

Advancement In The Status Of Women: “Analysing The Turning Point In US, UK, India & China”

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Abstract

The aim of this article is on the one hand, to draw up a conclusive point regarding the issue whether advancement is taking place regarding the status and position of women in US, UK, INDIA & CHINA or the efforts being taken in these countries are going in vain, and on the other hand, to draw attention to the paradoxical effects of the enactments or other steps that are being taken into account regarding the diversity of the realities women are experiencing. In conclusion, it raises the possibility of changes in gender relationships, where there are, and will continue to be, fewer women than men, particularly in adulthood.

Keyword: Women, Status, Rights

Introduction

“You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women”. Jawaharlal
Nehru

Most studies on feminism relate to an economic explanation as an intervention. Famous social scientist Mayoux asserts that microfinance for women has played a major role in feminism and it plays an important function in poverty alleviation and improvement in the status of women. Men and women are the two holes of a perfect whole. Strength is born of their union their separation results in weakness. Such that one has what the other does not have, each completes the other. The status of women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few years. From a largely unknown status in the ancient times through the law points of the medieval period to the promotion of equal rights by many reformers. The history of women in India has been eventful.

In Hindu Mythology it is wisely said “God lives where women is respected”

In United States

The Hawaiian saying: "The Future is guided by our Past" leads us to our commitment to support the programs of the United Nations for the advancement of women and gender equality.

President Bill Clinton has made women's issues an important part of his agenda. He has placed women in high office in his Administration, sought equal opportunity for women throughout the labor force and encouraged greater participation of women in business.

"No country can get ahead if it leaves half of its people behind. That is why the United States believes gender equality and peace that's why investing in women and girls worldwide is critical to US foreign Policy" - secretary of State John Kerry¹.

The Obama Administration has made advancing the status of women and girls a natural element of US Foreign Policy as articulated in 2010 Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review and the Department of States policy guidance on promoting gender equality to achieve our National Security and Foreign Policy Objectives. Further president Obama signed a Presidential Memorandum on gender equality, ensuring that an Ambassador at large for Global Women's issue will continue to play a leading role in U.S. efforts to advance women's rights around the world.²

US developed the First National Action Plan (NAP) on women peace and security;³ it also released the first US strategy to prevent and respond to gender based violence globally⁴. The Department of State's Office of Global Women's Issues (S/GWI), helped launch the women in Public Service Project.⁵

Another notable Administration activity to promote the advancement of women has been undertaken by the United States Agency for International Development. USAID has begun a Women's Political Participation and Legal Rights Initiative overseas to overcome limitations on women's legal rights. AID sponsored programs include Political Leadership Training, Civic and Voter Education, Technical Training and Leadership Services, and Non-Government Organization Capacity Building. All of these efforts are designed to give women greater access to government and to governing, and to show women around the world ways in which they can determine their destiny. Thus, both in domestic policy and foreign policy, the Clinton Administration has stressed the importance of women's causes and of improving conditions at work and at home for women everywhere. As the roles of women evolve in our society and in other societies, it is clear that the beginning of the next millennium will see far more opportunities for women than they have known in modern history. The United States expects to be in the vanguard of ushering in these opportunities.

The United Nation's Population Fund (UNFPA) [lists various aspects of empowerment](#) that are central to improving the status of women and girls:

Reproductive health: The ability of women to control their own fertility is fundamental to women's empowerment and equality. When a woman can plan her family, she can plan the rest of her life.

1 Fact Sheet, Office of the Spokesperson Washington, DC March 8, 2013

2 January 30, 2013

3 2011

4 August, 2012

5 December, 2011

Protecting and promoting her reproductive rights including the right to decide the number, timing and spacing of her children is essential to ensuring her freedom to participate more fully and equally in society. For both physiological and social reasons, women are more vulnerable than men to reproductive health problems. Collectively, complications of pregnancy or childbirth are the number two killer of women of reproductive age. Failure to provide information, services, and conditions to help women protect their reproductive health constitutes gender-based discrimination and is a violation of women's rights to health and life.

