

Female Identity in Vedic, Medieval and Modern Period: In Distinctive Context of India

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Abstract- Great things are said and written about the Indian woman today that she is free, secure and has achieved all her rights today. But all this is confined to the pages of the books only, while the social picture says something else. Today's Indian woman wants to eminence and present herself on a global scale. But the traditional beliefs and shackles of rites are so entrenched to her that she is unable to compromise on all this. A difficult situation has arisen before her. Our so-called Indian society considers women to be safe under the protection of men, they say that in the absence of a male shadow, a woman's life is miserable. That is why if a woman wants to live life alone, then the people of the society do not let her live. As a result, she is accepting marriage as a barrier to her freedom. The status of women was advanced in the Vedic period. Despite the male-dominated social system, women had all the rights and were considered goddesses in the society and family. The goddess-like women of the Vedic period became subservient in the medieval period. All his rights were taken away and he was forced to live a hellish life. The beliefs and religious rules of the Vedic period were suddenly changed. The contractors of religion imposed strict restrictions on women and propagated all the bad practices with full force. By the middle ages, the condition of women became extremely pathetic. In the early days of the nineteenth century, the status of women remained the same. With the establishment of British rule, the social condition of India started changing. Due to the influence of western civilization and culture, the status of Indian women started changing. With the cooperation of many humanist thinkers and social reformers of the country, the condition of women started changing continuously. In the presented research article, the direction and condition related to women's identity in the Vedic period, medieval period and modern period has been considered.

Keywords- Female identity, Vedic, Medieval, Modern period, Social system.

1. Introduction

Every person of this creation, whether it is male or female, has his own distinct identity. From the identity that enables them to get recognition in the society by making their personality strengthens. That is why they all struggle to maintain it, conscious of their identity. We all know that men and women are two sides of the coin of life. They are incomplete without each other. Of course, if the man is a fighting force, then women are the driving force for us and the whole life of man is the heritage of these inspirations. There is no difference between men and women in terms of human spirit and mental capacity. All Men and women are the foundations of creation. Both of them constantly struggle with their total velocity and impulse in the battlefield of life, sometimes they win, sometimes they lose. Women's are considering half the world, as they comprise almost half of the world's population. Therefore, without women, the family, society, and nation cannot even imagine.

Since old times, there have been continuous difficulties in the status of women from the social, religious, political, and economic point of view. Men have always dominated Indian society. Despite being weak at the physical and mental level, men have been exploiting and harassing them for centuries. The history of the world filled with all the pages of various rights taboos and heartless atrocities committed against women. Since ancient times, men have stood up against giving equal status to women. The male class does not want to be lost their

dominance from home, family, and society. That is why they give the woman the right to make small decisions by staying in the house, but he keeps the right to make all big decisions with himself. On the other hand, women also do not want any kind of impermanence in their family and social life bound by their dignity and traditional rites. She is compelled to bear everything without any opposition to maintain happiness and peace in the family.

Definition of Female Identity:

Great social reformers like Swami Vivekananda, Ramakrishna Paramhansa (1858-1922) also come up who, for centuries, made bold noises to provide a well-educated and exquisite life to Indian women who had been caught in the web of traditional social customs and superstitions. She was well aware that only on the strength of education could the direction and condition of women be improved. According to her, self-reliance is essential for the progress of the women's caste. She had full faith that women had immense power to eliminate the dire situations and demonic forces prevailing in the society. Ramabai emphasized on the equality of men and women in the family and society.

Through her book 'Stree Dharma Niti' written in 1882, she says that Indian women have nothing to do with the glory of the past. They need their all rights. Pandita Ramabai emphasized on women's self-reliance and independence in her speech. She explained to her sisters of the society that self-development is possible only through the acquisition of knowledge, for which it is necessary to be well educated. She conveyed the inherent power in the woman and realized the possibilities of advancement. He awakened women that self-reliance is a sign of happiness.

In her, book 'The High Caste Hindu Women' written in 1888, Ramabai has given a realistic description of the life of Hindu women while attacking the patriarchal system. In 'Manusmriti', the way in which Hindu women have been seen and tested is described in detail. Through the book, he has criticized the traditional stereotypes prevalent in the society, misdeeds, superstitions, customs, etc. Pandita Ramabai as well as other contemporary courageous women can be named who worked to improve the condition of Indian women such as Tarabai Shinde, Kashibai Kanitkar, Ramabai Ranade, etc.

Pandita Ramabai worked very hard for women's education, Demanded equality of women in the field of education. Emphasis was placed on appointment by providing equal pay to female teachers like male teachers. Demanded from the government for good housing arrangements for girls, medical education system etc.

Outlining the distinguished contributions of Pandita Ramabai in the context of girl's education at that time, Dr. K.M. Malti writes, "She opposed the apathy towards girls in the Indian family. Being a struggling woman, Ramabai could not compromise on social atrocities. Pandita Ramabai's speeches and works are the fundamental source material for the basic elemental discourse of women's discourse in modern India."¹

After all the efforts of Pandita Ramabai and other social reformers, the social, economic, religious and political status of women began to improve in the modern times. The consciousness of identity was awakened in Indian women. She began to strive for her existence and her identity in society. In order to highlight their personal importance and uniqueness, the women refuted social evil practices, customs, and stereotypes. It can, say that such collective protests gave rise to the concept of 'Asmita'.

In the Vedic period, women were worshipped as sacred, in this era; the condition of women was not socially, religiously, politically, family-pathetic. In spite of the prevalent of practice of many wives, the woman had enough respect and honors. The woman also had the same rights as men, but by the post-Vedic period, the woman began to decline and her social life began to feel various kinds of restrictions. The independent identity of the woman disappeared and she remained only a shadow of the man. The advent of foreign invaders gave a boost to luxury, which made the direction and condition of women hellish.

In the Mahabharata period, on the one hand, where a woman was called a vessel of honor, on the other hand, she was given the story of adulterous woman, considering her as the root of all sins. The entire responsibility of nurturing the family was given to the woman as a duty and she was imprisoned inside the boundary wall of the

house. Service to the woman as husband came to be considered as the ultimate religion. There was a decline in the middle ages. There was no other period as much as the degradation of a woman in the period of criticism. Child marriage, Jauhar system, Sati system, Devadasi system, Purda-system, dowry system was a tremendous practice of buying and selling of women, women's kidnapping, etc.

