

Comparison between status of women in Hindu society and Muslim society

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Abstract

Women in India are worshipped in the form of goddess. These are given great importance in society. It is believed by Hindus and Muslims both that women are important aspect of men's life. Still there were many norms and practices in Hindus and Muslims which degraded women. Women were not actually respected in homes; they were always cursed with harsh words by men. Although in Hindus and in Muslims women were being considered subservient to men but this status can be compared in society. Muslim women in India do not even enjoy the same status as men of Muslim society. They are being discriminated against men. Same is the case of Hindu women, but now with the changing society and mindset of Hindu people women enjoy far better status in society than before. Laws of both the communities have changed now but the implementation is effectively done in Hindu society than in Muslim society.

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Introduction

Women are the torchbearers of the society. The nation is considered educated if the women of that nation are educated, because these women have the ability to transfer the morals, values and zeal to study to the next generation. Women are important part of our society which enables the mental growth of the population. As in the people have accepted the fact that women are equal to men then the society is on the right path, but if they have not accepted that women are equal to men, then these people need some more education to understand the fact that all are equal in the society because man and women are two wheels of the vehicle and both need to be on the same path otherwise the society will be unequal. Women in India , till today are wholly not considered as equal to men but still the government and people are putting their efforts to cut down these differences between men and women. Here, women from different cultures and religions face different problems of equality. Different religions have different customs and rights specified which clearly indicates that there is inequality done to women. These inequalities are not only in one particular religion but almost in every religion in India. Government of India and people are putting their collaborative effort to curb down these problems faced by women in society.

Efforts taken by government

Our constitution has equal status to women. Article 14 of the constitution states equality before law, as every citizen of India is equal in the eyes of law. There is no discrimination which is being followed by the courts in matters of justice. Article 15 states that there should be no discrimination on grounds of sex, caste, colour, etc. Indian government has also given reservation to women so that there are equal opportunities to women and they can excel in their fields. There are also various other programmes which is being initiated by the government of India to curb the issue of status of women in society.

But after all this, the status of women in society is still not in a good position. Indian men still consider themselves superior to women in every aspect but the reality is a woman is no way behind men in any aspect of. These differences are even visible in different communities as each community has their rights and rituals which are to be followed by the people of their community. Customs and rituals are different for men and women.

Status of women in muslim society

As we proceed with this topic the first and the foremost thing which comes to our mind is the restrictions faced by Muslim women in India. But that is not the case, as there are many Muslim families now which have allowed their children to study without any discrimination

between a boy and a girl as now they are also getting educated and so they understand the concept of equality. But these families are very less in number. By observing around , we can analyse that the condition of women is not equal to men in any aspect , not in terms of rights , education , choice whom to marry , what to do. All the Muslim women are not like these, there are some Muslim women who are more educated and have got all the rights. From the birth itself, girl child suffers serious problems in Muslim community. There are certain things which men forces on their women. It is of great importance in today's scenario where everybody has a right what to do and what not to do. There are certain matters which are important for both husband and wife to decide mutually but in these matters also, women do not enjoy their right to take decision. These matters are of divorce, maintenance, marriage (Nikah) etc.

Age of marriage

Girls cannot marry anytime when they wish to. Marriage is concept where both the husband and the wife have to live together and understand each other. But under Muslim law, there is no age bar decided for girls to marry. Girls can eligible for marriage for they attain puberty. At the time of puberty, girls are not mature enough to understand the binding contract of marriage (Nikah) and they are neither able to give their consent to marry someone. When the girl who gets married is not mature enough and getting pregnant in near future would affect her health. Here the status of women is not considered by the people of community and they need to understand as this is the important factor which affects the status of women in Muslim society.

Polygamy

The foremost purpose of Nikah is the procreation of children and that is why Muslim men are allowed to marry fourwomen at a time. Quran says the husband has to maintain his each wife equally and if he is not able to maintain each wife equally then he should marry only one women. This right of marrying fourwives is only given to men and there is no such right given to women, they can marry only one husband at a time and if a women gets married to another men during the lifetime of her first husband then she would be charged with the offence of Bigamy under Section 494 of Indian Penal Code and the children born out of that relationship would be considered as illegitimate child. Here also the right is being given to the husband. The sole purpose of having four wives is that, at the time of mensuration of first wife, the husband should have another woman for her pleasure and so this is disrespecting the first wife. This is the serious cause and now it should be banned as it is seriously affecting the status of women in Muslim society as men are not considering women equal to them.

