



## Status of Women in Medieval Time & its Evolution on Relevance in Contemporary Times

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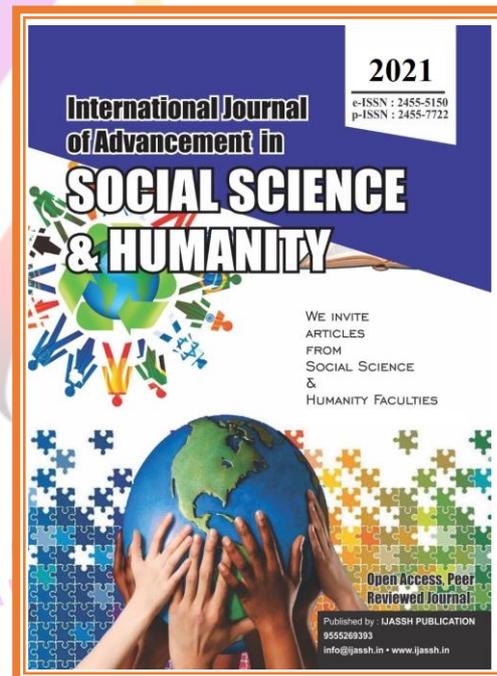
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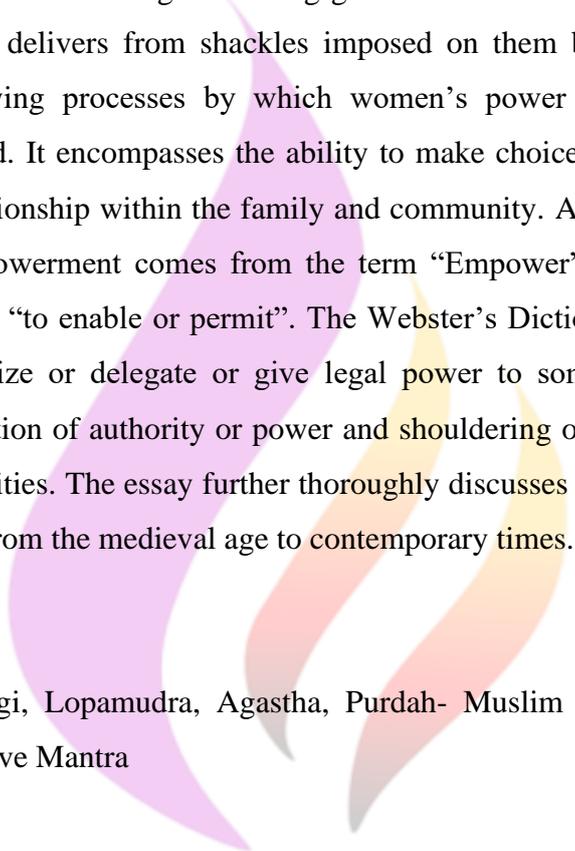


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**ABSTRACT**

Women's empowerment is a global issue in determining the status of women. The discussion on women's right is at the forefront of formal and informal campaigns worldwide. 2001 is declared as women's empowerment year by our country – India, as empowerment is a multidimensional process. The factors of full identity power, potentialities, capabilities and competencies enables the realization of one's rights and opportunities for development in all spheres of life. It consists of greater access to knowledge and resources, further leading to greater autonomy in decision making for having greater control over the circumstances that influence their lives. It delivers from shackles imposed on them by customs, beliefs and practices, further implying processes by which women's power of self organization is promoted and reinforced. It encompasses the ability to make choices, control resources and enjoy participatory relationship within the family and community. According to the Random House Dictionary, empowerment comes from the term "Empower" which means "to give power or authority" and "to enable or permit". The Webster's Dictionary describes the verb empower as "to authorize or delegate or give legal power to someone. "Empowerment" therefore means acquisition of authority or power and shouldering of greater responsibilities in several fields of activities. The essay further thoroughly discusses the evolution of Women Empowerment in light from the medieval age to contemporary times.

**Keywords:** Vedic, Gargi, Lopamudra, Agastha, Purdah- Muslim communities, epitomes, mantra, Guru- Hindu Love Mantra

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## INTRODUCTION

“Incredible change happens in your life when you decide to take control of what you do have power over instead of craving control over what you don't.”

**-Steve Maraboli**

Empowerment is based on the belief that people have the ability and wants to take more responsibility. It is also away to give leader a greater authority and responsibility to take care of the head of the public and to provide lower level of authority with the means for making influential decision. Empowerment closely aligns with the leadership.

India has been a male dominated society for several years. Looking back to the Vedic period (1500-1250 BC), the Vedas speak multiple volumes of women's highly fabricated status, among the intellectual female figures are Ghosha, Lopmudra, Sulabha Maitreyi and Gargi.

**Ghosha-** Ghosha has two entire hymns of the tenth book each containing fourteen verses assigned to her name in the vedas, which shows her wisdom.

**Lopmudra** – Lopmudra in the Rigvedas finds a place, born in a royal family and married to a sage Agasthya, who had a long conversation with the sage making him realize his duty of mainitng

equilibrium in both domestic and ascetic life.

**Maitreyi** - The Rigvedas contain about 1000 hymns, of which about 10 are dedicated to Maitreyi, a seer and philosopher who contributed towards the enhancement of her sage husband Yajnavalkya's personality and the flowering of his spiritual thoughts. She imparted the doctrine of the soul and his knowledge of attaining immortality.