After India's independence, the status of women began to change a little bit. In 1950, the Indian Constitution made several laws other than gender, caste and language, based on which no discrimination will be made against anyone. Even after getting constitutional equality, the condition of women remained unchanged. In the words of Mahadevi Verma, "In the constant flow of the ages, great empires were swept away, cultures disappeared, castes were wiped out, many impossible changes in the world were possible, but the invisible script inscribed with the script of the law in the face of Indian women could not be washed away. Even today, when the whole dynamic world is proving the imperative of constant change, an attempt is being made to cut off women's lives and make them equal to the same mould that was molded in the ancient age."²

Looking at the status of women, even today it seems that we are all living in the feudal era. In that era, where the emperors, chieftains, rulers or property owners used to exploit women, now the capitalists and the powerful people are exploiting the woman. The infant girl child is brutally murdered in the womb by the deception of fetal testing. About one crore twenty lakh female fetuses have been destroyed in the last several decades. Exploited and aggrieved women shy away from approaching the court of law for fear of humiliation, stigma and dissolution of marriage. Workers have to do all the household chores like domestic women because doing such things like them and sharing hands hurt the ego of men. Incidents of mistreatment of woman workers in the office and other work areas have become a common one. On the one hand, where she has to protect herself from the lustful vision of her male co-workers and higher officials, on the other hand, the suspicious eyes of the husband in the house make her feel very restless and compelled to live a life of darkness and solitude. Thus, workers are compelled to live a life of dependence even though they are self-reliant.

The workers work continuously for twelve hours in the factories, where they are subject to physical exploitation along with their wages. Most of the workers are victims of TB or other serious diseases. In this era of modernization, even today, the illegal trading of women is taking place in a clandestine manner, due to which the flesh trade is increasing rapidly. Incidents of abduction, rape, murder or suicide etc. are reported from various newspapers, news channels and other sources every day. If the culprit found in these incidents is rich and political patronage, most of the incidents are solved on the strength of money and power. In this era of globalization, most of the women associated with professions such as nurses, woman doctors, teachers, stenographers and receptionists are facing such kind of problems. Mahadevi Verma, considering the condition of women, has said in her book 'Srinkhala ki Kariya', "The history of the social status of the Indian woman is also a story of her being distorted from perverted to distorted. In the last centuries, its social importance has not increased, but thunderstorms have taken place to demolish it. As a result, her position became progressively stronger and more weak and ugly instead of being firm and beautiful."

Today, women need to be conscious of their rights and identity. Education is the only means through which they can get awareness of their rights. A woman does not have to depend on anyone else to maintain her existence. Wherever women feel that injustice is being done to them, they must register their dissent. One should raise their voice against the atrocities and exploitation of oneself. They should have their say at every level, only then can their condition change. This kind of awakening is essential for the women of rural or backward classes because they are still being harassed due to lack of education. Women should first demand their equality in the society, apart from the small demands here and there. Women need to establish their identity in the society and the nation by connecting with the current of time. She should have the same rights and respect as men in the family and society, of which she is entitled.

A woman wants freedom from the system and mentality that have forced her to lead a mediocre life. The cooperation of women as well as men is necessary to bring about a change in this system. Men, and especially young people, need to change their thinking about them. They have to abandon their traditional or spirit of

cultural exploitation, only then a better society, a strong republic, a developed nation and a family will have proper and all-round development. Nashira Sharma writes in this regard, "The most beautiful of relationships is the relationship between men and women, so why can't men or women develop an ever-lastingly simple and sensible relationship with each other? What is needed today is that we develop a moral value that can give a dignified shape to the relationship between man and woman."³

The feeling of hatred and resentment towards men has been instilled in the mind of a woman who has been suffering for centuries. In a way, she is becoming a rival of men today. Why is not that so? Men arbitrarily consumed the woman for centuries by giving the story of the goddess, kulaswami, tolerance, pativrata, etc. That woman is still struggling to break free from the shackles of injustice and exploitation that is happening to her. Even today, a poignant picture of a laboring woman carrying a burden of brick-on-brick on her head on the road and a nine-month-old child in her womb is found standing around us. Since the money given on per brick basis, the labors carry more and more bricks at a time on the head sometimes it reaches 30 kg. For such women, there is an urgent need to think about what kind of modernity, what kind of freedom, what kind of new science and what century has come.

This era of industrialization has come up with many challenges for women. The present time is more aggressive towards women. Now the need is for women to be conscious of their own identity and duty. Women often take politics as a prohibited area and distance themselves enough from it. In this field, they have to be active themselves, they have to give expression to their brilliance.

1.3. According to various scholars, female identity:

1. Defining 'female identity', Nashira Sharma writes, "I believe that if a woman can live like a human being with humanity and Asmita, which will be her freedom."⁴

2. One of great feminist writer Prabha Khaitan is accurate in the context of 'feminine identity', "A woman surrounded by self-doubt and unbelief needs new faith, new faith, and new ideas to protect her identity"⁵

3. According to another writer Rekha Kastwar, "The fight for the woman's identity is a battle to get the status of a man to half the world"⁶

4. According to Dr. Arvind Jain, "As long as the essentiality of legitimate sons (i.e. the institution of marriage indispensable) for inheritance of personal property in the patriarchal capitalist society and the totalitarian domination of the male (father-husband- son) in the family remains. Then every struggle of woman's identity and identity, existence and personality rights and expression, equality and honors is incomplete and all the manifestos are meaningless."⁷

5. In the book 'Stree Sarokaar', Asharani Vorah writes, "it can be said that in a country where a woman is burnt alive, she is murdered or feticide or she is forced to commit suicide, where childless men themselves are impotent. Even if you blame the wife for hiding your weakness, where there are controversies on the birth of a boy and mourning is celebrate on the birth of a girl, and then the important issue will be of existence and not of identity."

Female Identity in Vedic Period:

From the point of view of female identity, it reflects that the position of women in Vedic period was consistent. In spite of being a patriarchal family system, there was a liberal attitude towards the woman. The birth of a son was considere essential and very important; however, the birth of a girl child was unpromising at that time. Boys and girls had equal right to education. Then woman was as free as men were. There was no restriction of any

kind on their coming out. The woman had a great reputation in every sphere of life. In society and family, she considered equal to the goddess.

