

STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIA

In the creation of mankind, the most prominent role has been played by the womenfolk. They give birth to children and bring them up with absolute love and affection. But India, for a long time, was not able to recognize the prestigious position that a woman should hold in a society. Women were just considered the 'gate to hell' and thus acted as slaves to their husbands.

However, in the Vedic Age, women were given an honourable place in society. Some women composed Vedic verses. They were allowed even to take part in Vedic rituals along with their husbands. They held the same position and prestige as men, depending upon their qualifications. They were not considered to be apolitical. Neither were they considered to be devoid of the practical knowledge, nor were they incapable. But with the revolution of the wheel to time, things began to change. The

position of women became worst when the Muslim raiders like Ghazni, Ghori, Tamerlane, Abdali etc. came one by one. The impotency of the reigning power gave them the opportunity to plunder wealth and exploit common people and their women. Slowly, women lost their dignified position in the society. With the coming of the British, the women of India were reduced to second grade citizens.

Inspired by political expediency, the British Government acted in a manner prejudicial to the interest of the Indian women. In collusion with the vested interest of the country, the Government looked down upon the women. They had no right to paternal property after marriage. Often, young girls were compelled to marry the person to whom she would have given the parental status. At that tender age, when the girl had no conception about the practical life and the realities, and that too, with a man of the age of her grandfather. Men, regulated by selfish motives, often used women as contrivances. Re-marriage of young girls, whose husbands died in the prime of life, had not the social sanction. Apart from the basic fact of conservativeness, it must be admitted with emphasis that prostitution reached a great height during that time. Women were forced to be burnt alive in the pyre of their husbands. The Indian women were subjected to all sorts of humiliation and were deprived of whatever was due to them, in the name of religion. However, the 19th century saw a great upheaval in the women freedom movement. The Indian Freedom Movement witnessed the active participation of women in politics manifesting the fact that women are not apolitical.

It is only when India became free and the people of India gave to themselves a constitution where a declaration was made that the state shall not discriminate against any citizen on ground of sex. The Constitution of India is the "Magna Carta" of India women. Indian women now enjoy equal opportunities with men in every walk of life, and India has been one of the leading countries in the promotion of women suffrage. However, there still exists certain evils which our legislation apart from their best attempts, has been unable to erase. One of these is the dowry system. For this, we need the preventive measures like social consciousness of our people and removal of backwardness among womenfolk.