CHAPTER-II
ANTHROPOLOGY AND WOMEN
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Women occupy an important place in the evolution of human society. Being always looked down upon with regard to the position enjoyed by men in society, there had always been a point of doubt on the nature of the real status that women enjoyed in the society.

The Swedish sociologist, Gustar Geigor wrote that, the position of women in society provided an exact measure of the development of society.

In India as in any other country the problems a woman faces have specific colouring depending on the socio-economic colouring, which in turn depending on the socio economic milieu in which she has been nurtured and moulded. Her problems are influenced by various social considerations. Furthermore, she and her life necessarily determine the welfare of the home, family and society.

Jawaharlal Nehru said to awaken the people it is the women who must be awakened; once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves, and the nation moves.
Many sociologists are of the view that there are certain irreducible bases for the determination of one's status in society. Among them, age, sex and occupation are the important parameters. Status, whether the by-product of support or the result of birth carries with it an image of exemplary behaviour, is a model of collective expectations. Hence, the role performance by individual in society is a functional determinant of the status determination.

Social status is ordinarily acquired and consolidated or demised and lost over a considerable length of time and it is during this period that life styles are elaborated as the symbolic token of material achievement.

In India the position and status of women has been continuously changing as and when time changes. It is claimed that women's position was absolutely better during Vedic period than that of later periods.

**Status of Women in India:**

A historical study of woman in India reveals that there were distinct stages of rise and fall in her status, woman in the Vedic times enjoyed a very high status. She has ample rights to enjoy life like that of a man. Woman was man's friend, his co-worker and never his inferior, she had enjoyed the property
right and had access to the property of her father and husband. Woman in the field of intellect was man's equal. She used to discuss political and social problems freely with men. She composed and chanted Vedic hymns at the holy sacrifices. In matter of selecting their partners in marriage women had equal rights. Pre-puberty marriages were unknown and there are references made to “Swayamvara” marriages where women were given chance of selecting their partners. Widow marriage was in existence women had the privilege of adoption.

After the Vedic period the position of women deteriorated considerably. The Hindu law giver Manu had made woman entirely dependent on man and subjected her to the authority of a father, husband and Son in the different periods of her life as daughter, wife and mother. His dictum was that “for women there can be no freedom at any stage in life”. This position of women continued throughout the Hindu period and was reinforced by the Muslim masters whose custom and tradition were noted for the complete subordination of women by man and which considered women as inferior to men.

The British people at first followed a policy of non-interference in the social and religious life of the people of India to win their co-operation in the administration of the
country. So women went down imperceptibly in social status. They had to lead a cloistered life. They moved within the narrow sphere of their kitchen, cooking child bearing and child rearing and catering to the relatives in law and husband, comprised their work, life and activity. They had practically no idea of the busy world outside except what they learned from their menfolk.

**New Role:**

Women are primarily associated with the home and man with the outside world. As home makes women are expected to look after domestic chores, such as cooking and serving food, processing and storage of food and cleaning the house. Women's contribution to productive activities or to actual earnings of the family varies at different socio-economic levels and in different regions. Thus women, whether they work in the fields, factories or mines or work at construction sites or those who are engaged in household industries or in white collar jobs all of them are expected to be home makers along with those who confirm themselves exclusively to home making activities. Housewives and mother are the feminine roles. In the cultural understanding of the people, home making like child bearing and also child-rearing cannot be
distinguished from femininity. In other words there are sex-linked roles for women.

The quality of civilization can be better judged by the position it has given to women folk. India has a population of more than 100 crores. Almost half of the population constitute women folk. This women folk in India have been enjoying their own status which was in a way inferior to the men folk in past and it is also true that the transformation of the society from matrilineal to patrilineal the so-called women folk have been suppressed, oppressed and depressed like anything owing to the gender discrimination. As a result of this inequality of sexes existed. It is true that in the patriarchal society the right of inheritance of property rights is recognized with only men and as a result the women folk were badly neglected.