**Gargi** - Gargi, the Vedic prophetess, composed several hymns that questioned the origin of all existence. When king Janak of Videha organized a 'brahmayajna'a philosophic congress centered around the fire sacrament, Gargi was the one of the eminent participants. She challenged the sage yajnavalkya with a volley of perturbing questions on the soul or 'atman' that confounded the learned man whose learnings had silenced many eminent scholars.

Medieval India sees some of the important women as Sita, Savitri, Draupadi and Razia Sultan, however the contemporary modern Indian times see important women as Kiran Muzumdar Shaw, Cchanda Kochar, Nita Ambani, Ma- Srihivasan, Kareena Kapoor, Sania Nehwal, etc.

## STATUS OF WOMEN IN MEDIEVAL TIMES

Numerous social activists and non-profit organizations have always tried to work on women empowerment to make their status respectable in the society. Many of the social reformers tried to strengthen and bring back women's glory in the ancient times through press and other preaching platforms. Women in India have always been a *topic of concern* since the ancient period. They are an exact example of perfect home-makers and working women as their incomparable quality of the calmness of mind easily handles even the toughest situations. In India, there were many reformists who have worked for women since long - to name a few are Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswarachandra Vidya Sagar, Swami Dayanad, Kandukuri Veersalingam, Duragabai Deshmukh, Jyotiba Phule and Ramaswami<sup>3</sup>.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy did well in establishing and convincing Viceroy Lord William Bentick, to announce the *sati system* as illegal and an inhuman act. In the patriarchal family and society of our country for centuries, the law of man in terms of women's role and behavior has been strongly adhered. India always tried to give women their status but have hardly succeeded to restructure the reactions of authority within the family or other

resources. For numerous political social and economic reasons the particularity of women's domination and exploitation and the role of the power stayed considerably unexamined and little attention was paid to bring an end to the oppression of women in our country. More than a few reformers tried their best to control the status of women; nevertheless, it was Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, who had been triumphant to influence the status of women in our country.

Although, many social activists and reformers carried their crusade against all social odds to restore honor and dignity to women, attitudinal disparities still hunt our rural masses. Despite pronounced social development and technological advancement, women in villages still continue to be the victims of exploitation, superstition, illiteracy, social abuse and atrocities.

Though, the Indian constitution provides equal rights and privileges for men and women and makes equal provision to improve the status of women in society, majority of women are still unable to enjoy the rights and opportunities guaranteed to them. Society has not yet succeeded in framing the required norms to enable them to fulfil the multiple roles that they are expected to play in India. The

constitutional provisions are hardly practiced.

## **SUBJECTS & METHODS**

### **Research and Methodology**

According to Kerlinger, “Research design is the plan, structure and strategy of investigation conceived so as to obtain answer to research questions and to control variance”. The methodology adopted by me for this research work was basically divided in to the following sectors:

#### **Primary data-**

The field visit, on different occasion to different blocks of Mandla District and at times to the villages gave me an opportunity to meet the women Sarpanch and also to closely watch them performing their daily responsibility as being the head of the Panchayat. Though, it was time consuming, still I thought it was better to get insight from depth.

#### **Questionnaires –**

A questionnaire is prepared keeping in mind the women sarpanch with questions focusing on their education, living condition, general awareness, their participation at the panchayat meeting, decision making factors, participation in the political party meetings, delivering speeches and overall their role in the function of the village panchayat and

implementation of government schemes. Mostly the questionnaires were design to have closed-ended questions.

## **RESULTS**

- Undertaking research and extension to improve current practices, increase output and incomes to eliminate adverse ecological aftereffects.
- Another major concern is the literacy among tribal girl child and high dropout rates at elementary and higher levels. The focus is needed on girl child, education, which includes context-specific traditional and innovative interventions. Launching of special and sustained education initiatives for tribal girl child is mandatory which will drive the literacy levels on high.
- Informing all the gram Sabha members including tribal women of all the functions, responsibilities and the power of gram Sabha is necessary.
- Encourage women’s organizations working among tribes and ensure the formation, stabilization and bank linkages of SHG have to promote viable micro-economic activities with substantial support in terms of credit and market.
- To increase the female participation at the community level and to give more

decision making power which is actually needed to understand the existing traditional pattern of tribal community. This will help in the formulation of more effective development policies and it will also help to bring out the lacunae lying within the present policies.

- Women should be provided equal opportunities for leadership training for their betterment.
- More research activities on women participation and decision making behavior should be encouraged.
- Priority shall be given to timely monitoring of the improvement in the status and the condition of tribal women. Ideally, it should not be evaluated on the basis of numbers, but it shall be identified with proper initiatives to monitor the progress of women empowerment.

## CONCLUSION

India was a colony of the British empire who attained freedom in the year 1947. Moreover, Britain, being the leader of democracy follows a constitution which is unwritten. The Indian constitution borrowed lot of things from the British constitution, however it is very surprising

that even in Britain, before 1918, only the male population was given the right to vote and women were not entitled to vote. It was only in 1918, the “Representation of People's Act” was passed and women met a property qualification which allowed them to vote. Moreover, due to the formulation of Franchise Act of 1928, women finally achieved the same voting right as men.

So, we find that women had to undergo a lot of disparity in the social, economic and political spheres, even in advanced and developed countries such as Britain. The constitution of Britain and India provides women with the “right to vote” and the “right to contest elections”. A fantastic illustration, followed by the above statement would be of Former Prime Ministers: Margaret Thatcher and Theresa May, and the impeccable Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, famously known as the ‘Woman of the millennium’. Leaving aside the case of a developing country, such as India, our research finds that the Indian democracy has grown slowly and gradually, further considering women to be an equal partner. As women cover half of the population today in India and across the world, they share an equal chance and opportunity, similar to what is provided to men.

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