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WOMEN AND PATRIARCHAL BONDS; A SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT

India has been a country where great sagas and thinkers like Vivekanand, Ravindra Nath Tagore etc., mathematician - Arya Bhata and female singer – Lata Mangeshkar etc. have been borne. It has also been rich in culture throughout the world. Despite, there are discriminations after discrimination in the country; Caste, Creed, Religion and Gender Discrimination have been common evils for a long time. These evils are still wide spread and deep rooted in each nook and corner. Out of these social evils, Gender Discrimination has been trauma for womenfolk. It has never let the women live with an ease. Some time, to be married in so early age, and some time they were forced to immolate with the pyre of funeral of their husbands, and on the other, they were limited to homes due to sever and strict patriarchal bonds in society. They were not provided any chance to live freely, to show their talents, to express their views, thoughts and emotions and to work with their counterparts in any walk of life India has passed through various historical periods; Vedic, Buddhist, Muslim, British and Modern Period (20th and 21st century). In all those periods women have been harassed, humiliated and disgraced in many ways.

Living in 21st Century, when other nations are tending to fast Globalization, and Women Empowerment, on one side India also claims stepping forward towards this change, on the other, different party leaders of Central Government do not want to let the Women Reservation Bill pass in Lok Shabha despite it passed in Rajya Sabha a long ago.

Hence, it is obvious that there is discrimination with women even today in India in whatever form it may be. There would be only some parents in India who support equal rights of property as heirs to their daughters. Villages are backward in providing education to girls especially in technical, medical, management and higher education fields. They are thought to burn hearths and cook the food thought their lives.

Key words; i) Saga- narrative ii) Discrimination – inequality iii) Creed - dogma iv) Trauma – mentally and physically pain and wound v) Folks - individuals vi) Pyre – burning a dead body vii) Funeral – ceremony of burning of a deceased person viii) Patriarchal Bonds – rules and systems governed by male being ix) Humiliated – embarrassed mentally and physically x) Harassed – physically torture xi) Empowerment - to give authority to.

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True and everlasting development of a nation depends on the ideal society it has. An ideal society is one, in which all living beings are treated equally. There is Justice, Peace and Liberty without any discrimination of caste, creed, colour, gender and religion among the people living in. India is a country, where definition of an ideal society breaks or shattered into pieces due to imposed patriarchal bonds in each and every sphere, and wide discrimination in each nook and corner. That is why there is a unrest, and disagreement all-round. One can easily see unequal treatment with women in each and every field and thus this treatment with women is known as discrimination under discrimination. This is a heinous blot in society. "Religion breaks people by breaking society into caste fragments..." (Rege, 336).

For centuries, it has been observed that if someone is borne as a female being, she is a double object of hatred. On one hand, she is observed very low and degraded object in Indian Society that has been a patriarch one for a long past, on the other, if some female being has taken birth in lower caste, she faces double humiliation in society. "Our women are raped. Raped not only because, they are women, but also for revenge. Poverty is not the reason of this oppression. Our caste is the reason why we suffer, why we are exploited" (Rege, 316).

Since past, women have performed their duties much and more devotionally to their husbands. Sita left all comforts and luxuries of palace and lived with Ram in dare and dense forest when Ram was sent for 14 years banishment. She also maintained her virginity refined and obeyed wifehood living in Lanka despite, Ravan offered her different avarices. Kunti, wife of Maharaja Pandu allowed her husband a second wife, Madri. When Pandu shot Rishi Kindama with an arrow disguised as a deer, Rishi Kindama cursed Pandu to die in case he clasps his wife in the act of coition. On hearing Rishi, Pandu renounced the kingship and left for a forest exile. Both Kunti and Madri also remained in forest with Pandu their husband leaving all comforts and luxuries of palace. But men folk did never care for women. "One cannot even begin to compare Savitribai who even took peoples split..." (Rege, 324). Man has never tried to bow down before a woman from any angle. It is a woman who has been bound by several 'Religious Codes and Customs' prescribed in Hindu Purans and Smritis. A woman is considered in this society a machine of child birth that should generate only a male child, if she fails to do so, she is then tortured. "When Mayabai lost two children in quick succession, her husband's family declared her barren. One day, out of the blue, she was asked by her husband to arrange for food for his wedding party. Even after his pat or second marriage, Mayabai continued to live in the same house with her husband as she did not want to bring dishonor..." (Rege, 307).