The women of the critical era used to be entitled to high position after marriage. In religious events, women participated in the same way as men. There was no restriction on him in the field of love and marriage. She had full freedom to love and marry as per her wish. The widow herself was also the absolute authority of remarriage and it said that the person who aspired for happiness and prosperity should respect the woman fully. Among the female scholars who have introduced their uniqueness in the field of religious and spiritual scriptures are Gargi, Maitreyi, Vaka, Sulabha, etc. The practice of Swayamvar was more prevalent among educated women. After the death of her husband, the widow had full rights over her husband's property. Dr. Rama Shukla writes about the situation of women in this period. She writes, "In the Vedic era, the man had established the woman on the horizon of his life; he had worshiped her sacrifice, her creation, her mantra, her beauty. That is why she did not roam through the fierce valleys of the frustration of Santras and continued to roam freely and fearlessly in the field of joy. In that era, the female and the man respected the mother, the wife, and the girlfriend in all forms. Because of which he also had a sense of respect for the man."⁸

Due to the similarity of men and women in the Vedic period, the concept of 'Ardhanarishvara' reflected. Like men, women were also in the practice of Upanayana rites. In this period there was no superior or inferior between man and woman. Even hymn xxi of Rig-Veda makes the qualities of a woman higher than that of a man. In this period there was no superior between men and women. The power cult is also focus on destructive power and the superiority of the woman, but the situation of Hindu women began to fall in memory, especially with the Manusmriti and their condition deteriorated compared to before. Since then, a woman was considered a dependent, so it was considered mandatory for her to live under the protection of her father or husband or son for the rest of her life.

Thus, the direction and condition of women in India has been changing in a timely manner. From the Vedic period to the pre-middle period, the position of the women has been fluctuating continuously. According to the changing circumstances, there have been many changes in the field of social, religious, economic, family and political rights of women in different eras. There is sufficient evidence of this in the literature of the time. In the context of the social condition of the women of the Ailoke era, Dr. Alka Prakash writes, "In the Vedic age, the condition of a woman was the place in the society of the woman which is the place of the pulse in the body. The rapid movement of the pulse in the body or both slow-bend movements are indicative of malaise. Therefore, according to medical science, it is considered preferable to move the pulse in the body in equanimity. This was the situation of a woman in the Vedic society."⁹

In this period, women's education was widely promoted. Women's education was widely promoted during this period. Two classes are seen among the girl students of the critical era, 'Sadayovaha' and 'Brahmavadini'. Those girls were called Sadyovaha, they used to take education while living in the ashram of celibacy and in their youth, and then her young age they used to enter the householder's ashram. Lopamudra, the supreme scholar and wife of August Muni, who narrated various hymns of 'Rigveda' and other Vedas, was a 'Sadayovaha' woman. The girl students, who were called Brahmavadini, did not get married even after getting education. Such girls were always ready to discuss the topics of Brahma-contemplation and god with a lifelong monotony. Among the Brahmavadini women, the names of Gargi, Maitreyi, Apala Ghosha, Shasvati Vedavati and Vishwavaha etc. were taken.

'Rigveda' is the first Hindu scripture in which women are said to be the embodiment of the goddess. The worship of Goddess or Shakti has been a part of Indian culture for many years. The woman appeared in mantras with her deepest life, experience and penance. Along with the Vedic sages, the names of many wise women are associated with the mantras. There are souks by women in the Vedas. In the spiritual tradition of Hindu women, Brahmavadini women like Vishwavara Shashti, Apala Ghosha Aditi defeated the best Brahmanical philosopher men of their time in brahmacharya and debate. The 'Vak Suktam' which composed by the Amrina rishis's

daughter Kanya-Vak, in which the characteristics of the qualities of direct and indirect objects related to nature have been described through mantras in the form of deities. The details of men and goddesses from the activities of the gods reveal the social, economic and political status of women in the then society. In the Rigveda, apart from Upas, Aditi and Prithvi, Vakdevi is mentioned as the goddess of speech. In the Rigvedic period, women were a symbol of learning, modesty, love, fame and wealth.

In the Samhita, Brahmins and Upanishads, the condition of women began to decline in many contexts. In the critical era, even though respect was given to the differently able women in the then society, various accusations were also made against other women. In the 'Brihadaranyaka' Upanishad, there is a mention of the Brahnavadini women, Gargi and Maitreyi, who were as knowledgeable as Yajavalkya. A thorough observation of the great code of Varahamihir reveals that men had to depend on women to achieve their three religious goals, Dharma, Artha and Kama. Despite this, the girls of this era were deprived of the right to worship, yagna, performed in the name of their ancestors. Even the process of finding out the various defects in the woman's personality began to begin in the Maitrayani Samhita and 'Shatapatha Brahmana' in some places she was called an untrue speaker. A woman married by purchase was accused of having mental or physical contact with a man. The 'Tittiriya Sahayata' also mentions about mental or physical contact with her men.

It is also mentioned in this Code that women should not desire or aspire for the right, that is, property. Thus, although women were given equal rights to men in ancient Hindu society, it

is well evident from the observation of various contexts that the condition of women had become very pathetic in social, family, religious, economic and political terms in the period under review. Various allegations were made against him, he was evicted from worship, sacrifice and property, and his family was looked upon with suspicion.

The woman glorified by the 'Goddess', Shakti, of the Vedic period, remained merely a shadow of men in the Ramayana and Mahabharata period. It was proved the dharma of every woman to live with the man, to serve him, to accept him as God. In the context of the nature of women, Bhishma Pitamah in the 'Anushasan Parva' of Mahabharata says that the patience of suppressing greed in women is impaired. That is why it is necessary for them to live in the company of men. In the period of sutras and Smriti, the condition of the woman was beginning to become completely decreasing.

During this period, the practice of Sati was also recognized, as a result of which the condition of women from the social point of view became more miserable. On the one hand, where the condition of a woman declined, on the other hand, there is evidence of an increase in her economic and religious rights.

"Yatra Naryastu Pujyante Ramante Tatra Devta.

Yataratastu na pujyante sarvastatraphala: Kriya:"¹⁰

The deity always resides in the house where women are worshiped i.e. respected. Where their every desire is fulfilled, there is happiness and prosperity in every way, but in the house where the woman is insulted, contempt, contempt, etc., there is no attainment of auspicious fruits in spite of worshipping the gods, doing good and holy deeds.