The status of women in ancient India especially during Vedic times was very good and they were treated with all respect and reverence. They were like the incarnations of goddesses. For each and everything their suggestions were asked and tried to implement the same. Over the years, this status has been subjected to criticism. They should obtain permission either with father, brother or husband and then leave. This went on unabatedly and continued even today.
Unless the society changes its mindset, it becomes very difficult to women folk to regain their past status. Slowly and steadily the women folk became educated and this made the society to change its attitude towards them. Since time immemorial, they were confined to kitchen and over the years they started to come out of that and involved in several activities including income generating areas to help the family.

After the independence of the country and also having an independent constitution, gender discrimination was totally abandoned and they started getting equal opportunity to work side by side with men in the society. As a result, people started considering them as equal citizens of the society wherein every one was treated with all respect and reverence.

Women have contributed their might since time immemorial for the overall development of the society. This has been proved unquestionably. When Manu put restrictions on the participation of women in religious sphere created lot of havoc in Indian society and thereby people started to keep the womenfolk away from the religious spheres of the society. The involvement of women in religious fields was questioned due to their biological uncleanliness due to their regular menstrual cycle.

The quality of civilization can be better judged by the
position it has given to its women in the society. In the past the status of women were given different position. Americans considered the womenfolk as goddesses, French people as lovers, Muslim civilization as slaves and Indian society considered them as mothers. After the Vedic period in India, the status of women has considerably lowered. This was all due to the male dominancy over them and slowly they were kept away from taking important decisions pertaining to the family. As a result of this a series of restrictions were imposed on them and no female child was allowed to go out independently for anything. By doing so, her independency was checked and controlled. Women irrespective of their position and irrespective of the area in which they inhabited have rendered their selfless service for the betterment of the society as mothers, wives, administrators and also entrepreneurs.

Indian society is known for its own customs, traditions and heritages. This is all due to its outstanding cultural inculcations in the minds and hearts of the people. The Sanatana Dharma clearly put the women as mere angles. Matrudevobhava is an replica of this. It is the woman who is considered as the first teacher of the child and the entire responsibility of the child's development rests on the
shoulders of the woman. As a result of this she takes lot of interest and care in shaping and moulding the personality of the child. Here the role of women as mothers is extraordinarily great in Indian context.

Woman, though considered by men as a weaker sex, has always played a vital role in every society with regards the upbringing of the young and transmitting to them the 'socio-cultural' heritage. Despite her genetic superiority and her ability to share societal responsibility, she has not always enjoyed the status she deserved. Sometimes she was treated as a market commodity or a war prize, at others, she was upheld as the 'residing deity of the home and therefore was respected and protected, for the prosperity of the home depended on her. The status of women has thus differed from time to time, and from society to society.

The study of 'status of women' is however significant as it enables us to understand the ethical oneness of a community, and its limitations. In fact as Dr. Neera Desai (1977) puts it, "the position of woman in any society is a significant pointer to the level of culture of that society." It is through the marriage laws and other customs that we realize whether the man in that society looked upon the woman as a
valued partner whose cooperation was indispensable for happiness and success in family life or whether he treated her as an item of private property that could be exchanged, mortgaged or sold at his free will. The degree of freedom granted to women to move about and participate in various activities enables us to know whether a community accepts the fact that women have a contribution of their own to make, to its development and progress. Understanding the Status of women in any community also helps us understand the general attitude that men hold towards women, how for the religion in that community stands for justice and fair-play, whether it allows her any freedom of participation in the ritual and other religious activities. In short, the study of ‘status of women’ in any society is significant as it provides us an index of the ethical and social progress of the society.

Analysis of the ‘portion of women’ in India is a difficult task, for India is a land of great cultural complexity and diversity, of great regional variations—in customs and traditions, in castes and sects, in linguistic, communal and religious affinities. Yet, there is unity in this diversity, a common undercurrent of thought, common value-orientations which characterise and distinguish Indian culture—from all other perceptions. Through, a broad All-India pattern, we can
see the status of Indian women evolving and changing right from the Vedic to the modern times.

