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# Gender Justice & Women Empowerment: “Women” The most revered Creation of God

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## ABSTRACT

*From Vedic Period it is trusted that status of women are equivalent to men in India. However the condition declined significantly after. Feminist Movements were the reason due to gender imbalances, especially in West Europe and North America. With intense developments and an increase in awareness, there emerged step by step some progression in social structures. Different legitimate changes were presented, and enactments were passed to remove gender imbalance. Gender Justice simply means equality between men and women status. To achieve gender justice there must be a good correlation between social, cultural, economic, environmental, political and educational factors. Globally it has been understood that no country can progress without gender justice. Empowering women means acknowledgement of women's rights and creating a platform for equal treatment so that women can get the right place in society. In spite of the fact that the Judiciary has played an important role in women empowerment. 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act has given access to women's in the process of decision making however their representation in the State Legislation and Parliament is woefully poor.*

**Keywords:** Gender Justice, Women Empowerment, Vedas.

## I. INTRODUCTION

From Vedic Period it is trusted that the status of women is equivalent to men in India. However, the condition declined significantly after. Feminist Movements were the reason due to gender imbalances, especially in West Europe and North America. With intense developments and an increase in awareness, there emerged step by step some progression in social structures. Different legitimate changes were presented, and enactments were passed to remove gender imbalance. Gender Justice simply means equality between men and women status. To achieve gender justice there must be a good correlation between social, cultural, economic, environmental, political and educational factors. Globally it has been understood that no country can progress without gender justice.<sup>2</sup> Empowering women means acknowledgement of women's rights and creating a platform for equal treatment so that women can get right place

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<sup>2</sup> Upasana Mukherjee Comparative Study on Gender Justice Retrieved 14 March 2019 Retrieved from <http://www.legalserviceindia.com/article/l358-Gender-Justice.html>.

in society. In spite of the fact that Judiciary has played an important role for women empowerment.<sup>73<sup>rd</sup></sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act has given access to women's in the process of decision making however their representation in the State Legislation and Parliament is woefully poor.

*UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said "Gender equality is fundamentally a question of power" saying that a still male-dominated world has "ignored, silenced and oppressed women for centuries – even millennia". In spite of women's' accomplishments and victories, women's voices are still routinely neglected, and their assessments disregarded. Nonetheless, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that about four decades after the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was received and around 25 years after the milestone Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, "we are as yet way off the mark to parallel". "We are still not even close to equal".<sup>3</sup>*

Gender equality involves the idea that both men and women are allowed to build up their own personal abilities and settle on decisions without the confinements set by generalizations and prejudice and stereotypes.

Gender justice implies that needs of women and men, different behaviour and aspirations are supported similarly. Yet it doesn't imply that men and women have to become the same, yet that their responsibilities, rights, and opportunity won't rely upon whether they are brought into the world male or female. Gender justice value implies reasonableness of treatment for men and women as per their distinct needs. This may incorporate equivalent treatment for both men and women that is unique however which is viewed as comparable in terms of advantages, opportunity and rights.<sup>4</sup>

**Europe Gender Equality Strategy Council 2014-2017, includes five strategic objectives:**

- a) "Combating gender stereotypes and sexism.,
- b) Preventing and combating violence against women.,
- c) Guaranteeing Equal Access of Women to Justice.,
- d) Achieving balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making.,
- e) Achieving Gender Mainstreaming in all policies and measures".<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> UN Secretary-General António Guterres <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/03/1034341> Retrieved 14 March 2019

<sup>4</sup> ABC of Women Worker's Rights and Gender Equality, ILO, 2000. p. 48. Retrieved 14 March 2019

<sup>5</sup> Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, CM document (CM). "Committee of Ministers - Gender Equality

While the world has accomplished advancement in terms of women's empowerment and gender equality but still girls and women face discrimination and violence. Gender Justice is a necessary foundation for a prosperous, sustainable and peaceful world. Unbelievably, one in five girls and women now experience physical or sexual assault, and there are currently 49 countries without laws protecting women from violent behavior. Although harmful behaviors like child marriage and FGM (female genital mutilation), which have decreased by 30% in the past ten years, are making progress, there is still much work to be done to eradicate such practices. New legitimate systems with respect to gender equality in the working environment and the removal of unsafe practices focused at women is vital to end gender-based discrimination.