It is written in 'Manusmriti' that in childhood, a woman should live under her father, in youth under her husband and son under her husband's posthumously as a widow and obeying her husband's every command, she should always be considered God. By not doing so, the woman living separately from him will be liable to tarnish her family.

"Pitra bhanja sutairavapi nechhavirhamatman:

Eshan hi virhen stree gaye kuryadubhe kule."¹¹

Similarly, it is also said in the Manusmriti that the oblation in which the women, the polygyak, eunuchs perform the offering prayers to God in front of fire the impotent etc., is not fruitful but obscene, the wealth of the men is destroyed. Such an oblation sequence takes place against the gods. So he should be abandoned.

"Ashlikametsadhunam yatra juhavyami havih.

*Pratipametddevanam tasmattatparivrajayet"*¹²

According to Manusmriti, the woman has the right to only six types of wealth, in which on marriage. The wealth received by the parents in front of the fire, the wealth received by the parents in the ceremonies of home entry, son birth, etc., the work of love and the wealth received by the husband comes from the parents and the brother. Apart from this, a woman has no right over any kind of wealth and property. -

"Adhyagnyadyavahanikam dattach pritikarmani

*bhatrimatrupitratnam shadvidham stridhanam smritam."*¹³

In the context of the property of the mother, it is further written that her son and daughter have equal rights over the above six types of religions collected by her, so all should equally divide the mother's wealth among themselves

"Jannya sansthan tu saman sarva sahodara:

Bhajernameetrika Rikthan Bhaginyash Sanamaya:"

Thus, it can be seen that in the society of the day, the daughter had no right over the property of her father. Such strict rules make it clear how much discrimination there was between men and women in the post-Vedic period. The above facts suggest that in the fifth century, the condition of a woman declined considerably. When the practice of Sati was introduced, on the other hand, widow remarriage was banned. As a result, the condition of the widows became very pitiable and distressing. The education of women was completely banned. The practice of curtains began to gain momentum and child marriage became prevalent. Some marriages were arranged with the birth itself. Polygamy and mismatched marriages increased. Entry of women in religious institutions was prohibited. His study of theology and philosophy became prohibited. The position of a woman in the house became similar to that of a house cleaner.

The life of the childless and the woman who gave birth to a girl child was made hellish. In a way, the condition of such women was made worse than that of a widow. She was neglected by calling him profane, unclean. Yudhishtira is gambling in the Mahabharata and Rama's in the Ramayana period's abandonment after the ordeal of Sita's satiety describes the woman's social status.

In the stories related to Buddhism, women are described as unable to choose between truth and falsehood, unstable as sand and cruel as serpents. The Islamic community, which regards marriage as a contract, had a more practically worrying situation, even though the position of women in principle being the same as that of men. Islam considers women one degree lower than men consider and does not allow them to look at men.

The condition of Christian women was no different from them. The Bible instructs women to follow every order of their husbands without any complaint. Thus, no religion gives women the status of a society of men or the right to be equal to them. Therefore, it can be seen that neither woman is given prominence nor credibility has been shown on her qualifications in religious and social organization.

The woman, like the goddess of the Vedic period, had completely turned to the degraded by the post-Vedic period. All his rights were taken away and completely subjugated. No matter how the husband was worthless, no matter how he treated him, he was forced to endure. After the death of the wife, the husband could remarry, but the woman was burnt alive in the husband's pyre. Thus, it can be said that except for a few exceptions, the position of the woman in the ancient religious and social traditions was not satisfactory.

Female Identity in the Medieval Period:

In the middle ages, the position of the woman became more hellish. Commentators of this period completely changed the beliefs and religious rules of the Vedic era. The dominance of the Muslim Empire in India in the medieval period (1200-1757 AD) had never been as much as reflected in the condition and direction of the woman as it was before. In a way, this era can be called the age of tyranny, oppression and exploitation for women. The dominance of Brahmins under Hinduism began to increase, because of which they provided for many rituals while attacking the many rights of women. In order to protect the people of Muslim religion from the evil eye, women were prohibited from coming out of the house.

In order to protect the Hindu religion and to preserve the purity of blood, in the name of the purity of the then Brahmins and women, all the stringent restrictions were imposed on women. The practice of Purdah system, child marriage, sati system Jauhar system etc. started being given a lot of encouragement. Widow Remarriage was declared equal to unforgivable sin. In that time of society, the said evils were transferred to women as a cultural heritage.

Thus, the revered woman of the Vedic period became completely weak and helpless in the middle ages.

In the recent period, there is a kind of decline in the field of women's education. Only a select few women from the affluent class were able to get education. In this regard, Dr. Arvind Kumar Mahla writes, "There are some examples of women like Avanti Sundari (the author of the Prakrit language dictionary), Pargarmage (who played the role of a judge in the scriptures of Shankaracharya and Mandan Mishra), Deval Rani Padmavati, Rani Rupamati and Mirabai, etc. Otherwise, women were generally engaged in home, farming, animal husbandry, weaving and raising children."¹⁴

In medieval times, the freedom of women was completely restricted and imprisoned in the boundary wall of the house. Due to various reasons like insecurity, dowry, dignity, family honors and hurting the male ego, the birth of a girl child was considered inauspicious in the then society. On the one hand, where there was a sadness and disappointment in the house when a girl child was born, on the other hand, as soon as the son was born, there was a crowd of relatives, all of them used to celebrate and celebrate together collectively and feast. There was a tradition of considering the birth of a girl child as highly inauspicious in the Raj put families, under which the girl child was brutally killed as soon as she was born. Women who gave birth to a girl child were physically and mentally tortured. Men used to end the relationship with such women.

In the recent times, due to many social, religious and political reasons, parents used to marry their daughter at a young age as soon as possible by the parents and relatives. The opinion of the girl was never taken in this regard. At this time, the practice of dowry was dominated by the greed of money, a person used to marry women older than themselves. The practice of mismatched marriage was in full swing. However, in order to ban the mismatched marriage, Akbar had declared that if the age of the wife were 12 years more than the husband, then in such a situation, the marriage would be terminated as illegal. The consequences of child marriage began to be painful for women as it had a profound impact of negativity on the mentality, education, health and condition of the girl child.

