



Role and changing status of women in Kashmir

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Abstract

This paper attempts to describe the changing role of women of Kashmir and their confront to open challenges of the modern society. This paper also attempts to show the role of Government for the betterment of the women in Kashmir. For half of the past centuries, women in Kashmiri culture suffered from being treated unfairly and unequally. Their role and position were subservient and controlled by the family. But gradually the role of Kashmiri women has changed and heaving a great impact on Kashmiri society. Their roles have changed at an accelerating rate and are playing a major advancing in many aspects. Their right movement is a good example of how they have come across very strongly, fighting for their political, social and economic status. The Kashmir women have gone a significant degree of change in the field of education, profession, nutrition and health. This helped them to realize their potentialities, broaden their outlook and create a new meaning for themselves. Besides this the Kashmiri women have begun moving away from their traditional behavior pattern and attained relatively new roles.

Keywords: status, confront, traditionality, accelerating, opportunity

Introduction

Women play a variety of significant roles in our society from their birth till the end of life. The status of women is defined as a conjunction of the position she occupies as a worker, daughter, wife and mother to any point of time, the prestige attached to these position as well as the consequential expected rights and duties. Women play a great role in every one's life, without women we cannot imagine the success of life. They are the highly responsible for the successful continuation of the life of this planet. Early they were considered as only wives and mothers, who have to cook food, clean home and take care of the family members alone. But now the condition has been improved, they have started taking part in many activities other than family and kids.

Methodology

The study has been carried out in Kashmir. In this study, survey method will be used for the collection of data. The data for the proposed research work will be collected from cultural academic libraries, state and central archives in Srinagar, Govt. records, research libraries in various universities. The other form of data related to the present study will be collected in the form of articles, journals, autobiographies etc.

Role of women in traditional society of Kashmir

The tradition and culture of women life style in Kashmir remains same for many centuries. They were characterized by dominance and heaving lower social status in society. However, the status of some early prominent Kashmiri women which one gets from various ancient literary sources was very high. They distinguished themselves to apex of fame, such as rulers, princes, and commanders of army, as perspectives of religious lore, there was no social activity in which women did

not participate. But the authors of the ancient sources focused on individual women rather than on a class or group of common women.

In the traditional Kashmiri society, women were the victims of wide spread of illiteracy, segregation and complete denial of individuality. Socially, women suffered from the denial of freedom in their own house and suppression, unequal and inferior status. In traditional society of Kashmir women were always considered as subordinate to the male supremacy, they remained dependent on the male members of the family and could not develop their personality or be independent within or outside their family. In the past, the women in traditional Kashmiri society were in a paradoxical situation, where their social role was minimal; they participated actively in social, economic and other activities. In urban areas while the women of upper class family were completely confined to their homes and were not allowed to any manual work outside homes. Women belonging to various occupational groups worked with their men both within and outside their homes for livelihood. Generally, the women from immemorial were personally restricted to agriculture, spinning, weaving and later confined to work in handicraft sectors, with no formal education and social roles to be played by them in this male dominated society. In the rural areas, all women worked side by side with their family members in the agricultural fields. The role played by these women reflected crucial rule. Thus the Kashmiri women in urban as well as in rural areas worked in and out of their homes and were socially and economically productive. But this had not given them complete economic independence and higher social status.

Changes among the women in Kashmir

The mass changes among Kashmiri women started from

early 20th century, with the introduction of many social reforms, works of Christian missionaries, appearance of political consciousness, spreading of cultural awareness in which women felt concerned about their position, role and status in and out of their family. Open challenges to improve the position of women due to exposure of various broader perspectives and overall modernization of society begun to change this situation. Due to changing process, the Pundit and upper class Muslim women of Kashmir responded and fully to the process of change and women belonging to lower classes responded to change very late. In fact, they starting receiving modern education and getting employment only in the post independence decades. After 1947, all successive Government of J&K attempted to improve the condition of women by providing them free education, which had a qualitative impact on the role and status of women. The Kashmiri women in general developed an interest and motivation to come out of their homes for education, employment and entertainment. Due to the rapid growth of education, modernization, urbanization, development in the field of transport and communication not only helped Kashmiri women to find themselves as per with men in the highest offices of Govt. but also opens new social norms and values for their development. The women started getting their education and showed interest in the political and professional fields. Besides, the other areas of social living, they begun to come out of the domestic sphere and took professional roles outside their homes, this helped them to realize their potentialities, broaden their outlook and create a new meaning for themselves. The traditional role of a house wife gradually evolved into the dual and more fulfilling of professional working wife and thus house wife at the same time. They started to employ in services, establishment in offices and professional to technical occupations. They have entered into occupations and professions formerly practiced and dominated by men. Now women are awakened to their talents and realize the social responsibilities. In both villages and cities there has been a remarkable in the number of women going out of the four walls of the house hold and becoming workers. In the employment market they are successfully competition with the men folk. Employment has given women economic independence and the feeling of importance. They now feel that they can stand on their own and look after the entire family by themselves. They had boosted their self pride and self confidence.

Role of government for the welfare of the women

Government of India has been trying to ensure gender equality without discrimination of men and women. The status of women in India has been greatly changed over the past few decades. After independence the constitution of India guarantees equality to women by introducing (Article 14, 15(1) and 16) which ensures right of women and also the Govt. of India initiated five year planes for the improvement of the women. The first Prime minister of the state of J&K and also the education minister Sheikh Mohd. Abdullah, he setup a policy namely 'Naya Kashmir or Kashmir Manifesto' in which education in the state of J&K was a major and

important demand. The policy provides special arrangements for women's education in accordance with the provision of the women's charter. Another constitutional amendment act (1998) reserving 33% seats in lower house of parliament for women. In 1950 educational re-organizational committee was formed by state Govt. under the new director of education which suggested way of bringing education in more responsible touch with the needs and ideas of new Kashmir. Secondary education commission (1952), Kothari commission (1966), Bhagwat sahay committees (1972) were made for the betterment of both male and female.

Moreover other centrally sponsored programmes have been initiated by the Govt. in the state of J&K. In which Serva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (2004), Sakshar Bharat Mission Programme, Beti Bachau Beti Padau (2015), State female education in J&K state, Bati Anmol (2011), midday meal scheme etc. All of these schemes focused on promotion of girl's education to equalize educational opportunities and eliminate gender disparities.

Conclusion

Women are the pillar of our society, who plays a vital role to build the nation. Without women nothing is possible for men. A woman is the basic unit of society, she makes a family, family makes a home, home makes a society and ultimately society makes a country.

The woman in the society of Kashmir has been subjected to great over the past years. Their status in socially, economically, politically and generally in Kashmir is much higher than from past decades. A complete dramatic change has been taken place by the Govt. in the changing status of Kashmiri women after independence. Cultural and structural changes reduce exploitation of women to a great extent and provide equality of opportunities to women in various fields. The Kashmiri women have left the secured domain of their home and are now in the battle field of life, fully armored with their talent. Now, there is no area which remained unconquered by Kashmiri women.

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