Consent of marriage

Although according to law it is said that girl should give their consent to the marriage as in Muslim marriage there is offer and acceptance. In reality, girls do have not right to give consent to the marriage because at the age of 12 years or 15 years after the age of puberty , these girls are not mature enough to give consent. This is a sheer reality in India that Muslim women are getting married at very early in their life and are not happy in their life.

The Aim of marriage

The only essential purpose of Nikah is sexual intercourse between the husband and wife. The wife has to just satisfy his husband. The sexual pleasure of the boy is the main reason for him to get married. Here also, women just act like an object for his husband and there is nobody who asks for the consent of the wife or sexual pleasure of the woman. The aim is very vague and depicts the mental status of community.

Status of women in hindu society

In India, the status of women does not differ even in Hindu society. In Hindu society also the women does not enjoy equality. Men are considered superior to women and they have right which women are not enshrined with. Women in Hindu society are bind by certain rituals and customs which are not necessary in today's society .Along with the customs and rituals even the law, Hindu law is discriminatory and there are certain provisions which are inferior to women.

Again, when the constitution provides that there should be equality and no discrimination on the grounds of sex, Hindu women are being discriminated in various spheres of their life and these women are so gentle by their nature that now they have accepted the reality of this society and are living without any complains. In Hindu religion, people worship goddess but at their homes the boys or the husband or the son do not give them enough respect which they deserve and considers them subservient.

Again the reality of the status of women in Hindu society is that still people don't prefer to have a girl child , lack of education in girls , laws of succession , inheritance etc. These laws are framed in such a manner which does not give a women equal footing in society.

Factors which leads to diminishing status of women in Hindu society

Purpose of marriage

According to section 5 of Hindu Marriage Act, the purpose of marriage is procreation of children. Women are just being considered for giving birth to the child. This idea and mindset

of people should be changed so that the purpose of marriage should be changed as it is demeaning to the status of women who is just there for procreation of children.

Right of adoption

A married woman does not enjoy the right to adopt a child if she wants to. On the other hand, husband has the right to adopt a child but with the consent of wife. In this aspect also women do not enjoy equal position to men and are considered subservient to men. In this aspect also, women should be considered equal and now they should also be given equal status and equal right to men.

Inheritance

Earlier, daughters did not have a right to inherit their father's property. This right was only enjoyed by son. Hindu society have always discriminates between boy and a girls. Also married woman do not have share in their father's property, she is considered dependent on either her husband or his father.

Status of women in other nations

Muslim majority nation

Pakistan

Pakistani women are still not privileged to have equal position to men in society. Women are still subservient to men. There exists a patriarchal society and therefore all the important decisions are taken by the men in the family. However, in big cities like Karachi, Islamabad, Lahore, girls are at the privileged end and enjoy if not equal but a nearly equal position to men. But this condition only prevails in big cities. In other parts of Pakistan, the condition does not seem in resemblance with the big cities. In other parts of Pakistan there are certain other prevailing customs like child marriage, marriage with Quran, lack of education etc. Pakistan has highest number of child marriages; this gives the risk to the health of the women who gets pregnant. Either the condition of the women suffers or the child born dies at an early stage or has serious health problems. Pakistan has highest number of infant mortality rate in Asia. Literacy rate for women is also very poor. It does not facilitate colleges and schools of good condition everywhere, they are just prevailing in big cities and only few people can afford education there. However, in the year 2010 President Asif Zardari passed the bill for the protection against harassment of women in workplace.

Iran

In the western world, women in Iran have alike position as in Pakistan. Although Iran is more developed than Pakistan and it can be witnessed in the presentation of women in society.

Women in Iran are allowed to study but different Universities have different subjects with respect to women. Subjects which help women grow have been embedded in the Universities. With respect to the workplace, Women are at liberty to work outside but subject to the permission of husband, there if the profession and the decision of the wife is striking the respect of the family, then husband can deny his wife to work outside..Under Article 1117 of the Civil Code, an Iranian man can ban his wife from working if he believes this would be “incompatible with the interests of the family or with his or his wife’s dignity”.In the matter of politics, in totality there are 240 seats in Iran, out of which only 9 seats have been positioned with women. Although women have the right to be in politics, still they are deprived of opportunities and equal support from the society and still there is need for immense change in the perspective of the society.

The dress code of women in Iran is not easy to handle for all the women who live in modern world. They always have to wear headscarf and a long overcoat. Notwithstanding anything given in culture, women should be given liberty to decide for their own clothing. Thus, women in modern world should be educated enough to know her rights should have a voice, if anything goes against her wish.