In the medieval times, very strict rules were made regarding the Purdah system because the women used to go to the Dargah on holy occasions with carts, palanquins, horses or marches on foot. Taking advantage of such opportunities, rude men used to do inappropriate and undesirable things to women. For these kinds of reasons, Firoz Shah Tughlaq banned the movement of Muslim women to Dargah etc. Emperor Akbar, the Mughal ruler of that time, had also given strict orders in support of the Purdah system. According to him, if a young woman is found roaming in the streets or markets without a curtain and violating the curtains, she will be taken to the brothel and the woman would be forced to take up that profession. People of Hindu religion also supported it. In order to preserve their sanctity, Hindu women also started adopting the Purdah system. During this period, the practice of polygamy was also greatly encouraged under the Muslim rule.

Under the Muslim religion, every man had the right to have four marriages. Every Muslim man had the right to have four marriages based on Islamic traditions permanently and countless marriages through a contract marriage. Mirza Aziz Koca said that a man (Muslim) should marry four women. One should marry a Persian woman to negotiate, a servant for housework and a Hindu woman for raising children, and a Turkish woman for the dot-reprimand.

In Hindu and lower class Muslim society, the rules of the same marriage were prevalent. Due to the practice of polygyny, the condition of Muslim women at this time became very hellish. Even outside the house, after marriage, she had to live under the control of her mother-in-law.

The mother-in-law had the right to the whole house, for some reason if the mother-in-law became dissatisfied, she would ruin the life of her daughter-in-law. In Muslim families, there

were often divorces in such a situation. Cleaning the entire house, arranging the kitchen, cleaning the clothes, animal husbandry, giving birth to healthy children and raising them, eating after husband's meal, etc., were the routine of a wife. The condition of women in the middle ages was very pitiable from the point of view of female identity. In the words of Dr. Alka Prakash, "For the sake of their vested interests, the Indian feudal lords began to marry off their daughters to the Muslim rulers and they were forced to live a hellish life in their harems. These Muslim rulers started adorning beautiful Indian women in their harems. They kept them as their personal servants. Emperor Akbar started setting up Meena Bazaar for the choice of beautiful women. He used to decorate his wish by abducting beautiful girls from every nook and corner of India."¹⁵

At this time, only the vain form of woman was considered as the main one. Like other practices, the practice of Sati and Jauhar was also prevalent during that period. The following two practices were particularly prevalent among the upper classes of Rajputs and Hindus. Under sati system, after the death of the husband, the wife was also burnt alive along with the dead body of the husband. If a woman, while opposing this practice, refused to burn with her husband's body, she was called characterless. At this time, the condition of widows in the society was very difficult. Such women were denied the right to remarry, while no such restriction was imposed on men. They could marry the second, third marriage without any tie-up in the event of the death of the wife or the birth of a child.

Being a widow was considered the result of sins of previous births and sins in this period. The widow was always kept away from the process of performing any auspicious work and rites. Even her shadow was also not allowed to fall on auspicious works and occasions. The widow had to spend the rest of her life serving and caring for the family. She used to lead a lonely life completely neglected. In such a situation, some women were voluntarily burned and some were forcibly burnt with the dead bodies.

Thus, it can be seen that widows were brutally murdered in the name of the honors of the family. In the medieval period, the practice of Jauhar in the Rajputani houses was also supported enough. Rajput women used to commit Jauhar to maintain their purity. In this time, the Rajputs had to struggle continuously to preserve their honors. As soon as the Rajput women realized or came to know that their husbands would not be able to return alive from the battlefield or that their defeat was certain, in such a situation, they sacrificed their lives in all the fire to protect their holy arms from an undesirable person, this was called Jauhar.

Even in this period, women were respected as a mother. The only condition was that the woman would give birth to a son and a child, the mother who gave birth to the son and the child got more respect in the society and the family. She was given the right to participate in the cultural events, festivals and celebrations of the family. While the mother who gave birth to the girl child had to fall prey to the satire of the mother-in-law, sister-in-law, jethani-devrani and neighbors' in the house. The elderly man of the family is far from concerned, even the husband of such a woman himself did not support her. Thus, the medieval woman became a slave, a servant, and not a friend. In such a situation, the woman did not even have the courage to raise her voice against the injustice being done to her. In this era, the woman had become a puppet; she was locked in the four walls of the house. It was considered the cause of degradation. Woman was considered the gate of hell and the mine of poison; no one

tried to understand her mind, heart feeling. In the middle Ages, by depicting his fingernails, he was made a means of fulfilling the subject's lust.

In the recent times, the court of Muslim rulers was dominated by the free work relations. Their court was always full of wine and beauty. The goddess of the Vedic period, the like-goddess woman, came in the middle ages and became a means of enjoyment only for men.

The steady decline in his condition was beginning to show. The women used for enjoyment were kept as dancers and servants of the royal houses. In the course of time, such women turned from maidservants to prostitutes. At this time, the Devadasi system was also very much encouraged. Women of the following clans were appointed to dance and sing in the temples.

In the medieval period, because of which the construction work of brothels started going on in places outside the city and it was a practice of forcibly making women prostitutes from childhood. Everyone had their authority over the woman, but no one tried to grope her inner self. Therefore, in this way, the woman, instead of being a companion of life for men, became a mere enjoyment. All his freedom and fundamental rights of thought were taken away. As an exception in the medieval period, there are some examples, which show that from the point of view of the then government and administration, power was directly and indirectly in the hands of women. As Maham Anga, who had babysitter of Akbar, kept the government under his control for about five years.

The name of Razia Sultana was also very famous in this era. As the first woman administrator in Indian Muslim history, she sat on the throne of Delhi and embraced the principle of a full-fledged empire. Like this, 'Candela Princess Durgavati' also ruled over the citadel Govind. During the reigns of Rani Durgavati, Chand Bibi and Jahangir, his wife Noor Jahan ruled efficiently. Tarabai, the mother of Shivaji II, ruled for about 10 years until Shivaji became an adult. However, these examples were circumstantial and exceptional. Generally, women were confined to the boundary wall of the house away from rule and oppression. All functions relating to governance were reserved under the jurisdiction of men. Mirabai, the most important and famous poet of this time, socially expressed the atrocities, atrocities, inhumanity, oppression, oppression, oppression, etc., that were usually hidden by women under the patriarchal system.