Traditional Outlook and Practices:

To understand the contemporary attitudes towards the status of women in India, one has to look back into the past and understand the traditional outlook and practices that manifested woman's place in the society. The family during the Vedic Age (2500 to 1500 B.C.) was essentially patriarchal, with eldest male member as its head, wielding considerable authority over other members and family property. The woman's position in such a family was naturally inferior, though she enjoyed considerable freedom than her counterpart in the Post-Vedic society.

In the Rig-Veda, there are references of the 'dampati'—the householder and his wife making sacrificial offerings together. The wife could perform sacrifices during her husband's absence and could also chant 'sama' hymns. The Rig-Veda also relates the story of Brihaspati, who left his wife and went away for practising penance but the gods explained to him how it was improper to perform penance, alone without wife. Every householder was expected to fulfill his 'dharmic' duties, the socio-religious obligations with active participation
of his wife, who was described as ‘sahadharmacharini’. Woman thus had absolute equality in the eyes of religion.

As far as education was concerned, the position of the Vedic woman was generally not unequal to that of the man. She received similar education as man, could participate in philosophical discourses with men and could also practise penance like men. There were as many as twenty women among the composers of Rig-Vedic hymns. The most well-known of such scholarly women, whose names have been recommended for daily remembrance by posterity, were Sulabha, Maitreyi and Gargi, who are known to have defeated, scholars like Yajnyavalkya, in intellectual and philosophical discussions. Two classes of women students recognized in early Vedic society were ‘Brahma-vadini and ‘Sadyodvahas’ the former were lifelong students of theology and philosophy; whereas the latter prosecuted their studies only till they were married. Some of the lady philosophers used to remain unmarried throughout the life in order to carry on their spiritual experiments unhindered. Later, the admission of women to the Buddhist order provided great impetus to the cause of female education. Majority of ladies from Buddhist families lead a life of celibacy in order to follow the eternal path of religion and philosophy. One among them was
Sangmitra, king Ashoka's daughter who went to foreign countries like Ceylon and attained great name and fame as the teacher of Holy Scriptures. The women-teachers were known as 'Upadhyayanis'. They were quite numerous in Vedic society and under their guidance the girls received their training. Writers like Hariia manned that girls should be taught at home by their male relations. By about 5th century B.C., education was generally confined to cultured and well-to-do families.

Till about the beginning of the Christian era, Upanayana or the initiation ceremony, commencing the period of discipline and education, was as common to girls as it was in case of boys. It was believed that a maiden could succeed in married life only if she were properly trained during the period of studentship. Down to about the 3rd century B.C. girls could remain unmarried till the age of 16. Though marriage was considered as desirable for both men and women, the society did not insist on every one getting married at all cost. But by 300 B.C, marriage became obligatory for girls, and the freedom of choosing their partner, enjoyed by them earlier was also withdrawn. The age at marriage of girls was also reduced to 14 from 16. They were married before they could exercise any intelligent choice in the matter. Girls could no longer have the
privilege of going through 'Upanayana', as marriage, was considered as the only, necessary 'sanskara' sanctifying; their body. Subru, the daughter of sage, Kuni, remained unmarried for all her life practising severe penance, and realized at the end of her life that could not go to heaven as her body was not consecrated by the sacrament of marriage. She then had to marry sage Sringavat with whom she lived for a night and set on her journey to heaven! Thus marriage became not only obligatory for girls, but by the beginning of the Christian era, pre-puberty marriages became the order of the day. This new trend of child marriage proved a serious obstacle in the way of women's education. Thus in the age of Brahmanas (1500 to 500 B.C) gradual changes were taking place in the status of women. By the age of Sutras and Epics (500 B.C. to A.D. 500) it changed considerably. Girl's education was discontinued as there was clamour for early marriage at 8 to 10 years of age. Procreation of a son became a religious necessity, for he alone could discharge certain religious obligations, to the ancestors.