**Landmark case:**

*Vishakha vs. State of Rajasthan*: It is a 1997 decision given by the Supreme Court of India on combating sexual harassment threat at work place and somewhere else. By virtue of the writ appeal that the victim Vishakha filed, Chief Justice J.S. Verma delivered the verdict in Vishakha's case on behalf of Justices Sujata Manihar and B.N. Kripal. In accordance with Article 14,<sup>6</sup> 19(1)<sup>7</sup>(g) and 21<sup>8</sup> of Constitution of the Indian Constitution, every profession, trade, or occupation is required to ensure a safe working environment for its employees. The most important requirement was that a safe workspace should be available in the workplace. In the public sector, the Vishaka norms have been strictly followed. Internal sexual harassment committees have been established by a number of governmental organizations, including the Sports Authority of India, the Central Board of Secondary Education, and several Ministries committee.<sup>9</sup>

**II. LEGAL TRENDS ON WOMEN LABOUR**

Advancing gender equality is viewed as an economic prosperity. "Gender Equality as Smart Economics: A World Bank Group Gender Action Plan (Fiscal years 2007–10) viewed women economic activity is a great measure for gender equality in an economy."<sup>10</sup> Discrimination on gender frequently results in female acquiring low-wage employments and being excessively

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Commission (GEC) - Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017 [1183 meeting]". Wcd.coe.int. Retrieved 14 March 2019

<sup>6</sup> Article 14, Constitution Of India, (Right To Equality)

<sup>7</sup> Article 19 (1)(G) Constitution Of India, (Right To Practice Ones Profession)

<sup>8</sup> Article 21, Constitution of India, (Right to life)

<sup>9</sup> AIR 1997 SC 3011 <http://www.legalserviceindia.com/legal/article-374-case-analysis-vishaka-and-others-v-s-state-of-rajasthan.html> Retrieved 14 March 2019

<sup>10</sup> *World Bank (September 2006)*. "Gender Equality as Smart Economics: A World Bank Group Gender Action Plan (Fiscal years 2007–10)"

exploited separation and abuse.<sup>11</sup>

**The Hunger Project-India 2019:** The Bihar State Level Convention was organized by The Hunger Project-India 2019 to address pervasive gender disparities. Young girls from all around Bihar who had been elected as women representatives (EWRs) displayed clear manifestos asking that government officials pay attention to their needs and concerns in the Panchayats and protect their rights as equal citizens in a vote-based system. The Hunger Project (THP) is an ongoing initiative in several nations, including those in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. It aims to empower rural grassroots communities to make improvements in family income, education, and other areas, as well as to end hunger in the globe.

The Panchyati Raj Minister for the state, the media, and political party members heard from elected women representatives who underlined the significance of political empowerment for women and reservations in local administration. EWRs required officials to be transparent and accountable. A program for teenage girls that was created in Bihar allowed women to access equal opportunities, postpone forced child marriage, speak out against sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination, and would improve their future. Empowering women is a crucial strategy for reducing poverty. Notwithstanding the fact that women in developing countries give almost 70 percent of their input in horticultural work, they keep on accounting more than 60 percent of the world's hungry. Gender discrimination lead to decline in crop production, production sold at a lower cost and hunger for herself and for her children. Gender balance measure up to access to these agribusiness resources could expand crop yields by 20-30 percent.<sup>12</sup>

### III. WOMEN EMPOWERMENT MEASURES

- **Microfinance Program:** Microfinance is a powerful tool in enhancing women empowerment like legal awareness, family decision making, economic security and mobility. Microfinance has emerged as a powerful tool for women empowerment in the new economy. In India, microfinance distribution is mainly dominated by Self Help Groups (SHGs) -Bank Linkage Programme. It aims at providing a cost effective mechanism for providing financial services to the poor section of the society.<sup>13</sup>

- **Elected women representatives (EWRs):** Strengthening Women's Leadership in the Electoral Process in India. Now 66000 women are Women's Leadership participants. These

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<sup>11</sup> What we do: Economic empowerment: UN Women – Headquarters". headQuarters. Retrieved 14 March 2019

<sup>12</sup> "Mission – The Hunger Project". thp.org. Archived from the original on January 28, 2010.

<sup>13</sup> Sujatha Gangadhar and Malyadri, Journal of Entrepreneurship and Organization Management 2015, Volume 4 • Issue 2 DOI: 10.4172/2169-026X.1000141

women representatives are currently successful change specialists for reducing hunger rate in their towns.

- **Women's Empowerment Program (WEP):** It enables women to change their outlooks about gender discrimination at home, society and workplace.

