

PLACE OF WOMEN IN WORLD'S SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to discuss briefly, about the place of women in world's society. For this, at first, the place of women in pre-history and in anthropology has been explained shortly. From pre-history and anthropology we can know that the society has given responsibility of maintenance of children to women, because they have the power of production of child. Then, the place of women in psychology, in theology and in ancient philosophy have been discussed with criticism. According to some psychologists and ancient philosophers, for natural cause women are weaker in physically and mentally than men, but some psychologists and philosophers have denied this opinion. After that, the important views of feminists regarding women's position in society have been analyzed briefly. Specially, the views of Simone de Bouvoir and Marry Wollstone Craft have been explained here. The feminists do not believe in sexual difference. According to them, there have physical difference between men and women, but there have no sexual difference. At last, the various systems of women's freedom movement have been discussed shortly. Then, it has been concluded, by explaining the present situation of women in first, second and third world countries.

Keywords: Women, Society, Feminism, Freedom, Movement, Equality.

INTRODUCTION

In the past, there was no difference between men and women. At that time, Men would accept women as real life-partner. The women were companion of men, in all aspect of life. When men first built society, then there were two types of family - one was mother centred and the other was father centred. In father centred family, there was all power in hand of father, but in mother centred family, all power was in hand of mother. Even, among tribes, who are till now in ancient position, in those families, there have mother centred system. But women's peak of achievement has been descended by the traditional development of civilization, culture and society. The modern society believes in supremacy of men. We accept men as first gender and women as

lower second gender. In this situation the inequality of men and women has been manifested. But, nowadays the society is accepting the equality between men and women. The society is not accepting the difference between men and women in economic, political and social aspect. The modern society of the world has understood the importance of equality between men and women.

Women in Pre-History and in Anthropology: It is true that, there is physical difference between men and women. But these kinds of similarity and dissimilarity between both, proof that they both are cursorily equal, because these are natural fact. There is no sexual division in nature. Man is a name of species, in which men and women both are included. From pre-historic and anthropological information we can know that the society has given responsibility of maintenance of children to women, because they have the power of production of child. In manifestation of agriculture-centred civilization the practical life of women have limited into the cordon of family. It has proved in anthropological research, that till now there have some tribes, in which the respect of women are not less than men. In society women are real associate of men in the struggle of maintaining of life.

Women for Psychologists: According to some psychologists, for natural cause women are weaker in physically and mentally than men. Such as Dr. Charles Meigs wrote in 1847 that women's brain are smaller than men's brain. So women are not skillful in intellectual or meditative work. Dr. Edward Clarke also said in his book "Sex and Education" that various reverses take place for giving chance women in education like men. But in 1877 Dr. Mary Putnam Jacobi had refuted above opinion depending on scientific research. Scientifically she proved that women are not weaker in physically or intellectually than men. In 1903 Helen Woli proved that, in mental ability sexual discrimination is irrelevant. In meditative work men and women are equal. Psychologist Frued also discussed women's mental world. But his opinion was superstitious, because he discussed his opinion from men's angle of vision.

Women for Theologists and for Ancient Philosophers: Ancient Indian theology and philosophy did not accept equal right of woman with man in society. Women had no right in Veda, as well as in education and in property. In various theology and in ancient Indian and western philosophy it is said that, women's all works are due to fulfillment of men's requirement. According to Aristotle, the rational soul is absent in slaves, it is not found in children, and it is inactive in women. Also, for medieval philosopher St. Augustine, women are not the embodiment of God, they are incomplete animal, because women are less spiritual. For Augustine, only men are created as embodiment of God. Actually he thinks that, the embodiment of God is connected with a special logical viewpoint. For him, women are naturally emotional,

so their social position is like this. Men are very dominant and logical. So, for women's internal limitation, they are situated in our society, only as assistant of men's action.

Aristotle's follower, another medieval pope and philosopher was St. Thomas Aquinas. For both of them, by nature women are inferior to men. So, women's own nature is the cause of their lower position in society. According to Aristotle, for physical structure women are inferior to men. Similarly, going one step ahead, Thomas Aquinas says that, women should be lowered place in our society, because they are the creator of all sins. But the feminist philosophers, who accept the man and woman in society as equal, they criticize and deny the above viewpoint of Aristotle.