The post-vedic society, as depicted through Manu Samhita and epic like Mahabharata, had already experienced rigidification in caste-system and the women, along with Shudras were considered an inferior status. Manu's attitude as regards property rights to women was clear when he
declared, 'A wife, a son and a slave—these three will have no property'. The wealth which they earn is (acquired) of him to whom they belong. The wife had only the right over her 'Stridhana', whatever she received by way of gifts at the time of wedding. Kautilya however recognized the prior claim of a brotherless daughter.

The Epics provide contradictory evidence with regard to the degree of freedom enjoyed by women in that period. Education seems to have been by the time the privilege of the royal families, as the Ramayana speaks of Kausalya (Ram's mother) and Tara as 'Mantravid', well-versed in the Vedas, and the Mahabharata refers to Sulabha, a virgin scholar, as well as to Draupadi, the wife of five Pandavas, as 'pandita', the learned lady. She was an able guide to her husbands in matters of religion, philosophy, war and general 'Code of conduct'. There is also an evidence in the Epics with regard to employment of female servants in the royal families, and a tendency to keep women in seclusion. Valmiki, in the Ramayana, grants women the freedom of movement in times of distress, war, swayamvara, sacrificial rituals and marriage ceremonies, meaning thereby the women lacked such a freedom at other times.
With steadily growing rigidification of Brahmanism and rising importance of ritualism, the Brahmins acquired unlimited powers. As a reaction to this, Buddhism arose and declared that no intermediary was necessary between the God and the man, thus opening the doors of religion to all men and women, without any distinction. Women could freely join the Buddhist order and exercise their right to salvation. Even a courtesan like Amrapali could sacrifice the worldly comforts in favour of religious life of austerity in order to achieve 'Nirvana'. Although a Bhikkhuni had a lower status than a Bnikkhu, Buddhism brought about freedom and equality for women in the sphere or religion. It created a democratic atmosphere in which women could regain their self-confidence.

Threatened of its dominant position in the society, the Brahmin class once again made strong efforts to re-establish varnashrama— dharma, the authority of the Vedas and advocated strict moral rules for women. The Puranic writers contended that a woman should worship her husband as her god, even though he may be of ill-repute, suffering from incurable disease or might be ill-treating her as a slave. Her enslavement to man was glorified in the name of 'pativrata-dharma', though the 'dharma' was of 'abject obedience and unnatural tolerance'. Her religious participation was restricted
to observance of certain ‘Vratas’. She was no longer entitled to hear the Vedas. Due to the pre-puberty marriage, she could exercise no choice with regard to her partner in life. Bramapurana advocated four years as the due age for marriage of a girl. From about 6th or 7th century A.D., Brahmin girls were being unmarried, at the age of 8 to 10. They could no longer choose to remain unmarried, for marriage had become almost compulsory and universal.

The ideal wife as described by Manu was Sadhavi (virtuous) if she constantly worshipped her husband as a god even if he was devoid of qualities or seeking insure elsewhere. But it was a sin if she even thought of another man. It was the privilege of the husband to have a second wife if the first wife failed to give him male issues. He could also indulge in extramarital relations. This double standard of morality for men and women indicates the privileged position and dominance of men over women on one hand, and greatly deteriorated position of women on the other. Moral lapses of the male were not only pardoned, but even encouraged, whereas the women could be penalized, even put to death for the slightest departure from the moral norms. The wife was expected to be faithful to her husband, not only while he was alive, but also after his death. She had no separate existence
apart from her husband. As a widow, she had to lead a life of chastity and simplicity. Her mere presence was inauspicious; sight of hers was an ill-omen. A widow was thus put into most humiliating position as a life-long unpaid servant in the family, often ill-treated, ill-fed and blamed for the death of her husband. The most sinister custom of shaving the head of a widow through force was another measure to make her look unattractive to men, for Manu believed women has excessive, insatiable sexual appetite, as a result of this they could easily fall prey to evil elements in the society. ‘Woman was created for infatuating man and hence there is nothing more heinous than women’, said Manu. He was supported by the Epic and the puranic writers, who thought, love of scandal and the lust of sex the creator gave to women. A man cannot guard them by words, blows or punishments for they are always unbridled. A woman thus needed to be guarded and protected, by father in her childhood, by husband in her youth and by sons in her old age. Manu thus prepared, a proper mental outlook and attitude for the continuous decline in the status of women.

