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PURDAH SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

“Ghoonghat” is a local variant of Purdah in India. Since the days of British rule, there have been special necessities for Pardanasheen women in the laws of evidence and civil procedure, irrespective of their religion. The Northern ruler of India extensively adopted this practice for fear of women being captured by attackers, an age long practice of reducing women to prize trophies. When this practice came into interaction with Hindu culture’s rural areas, it was interpreted as Laaj. The newly married bride was to cover her head with the Pallu or Dupatta in front of her Husband or in-laws. Women’s privacy was so strongly related with the “Ghoonghat” that the honor of the families and the feminine code of diffidence were upheld and tied to it. In Hindus, the concept of “Ghoonghat” is initiated after Marriage, whereas the practice of Purdah amongst Muslims is shadowed when a girl grasps puberty. There is no rapid swing from Purdah to No-Purdah regions.

From eternity women are carrying “Purdah”, “Burkha” and “Ghoonghat” etc. and the men out there are just thinking her dignity to shelter herself. And now a days, every single flash I hear a man screaming- “I Can’t breathe in this mask.”

Keywords: Purdah, Burkha, Myth, Ghoonghat, Muslims.

1. INTRODUCTION

The perception of secular India has come under scrutiny from numerous conclusions. Regardless of secularism acquiring its way into the Constitution’s pages in 1975, the experiences of those inhabiting in India have been quite absolute. The line of reasoning put forth by right wingers mainly mount the past emperor’s wrongdoings to justify the events of today. Conversion of the word purdah is screen or veil in the domains of India. Exclusively in India, Purdah is experienced by Muslims as well as various Hindus. The isolation of women from community opinion by wearing concealing clothing from head to toe and using curtains within the home. To achieve their separation from public meeting and position, a Purdah Tradition is considered in Persia that allows women to cover their faces and bodies. During the Middle Ages in the 7th century AD this pattern was adopted by Muslim sects who occupied India. After the Mughal rule it is believed that the practice spread to Hinduism. Moreover, Researchers have stated that the practice of purdah system has been already initiated by the Delhi Sultanate, way before the Mughals set foot in the Indian Mainland. The Rajput’s were among the most dominant groups to bring this isometric of Purdah to the Indian mainland during the defeats. Such is also witnessed in the tale of Queen Padmavati. Replication the customs and rituals of Muslim in India aristocracies by ordinary citizens is due to some factors. Firstly, because the ruling elite and nobles practiced it devotedly, it was carefully a sign of honor. Secondly, the dread of attack and the sensual laxity and resentment by the Muslim Kingdom and aristocracy of the sultanate. Elite women wore the covering as the symbol of respectability and raised status in the ancient Mesopotamians and in the Greek and Persian Empires. The restrictions enforced by this practice vary according to the distinct countries and class levels. Mostly, the women in the upper and middle class are more likely to practice all portions of purdah because they can afford to not to be an employee for others.

1.1. History

Persian culture has set the base up to experience the purdah tradition attained by the Muslims during the Arab conquest of what is now Iraq in the 7th century AD. Muslims dominated northern India in turn manipulated the practice of Hinduism, and purdah became usual among the Hindu upper class of northern India.

Purdah was common with the Muslim ladies in medieval Indian society. When Amir Timur conquered India and entered in this country with his army and womenfolk, strict purdah rule was originated. He made an assertion, that women of their families should be strictly hidden from the view of stranger. The Muslim men were intense in protecting their women from public gaze and if they were revealed it was considered as dishonour. The harem ladies of Akbar’s time were severely sheltered from the eyes of men.

There are mainly two considerations for this. Initially, the superiority and royalty faithfully practised it to maintain their exclusiveness, it was a symbol of respectability. It dripped down but only till the extent lower classes were able to afford it. Finally, the intimidation of intruders and the sensual negligence and outrages enacted by the Muslim royalty and superiority of the sultanate and Mughal periods had poured a sense of uncertainty among the Muslim subjects and among the Hindus. Consequently, they consigned their women gently behind the purdah to save them from the lustful sight of these leaders. A Muslim majority of India were Hindu converts.

2. Literature Review

2.1 To discover the connection between the use of 'purdah', gain access to education and employment for rural women. It was seen and argued in the most past literature that in Bangladesh, the use of 'purdah' had effect on women's access to education and employment because the leader is seen to hold back on women's freedom and mobility. It was considered that 'purdah' was not only a religious symbol bound to belief in system, but also a symbol of purity and honour amongst the richer families who are more deliberate of their high social status. About this religious custom, most rich families do not allow to go outside their home. Opposing the above the religious observation of women, it was concluded that the use of 'purdah' does not in any influence on women's access to education as well as employment outside their homes. It was also insight that most rural women chose to wear 'purdah', they are more liberal view concerning the practice of using 'purdah'.

M Sultana Alam, European journal of Social Sciences, January 2009

2.2 All the married women of both Muslim and Non-Muslim communities noticed that purdah or ghoonghat play a substantial role in restraining and prohibiting their involvement in social and economic roles in selected villages in Saharanpur district of Uttar Pradesh. Amongst the family of both the communities this tradition was practiced boosting the status of the women as well as their families. Women can relax while being in home, but they had to observe strict covering when outdoors. There are different types of veils cover the women amongst different communities, like the Muslim women wear *burqa*, while the non-Muslim women wear *dupatta* or end of the *sari* to cover the face accurately while going outside the home.