The nude picture of the feudalistic enjoyment is presented in the works of medieval poets. The fleshy beauty of a woman who was considered the mere material of luxury and the lustful image of the imagined love-worm was the most famous intoxicating form of Indian woman. Through his book 'Aadmi ki Nigah Mein Aurat', Rajendra Yadav throws light on the medieval feudal society and writes, "The feudal society has given only three names to the woman: wife, concubine and prostitute, apart from this she must accept a fourth relationship. When he gives social acceptance to a woman by giving her name along with protection i.e. food, clothes and house, she is called a wife, but when he does not give his name by giving protection, she is called concubine and where she neither gives protection nor social acceptance. she is a 'prostitute' because she has to depend on many for protection; in consequence, there is no question of social respect. In fact, in the feudal system, the woman had become an object for man who fulfill the desire of sex and give birth to their children. Here, in exchange for service use and loyalty, the man decorates, protects and takes responsibility for the woman in the same way as he decorates, grooms and protects his elephants, horses and bullocks."¹⁶ All these things really violate a woman's freedom. Society and home represent his inferior condition in the family.

Thus, from the past analysis, it becomes clear that traditional social rites, traditional thoughts; religious pretenses had made the condition of Indian women very difficult in during the period under review. The whole world had become dark for her, and all the way out of this period of hard work was close for the woman. In such a difficult environment, the woman was forced to live suffocated in the boundary wall of the house. Although there were some learned successful administrators in the age of age, they were not given social sanction to become the reference character of ordinary women. The patriarchal social system allowed such women to remain the only exception. The saints of this time also considered women as an obstacle in the field of attaining salvation. For ordinary women, Sita was exemplary, because she always had to give an ordeal to prove herself pure and true. They had nothing to do with successful women like Rani Durgavati and Chand Bibi.

It would not be wrong to call the presented period was a period of gender differentiation, because in the middle era, there was a great deal of disorganization in the relationship between men and women. In a way, if this period is called a period of inequality, it will be incompatible, because there is no difference between an ordinary woman and a servant in this age. Therefore, if the medieval period is called the era of blurring the golden Indian history, then there will be nothing wrong.

2.6. Female identity in Modern Period:

There was no change in the status of women until the first half of the nineteenth century. Injustice and discriminatory attitude towards women appears to be undone. In this century, British power was established in India. The English traders took a special interest in the trade itself by staying away from luxury. As a result, the feudal system began to decline. On the one hand, the then humanist thinkers justified the education related to religious subjects for women, on the other hand, demanded the education of humanistic subjects instead of religious education for men. These thinkers said that by learning humanistic subjects, the path of women would be corrupted and she would deviate from her duties. Even the Russians, who are strong supporter of freedom, equality and fraternity, were not in favor of giving women political rights, they gave special importance to the work of giving birth to women's children and the care of the household. In such a dire situation with the publication of Mary Watson Kraut's book 'A Vindication of the Rights of Women' in 1792, the talk of women's rights and women's liberation first began. Inspired by the French Revolution, he sought to apply the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity to the female community as well. The voices of this tradition of emancipation became stronger in the book 'The Subjection of Woman' published by John Stuart Mill in 1869 and 'The Second Sex' by Simone De Bouvar in 1949. Thus, English methods gradually came into vogue in India. Coming into contact with western civilization and culture led to a change in the mindset of the Indian people and started to improve the condition of women.

Western women were often self-reliant and independent. Inspired by them, there was a kind of awakening among the women of the country. With the strengthening of the 'Women's Liberation Movement' in India, there was a storm in the antiquated masses. In a way, this era can be called the era of many social reformers who made every effort to improve the condition of women. The improvement in the condition and direction of Indian women started with the arrival of the British in India. The improvement in the condition and direction of Indian women began with the British coming to India. At the time when the British came to this country, there was a strong practice of evil practices like child marriage, girl child murder, Sati system, etc. It became very necessary for women to be educated to struggle with the above circumstances. Foreign Christian missionaries, the British Government and progressive Indians played an important role in this area.

Many social reformers of the country include Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Devendranath Tagore, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Gopal Hari Deshmukh, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Mahatma Jyotiba Govind Rao Phule, Savitri Bai Phule, Rani Lakshmbai, Anibisant, Queen of Jhansi, Ghondo Keshav Karve, Swami Vivekanand, Veerchand Raghav Gandhi, Mahatma Gandhi,

Vitthal Ramji Shinde Jammalal Bajaj, Bhimrao Ambedkar, Vinoba Bhave etc. were succeeded in the field of rooting out social superstitions and evils. Instilling a sense of identity among women and forcing the government to act tough against the evil practices prevalent at the time. Apart from all these great dignitaries, thinkers and social reformers like Mahadev Govind Ranade, Keshav Chandra Sen, Dadabhai Naoroji, Balkrishna Gokhale etc. had done important work to protect women's interests and create awareness about their rights.

In the recent period, many women litterateurs and poets, through their works, had attacked the various burning evil practices, pitiable condition of women in the society, etc. prevalent on that time society. Sarojini Naidu, Subhadra Kumari Chauhan, Mahadevi Verma, etc. played a special role among them. Savitri bai Phule (Born in 1831) had the distinction of being the first female teacher of India. People recognized her only as a teacher and dalit reformer, when in reality she was the first Indian feminist thinker of modern times. She started educating girls by opening many schools for them. At the same time, he raised his voice against the social injustice and atrocities committed against them while promoting women empowerment. Similarly, Dr. Anandi Gopal Joshi (1865-1887) and Kadambini Ganguly (1861-1923) were the first female doctors. Both of them had a degree in

European Medicine in 1886. Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar's 'Hindu Code Bill' was by this time the most powerful document of women's upliftment. Lakshmi Sehgal (chief of Rani Jhansi Battalion of The Azad Hind Fauj) also played an important role in motivating women.

Mahatma Gandhi was the leader among those who improved the condition of women; he had given the participation of the then women in the freedom struggle and inspired them to take over the battledore by crossing the boundary wall of the house. On his call, thousands of women came forward and all of them played an important role by participating in the nationalist movements like the Non-Cooperation Movement, the Civil Disobedience Movement, the Dandi March and the Quit India Movement.