Contradictory to Manu’s prejudicial view, we have numerous examples from the Mahabharata to show how woman was expected to be treated with love and honour.
Bhishma, the great grandfather of Pandavas enlightening Yudhisthir, the eldest of the five Pandavas at one time, calls a woman 'a great temptress' and a 'lurer', and at another, speaks of her in terms of high reverence. "Women should always be adored (Pujya) and treated with love" he says, "If the women of a family, are not honoured and the treatment they receive, insult in grief and tears, that family soon becomes extinct."

The execution of the 'dharma' of man depends upon woman. Women are the deities of prosperity; the person who desires affluence and prosperity should honour them. Varahamihira, an astronomer of 6th century A.D, felt strongly about the injustice done to women by men of his times and proclaimed, with her help, "'dharma', 'artha', son and pleasures of the senses are possible. Hence, the frail sex should ever the regarded in the home as the goddess of prosperity (grihalakshmi) and treated with respect (mana), and dignity." These various judgments expressed by different thinkers during the post-vedic period, though seem contradictory, indicate that woman is to be respected and honoured for family stability and happiness; in view of the inherent weakness of her character, however, she needs protection of man and is dependent on him all her life.
A widow, who could never contract a second marriage in this period, was offered another yet more inhuman alternative of 'self-immolation' or 'suttee', whereby she burnt herself alive with her dead husband. Initially it was voluntary and an alternative to leading a life of misery and humiliation as a widow. Later it was adopted by the kshatriyas as a regular institution, and Rajput women committed 'Jauhar' or suttee on a large-scale when their husbands were defeated in war. After the Muslim conquest of India, the Brahmins also adopted the custom, and by the 15th century the Hindu widows who did not observe sati were held in great dishonour. As Dr. Neera Desai aptly remarks, 'with the emergence and spread of this custom, anti-climax was reached in the deterioration of the position of woman and her subjection'. So long as women practised sati voluntarily, it proved their devotion and love for their husbands. But when it was forced on them, as was the case with overwhelming majority, it was the height of barbarity that has left lasting blemish on Hindu culture and society.

**Position of Women in Muslim Period:**

The Muslim invasion of the country brought about further deterioration of the position of Indian women. The coercive norms imposed by the Muslim rulers on the
conquered Hindu population, introduced further ‘restrictions’ on the freedom and rights of women. The ‘purdah’ system introduced by the rulers brought about seclusion of women to their homes, and their polygynous marriages adopted by the Hindu for religious reasons, inflicted untold misery and humiliation on married women. Their freedom of movement was greatly restricted, as a security against the invaders and their participation in socio-religious activities, in intellectual discussions became a memory of the glorious past. Even in this darkest period, one notices a silver lining through certain social reforms introduced by some of the enlightened Mughal emperors to relieve the women of their hardships. But these hardly improved the status of the women. Widow-remarriages were completely frowned out of existence by about 600 A.D. Widowers, on the other hand, could contract second and even third marriage - with or without the consent of first wife. Such a marriage was declared to be a religious necessity by some obliging Smriti writers. Although they held, ascetic life as preferable for a widow, they also begin to refer to ‘sati’ as a second alternative. Coming into general vogue by 400 A.D. the custom of Sati firmly established among the ruling Rajput families of Northern India. Muslim rulers, as a general rule, did not like the custom. During the reign of Akbar, Satis
became rare due to restrictions imposed on widows, not to mount the funeral pyre without the permission of the local government officer. This privilege of ‘Sahamarana’ was often given to the favourite wife, others being burnt on separate pyres; funeral arrangement was often made in a pit to make an escape of a widow impossible.

