, Parvati Devi, Lado Rani Zutshi, Begum Fatima, Bibi Raghbir Kaur, Smt. Harnam Kaur etc. were the Punjabi women who played a bold role during the Gandhiji's non-violent programme of freedom.

In May 1917 the first Women's Association was founded. Mrs. Besant was its President, Mrs. Dorothy Jinarajadasa its Honorary Secretary for 8 years later held in succession by Mrs. Margaret Cousins. After the death of Mrs. Besant, Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddi has been its President. This Association worked hard for the emancipation of women.

Mrs. Sarojini Naidu was the dynamic genius among the galaxy of leading patriotic women. She was a poetess and a brilliant speaker. She joined congress and worked for the freedom of India ceaselessly. She also had the honour to serve as the President of the Indian National Congress and she accompanied to

Mahatma Gandhi for the Round Table Conference at London. She was known as the Nightingale of India.

In 1919 Mrs. Cousins, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu and Miss Hirabai met the members of the JT. Committee. They made some proposals saying that voting right should be necessarily be given to Indian women. In the year of 1920, first time voting right was introduced in Travancore (India). To Madras voting right for women was granted in 1921. IN 1922 TO Bombay and in 1925, it was introduced in Punjab and in Central Provinces in 1927. Bihar was the last to granted it in 1929. Then in 1930 it was introduced in all status of India.

Women continued their agitation because there were no tangible results though they were achieved the right to vote. After a great struggle Smt. Muthu Lakshmi Reddi was nominated as a member by the Madras Government and became the first woman who stepped into the Assembly. In 1935 according to Government of India Act, Adult Franchise, was introduced in all the stated.

In the year of 1937, when Congress Government were formed, several women got elected as members to the Assemblies in Bombay, Madras, Orisa, Central Provinces and Assam. It was the time of an all round change of Indian society. Now men and women acted as souls not as sexes. They learnt new respect for one another and their all round capacities. Srimati Sarojini Naidu was the most outstanding women of her period and Srimati Kamaladevi Chottopadhyaya was the leader of its youth. Mrs. Rukmini, Lakshmi pathi (Madras) Mrs. Hansa Mehta (Bombay), Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi (Sabarmati), Mrs. Zutshi (Lahore), Mrs. Captain (Bombay) Mrs. Nellie Sen Gupta (Calcutta), Satyavati devi (Delhi), Miraben (Mrs Slade Ahmedabad), Mrs, Jaffar Ali (Lucknow), Durgabai (Andhradesa), Kuttimala Amma (Malabar) were the other prominent women leaders.

The Vijaylakshmi Pandit was appointed to the United Provinces Cabinet as Minister for Local Self-Government. Anasuyabi Kale, Sippi Milani, Radhabai Subbarayan prominent women leader of the period. Begum Shah Nawaz, Begum Qudasia Aizaz Rasul, Begum Sharifah Hamid Ali, Kulsum Sayani, Hajrah Ahmed were prominent Muslim women leaders of that time.

As we study during the long subjugation under the British rule, women's health and education suffered. Evil of ignorance and purdah imposed on them, it chained them to hearth and home in such circumstances women could not be expected to come forward of medical education. In 1885 Dufferin Fund Committee was established and women Doctor were trained on scholarships of Dufferin Fund. Then in 1902, the Victoria Memorial Scholarships Committee established to improve Midwifery services.

However, before independence the need of trained women doctors was felt to fulfil the need of women of India especially who were staunch purdah-observers, they would have to preferred to die during child-birth rather than be treated by a man doctor. So, keeping this view medical schools were opened, especially for women. In medical institutions women were surgeons, physicians, teachers and administrators. These institutions played a perfect role not only in providing medical care of the highest order to women but also laid the foundation for the initiation of Indian women in the teaching and practice of medical sciences. Dr. Ida Scudder established a nursing school and medical school for training of Indian women in medical profession. These schools later on grow into a co-educational training institutes.

The Ministry of Health in the Government of India was headed by distinguished woman Rajkumari Amrit Kaur. It was the time when women of India faced the problem of low nutrition, superstitions, ignorance, insanitary condition, lack of fresh air and sunshine, purdah etc. So in these conditions Rajkumari Amrit Kaur laid down the policy of health for independent India.

Many healthy schemes and projects started under the leadership of Rajkumari Amrit Kaur. Dr. Sushila Nayar was the second woman Health Minister at the centre. She had an insight into health programs and she had also the vision of a healthy India.