Economic empowerment: Six out of 10 of the world's poorest people are women. Economic disparities persist partly because much of the unpaid work within families and communities falls on the shoulders of women and because women continue to face discrimination in the economic sphere.

Educational empowerment: About two thirds of the world's illiterate adults are women. Lack of an education severely restricts a woman's access to information and opportunities. Conversely, increasing women's and girls' educational attainment benefits both individuals and future generations. Higher levels of women's education are strongly associated with lower infant mortality and lower fertility, as well as better outcomes for children.

Political empowerment: Gender equality cannot be achieved without the backing and enforcement of institutions. But too many social and legal institutions still do not guarantee women equality in basic legal and human rights, in access to or control of resources, in employment or earnings, or in social or political participation. And men continue to occupy most positions of political and legal authority. Globally, only 22% of parliamentarians are women. Laws against domestic violence are often not enforced on behalf of women.

In United Kingdom

The UK Government believes that all girls and women have the right to live free from discrimination and violence and to fulfil their potential. Women's greater economic independence and participation is crucial to gender equality and global development. The UK has prioritised this at home and overseas.

Victorian women had a few Civil and Political Rights. A wife in UK had to act as directed by her husband, who was the protector and advisor until 1884 a wife was officially listed as one of her husband's possession. Victorian women were also expected to live up to an image of the perfect being beautiful and loving. With the progress of 19th Century, women were given the right to vote in local elections. But by 1900 they still did not have a parliamentary vote. In 1866 petition signed by 1,500 women asking for the right to make a parliamentary vote was filed, they were ignored. In the early 20th Century there were two main groups active in the campaign for women's suffrage, a term used to describe the right to vote. From peaceful campaigning to militant tactics, the fight for women's voting rights lasted many years. Their goals were achieved with full equality with men, in 1928.

Violence against girls and women in all its forms is an abhorrent crime and must be eradicated. In the UK, they have introduced domestic violence protection orders and measures allowing women to check their partner's criminal history. They criminalised forced marriage and female genital mutilation and they are clamping down on online sexism and abuse as well.

In India

The position of women in ancient India has been a very complicate one because of the paradoxical statement in different religious scriptures and sometimes in the same teat at different places. Some have described their status as “equal to men; while others have held not only in disrespect but even in positive hatred.

During the period of British rule of about 200 years⁶ some substantial progress was achieved in eliminating inequalities between men and women in matters of education, employment, social and property rights and so forth. The most significant legislations passed during the British period relating to the problems faced by Indian women:-

- ➔ Abolition of Sati Act 1813
- ➔ The Hindu Widow Remarriage Act, 1856
- ➔ Civil Marriage Act, 1872
- ➔ Married Women's Property Act, 1874
- ➔ The Child Marriage Restraint Act (Sharda Act), 1929
- ➔ Hindu Law of Inheritance Act, 1929
- ➔ Hindu Women's Right to Property Act, 1939 etc.

The path towards total gender empowerment is full of potholes. Over the years women have made great strides in many areas with notable progress in reducing some gender gaps. Yet realities such as 11,332 women and girls getting trafficked every year, and increased practice of dowry, rape and sexual harassment hit hard against all the development that has taken place. Thus, if on one hand women are climbing the ladder of success, on the other hand she is mutely suffering the violence afflicted on her by her own family members. As compared with past women in modern times have achieved a lot but in reality they have to still travel a long way. Women may have left the secured domains of their home, but a harsh, cruel, exploitative world awaits them, where women have to prove their talent against the world who see women as merely vassals of producing children. The Indian women has to make her way through all the socialized prejudices against her, and the men yet have to allow and accept the women to be equal participants in the country's way forward.

In China

“I do not think that men and women are on an equal footing. I live in a world dominated by men, and I sense this impalpable pressure every day. It's not that men don't respect us. My husband cooks for me and does a lot around the house, but I still feel male chauvinism in the air. In truth, men do not really consider us to be their intellectual equals. Cao Chenhong, senior manager in a Beijing company.