While the Hindus adopted the institutions of purdah and polygyny from the Muslim, they were careful not to assimilate divorce, widow remarriage and a larger share of property for women, which characterized Muslim society. The Hindus continued to be rigid in their outlook, to be governed by the directives of Manu and hence the democratic elements of the Muslim culture had no impact on Hindu's traditional outlook and practices.

Under the Muslim regime, right up to the arrival of the British, the status of women was continually deteriorating. Ideologically, she was considered an inferior species; socially, she was denied all rights, more or less isolated and totally subjected to male domination; economically, she was completely dependent on her husband or other male relatives, her right to 'Stridhana' though recognized, yet hardly, implemented, and politically, she was a non-entity. The society
was not prepared to accept the fact that a woman could have an independent personality. The free-growth of her personality was thwarted not only by the social institutions and the customs prevailing then, but also by the ideology of the time. The very 'conception of a woman, whether Hindu or Muslim, was basically feudal in character', as Mrs. Desai remarks.

**Position of Women and the Bhakti Cult:**

The Bhakti cult founded by Ramanujacharya in the 11th century A.D. had a tremendous impact on the position of women in India. As a reaction to the rapidly expanding Buddhism on one hand, and to the large scale conversion of the downtrodden masses to Islam on the other, the 'Bhakti' movement introduced new trends in social life. The numerous saints who arose in different parts of India proclaimed that any one irrespective of distinctions, of sex, age caste or creed can achieve salvation by devotion to God, without any intermediary. Almost all the saints preached against the rigidity of the caste system and the tyranny of Brahmanism. Religious teachers like Kabir, Namdev, Ramdas hailed from lower castes like weavers, tailors and cobblers respectively. Saints like Gnaneshwar translated the Vedic scriptures into
regional language of Marathi to reach the Vedic knowledge to the illiterate men and women. The Bhakti movement, being essentially humanistic, attracted the masses, particularly the downtrodden men and women.

On eve of the British rule in India, the status of woman had already reached the maximum degree of deterioration. As a daughter, she was burden to the father, who disposed her off to any caste-man, irrespective of age, before she was biologically and mentally prepared to face married life. As a wife, she was expected to be a 'pativrata' at the cost of her own comforts and total development of her personality; if she were to live longer than her husband, as a widow she had either to lead a life of an ascetic or commit suttee. So long as he was alive, to him she was either the source of sexual gratification, or as begetter of male children.

The Status of Women under the British Rule:

Prior to the British rule, India was being invaded from time to time by number of foreign groups, which plundered the people but left their socio-economic structure untouched. But the Britishers, despite their policy of non-intervention, directly or indirectly affected the self-sufficient village economy, the joint-family system and the caste system which had hitherto
provided stable foundations to Indian society. They not only introduced capitalism in the economic field, democracy in the social and the political spheres, but also their ideology—their ideas of liberalism and rationalism, equality of all citizens before law—which left a far-reaching impact on the Indian culture and society.

The British conquest of and rule over India brought about economic and political unification of the Indian people under a single centralized government.

The introduction of the modern means of communication and transport brought scattered groups of Indians together. The extensive social contacts among them contributed to relax caste-barriers, communal and provincial prejudices. The introduction of a new legal system initiated a change in the legal relationships between the Indians. The establishment of a network of educational institutions produced a new class of Indian intelligentsia, which later provided leadership in all progressive movements. Having imbibed ideas of equality and liberty, liberalism and nationality, the enlightened Indians like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, applied them to the prevalent social conditions and sought to bring about a social transformation. For the first time, after centuries, the issue of the position of
women received humane consideration from liberal-minded social reformers who struggled for women's education and emancipation.