Moreover, famous French philosopher Rousseau said about freedom for all, except the women. For him, by nature, women are inferior in our society. Naturally women are mother, only they can give birth of a child, and for this, they are dependent on men. According to Rousseau, specially for sexuality, women are dependent on men. But, although by nature women are very bashful, even then, in respect of social welfare they should practice sexual abstinence. But, a French feminist philosopher Sarah Kofman has strongly criticized this view of Rousseau. Most of the feminists have criticized Rousseau as woman hater. In above view, from one side Rousseau has said women as bashful, and from other side he has said women to practice sexual abstinence. So, according to Kofman, the above view of Rousseau is self-contradictory.

In 1869, British philosopher John Stuart Mill wrote in his book "On Subjection of Women" against the women hater philosophers. He fully denied that, women are naturally inferior to men. He did not accept that, women are intellectually weaker than men. For him, actually due to prevalent custom, law system and for weak education of women, the position of women has become low in our society. The women have no way to choose in their life without the marriage, that's why, they don't get equal right in politics and in law. According to Mill, without political and constitutional right, the development of women's such situation is never possible.

Women for Feminists: The women, who have strongly criticized the women haters, or the women who have taken main role in women's freedom movement, or the women who have supported this feminist movement, are known as feminist. The various social and national theories of feminist movement, is called feminism. The feminists do not believe in sexual difference. According to them, there have physical difference between men and women, but there have no sexual difference. Feminists have focused us to the difference between two English word - 'sex' and 'gender'. The word 'sex' means organic difference between men and women. But our society has explained this discrimination in different way. Society tells us that men and women are totally different. They are differed from physically, mentally, habitually and

professionally. Thus, our society has created sexual or gender discrimination. That means the society has created gender.¹

Our society see the female not as a man, but as a separate sex/gender different from male, because we can see that our society has bounded the women in household work. In some profession the women has no right to work. Some specific professions have been confined only for them. This called sexual discrimination. There have no difference between male and female except physical structure. So, for women different field of action and to them separate expectations etc. are meaningless. If we want to bring equality between male and female, then we have to accept both of them only as man.²

1) View of Simone de Bouvoir: In modern age, a great feminist Simone de Bouvoir placed feminism newly, in her famous book “The Second Sex”. To her, in society the acquaintance of women is that, she is not men. Only men are self-controlled, free or different. Women are as not self-controlled, as dependent. In our society as a dependent woman are being or oppressed by men. According to Bouvoir, responsibility in maintenance of children are also physical weakness of women, which preventing her to be independent. But our society is giving more importance on above attribute of women. Women have to decide what are the value of these attributes. Only then they will be able to be independent or free. Originator of historical realism Marx also accepted that, women were oppressed. But he has searched the cause of this situation of women in social system. According to him, without the eviction of capitalism there will be no end of any persecution.

According to Bouvoir above opinion of Marx is not acceptable, because there is no relation between capitalist social system and persecution of women. To Bouvoir, Psychologist Frued's view also is not acceptable, because he discussed his opinion from men's angle of vision. Bouvoir thinks that women will be able to get freedom by their own endeavor. For this we need economic freedom. For this they have to go out from the narrowness of family, and they have to be employed in various professions. The women have to be more conscious about society, because they have to take important role in social change. For this, they have to struggle, because this society will not give the women this right easily.

2) View of Marry Wollstone Craft: In 1792, Marry Wollstone Craft, a famous feminist of England, published her famous book “Vindication of the Rights of Women”. In that book she

¹ “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.” - The Second Sex, Simone de Bouvoir.

² “We must assess people as individuals, not merely lump them into ‘female’ and ‘male’ if we are to find out what they are really like.” - Practical Ethics, Peter Singer.

remarked that, females are also naturally intellectual and rational like males.³ According to her, the society makes them as irrelevant. For her, it is not true that, women's existence is due to men's satisfaction. She has strongly criticized this opinion. It has been demanded by her that, like men, women are also worthy to get facilities in education, in politics and in various works. She organized a movement for women, in 19th century, in demand of equal chance with men, in the right to vote. In 1898, Charlette Perkins Gilman, said in his book "Women and Economics" that, without being freed from home and family, women's freedom is impossible. Women are dependent on men, only for their familial work. In 1920, Unites States of America has accepted women's right to vote, through the 19th amendment of constitution. In 19th century, in India, at the age of renaissance of Bengal, the situation of women became developed. Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and Raja Rammohan Roy circulated women's education and widow's marriage in 20th century. Thus, through women's education and widow's marriage, there started establishment of women's own right.