Because of the tireless efforts of all the social reformers of this century, the British government had to enact acts to improve the condition of women. In 1829, with the efforts of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the practice of Sati was declared illegal. 'The Hindu Widow Remarriage Act' came into existence in 1856, the credit of which goes to Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. In 1872, the Native Marriage Act (Civil Marriage Act) was enacted to allow inter-caste marriages. The 'Age of Consent Act' was enacted in 1891 to ban child marriage. Under which it will be illegal for girls below the age of 12 years to marry.

This Act later became the foundation stone of the 'Sharda Act' (1929). Even after all this, there was no significant change in the situation of women from the practical point of view, because the then women themselves did not want freedom from the evils by accepting them as part of religion. However, various efforts made by various social reformers in the critical period were able to prepare the background for the positive changes that will happen in the future. The 1920s and 1930s saw the expansion of women's limited suffrage on parameters such as property, education and marriage. Subsequently, the Government of India Act, 1935 appointed one woman for every five men. This gave 41 reserved seats to women in the provincial legislature and limited reservation in the central legislature. Women also took advantage of this reservation. In the elections held in 1937, 10 women from general constituencies were demoted to 41 from reserved constituencies and 5 from provincial legislative councils. In this century, in terms of women's representation, it was the third largest percentage in the world.

By the 20th century, the condition of women began to improve. After independence, there was a radical change in the social, religious, educational, economic, political and judicial status of Indian women. In all the fields, women started participating in a big way. Her voice of opposition to women against the age-old suffering process had become louder. The present woman does not consider herself inferior to men. She has challenged beliefs as well as shook the moral world.

Today's women are redefining the husband, the family and their duty in a new way, from the real point of view, the entire credit for whatever improvement has taken place in the condition of women goes to the social reform movements. In the middle ages, only women

from the elite class could get education, but after independence, there were many improvements in the field of women's education. By coming into contact with education, Indian women became aware of traditional stereotypes and superstitions. She has started a movement demanding reservation, equal communal and political rights in the legislature. Due to the continuous increase in industry-wealth due to industrialization and urbanization, more employment opportunities have started to be available, due to which women do also have the opportunity to work. The woman who had been under men for ages has now become financially self-reliant. In the words of Dr. Arvind, The increase in urbanization has led to the increase in equality freedom among women, late marriage, inter-caste marriage, widow remarriage, etc. Urbanization has reduced the Purdah system largely and has changed the male mentality. The latest means of communication, such as print and electronic media, made Indian women a part of globalization. Now they are also directly influenced by global events, whether it is the West and American women's movement or the Taliban diktats of Muslim nations, freely reacting to everything. Doordarshan Cable TV Cinema and the Internet have taken women one step further from freedom to freedom. Originally in the first half of the 20th century, the freedom struggle provided a platform for women to participate in public life by freeing them from the confines of the boundary wall of the house. Today a woman wants to accept her husband not as a sovereign husband, God, but as a good companion. Now there has been a change in the image of a woman like weak, soft and petite.

The feminist movement, which began with the concept of women's salvation and equality, was confined only to providing education, some employment and healthcare to women. In the present context, if we look at the social condition of women, it will be clear that even today her condition is very pitiable. Even today, the birth of a son is being given more importance than the birth of a daughter, because of which the number of girls has started decreasing. The group ratio of boys and girls of 0-6 years in 2001 was 927 girls per 1000 boys, whereas in 2011 this ratio has come down to 918 girls per 1000 boys.

The social status of Indian women becomes clear like a mirror from the study done through 'Indian Human Development' Survey 2. In this study, 60 percent of the women (Hindus and Muslims) openly agreed that they had to be cover up or veiled. 96% of women in Rajasthan, 91% in Bihar and 6% in Tamil Nadu still wear veils or cover up in some form or the other. During the survey, 80% of the women admitted that they had to take permission from their family members and husbands to go to the hospital. 40% of women said they had no role in their own marriage, while less than 20% believed that they had known their husbands before marriage. In this survey, it was also revealed that on an average, a family has to pay Rs 30,000 in cash in the name of dowry, while 40% of the money has to be spent in the name of a car or scooter in marriage.

The women of our country have not only been victims of social backwardness but have also been suffering from the misery of discrimination in the economic sphere. In the above survey, it was observed that in 2011-12, less than 20% of women have land and property in their names, only 50% of women are able to decide to buy the essential household items. Indian Economy among other half" that Parasis Khambara Fellows C.S.D.S and Carl Iderfury on South Asian Affairs published in 2012 by the Center for Strategic and International Studies in the US, the former assistant foreign minister of the U.S. revealed that India has the world's second labor force of 47.80 million, of which only 24 percent are women. In the senior-most positions, only 5 percent of women in India are working, while on an average, 20 per cent of the women in the world are working in senior positions.

The 'Global Gender Gap' report, published by the World Economic Forum, studied and analyzed 153 countries in 2019-20 on topics related to women's economic and political participation. It was revealed in this report that India has slipped four steps below Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal to the 112th number as compared to 108 in 2018. Through

this report, it is also clear that the economic gender gap in our country is very deep and complex. Here the economic gender is much larger than the political gender. According to the 'Global Gender Gap' Report, India ranks 149th in the field of economic participation and opportunity for women and 117th in the field of providing equal wages after doing equal work. India has registered 112th position in educating women and 150th position in the field of health and survival. Keeping this report in view, it can be said that even today the situation of Indian women is noteworthy.

If the issue of political participation is considered, it will be known that the position of the women of our country in this area is still negligible. In 1952, the number of women in the first lower house was only 5 percent, while the number somehow increased to 11.3 per cent in 2014 and as such, in 2019, the figure increased to 12 percent. Today N.D.A. Out of the 64 ministers in the government, only six are serving as women ministers. According to the Economic Survey of 2017-18, only 9 percent of the 4,118 members in India are appointed on the post of MLA. While 14 percent of women are working as MLAs in Haryana, Bihar and Rajasthan, 13 percent in Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal and 12 percent in Punjab, on the other hand Nagaland, Mizoram and Pondicherry do not have a single woman legislator. At the same time, the number of women ministers is zero in eight states including the capital Delhi.