- **The Hunger Project in Bangladesh in year 2014:** To end discrimination against girls, over 1 million people in Bangladesh respect and celebrate National Girl Child Day. The Hunger Project is in favor of their elected officials forming federations. By establishing federations at the block and state levels, states like Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, and Rajasthan support women leaders and give them a platform to speak out against gender inequality.<sup>14</sup> The Indian Constitution not only guarantees women's equality but also gives the State the authority to take positive discriminatory measures in their favor in order to counteract the accumulated socio-economic, educational, and political disadvantages that women suffer. Our laws, development strategies, plans, and programs have all been created within the context of a democratic polity with the goal of advancing women in a variety of fields. Among other things, fundamental rights guarantee everyone's equality before the law and equal protection under the law, forbid discrimination against any citizen based on their race, religion, caste, sex, or place of birth, and ensure that everyone has an equal chance to succeed in matters relating to employment. Articles 14, 15, 15(3), 16, 39(a), 39(b), and 39(c) of the Constitution are particularly significant in this context.

#### **Court and Gender Justice:**

The Indian government has ratified numerous United Nations (U.N.) treaties, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The Court has been fairly assertive in holding the Indian government to the international commitments it has made when holding the state to its constitutional (CRC).

#### **IV. LORD MANU OPINES IN MANU SMRITI**

Where women are respected and live happily, in that pious house, the learn needs are delighted. It is well said by **Frederic Reynolds** that, "As for women, though we scorn and flout them, we may live with but cannot live without them."

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<sup>14</sup> The Hunger Project on March 14, 2014 <https://www.thp.org/our-work/where-we-work/india/>

Infact a nation cannot permanently remain on a level above the level of its women.

So, may I reiterate that future of country depends directly on the education, empowerment and awareness of females of a country?

“**Mata Nirmatree Bhavti**” Mother is the creator of bright future of a child. So, she actually shapes and moulds the future of humanity.

## **V. VEDAS: THE ANSWER TO EVERY QUESTION**

**Rigved Mantra 8/1/6** enshrines the prayer that Oh! God, you are greater than my father and brother but equivalent to my mother. This eternal principle made by God is based on the fact that both the entities (God and mother) are destined to give all bounties to others.

Rigved has awarded the prestigious status of Brahma to women-

“**Stree Hee Brahma Babhoovith**” (**Rigved mandal 8/33/19** refers)

Let us pay our attention towards the word-**Brahma**. Here, it implies two meanings-

- 1.) The creator
- 2.) The learned of Vedas.

In the previous yugas, all the women had inculcated these qualities within themselves. That woman only is Brahma who possesses above stated two qualities.

**Taitareey Opnishad Declares-“Matree Devo Bhav”**

Mother, the epitome of womanhood, is to be worshipped, respected being devi i.e. one who gives everything to her children including education, comforts, nourishment. Otherwise a woman who shuns her responsibilities cannot be entitled as “Devi”.

This Upanishad also states that nobody should exhibit laziness in discharging duties entrusted to them by the mother. Everybody should always be obedient towards her.

It shall not be out of place to mention here that the children who refrain from discharging their duties towards parents can also not be categorized as faithful or children of good character. So, the parents as well as children are required to gain vedic education to discharge their duties sincerely, as before.

Mahabharat Shantiparv beautifully describes about qualities of learned mother that she is the origin who gives birth to the body of a human-being, infact she is the bestower of happiness and giver of assurance to all the sorrowful/unhappy people of world.

As long as one’s mother is alive, the progeny feels protected under the shelter of her patron.

Mother nurtures her children irrespective of their qualities or disqualifications, so no shelter is as reliable and important as mother.

**Rigved Mandal 1, Sukta 48 and 49** eulogise the divine qualities of a learned woman. The essence of the Sukta 48 and 49 is that woman is the pious means to generate wealth in family, she is glorious like sun, who practises Ashtang Yog in dawn, bringing laurels to both families of her parents and in-laws.

**Rigved** beautifully describes that just as dawn gives birth to day which brings wealth and comfort to all similarly learned woman is the origin of happiness and bright future of her family and nation.

**Rigved Mantra 1/48/11** states when women are respected by men and their honour secured then such ladies being perennial happiness to their families.

**Yajurved Mantra 14/2** states that daughter while living in parents' house should indulge in intense study of Vedas under the divine shelter of learned of Vedas. Such learned daughters then establish themselves successfully in their in-laws house after the culmination of marriage ceremony (Vivah sanskar). Such daughters being learned are perennial source of joy and happiness for both their parents and in-laws. They donot indulge in any vices.

**Yajurved Mantras 13/16 and 17** endorse the principle that females should be appointed as judges to adjudicate the matters of legal concern for the ladies.

Vedas have empowered women to sit at the helm of affairs for maintaining peace and justice in the society. One is filled with respect and awe towards females by appreciating the vedic rule enshrined in **Yajurved Mantra 13/18** that deserving learned women should rule the nation justiciably.