Hindu majority nations

India

Land of diverse religions, culture,etc. India is a country where the status of women has changed from worse to better. Earlier, there were various practices in India which were followed which contended women to the lower position, subservient to men. Sati, Pardahsystem, way and types of clothes, these are the things which were to be followed by women without their viewpoint. With respect to men in society they were always allowed to follow their dreams and enjoyed liberty with whatever they were doing. From the less educated women and not knowing about their rights, women in India has travelled a long way to achieve their status in society , what it is today. Today, the structure of women has come a long way. Today, literacy rate of women of 60%. Women are now more educated, and with respect to this education woman has grown themselves in various aspects like politics, their freedom, culture. With the higher status of women, new laws are being framed so that women can also enjoy equal status with men.

Now, daughters also get equal share in property of his father. This new provision was added in 2005 in Hindu succession Act, 2005. In Muslims, guidelines has been given by Supreme Court to illegalize Triple Talaq which a curse for Muslim women in society. Although, there is a provision of equality in Constitution, but still the provision clause says that, there can be

reservation and special laws be made for women so as to give equal opportunities to women. In politics also, every High position has been held by women, whether President, Prime Minister, Speaker of Lok Sabha, Leader of opposition etc. Now women in India are participating and getting equal to men.

Nepal

A Hindu dominated society Nepal, still has not been able to come along with respect to status of women. Although Constitution of Nepal grants equal opportunities to women education, still the vicious circle of Patriarchal society has engulfed women in it. Education is also subject to class, richer girls study, but poor girls are not getting enough opportunities to study and they are lagging behind in society. Measures are being taken by the government to curb this gap between men and women, and it is getting successful in near future. In 2002, daughters get equal share in the property of their father, but they do not enjoy this right after their marriage, as after that they share the ownership with their husbands. Also, women got the right to divorce which was earlier not granted. Again, children can get their citizenship enrolled in the name of his /her mother. These changes help women to acquire a better status in society.

Comparison between hindu women and muslim women

Education

Literacy rate of women Hindu is better than Muslims. Jains, Buddhists, Hindus all have higher literacy rate of women than Muslims. Jains have 86.42 %, Buddhists have 71.83 %, Sikhs have 67.50 % Hindus have 48.67 % educated women in their community. According to data Muslims have the lowest female literacy rate which is 43.34%. Education helps women to aspire and become a better person in future with respect.

Age of Marriage

According to Hindu law, section 5 clause 3, girl should be of 18 years of age to get married legally. However, in Muslims this age is not defined, they can get legally married after they attain puberty. In today's world, girls are attaining the age of puberty at just 12 or 13 years which is a very small age to get married. Girl is not mature to get married in such a young age and because of these reasons our society is still a developing one. Status of women in Muslim community should be higher with the changing environment and they should change this provision and get decide about the age of the girl for marriage.

Clothing

In Muslim society women are not allowed to wear clothes according to their own comfort. Their culture doesn't allow them to show their body skin not even their nails. However, this much has not been followed up today, but still they wear Burkah, which is a kind of Pardah system and it still prevails in Muslim society in India. This should be changed and girls should be allowed to wear cloths according to their comfort. However, in Hindu society girls are at ease to wear anything they wish to, but this is also the storyline of only girls who live in cities. In Villages, many Hindu families do not allow their girls to wear clothes which they wish to wear.

Right to property

With respect to right to property, Hindus and Muslims women both have almost the same rights to inherit. Hindu daughter gets equal share in the property of her father, but that does not devolve after her marriage. After marriage also, she is being entitled to the same property. Nevertheless, in Muslim society, this right of the daughters gets devolved after their marriage and they acquire equal share in the property of their husband. Muslim women gets 1/8 share after the demise of their husband, but in Hindus the property gets equally divided between children and the wife.

Conclusions and suggestions

Women should be given equal status in society whether in Hindu society or in Muslim society. Both the community members should amend their laws with the changing society and women should be considered equal to men. Women should be given equal rights same as men. Constitution has guaranteed Right to equality without any discrimination but still in the Personal laws of Hindus and Muslims discriminate between men and women. Women did not get same rights as men in these personal laws.

Thus, there should be amendment in the personal laws where equal rights should be given to women. There should be various programs which should be initiated by the government to make people aware about the status of women in society. They should not be looked down upon instead should be considered equal. Age of marriage should be fixed at a certain age at which the girl is mature enough to get married. This age bar should be decided for all the girls irrespective of their religions. Hence, women are not less than men in any manner and so should not be discriminated in any manner.