STATEMENT - 1

(Statement showing the particulars on which the work is based, the discovery of new facts and of new relationship between facts by others and how the work tends to help the general advancement of knowledge)

(i) The research presented here is an attempt to understand and enunciate the position of women in ancient India. The status of women in a particular society is a major indicator of the spirit and true character of a nation’s society and culture. However, even though women have been central to the building up of a society and civilization, the historical and sociological studies often have a tendency to depict women as a marginal player in a civilization and to overlook their pivotal role in a society. An attempt has been made through this study to rectify such an erroneous approach and to present women as a dynamic force and an equal partner in the emergence and shaping up of a society and civilization. Hence, if the study about the status and position of Indian women in the ancient Indian has to be at all meaningful and pragmatic, it has to follow up a number of tangents, some of them being of the divergent nature. A balancing act and a dispassionate approach, imbued with the feelings of empathy and sensitivity, is, therefore, necessary because of the existence of such different, conflicting and parallel approaches.

(ii) As the study of the status and position of women in early Indian history has a very wide gamut involving wide ranging intricacies and complexities, this research endeavours to cover all aspects and facets related to the status of women in Ancient India in a complete, comprehensive and multidimensional perspective. To achieve this object, an attempt has been made to take into account, to the extent possible, infinite variations as regards the status and position of women in early Indian history, often differing and diverging according to the cultural milieu, family structure, class, caste, property rights and morals. This study has also taken into account the vital factual position that all along in ancient India, women have not had the same or uniform level of identities, gamut of
activities or status. An effort has thus been made to take into consideration different social contexts and paradigms. An attempt has also been made to look into the comparative situation in other cultures and civilization of the contemporary times.

(iii) In view of the intricate and contentious nature of the subject and divergence of viewpoints about the status and condition of women in ancient India, an attempt has been made to avoid blind reliance upon any specific methodology and to shun the prejudices and presumptions that have often tended to blur a rational and objective approach. Thus even though due cognizance has been taken of the divergent models or methodologies, an attempt has been made to adopt an empirical methodology which is derived from a critical analysis and a meticulous and dispassionate scrutiny of all the relevant facts in all their variegated aspects and coalesce them, with impartial neutrality, and imbued with the feelings of empathy and sensitivity.

(iv) The source materials on this subject are also full of contradictions—they often do not provide precise dates, and their interpretations are very often so divergent that we are faced with a daunting task of assessing the actual quantum of myth and reality. It is rather a difficult task to arrive at a rational judgment and a balanced depiction in respect of the status and position of women in ancient India. An attempt has, therefore, been made to undertake a critical, comparative and corroborative study of the literary, archaeological and epigraphic sources and embark upon an extensive and critical scrutiny of the various sources of information including Vedic, Epic, Buddhist, Smriti and classical Sanskrit literature, sculptures and inscriptions, narratives of foreign travellers etc.

(v) The status and position of women, including the extent and form of their subordination in any society, is conditioned and heavily influenced by the society’s overall social milieu, cultural environment and ideological strains and undercurrents. Hence this study also attempts to make a critical reappraisal of some of central principles, belief systems, and social practices that underpinned women’s lives and identities in India. Thus, the general subordination of women was formalized and perpetuated through the powerful institutions and deeply entrenched traditions based on the religious beliefs and ideology, which shaped the social practices and entailed socio-legal approval to a
structure based on social stratification in which women and lower castes were assigned a subordinate and subservient role.

(vi) This study seeks to probe the nature and extent of the exploitative practices which led to the degradation of women in ancient India. Although the degraded and exploitative condition of women in ancient India had many facets and dimensions, this study seeks to probe and analyze the same by means of the following institutions or practices and the related issues –

(b) Degradation of widows
(b) Practice of Sati
(c) Institution of public women.

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STATEMENT – 2

(Statement showing the sources of information, the extent to which the thesis is based on the works of others and the original portion of the thesis)
The study into the status and condition of women in ancient India involved an extensive and critical scrutiny of the various sources of information including Vedic, Epic, Buddhist, Smriti and classical Sanskrit literature, sculptures and inscriptions, narratives of foreign travellers etc. In order to grasp the subject and to critically and thoroughly grasp and scrutinize all its relevant aspects, I have relied extensively on the primary literary sources like the Vedas, Brahmana literature, the Epics (Mahabharata and Ramayana), the Puranas, the Dharmasastras, the Arthasastra of Kautilya, Vatsayana's Kamasutra, Bana's Harshacharita etc. A critical, comparative and corroborative study of the literary, archaeological and epigraphic sources has helped in analysing the subject in a comprehensive and rational manner. Analytical study and interpretations in light of the authenticity and objectivity of the sources also have been taken into account.

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The entire approach adopted to interpret "Facets of exploitation of women in Ancient India" is original. This study attempts to add to the aforesaid subject and take it a step forward.

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