Infact **Yajurved Mantra 13/19** devolves a responsibility over the husband to respect his wife and give her pleasure. If the essence of Ved mantras is held sincerely in life with heart and soul then where remains the scope of occurrence of any incident of dishonor of women anywhere?

Further, **Yajurved Mantra 13/20** compares learned women to Doob (a kind of medicine). Mantra states that just as doob obliterates disease and enhances happiness similarly learned women wield all these qualities.

**Yajurved Mantra 13/22** states just as the universe is enlightened by the sunlight similarly learned, pious, virtuous ladies enlighten the entire household by their qualities.

**Yajurved Mantra 13/26** is an eye-opener that it is the moral duty of woman that she should

never bow down before enemies/wrong doers and be tolerant towards her in-laws. In this mantra, a woman has been called- “**Sahastra Veeraya**”. The divine adjective “Sahastra veerya” symbolizes the immense strength and vigour blessed to woman by God. She has the potential to undertake huge tasks successfully.

**Yajurved Mantra 13/34** states that just as males preach the society after becoming learned similarly the females should also strive to attain vedic knowledge to become learned for preaching the same to other females of society.

Mahabharat epic vividly depicts how a learned woman stands by her conviction against all odds. No bindings of love, relations, attachment or greed can waiver her from right path because she is strong morally and intellectually.

Here, I am hinting towards Gandhari, who did not bless her son Duryodhan with victory in Mahabharat war, but said-

“**Jahan Dharma Hai, Wahan Vijay Hai**” i.e. where there is moral righteousness (dharma), there is victory.

It is quite unfortunate that in the present scenario, the government is not making sufficient efforts to spread vedic knowledge especially amongst young girls-women as the future of nation is nourished in the lap of women.

Just as it is important to know about darkness to have better understanding of light similarly the wisdom lies in understanding the dual concepts – right-wrong, knowledge-illusion/ignorance, true-false etc.

Where on one side Vedas eulogize the divine qualities of women, on the other side they also highlight the shortcomings/ demerits of females, which were well understood by great women like Sita, Madalsa, Bal-Brahmacharinni Gargi, Katyayani, Lopamudra, Kunti, Draupadi, Ganga, the mother of Bheeshma Pitamah and many others to remain alert and save themselves from indulging in same.

**Atharvaved Mantra 2/14/1** states that woman who-

1. creates internal conflicts within family
2. creates fear within family members
3. has acid tongue and is stubborn
4. is full of anger;

Such female is designated as “wretched, devil soul” who should be abandoned because of her

demerits.

**Atharvaved Mantra 14/2/75** explains that women who is steadfast in her dharma i.e. moral righteousness, (**Shatshardaye, Deerghayutvaye**) she gets long life, (**Subbuddha**) possesses pious beautiful intellect, remains alert from committing sins, listens to Vedas and overcomes vices successfully.

According to **Yajurved**, women should have good knowledge of medicines.

**Yajurved chapter 11** reiterates that women have the ability to make their homes heaven and full of happiness by gaining vedic knowledge.

## **VI. PRESENT SCENARIO**

- **Article 14 of Indian constitution guarantees right to equality for both men and women.** But are we following this article in letter and spirit? Let's analyse-

The degradation of vedic values have led to tarnishing the image and status of woman symbolizing her as weak and dependent entity, who is devoid of independent existence. Today, she remains overshadowed by the personality of her father and later by her husband, mocking her very existence.

- **The 12<sup>th</sup> Annual status of Education Report [ASER 2017- Beyond Basics]** focuses on 14-18 years old girl children across rural India and finds disturbing shortfalls in their ability to do even simple tasks like counting money and telling time.

Causes and effects of prejudice against the girl child in our society are many and extremely hard to undo.

Sex determination, for example- is done through machines with impersonal technology. But male dominated society is responsible for these gender-based termination or female infanticides.

Deep rooted prejudice against the girl child operates at subliminal/unconscious level almost everywhere. Is it not a mockery of the constitutional and legal golden rules of equality and security guaranteed to females across the nation?

In an oriental (sick) environment that we live in, women have to make much more adjustments than men. This is ground reality.

- **Tripple Talaq** is one of its manifestations where Muslim men have the right to repudiate the marriage instantly and unilaterally leaving no room for negotiation or reconciliation.

The recent gory attacks on women have shaken all sections of society towards increasing incidents of violence against women. Genesis of violence is very subtle and deep rooted in human psychology.

