



Philosophical Analysis of Equal Status of Women in the Society of India

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ABSTRACT:

Women in ancient India were treated as goddesses. They were given intellectual and spiritual standards of living where they held a high position in society. Women were allowed to indulge in societal activities and their opinion was even considered in the political administration. Later on, society treated women in a very deteriorated form which ran for many years. During this period women had to follow the sati system, purdah, and early marriage and they were not allowed to indulge in any activities other than household chores. This ill-treatment of women further worsened with prostitution being followed and the devadasi system where women were only treated by the men for their sexual pleasures. Now, in the 21st-century women are fighting for their rights in all spheres, asking for equal status as men. Women nowadays, include themselves in all activities that men also do, proving that they are no less than them. But yet there is inequality in society. Following the qualitative method of research, this paper tries to analyze whether Plato's ideology of women having equal status to men is important in creating an ideal society or Aristotle's thought about there should be a difference in the status of men and women because society cannot be ideal but society can only try to improve but treating unequal unequally. This essay investigates how women's status and respect have diminished as society has changed in the twenty-first century. Many constitutional provisions were insufficient to achieve supreme functioning in society. After the advancement of technology and the presence of globalization and commercialization in modern life, the prestige and role of women as substitutes have declined. The Idea of women being given equal importance as men and the reason they are supposed to be given is analyzed in this paper with the views of Aristotle, Plato, and ancient Indian scriptures.

KEYWORDS: Women, Equality, Aristotle, Plato, Manu Smriti, Ancient and Medieval period of India.

"An idea built the wall of separation between the sexes, and an idea will crumble it to dust." — Sarah Moore Grimké¹

Another look at society without examining the fame, function, or role of women will give a satisfactory picture of society. The implementation of the sovereign command i.e., the law according to Austin has played an important role in the women's law in society. Only once the procedure is carried out under the Supreme Law are laws enforced in society. The knowledge of and perspective of the issues that women have experienced over the years and their services are different regarding different periods.²

During the ancient period, women in India had high status in society, with opportunities to attend high standard in spiritual and intellectual standards. Women did not follow the sati system.³ In ancient India, women were not subject to the purdah system and were free to choose their male partners. In modern India, it is a male-dominated system where the women follow every command of the men without thinking as to what and why they are doing⁴ it. Women in the society were treated with respect and they were provided with education and discipline. They were allowed to be unmarried and were respected for their choice in life⁵. Women did have economic freedom in participating in outdoor activities and helped their husbands as agricultural purists. They had limited rights on the ancestral property though they had different measurements during the different stages of life⁶.

The social structure of any civilization, which is built on fundamental economic relationships, must be examined to understand the status of women within that culture. Only after studying women's roles in the production process and their control over the production techniques can we fully comprehend the actual nature of women's status in society⁷. The principal incapacitation of women came about by the emergence of economic manufacturing and property ownership lies at the center of human history, from feudalism and capitalism to socialism. As the mother, the sole recognizable parent in a polyandric or paired system of marriage, women played a major role in society. The function that women perform in the home is equal to the one that men play outside

¹ Quote by Sarah Moore Grimké on Women's rights.

² Calvert, Brian. "Plato and the Equality of Women." *Phoenix* 29, no. 3 (1975): 231–43. And Wilder, Alfred. "On the Essential Equality of Men and Women in Aristotle." *Angelicum* 59, no. 2 (1982): 200–233.

³ Rani P, Veena. "The position and role of women at Historic society to modern society in India." *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research*. Volume 10, Issue: July 11th, 2021.

⁴ Tharakan, Sophie M., and Michael Tharakan. "Status of Women in India: A Historical Perspective." *Social Scientist* 4, no. 4/5 (1975): 115–23.

⁵ Rani P, Veena, supra, Volume 10.

⁶ Leonard, Karen. "Women in India: Some Recent Perspectives." *Pacific Affairs* 52, no. 1 (1979): 95–107.

⁷ Tharakan, Sophie M., and Michael Tharakan. "Status of Women in India: A Historical Perspective." *Social Scientist* 4, no. 4/5 (1975): 115–23.

the home.⁸ The importance of women's domestic activities lessens as a result of slavery and the invention of the plow. This unequal relationship continues through both feudal and bourgeois stages of history.