A Woman borne in lower caste hardly survives. There are barriers at every step before her. How can she step forward? She thinks her birth in low caste a heinous thing. "The left must remember this society is not merely class based, but it is Varna and caste-based as well as. Religion is a powerful instrument here... Cruel custom has been legitimized by religion and the Smiritis" (Rege, 316). The whole focus while writing these Puranas and Smiritis was paid how to make the position of women bad to worse. Kumudtai narrates the plight of women in Maharashtra State. She observes Caste-based violence. "The violence against dalit agricultural labourer women, burning of educated girls by husbands for dowry... increasing rate of suicide among young girls... if this was the same religion..." (Rege,327). We find another instance of dishonor of women in Mahabharata in Udyoga Parva Section 119-122 that contains a story about disgrace and dishonor of a woman given in four stages. The first story relates to Galava "Galava was very devoted pupil of the Saga-King-teacher Viswamitra . At the end of his academic period, to please his Guru, Galava requested Viswamitra to state the Guru-Dakshina. Guru Viswamitra asked Galava to present him eight hundred white steeds of good pedigrees: white as rays of the radiant moon with one ear black in hue. Having tired in search of such rare type horse, Galava with his friend Suparana reached to the king Yayati of Prathistana. Yayati had no such rare horse and by then had depleted his wealth. He could not disappoint a needy and so, he gifted, instead, his beautiful daughter Madhavi also called Drishadvati and suggested that he could get horses by setting her price as Madavi was capable of promoting every virtue. Galava offered Madhavi to child-less king, Haryasva in exchange for two hundred steeds. The story continued with the suggestion of Madhavi. "I am blessed by a saga with the special faculty that each time after child birth, I will regain my virginity and hence, year after year, Galava Sold Mahadvi she was sold to, Divodasa king of Kasi, king Ushinara of Bhojanagri to gather six hundred horses and thus paid his Guru Dakshina" (Mudrarakshasa, 217). The above story quoted in Mahabharata depicts that women are the object of consume till the end of their breath like 'just use and throw them'. Women have been puppets on the hands of men folk, but in later Vedic Period, their position in society again degraded. They had to get remarried with their husbands' brothers, if any woman's husband was killed as a hero in the battle. She had to immolate (burn herself in the funeral pyre of her husband) with her husband to be called a Sati. Early marriage was also prevalent in the period. Despite un-matured, they had to bear all responsibilities of families performing fourfold-status-role sequence as a daughter, wife, house wife and mother in very early age.

In Mughal Period also, status of women was not higher. Women were captivated and limited to homes. Parda Pratha was also in vogue in that period. Birth of a female child was considered as inauspicious or bad omen, but son's birth as an occasion of rejoicing. Among rich class, polygamy was common.

When a women observes culture based on hierarchy as prevailed in Indian society, she feels her life like a sever wound that suffers here day and night and makes her brain burst. "Kumudatai argues that Just as the analysis of

the lives of communities and individuals in society can't exclude caste, so also the analysis of the lives of women cannot ignore exploitation based on gender. Dalit women, she underlines are the victims of this double exploitation. In order to understand and analyze why and how this is so... less important than ideas and thoughts" (Rege, 304).

To come out from the bad practice prevalent in the society, the founder of the India constitution, Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar suggested to Indian women, "As your children become educated, the living standard of your family will improve and they will try to take you out of this hell. We too are humans and have the right to live as human beings. Your children will make you conscious about this... Caste off all the rituals that promote ignorance.... It does not matter three quarter of the generation is lost in this; for remaining one quarter can lived with pride as human being and will create a bright future. My mothers and sisters, let the first step of change be yours" (Rege,296).

In Vedic Period, women held high place in society, but from middle period, status of women went bad to worse. "Yatra Narestu pujiyante, ramantey tatra devita. Yatreto too na pujiyante sarva tatrafla kriya" (Smriti, 3 - 56/83). Mahabharata also shows degraded position of women in 'Anushasan Parve (Daan Parve)', "Antkah pavno mrtuh patalam vadva mukham, Kshurdhara visham sarpo vahin ritye katah striyad" (Mahabharata, 29/5599): 'Women are the most sinful. Women full in youth are burning fire. They are mega (magic) Monster. They have been compared to snake, fire and sharpness of a dagger'. All these laws were framed by a group of people in that patriarchal society and hence women's hands were bounded by men who were rule maker then. Mahabharata is evidence how simple woman had to be wife of five husbands. Even then, she was also unhonoured and disgraced in the court of Duryodhana in the presence of her five husbands and the elite members of the family. If we throw a glance on Puranas and Mahabharata and Manu Smritis we would find that a woman had been humiliated at every step. Ravan, a great scholar also criticized woman when he was talking to his wife Mandodari as depicted in Lanka Kand ; "Nari subhav satya sab kahahin, Avagun aath sada ur rahahin"(Ramcharit Manas, 14a-1-2/720; A woman always persists eight demerits in her nature- courage, falsehood, fickleness, fear, cheating, timidity, insensible, unholy and cruelty. Man has always seen women with lustful eyes. If she is found alone, man has tried to quench his thirst to make him satiate. Even Ravan could not control himself when he saw his daughter in law Rambha while returning from a mission and forced her to make illicit relationship with him. Although Rambha repeatedly denied making any such relationship because relationship between her and him was far above carnal appeasement, but Ravan satiated himself. At the narration of that all to her husband Nalakubara, Nalakubara could not control himself and cursed Ravan. "he shall no longer be able to approach any other young women who is unwilling to accept him. When however stricken with love, he will violate a woman who is unwilling to approach him, his head will actually be split in to seven pieces that very moment" (Ramayan, 55/743). Even today there are several lust full men like Ravan to make woman their victims.