Introspection reveals- social, political, economic and psychological factors for the same, manifesting in society as poverty, lack of employment, alcoholism, drug addiction, sexual perversion, money, power etc.

### **WOMAN NEEDS TO REALISE THEIR POTENTIAL**

Women are being violated not because of their lack of strength but because of their lack of knowledge of Vedas and their disability to realise their true identity. When women begin to identify themselves with body and organs ignoring their true form- i.e. soul, they forget that they have already been divinely empowered by God.

They do not need to depend on any legislative empowerment or help from NGOs, law and order machinery etc. for the same.

Unfortunately exemplary characters of Sita, Madalsa, bal Brahmcharinni Gargi, who wasthe Acharya of King Janak, Katyayani and many others have been confined to pages of history. Onus of responsibility lies on society and government that they first sensitize themselves to divine Vedas' knowledge, then arrange for educating young girls and women with vedic knowledge and inspiring them to listen vedic knowledge from learned of Vedas. As a result, women would have sense of accomplishment and strength and self- actualization in all respects to give society and nation learned of Vedas, brave soldiers etc. in the form of sons and daughters.

### **LAWS MUST BE MADE ACCORDING TO VEDAS**

If we go through our vedic culture, we find that only law cannot empower women. You see, the laws to empower the woman have been made by all nations and are being implemented somehow. But the condition of women is being obsessed to get deteriorated day by day. In Atharvaved, why a father of bride hands over his daughter to his son-in-law at the the time of marriage stating that until now I have been looking after my daughter and with effect from today, this responsibility has to be borne by you. It means law only will do nothing. Some shelter is required by woman. It is also a surprising matter and it is even shameful that when a girl or woman is sexually exploited then the society immediately consider that she has been dishonored bout not MEN.

So, we will have to consider that in spite of all facilities, there is a little bit difference between

man and women and therefore she is only a lady who ever require sahara (shelter).

From the above, it is essential to know that right from the beginning of the earth, the woman has only been feeling freedom till time. Our eternal vedic culture itself makes law and order to protect the women.

But you see, in addition vedic culture inspires men and women both to get progress in spiritualism also which puts control over senses and perceptions and when the senses of man or woman by the vedic spiritualism are controlled, then question of insulting women does not arise.

It is the duty of King (Prime Minister), the ruling party and the opposition party to always maintain an atmosphere of fear amongst the criminals as taught by our Vedic culture (Atharvaved mantra 1/7/2 and Atharvaved mantra 1/7/7 refer) but it has been observed that the ministers tend to fail in it very badly, since we have been reading more news on rape cases in the newspapers wide across the country even after the brutal Delhi gang rape incident which has inculcated more pain and terrible hatred in our hearts. We are forced to think and accept after the disgusting and shameful act which has happened presently that present laws are not enough to deal with these kinds of issues as they are not able to inculcate any fear among criminals.

It is a bitter truth according to our true literatures like Valmiki Ramayan and Mahabharat that today's adverse state of all our country-women, could not occur had there been strong and effective law and order enforced by leaders as was done by ancient kings who used to follow vedic culture, wherein scope to excuse/forgive the culprit existed.

This situation also is very well clarified vide Atharvaved mantra 11/3(1)/31 wherein it is preached that it is only a vedic spiritualism which controls the senses and stops doing any sin including dishonour of women.

**“It is not a thunderous air in the sky, that respect of women cannot be saved, such should be the punishment to the culprit, neither should live, nor die they.”**

## VII. CONCLUSION

Quite some time ago, Beijing hosted an international conference on women empowerment. The central issue of discussion was to give equal opportunity to women vis a vis men at political and economic level. It is fashionable to talk of women-empowerment but conferences and discussions can be fruitful only when the psychology of people is transformed to realize that women are not a commodity to be pitied or bargained for.

Wasn't Sitaji dear to her father, the royal sage- Janak? Wasn't Devyani dearer than life to that great master of immortality, her father Rishi Shukaracharya. In our own context, consider how dear our former Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi was to her father Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru. So, paying lip service to the idea of gender equality is one thing and being actively vigilant about our conduct towards an innocent life is quite another.

On the physical differences between genders, it is truly said, we should try to set aside the differences of opinion and respect biological limits. Now, this is not a matter of innate superiority or inferiority of any particular person. It is nature or psychology, if only one were to admit it dispassionately. **As one may rail against it, nature does not design men to carry babies and nursing them.**

Awareness of Vedic education is the most effective antidote for ills afflicting women. The remedy is subtle and powerful. So, women's emancipation is possible by armouring her with both Vedic spiritual and worldly education to make her know her immense potential.

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