Chinese women's political and social status has risen steadily over the past decade, but they still face serious obstacles.China's past is critical to understanding the role of women in China today. In imperial China, women assumed a relatively subordinate position to men. The power of women in China did not generally extend beyond the homely affairs. In the period between the end of the Qing dynasty in 1911

6 Early 18th Century to the 1st half of 20th Century

and the founding of the People's Republic of China⁷, the role of women in Chinese society began to change dramatically.

The United Nation Development Programmes Human Development Report (2010) gave china a "Gender Equality Ranking" of 38, just below the US (37) and far above Brazil (80) another member of the "Big Four". The central government sector, and since 2008, it has actively encouraged local govt.'s to employ more women in leadership positions. Since the founding of the people's republic in 1949, the population of employed women has risen constantly. The rural economic restructuring conducted since the end of 1970s, uncashed the immense labour potential of women.

In March 1992, the UN decided to hold the fourth World conference on women in Beijing, the capital of China. This has around greater world attention on the status of Chinese women.

At the same time, the Chinese government is highly aware that, restricted by the country's limited level of economic and social development, especially in the process of economic restructuring and in establishing and improving a socialist market economic system, China is confronted with new situations and problems in its efforts to promote gender equality and women's development. Chinese women have become increasingly more diversified in their social status, and thus their needs for subsistence, development and protection of their rights and interests also vary. There is an obvious imbalance in the development of women in different regions, social status and groups; the outmoded conventions and custom of inequality between men and women handed down from China's history and culture have not yet been completely eradicated, and women's rights and interests are still being infringed upon to varying degrees in some areas. There is a long way to go and arduous tasks to tackle to achieve gender equality and promote women's development in China to a satisfactory level.

In the new historical stage of building a comparatively well-off society in an all-round way, the Chinese government aims, from the strategic height of building a harmonious socialist society in the light of China's national conditions, to promote the scientific concept of people-oriented, overall, coordinated and sustainable development, further implement the basic national policy of equality between men and women, safeguard women's rights and interests according to law, put into effect the requirements for the goals of the *Outline for the Development of Chinese Women*, and strive to ensure that women enjoy the same rights as men in politics, economy, culture, society and family life. The Chinese government will continue its efforts to encourage all social sectors to help promote gender equality and women's development, strengthen its exchanges and cooperation with the United Nations and other international organizations concerned and the governments of various countries, and make active contributions to promoting worldwide equality, development and peace.

Some Important Do's For Advancement In The Status Of Women

1. Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality.
2. Treat all women and men fairly at work – respect and support human rights and nondiscrimination.

7 1949

3. Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers.
4. Promote education, training and professional development for women.
5. Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women.
6. Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy.
7. Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality.
8. Promotion of women to top executive positions and compensating them accordingly.
9. Representation of women on the board of directors and in senior management.
10. Strong support from senior executives for workplace equality.
11. Career development, education and training programs for women employees.
12. Hiring and promotion policies and activity to assure gender equity.
13. Programs to address work/life balance concerns, including in particular women's health, safety and childcare responsibilities.
14. Programs to address discrimination against women and to protect women from harassment and violence.
15. Use of women-owned companies as vendors and service providers.
16. Positive images of women in their advertising, promotion and marketing.
17. Accountability and transparency to employees, investors and the communities in which they operate.

Conclusion

The legislative acts currently in operation or force are mostly being implemented or put on paper only. The grim reality is that the nation which passes a law at the drop of a hat is seldom governed by the law due to its arbitrariness and presence in lots. That Nation is best governed which has minimum of law in force which can be/ are being implemented properly. The Indian political system collective psyche has always suffered from paralyzing syndrome flog a problem out by taking log about it by making a law. This is not the correct approach to be taken into consideration. The laws are sufficient now, the only thing our country needs is 'To watch the watchman' (i.e. ... awareness, proper execution and implementation). If proper implementation is taken care of then that day is not far when Indian women will catch up with their western counterparts and regain their honourable status which they enjoyed in the distant past and satyug. People should also realize that - It is man who makes houses, but a woman makes homes, because the creation by employing workers and buying raw materials like bricks, sand and cement is much easier than the creation made with the amalgamation and mergers of love, affection, care and household doings.

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