Patriarchal society in the Indian society introduced the family property system⁹ and the fact that private commodity manufacturing couldn't be achieved. There was no master-slave relationship in the traditional sense. The division of labor had been for hunting and collecting of food and household duties between men and women respectively. Women didn't have total control over the tools and methods of production and this division of labor about sexes is discouraging.¹⁰ In Ancient times, both men and women started choosing their life partners. It exhibits significant freedom and, gender equality,¹¹ which was not looked into later, and women were forced into marriage.

Due to the decline in women's educational prospects, the tradition of pre-puberty marriage, and several other institutional and ideological pressures of the period, Indian women were compelled into dependency and subjugation. The law of Manu, which explicitly states: "*Women must be subordinate to their fathers in their childhood, their husbands in their youth, and their sons after their master has passed away, is the pinnacle of this tragic slide. Never let a woman be self-sufficient.*"¹² According to Manu, a woman's business is to tend to her husband and worship him as a god.

Any India-wide movement for women's equality and freedom must confront the essentially exploitative character of man-woman interactions. It must be well conscious of the feudal and bourgeois ideas toward women that predominate in our culture. And it must ignore the more fundamental connotations of women's sculptures that remain with us as tribal vestiges.

Socrates argued that men can dominate and women can submit to their husbands in the context of the family. According to Plato, males are better than women and are the protectors of gender equality. Although he thought women were subordinate to males, Plato felt that women and men should get the same education. Aristotle does assert that women are, at least biologically, somewhat of maturational mutilation in this context.¹³

On the other hand, Plato on his liberal ideas on women's education and what is commonly referred to as their liberation. Plato said that some women are just as naturally suited to become guardians as some males.¹⁴ According to Plato, males are better than women and are the protectors of gender equality. Although he thought women were subordinate to males and wicked and cowardly, Plato felt that women and men should get the same education. A man is better than a woman in every activity. A woman cannot be regarded to be dominating in a subject just because she is a woman.¹⁵ It is important to assess each story independently and to carefully situate each story in connection to the dialectical and discursive parts of Plato's writings using examples that will highlight this intricacy to comprehend his views on women.

Indian women are depicted as stratified articles with values unequal in both theory and practice. Data on mortality and reproduction, the age of marriage, literacy, and participation in the labor market show significant disparities between men and women.¹⁶ Women are vying for the same rights as men; there is no injustice in their demand, and Aristotle argues that each should be treated with the same respect as the other¹⁷ as shown in Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, Protection of Women from Domestic Violence act 2005, Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 where girls and boys are treated equally. Equal rights for men and women and respect in the community for the kind of labor that each of them carries out by their interests are crucial. To have a seamless and effective operation in a society such as India, both of their claims must be taken into account.

⁸ *Id*, 117

⁹ Calvert, Brian. "Plato and the Equality of Women." *Phoenix* 29, no. 3 (1975): 231–43.

¹⁰ Leonard, Karen. "Women in India: Some Recent Perspectives." *Pacific Affairs* 52, no. 1 (1979): 95–107.

¹¹ Leonard, Karen. "Women in India: Some Recent Perspectives." *Pacific Affairs* 52, no. 1 (1979): 95–107.

¹² Tharakan, Sophie M., and Michael Tharakan. "Status of Women in India: A Historical Perspective." *Social Scientist* 4, no. 4/5 (1975): 115–23.

¹³ St. Thomas Summa Theologiae, *On the notion of what makes a man simply good*.

¹⁴ Allen, Christine Garside. "Plato on Women." *Feminist Studies* 2, no. 2/3 (1975): 131–38.

¹⁵ Calvert, Brian. "Plato and the Equality of Women." *Phoenix* 29, no. 3 (1975): 231–43.

¹⁶ Leonard, Karen. "Women in India: Some Recent Perspectives." *Pacific Affairs* 52, no. 1 (1979): 95–107.

¹⁷ Wilder, Alfred. "On the Essential Equality of Men and Women in Aristotle." *Angelicum* 59, no. 2 (1982): 200–233.