In 1946, there were 15 medical colleges with the an annual enrolment of 1,200. Thus there was rapid expansion of medical education. It was the time when women were confined to be practice of obst. and gynecology. In the field

of obst. And gynaecology women were occupying high position. Dr. Padmavati was the first woman cardiologist in India. In 1954 she established the first cardiac clinic and Cardiac Cath lab in North India. She has won also international recognition in the field of cardiac research.

During our research period after the long struggle, Indian women got jobs in almost all the departments as the clerical as well as higher administrative posts. The maximum number of Indian women working in the post and telegraph department. In the early 20th century women were appointed on the same terms as men, but generally with higher pay in few no. of the departments, but no discrimination was done between European and Indian women.

Although women were appointed in the civil services, but they were not considered suitable for more responsible jobs. They were filled almost all the lower grades of the post office and the department of interior. But after independence Indian Constitution provide equality in all sphere of life.

Our research period is important because first-wave of feminist movement started from this period' when women's organizations set up and they demanded for their rights. This time also considered the wake- up for equality. They faced new challenges.

Violence against Indian women was not a new issue because it had been raised in the past. Historical evidence like sati, dowry murders, suicides of women and many more ways which proved the violence against women but again women were greatly affected during the period of partition of India. In those days kidnapping of women was an ordinary thing. Women became the bone of contention among the rioters who fought over them for frivolous reasons. It was common in those days for parents to kill their daughters and sisters in order to preserve their honour. After the partition in East Punjab, Miss Mridula Sarabhai a noted special worker was appointed as in charge of the rescue work of abducted women. Other women workers who assisted the rescue work were Rameshwari Nehru, Mrs. Bhag Mehta, Sushila Nayyar, Premvati Thaper Kamalaben Patel, Damyanti Sehgal and Aniskidwai etc. These women participated devotedly in the social work for rehabilitation of victims of the

partition. They face no. of sufferings like broken families, disabilities, diseases, psychological traumas, tortures and atrocities at that time.

In 1949, after the independence of India every adult got a voting right so, all women who was above 18 years got the right automatically. It started the new chapter of women's position and status. Thus all the efforts done for women's upliftment became successful.

Congress also passed resolutions for the society Justice, especially for advancement of women. It changed altogether after the independence of India. Before 1947 law enforce were different in different provinces. Under the leadership of first Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru, B.N.Rao Committee was formed for the necessary changes in Indian society. So, the member of this committee collected the public opinions from the whole country. In 1955, on the recommendations of the public, some important Acts were passed, like The Special Marriage Act, Hindu Succession Act, Act of Maintenance. In 1956 Hindu Minority Guardianship Act, Hindu Adoption Act were passed.

The Constitution of India removed discrimination against women in both legal and public sphere. Fundamental Rights also ensured that women would not face discrimination an account of their sex. The Constitution of India granted to all Indian women equality (Article 14), no discrimination by the state (Article 15(1)), equality of opportunity (Article 16), equal pay for equal work (Article 39 (d)). It also allows special provisions to be made by the state in favor of women and children (Article 15(3)), renounces practice derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51 (A) (e)), it allows for provisions to be made by the state for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief (Article 42). With this it tried to removed inequality to women in all spheres of life. Nationally the women was given equal status. The subordination of yester years was removed.

Finally, it can fairly be said that during our selected period there were a lot of improvement among the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims women. It changed the totally outlook and attitude of Indian women. It was the time which encouraged Indian women to participate in socio-religious activities and acquired education.

During the phase of 1921-1922, the purdah system was being on the platform. Then the opinion was moving for discarding the purdah, but in initial stage of time the progress was very slow. In the end of the 1937 though the purdah system did not vanish completely but it did disappear to a large extent. At this time purdah was not considered a hall mark of respectability. The parrot like cry of Indian traditional people that a woman's proper place was the home now became out of date.

This period marked a definite stage of women's upliftment. They became economically independent and adopted various professions. Now they had learnt to look beyond domestic roles and taking part in constructive works and national politics and improved their capabilities. It was the time when old beliefs and notions crumbled down. A new role of women emerged out of the debris of the past. She came from obscurity to limelight, from socio-economic subjugation of freedom. But in practice rights provide to women by nation remained on papers only. The awakening among women during our research was limited to urban areas only. Most of women related to rural areas remained uneducated and dumb. To bring about change a much bigger effort is needed.