That patricidal society took many women's lives. Women in the past had to pass through many severe examinations to prove their virginity. Some had to be 'Sati' to prove a true wife of her deceased husband. A story about a woman's severe examination is prevalent in Ramayana, "Sita , the wife of Lord Ram was abducted by Ravana , the King of Lanka . It is said that she was not real Sita whom Ravan abducted, but it was 'Chhaya Sita' (shadow of Sita) but, real Sita went inside the earth and Maya Sita went with Ravana. She was kept under captivity in Lanka at Ashok Vatika. Ravana true devotee of Lord Shiva, he (Ravana) never thought even in his dreams to touch Sita. When Ram Killed Ravana and took Sita back from Lanka. Sita had to undergo 'Agni Pariksha' (an ordeal of fire) by which She proved her chastity and after then she was accepted by Ram. Sita being chaste throughout a life could not tolerate this act of humiliation as in the form of Agni Pariksha and It is also said that 'Maya Sita' was engulfed by fire and real Sita was exchanged who was already hidden in the earth.

Woman! Woman! Woman! that is a name that has been exploited whenever one wished. Great dramatist, William Shakespeare in 'Hamlet' calls, 'Frailty, thy name is woman', means women are weaker than men. In past, there are 'Sati' stories. How had they to be burn herself alive in the pyre of her husband. Queen Victoria in 1861, issued a general ban in India for this heinous practice. Sati Prevention Act 1988 also passed in India for 'Dictative Criminalized type of Aiding', Abetting and 'Glorifying of Sati.'

Place of women were considered high in human society in 'Vedic Period'. 'Yatr naryasto pojiyantay, ramantay tatr devta (Where women are provided place of honour, gods are pleased and reside there in that house hold)'. But the scholars who framed 'Manu Smriti' paid no respect for women and wrote very derogatory comments about women:-

- "Swabhav ev narinam...." (Smiriti,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 female.

- “Mantra Swastra....”(Smiriti, 2/215): Wise people should avoid sitting along with their mothers, daughters or sisters. Since carnal desire is always strong. It can lead to temptation.
- “ Yasto na bhavet....” (Smiriti, 3/10): Wise men should not marry the women who don't have a brother and whose parents are not socially well-known.
- “Balya va....” (Smiriti, 5/150): A female child, young woman, or old woman is not supposed to work independently even at her place of residence.
- “Na ast strinam....” (Smiriti, 5/158):...her only duty is to obey and please her husband and she will for that reason alone be exalted in heaven.
- “Vyabhacharay” (Smiriti, 5/167): Any woman violating her duty and ‘Code of Conduct’ toward her husband is disgraced and becomes a patient of leprosy. After death, she enters womb of Jackal.
- “Bhartaram....” (Smiriti, 8/370): In case of a woman, proud of greatness of her excellence or her relatives violates her duty toward her husband; she will be thrown before dogs at a public place.

Such strictly codes hindered the progress of women in past. One bad practice is prevalent even today in society. If a woman is unable to give birth to a child after three years of her marriage, she becomes an object of hatred to members of all family, as a result, she is rushed out from the house and forced to go to her native place. How heinous position do the women face? One wrong notion about the birth of female child is still prevalent in society. If any woman gives birth more than two children, she also becomes an object of hatred.

So living in fast changing world, and ‘Globalized Era’, It is in the need of hour to crush down all past rituals and religions, bad practice and the Codes imposed by Manu Smriti on women and, be aware to your rights. There are fundamental rights of Indian constitution provide security for women and make them aware of their rights. Dowry, Sati, Violence against women are lodged in Criminal Act. If something happens with women, they need to lodge a complaint by dialing toll-free number 1090 in case of U.P. residents. Women can also register online complaint. Bill of women Reservation that passed in Rajya Sabha should also go through in Lok Sabha. It is the need for women recognize their strength. Women have also earned reputation in different fields like; Smt. Indra Gandhi in Political field, Kiran Bedi in Administration, Lata Mangeskar in Music, Bachhendri Pal in mount riding, P.T. Usha in games. Ashwarya Rao Bachchan in Miss World, Mother Teresa in social work, Kalpana Chawala in space. You need courage and just break-‘Patriarchal Bond’ and you will certainly get some place in any walk of life. National poet Maithali Sharan Gupt also declares woman Power as ‘ Ek nahin do Matrain, Nar Se Bhari Nari.’

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A brief bio of Author

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