

The unseen burden and her forgotten lore

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Women hold a crucial place in human society. They are like the earth. The resolve to treat the earth as a mother is truly commendable. It is the foundation for the growth of the new generation. To attract any companion, women were even given a place as ornaments. Since the Vedic period, women have been given numerous names, meanings, and definitions. Since the dawn of creation, there have been various opinions regarding the origin of women. Studying ancient scriptures reveals that Prajapati, the creator of the universe, was initially alone. Therefore, he divided himself into two parts, taking one part as his wife and the other as his husband. According to the Sri Naradiya Sukti, "The origin of this universe is an invisible, unbroken, and indivisible entity called Brahman." (1)

According to the Atharva Veda, woman is born from the power of the same God. According to all philosophical texts, especially discourses, philosophy, and the philosophy of Mimamsa, woman has a significant role in the work of creation. Some call her Shakti. "Vedic philosophy describes two independent streams of life in creation: the female stream and the male stream. These two are considered complementary to each other." (2) Or it is a freely flowing stream.

The first use of the word "Nari" in Sanskrit and Hindi is found in the Vedas; it means wife. From the beginning until today, the word "Nari" has generally been used to mean "female." Even in the Bhakti period of Hindi literature, it was used as a symbol of sexual relations. According to Kabir "Nari is the pond of hell, rarely there is a garden. If a saint rises there, the whole world seems to move." (3)

That is, woman is like the pond of intercourse. Only a rare human being can restrain the reins of the horse of their mind from straying into this direction. Only a saint can perform such spiritual practice. Otherwise, the entire world is dying from contact with it. Wherever the three are condemned, the word woman is used.

However, in modern times, the word "woman" is used to mean beloved, goddess, or woman. From the Vedic period to the present, the most common words for "woman" are "stri" and 'mahila'. 'stri' is a Vedic Sanskrit word, and its first use is found in the Rig Veda. A woman is called "mahila" because she respects marriage or is revered.

These different names for women define her character. There's no objection to not treating women as equal to men. However, rape and torture should never occur even in an uncivilized society. In a civilized society, it's impossible for men to prey on a woman living with them. Thus, women face many problems in society. These lines by Kamayanikar Prasad Ji are completely meaningful regarding women. "Woman, you are nothing but faith, a silver gem at every moment. Flow like a nectar source, / on the beautiful plains of life." (4) By naming woman as 'Shraddha', Prasad has presented to the world not only the true beauty of women's society but also the true beauty of human life. Woman is soft and beautiful in her very name, that is why Mahapraan Nirala ji has written, "On a page of literature, a woman's figure, like a lotus stalk in the abyss of darkness, with its hundreds of petals compressed, falls open in the land of light with its fullness. Life is stored in the roots, woman is the embodiment of the eternal, captivating light of the world." (5) Unique details have been given on the beautiful form and inner light of woman.

Because of her equal ability to work in every sphere of life, a woman has the right to live like a man everywhere. She is not merely a follower of a man, but also a companion and a co-wife. A man's right hand symbolizes effort and action, while his left hand symbolizes success and victory. Therefore, her place is on the man's left side. Therefore, a woman is also known as Vama. A woman shouldered more responsibilities in the domestic sphere than a man, which is why she was also called a 'housewife'. She was respected by men as a daughter, a wife, and a female in all aspects, and hence, she was called a woman. Different scholars have identified different terms used for women. Because a woman possesses beautiful body parts, she is called Angana; because she is fearful, she is called 'Bhiru'; because she is revered as a mother, she is called 'Mahisha'. Because she respects her husband, she is called 'Mahila'. Because she is imbued with youthful emotions, men respect her, and therefore she is also called 'Mena'. Women are an integral part of society and culture. Despite being a part of society, they are also independent individuals and a life force. Viewed from a

new perspective and within new values, it becomes clear that women possess an independent identity. Their human nature gives them a superior personality. It is through the integration of these three that a woman reaches the pinnacle of womanhood.

Indian society and culture have held many notions about women. "Men have called women demons, goddesses, and when these categorizations failed to satisfy them, they declared women a riddle. Since ancient times, women have been a subject of contemplation in one form or another. That is why they have been viewed in different ways. "On the one hand, women have been worshipped as goddesses, while on the other, they have been considered a mine of sin and a mere object of enjoyment." (6)

According to Dharendra Verma, "We use the term consciousness to mean intellectual inclination, proficiency, inspiration, or emotion, which is the human mind's power to persuade. Consciousness is directly related to human intelligence and is possible only in human beings." (7) Consciousness awakens only in humans. That is, consciousness is the power to understand one's surroundings and evaluate its meanings. According to Ramdarsh Mishra, "Consciousness is that element which has the feeling of knowledge and the experience of individual activity. When we know a substance, we gain knowledge of its nature." (8) That is, consciousness is that element present in living beings, which distinguishes them from non-living things. In other words, we can call it the element that drives human life activities.