Women's Freedom Movement : In our classified society, major part is humiliated and exploited. Due to finish various social absorption and humiliation, various social and political revolutions have been happened in our society in different times. But these revolutions did not change the position of women of our society, because the change of women's position was not the aim of these revolutions. In the sake of change of social and economic situation, a part of women started movement actively and unitedly. The time of this movement was 17th century. This movement is called as women's freedom movement or feminist movement. The aim of this feminist movement was the termination of inequality, in relating to the right of education and work, between men and women, and to the right of participation in various outer work. As the basis of this movement, the feminists have distinct social and national theory. These theories of feminist thinkers is known as feminism.

On the other hand, by 'feminism', we may mean various systems of women's freedom movement. There have some difference between western feminism and Indian feminism. Instead of these differences there have some similarity between western and Indian feminism. Depending on that similarity all freedom movement of women in the world can be divided into five classes. These are - *i) Conservatism, ii) Neo-Conservatism, iii) Liberal Reformism, iv) Radicalism, v) Ultra Radicalism*. These opinions are explained briefly -

1) Conservatism: According to this view, naturally women sacrifice themselves in maintenance of family. According to this theory, home and family are the best place of women. As a result, gradually the place of women in society has depended on men. For this, sexual discrimination

³ "There is no 'sex in the souls'." - Vindication of the Rights of Women, Marry Wollstone Craft.

has been occurred and also the society has been ruled by men. This image of women is accepted in the culture of men and society. It has been reflected on social behavior of men.⁴

2) Neo-Conservatism: According to this opinion, we have to give the women opportunity in higher education. Except education, we have to think about keeping good health for women. Also, we have to accept the place of women in larger field of action of society. These types of changes in conservative schools have come from the development of science and modernization of society. Although, the supporters of neo-conservatism think that, women's role in maintenance of family is greater than the role in larger field of action.

3) Liberal-Reformism: According to this theory, depending on the line of thinking of liberal reformists, there have come many changes in women's place in modern world. According to liberal reformists, these changes in our society, depending on women's place, will come through the constitutional indication and through the discussion of various world-organization. Various organization of united states are trying to bring equality between men and women.

4) Radicalism: According to this view, the cause of intemperance in women, is the class system of society. This view is actually influenced by the idea of Lenin. Women do not participate in generating system of capitalist society. They are always engaged in the work of fertilization of child, maintenance of child etc. According to Radicalists, for freedom of women need socialisation of household work and end of capitalism. Except these, women need unobstructed freedom in the field of marriage and in fertilization of human. For all of these need a revolution.

5) Ultra Radicalism: According to this theory, the history of mankind is the history of men's rule and women's repression and absorption. Cause of this absorption is the system of women's child production, maintenance of child and with these women's emotional life. According to Ultra Radicalists, cause of women's repression and absorption is our family. In this type of family women are bound to be powerless. So without eviction of family the freedom of women is impossible.

CONCLUSION

In the world, countries are divided into three classes - first world countries, second world countries, and third world countries. America and west European countries are included in first world. These countries of first world are more developed. Previous Soviet Union and East European countries are included in second world. Africa and undeveloped countries of Asia are

⁴ "When men are oppressed it is tragedy, when women are oppressed, its a tradition." - Barnadette Mosala(famous feminist of South Africa).

included in third world. The situation of woman in third world is very bad. Because, they do hard work in family and also in out of family. They nourish child and also do hard work in field. In other hand the women of second world country demand equal ownership in different section of society. They think, nourishment of child is the vital duty in society. They also do various work in out of family.

But the position of first world's woman is comparatively better, because today they are the proprietor of worldly property. Although, in those countries the womanly movement did not over till now, because those women want to attain more power, more consent in higher stratum of life and equal possession with man in higher stratum. Therefore, till now, the inequality between men and women is unresisted. In various countries, there have no right to vote for women. In United States of America, there have some difficulties till now, to be a woman president. Even, till now, the women do not get permission in various profession. But, in U.N.O., it has been declared that, the year 1975 is "International Women's Day". In India, on 15th January 1998, a bill has been put up in parliament as 84th amendment of constitution, regarding the reservation of sit for women in parliaments and in legislative assemblies. Thus, the importance of women has been accepted in the development of countries. Actually, no inequality is supportable in the universal growth and development of the world.

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