Laxmi Devi and Maninder Kaur, Indian journal of Gender studies, 2019

2.3 Now a days in many countries, women's action endures to be dictated by gendered spaces, including social observations such as 'purdah'. At the same time, women's lives have been changed in recent years while globalisation and increased urbanisation, carrying forward the noteworthy increase in opportunities for women to work outside their homes. To explore purdah in Bangladeshi society through an ethnographical study in one of Dhaka's low-income communities. The argument which was raised when the new employment opportunities permit women to enter spaces that were previously not available to them, these employment opportunities are often allowances of existing exploitative, male-controlled systems. Additionally, a positive identity and moral status should be maintained by the women in specific ways. These negotiations are a vital part of the everyday experiences of women as they traverse their relationships and employment in the changed context of their lives.

Bethany Jennings, Women's Studies International Forum, 2022

2.4 The system of isolating women and imposing high standards of female modesty in much of South Asia is based on the mostly used practice is 'purdah', it is a vital part of the life experience of the many South Asians, both Muslim and Hindu, and is a central highlight of the social systems of the area. The crucial characteristic of this purdah system is limitation on the connectivity and interaction between the male and female outside distinct categories, which is different in Hindu as well as Muslim. Hindu purdah is all about a set of prevention rules between a woman and her male affinal whereas, Muslim purdah is based on limitations do not apply within the current family, but only outside it. Muslim solitudes begin with puberty and Hindu seclusion strictly begins with marriage. On any range of the ways purdah system decides woman's place in this society which distinctly limits a woman's movement outside her home occupies one of the most extreme positions. To help and develop woman's place in different societies in more systematic view is to look at this unusual system of sex- role allocations in many diverse aspects and analyse the original values and show social forms which are common to other times and other places.

Hanna Papanek, Comparative studies in society and history, 1973

3. Methodology

During the victories the Indian mainland come up with the purdah system, the most dominant one's to be severe believers of the purdah system were Rajputs, it is also witnessed from the tale of Queen Padmavati. When this was confronted Hindu culture's rural areas, it was considered as laaj. The newly wed daughter-in-law was to cover her head with the pallu or dupatta in the dignity of her husband or in-laws. However, it was initially practised by the Muslim community during the colonial era. In the Rajput era, the purdah signified economic novelty along with it being a marker of good behaviour from the religious point of view. Nevertheless, this system stayed its base in Hindu practices as well.

'Ghoonghat' was strongly associated with the women's isolation that the honour of the families in the society and the feminine code of simplicity were maintained and tied to it. It has been disclosed that by the 15th century, the purdah became an important part of Rajasthan's primitive manners to mirror the practices of the dominant resident. Consequently, it was obeyed by the women in dominant societies. When the practice of ghoonghat amongst Hindus is followed for the women after marriage, while the concept of purdah starts when the girl enters puberty.

Several critics insights purdah as an evil impact that has only gagged the rights of women and perpetuated machismo. Their straight point was towards those Muslims in India who have closed women from the outside world to make them unaware of the reality of life. They force these females to produce dominating boys and submissive girls and take away their economic independence. Women only know what their fathers, husbands, and sons want them to know, to keep the females submissive. Women who practice purdah as having no free will or voice.

Others, mostly disciple of Islam, see purdah as a very positive and respectful practice that set free women. It is observed as redemptive because it brings about an aura of respect. Women are seen as individuals who are judged by their inner beauty and mind but not by their physical beauty. By covering themselves, they are safe and not looked like a sexual stuff that can be easily dominated. As the act of honour, respect, and dignity purdah is entailed for the Muslims. Islam raises the status of women by commanding that women have equal rights with men and remain on the same foot as them. While being in purdah women places herself on a higher position and allows men to insight her and respect her for her intelligence, faith, and personality.

The Hinduized form of purdah was started practised in the Northern belt; Ajanta caves provide us the information that the Southern part of India had no orientation of this system. There is no instant shift from purdah to no-purdah regions.

4. Conclusion

In a society where male superiority is very substantial and simultaneously unstable, the isolation of women has remained an essential aspect of male chauvinism to date. The practice of purdah or ghoonghat involves a woman to seclude herself from those who are not the immediate family by covering her face, thus controlling her visibility to the world. The lack of education and more dominance in the surrounding is reflected by the negligence of legislation around this embedded practice. An individual also needs to parallelly acknowledge the choice of a woman in her clothing without any rules. Though this is not enough for spreading awareness and trying to rebuild the historicity of such customs. When purdah was comes in practice as a form of oppression, protection, or empowerment, willingly or through generations, was crucial. The purdah system and its many indications have been a controversial topic to various backgrounds of social setup. In the modern era, this practice has been a weapon in the social war to calm some and target others. Since the rise of women's movement, the role of purdah has become more controversial in any culture. In Hindu practice purdah is almost disappeared, and it is practiced to greater and lesser degrees in many of the Islamic countries. Both ways the practice of purdah is looked at whether in a negative or positive light, it continues to be an important part of everyday life for some peoples and marks a part of their culture.

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