There arose two groups of thinkers who differed in their approach to social progress including liberation of women. Both were against the undemocratic character and exploitative nature of our social institutions and the harmful social practices. But their emphasis differed. One group, the revivalists demanded the removal of evil practices on the basis of a programme of revival of Vedic institutions and customs. The other group, the liberal Reformers, thought in terms of equality of all human beings irrespective of sex and other distinctions. They launched several social reforms, through education and legislation, in order to fight the tyranny of caste and other institutions and to establish individual liberty and equality. These two schools of thought, which emerged during the British period, created a congenial atmosphere in which women's education was encouraged, the age of marriage raised, and employment of women made feasible.

Nineteenth Century Social Reform:

The movement for the improvement in the status of women in India dates back to the last decade of the eighteenth
century. In 1795 the British Government passed two regulations to abolish the practice of female infanticide soon after Raja Ram Mohan Roy launched a campaign for the abolition of the constraints on widow remarriage among upper caste Hindus. This movement, kindled by these two reformers in Bengal, spread to Maharashtra, Andhra and several other parts of the country. Throughout the nineteenth century, reformers across the country waged a powerful battle against a range of Hindu practices that made for the subjugation and inhuman treatment of women.

Although both the reformers, Ram Mohan Roy and Vidyasagar and the issues that they agitated against, were largely Hindu, echoes of the movement were felt among other communities as well. For instance, parallel movements occurred within the Islamic community. Towards the end of the nineteenth century the begum of Bhopal, Sheikh Abdullah in Aligarh and Karamat Hussain in Lucknow tried to bring enlightenment to bear upon the lives of Muslim women.

This continued struggle on the part of the reformers, as Dr. Suma Chitnis points out liberated women in many ways. It brought legislative measures for the abolition of Sati, paved
the way for restrictions on child marriage, and legitimized and facilitated widow remarriage. It promoted the education of women and opened up possibilities for their employment—initially as nurses and primary school teachers, but progressively as professionals of high standing in law, medicine and other fields. It brought about the starting of pioneering institutions and organizations to work for women’s welfare. These organizations sought to educate women, to equip them for employment, to care for them in widowhood and in destitution.

They set the tone for welfare work for women for decades-to come. It is important to make that none of the leaders of this reform movement were women. In this sense, it was not women’s movement at all, but rather a movement for women, led and conducted by men. It is equally important to recognize that the reformers basically addressed themselves to issues concerning the lives of middle and upper class, and upper caste women. They were not involved with the masses. Jyotiba Phule, who himself belonged to the lower castes, was probably the only nineteenth century reformer who was concerned for Harijan women. It is also important that the reformers aimed merely to change the position of women within the framework of the family and extended kin-group or
rather, to obtain for them a more humane existence than was available at the time. By no means did they aim either at drawing women into socially significant roles outside the family, or at attaining for them equal fights and opportunities with men.

**Women as Administrators:**

Since ages, we have seen the participation of women folk in administration at all levels. Right from Gram Panchayat to the highest position of President of India women have shown their commitment in administration. As a result of this many important decisions have been taken without much risk. By participating in the public life women have proved beyond doubt that they are in no way inferior or weak when compared to men. Since ages, women were barred from entering the public life, slowly they are exposing themselves to the new environment wherein they have to mix freely with the public and involve themselves in solving their problems. Now, government is also giving equal opportunity side by side with men by providing reservations to them in different walks of life. Education is also given equally with men so as to make them competent in all walks of life. As a result, this exploitation of women by men was marginalized. This was
supported by women activists, “Sthri-Shakti” bodies and other like-minded organizations. To attend to the problems of the women and to check the possible harassment on them separate police stations (Women) was opened to protect this type of women folk.