The status of women has been changing over time, according to the country and time. Over time, numerous changes have occurred in Indian society, leading to a daily decline in the status of women. The role of women is as crucial to the building of society as water, air, and food are to the survival of the body. In the traditional Indian system, women have lived their entire lives under the protection of their fathers, husbands, and sons. In a patriarchal society like India, women's exploitation and problems begin within their families from birth. From female foeticide to the practice of Sati, their lives are fraught with struggles. They become victims of exploitation at various levels, including familial, social, and political. These problems begin within their own homes. Women face challenges such as foeticide, child marriage, denial of education, mismatched marriages, dowry, childlessness, loneliness, sexual abuse, mental abuse, widowhood, and the practice of Sati. To prevent the influence of English education on Indian women, their focus shifted to spiritual education. Parents, considering education a gift of Western civilization, wanted to deprive Indian women of education so that they would not be influenced by Western traditions. They considered English education to be irreligious. Therefore, many social reformers championed the cause of educating women. However, for various reasons, primarily "the practice of purdah and child marriage, women remained deprived of education for a long time." (9) Gradually, the Brahmo Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Arya Samaj, Theosophical Society, and Ramakrishna Mission entered the field. These organizations opened several girls' schools. The Arya Samaj established a girls' school in Dehradun and a girls' college in Jalandhar. Some women also took significant steps in this direction, seeking to educate their uneducated sisters. Pandita Ramabai is famous in Pune, who established an ashram for orphans and women in Kedgaon and organized their education. In most families, girls are still denied access to higher education. It's often seen that they don't receive the kind of education they aspire to. There are many reasons for this lack of parental support: sometimes, due to financial constraints, parents are unable to educate their children, and sometimes, girls seek an education they themselves are not interested in, suppressing their desires. Sometimes, when their daughters reach adulthood, they don't want to send them away from home, and it's impossible for them to keep them out of their sight. Many parents also believe that higher education spoils their daughters. Thus, educating their daughters faces numerous challenges. If these problems aren't addressed, their daughters remain uneducated, or the means to pursue higher education are available, and educated parents want to educate their daughters.

Widowhood is the greatest crisis in a woman's life, shackling her with numerous rules, regulations, and customs, and isolating her from the mainstream of society. While widows may be socially extinct, they continue to live their lives physically. Widowhood is a time that darkens a colorful life and fills her life with grief and helplessness. As a result, widows lose their identity and self-respect, becoming victims of oppression and exploitation at every step. "The problem of widow marriage has given rise to numerous social and economic problems, along with the inhuman exploitation of women. This is a paradox of women's lives that makes innocent women the source of many evils. In Hindu society, widows face double exploitation. On the one hand, they are deprived of all human rights, and on the other, their character is judged so minutely and subjectively, as if the entire existence of Hinduism depends on their good character." (10)

Widows have no existence in Hindu society. Their plight is abysmal, with many inhumane practices. They are seen as inauspicious and a curse. Upon the death of their husband, their identity, beauty, and rights are stripped away, and they are bound by rules, such as wearing a white sari, eating simple food, and attending any

auspicious function. Their heads are shaved. According to the rituals performed during death, all items such as bangles, vermilion, bindi, and mangalsutra become worthless to a widow, and she is deprived of all these. In the Hindu community, women are considered responsible for their husband's death and are excluded from mainstream society. Our conservative Hindu society presents two ideals for women: one is the 'Sati' system and the other is the Sanyasi. Widows are a symbol of inauspiciousness, as our traditional society does not allow for the freedom to remarry. Mahatma Gandhi, attacking this age-old mentality, said, A widow has as much right to marry as a widower. Widowed women face many challenges in their lives. They are bound by various religious and social rules, which makes them feel isolated in society. Man is a social being. Without society, he becomes completely helpless and powerless in living his life. Similarly, widowed women have to live a difficult life, isolated from the mainstream of society. Having a son is considered a great virtue in society, which is why sons are given a higher status and daughters are given a lower status. Therefore, being a woman is a curse, and being a widow is an even greater curse.

Due to mechanization, unemployment, industrialization, etc., human loneliness is increasing. As a result of modernization, women are suffering from the problem of loneliness. Dr. Sheelprabha Verma writes about this: The prevalence of lonely women is increasing in modern society. Society creates various obstacles in the life of lonely women. It wants to inflict physical and mental suffering on them. Struggling with all these hardships, today's women live a lonely life. If a human is happy, they are able to develop themselves, but a person suffering from unhappiness is immersed in worry. Thus, they live a life filled with suffocation. Women are exploited not only physically but also mentally. Sometimes the injury is felt in the heart. What cannot be seen or heard is only felt. This mental ill health is ignored. People are even unaware of mental abuse.

Who exploits women? When asked such a question, we immediately say men, because that has become our custom. But men aren't always the root cause of women's problems. Women themselves are also complicit in their exploitation. Until a woman strives to liberate herself, she will remain enslaved. Women see themselves as slaves and useful objects to men, so they assume the responsibility of keeping the next generation in that position. They dictate and direct future generations to live their lives in the same way. Consequently, women themselves become victims of exploitation and put others through the same problems. This practice continues. As a result, women themselves begin to inflict pain on other women, and eventually, they begin to treat them harshly. The reason for this situation is that women themselves fail to understand that what is happening to them is injustice. They are unaware of their rights. In such a situation, women will continue to be exploited by women.

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