So far, only three women in India have been allotted important portfolios in the state governments, one of whom has been accommodated in departments like the Ministry of Home Affairs and two in the Finance Ministry. Looking at the global perspective, it would be clear that women have an average of 22.4 per cent in Parliament, while India has been able to secure 148 ranks out of 193 countries, representing only 14 per cent in the region. India ranks sixth among the seven countries of South Asian countries. Other countries are better represented in the political arena with women in their parliament than India. Such countries include Nepal (32.7%), Afghanistan (23.6%), Bangladesh (20.7%), Pakistan (20.2%) and Bhutan (14.9%), these statistics show that the role of Indian women in decision making related to politics is negligible.

Apart from all this, if the moral crisis were looked at, it would see that this crisis has become a curse not only for Indian women but also for women all over the world. Why is there so much hatred of men towards women? Violence against women has reached a terrible stage not only in India but all over the world. Manisha Valmiki of Uttar Pradesh was not only raped by four men, but also broke her spine and also chopped off her tongue. The soul trembles when hears this heart-rending incident. The only question that arises in the mind is that why women are finally subjected to such cruel atrocities. Because she is a girl?

In the above case, the matter of high or low caste does not come anywhere because such heinous crimes are committed even with upper caste women also. In this context, these lines of Taslima Nasreen prove to be succinct, "In the view of the male system, there is only one caste of girls, that is, the lower caste. That is why men of all castes, high and low, do not hesitate to rape or murder women."

The Nirbhaya gang-rape incident in 2012 brought people's attention to the sexual violence and brutal atrocities being committed against Indian women. On the special demand of the agitators who had agitated for justice for the victim, the 'Nirbhaya Act' was made, so that atrocities against women are stopped. But even after hanging the rapists by raising their voice, no better picture came in front of us and on the contrary even after this such cases are happening continuously. In fact, there is a more frightening male system than the death penalty. Because a man forgets the fear of death, but he does not forget the teachings of manhood at all. Carrying the terrible axe of sexual chastity in hand, our patriarchal society

gives rise to countless frustrations towards the female body by instilling an unusual feeling in everyone since childhood. Outside, the violation of moral boundaries is hidden by individuals within the family in response to the same society.

According to the National Crime Bureau, the cases of crimes against women such as molestation, rape, domestic violence, dowry harassment, etc., are increasing day-by-day rather than decreasing. The number of such incidents in 2012 was 2, 44,270 which increased by 26.7 percent to reach 3, 37,922 in 2013. Similarly, it increased to 3, 29,243 in 2015, it increased 3, 38,954 in 2016 and 3, 59,849 in 2017. Based on a 2019 NCRB report, it can be seen that there has been a percentage increase in crimes against women in India. In 2019, the rate of crimes against women per one lakh population was 62.4 per cent as compared to 58.8 per cent in 2018. Along with this, on an average, 87 rape cases were reported daily in India in 2019 and 4 lakh 5 thousand 861 cases of crimes against women were registered. According to a study of WHO in 2011, one woman is raped every 54th minute in our country. In addition, in report of the Centre for Development of Women says 42 women are raped every day in India.

The above facts create a very alarming situation regarding the safety of women. In view of these figures, it can be said that measures like 'Nirbhaya Act' are not effective in reducing or eliminating crimes against women. Here every person needs to understand that mere enactment of a law cannot solve a problem but there is also a dire need to implement that law with full force and until there is a change in the attitude of men, violence and crimes against women will continue to take place. However, it is regrettable that people flatly refuse to change their attitude towards women because they feel that enough changes have taken place in this area.

In fact, if social change has to be brought about, it will not be possible for a few thousand people out of a population of 130 crore to come forward, but for such a change, crore of people needs to come forward. It is a matter of great sadness that in the name of women's empowerment, women are talked about to be respected, honored and worshipped, but on their freedom is not even discussed with regard to power and equal rights. Highlighting the enormity of the heinous crimes against women, Subhash Setia writes, As long as the excesses related to sex continue to be linked with the 'dignity', 'modesty' and 'character' of the woman, women's empowerment and the dream of equality will not be fulfilled. The tendency to treat sexual relations as a synonym for 'character' is a big challenge to the self-respect of a woman.

In spite of all these challenges and inconsistencies, women are playing their own prestigious role in every sphere of life. The effect of education has improved its status and appearance. Today she is not lagging behind men in any field but is being able to get further ahead of her own merit.

Today, women are making their unforgettable place on the strength of their hard work and ability in various fields such as science, medicine, engineering, advocacy, business, computer and administration, as well as in the hard and complex departments such as army, police, air force, navy, women are also registering their important roles.

In the departments of cinema, advertising, art, drama, dance, Women are dominating in all areas like music and mass communication etc. But even after all this has happened, a

complex and burning question arises that even today young girls are raped, even women are beaten and burnt alive for dowry and women are forced to do dirty work and also widows and deities are mistreated so on. The birth of a girl child is unfavorable and alien is just a matter of giving money or charity, what are these achievements worth proud of in such a country? Therefore, this is the right time to discuss these issues.

The rich of multipliers, but the non-availability of opportunities, economic backwardness, mentally weak deemed and lack of participation in decision-making in social and political life, etc., are the reasons that are responsible for the present condition of women. It is only

through quick and positive solutions to these problems that steps can be taken towards the change of conditions. For which a continuous process of political, economic and social empowerment of women has to be initiated. At the same time, women's participation has to be structured in place of women's welfare. It is only by supplementing women empowerment and women's liberation that the desired goal is possible to be achieved.

After considering all the issues related to female identity, it is concluded that 'the female identity is basically a demand for the attainment of a woman's own independent existence and in this area she is also constantly striving.

Conclusion

It can thus be said that the way women are untidily discussing their independent existence and rights openly at the national and international level; it appears that they will achieve their rightful position in society as soon as possible. In this development journey, she will have to take men along with her not as her opponents but as an ally because in the absence of the cooperation and goodwill of men, she cannot be able to achieve her goal. In the society, both men and women are two sides of a coin. The life of the other without one is difficult. However, since ancient times, there has been considerable disparity in these two aspects. The patriarchal social system has always been dominated by men and women have been doing it as a follower.

In fact, in order to live an advanced life in the society, everyone needs an independent existence, but the biggest problem arises when the people of the so-called civilized society flatly refuse to accept the woman as a person. In such a situation, there is a question mark on his identity. Being a woman, she is subjected to all the restrictions on laughing, talking, walking, getting up, doing, etc., which play an important role in ending her existence. Women's identity wants her equality, freedom, respect and respect in the society and everything that has been dominated by men for centuries.

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