In a patriarchal society, the women who emerged as administrations had to face lot of problems, due to the gender discrimination many technical problems will be cropped up in the administration. In spite of these hurdles the women administrators are managing their show successfully. To name a few administrators, like Kiran Bedi, Jijha Harisingh are noteworthy, against the odds they did lot of work as administrators and because very close to the common people in the society. As a result of this they get good opinion from the mass. Though they get this type of opinion from the public, but in times of crisis no body supports them due to gender discrimination. Very few administrators, against the current but most of the other women administrators had the policy of compromising with the situation and thereby they get totally immuned from public as well as their superior harassment. Women administrators are more or less successful in crisis management. By the virtue of their experience in the administrative needs they can easily solve many difficult problems easily.
Women and Entrepreneurship:

Women have always played a supporting role for man in the economic activity of the family. Even through women had the skill or potential to develop herself as an independent much support was not given in the earlier days. Now women being 50 percent of the population it is necessary that women are given opportunities and the necessary support to develop themselves as independent entrepreneurs. This will not only help in family economic development but will also add to the economic development of country to a larger extent.

An entrepreneur is a highly respected word. Entrepreneurship refers to the skill of discovering new economic opportunities, managing the business, taking risk and introducing innovations (Sundaram1989) in women contribution to India’s economic and social development edited by Mahajan 1989). Here we are studying the women entrepreneurs. An entrepreneur is an important change in every society. Schumpeter (1961) defined entrepreneur as a dynamic agent change or the catalyst who transformed increasingly, physical natural and human resources into corresponding production possibilities.
Table-01

Caste wise, age wise and Educational status of the Women Entrepreneurs

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<td>08</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Viswakarma</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Madiwala</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Kuruba</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Harijan</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reveals that there are as many as 25 women entrepreneurs from five castes in two villages where I did field work. The table also reveals that all castes in the village have the representation of women entrepreneurs in their caste. This itself shows that women are encouraged to earn extra income for themselves and for their family. All the entrepreneurs have the satisfaction of contributing their might in the overall development of the family. Even in the field of education also these women entrepreneurs are doing well.
### Table-02

**Caste wise and Age wise Marital Status of the Women Entrepreneurs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Lingayat</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Viswakarma</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Madiwala</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Kuruba</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Harijan</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>08</strong></td>
<td><strong>04</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that out of 25 women entrepreneurs, as many as 08 women entrepreneurs are from Lingayat community who are the major owners of land ownership. The marital status indicates that out of eight, two are unmarried and the rest ones are married. In this category no one falls under widow, deserted, divorced and single parent category.

Next to Lingayats it is Viswakarma who has 06 women entrepreneurs. Out of six, one is unmarried and the remaining ones are married.

Madiwalas and Kumbaras have three and four women entrepreneurs respectively. Among the Madiwalas all the four
ones are from the married category. Among the Kurubas one is unmarried and the other two are married. Harijans have four women entrepreneurs and all the four are from the married category.

Table-03

Caste wise Family Types of Women Entrepreneurs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Nuclear family</th>
<th>Extended family</th>
<th>Joint family</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Lingayat</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Viswakarma</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Madiwala</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Kuruba</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Harijan</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>03</strong></td>
<td><strong>02</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Family plays a very important role in moulding the personality of the individuals. The majority women entrepreneurs are from nuclear families and as a result of it, convincing their husbands to become entrepreneurs was not a difficult task. Only 05 entrepreneurs represented extended and joint family system. In a n agrarian setup raising to the status of entrepreneur is a difficult task because it is backed by one’s economic well being.
Progress of Women Entrepreneurship:

India being the country with a vast population employment opportunities are limited. Creation of self employment opportunities through the promotion of entrepreneurial skills, especially entrepreneurial skills, has large scope. Though India boasts of entrepreneurship since 1950, its base till recently was narrow and confined to only few industries and few families. After independence both government of India and the business houses began to take up steps to develop entrepreneurial growth in India.

The development of women entrepreneurial skills gained its importance in India after the declaration of the International decade for women by the UNO i.e., 1975-85. The hidden entrepreneurial potential of women has gradually started changing with the growth sensitivity to the role and economic status in the society. Women are becoming increasingly conscious of their existence, their rights and their work situations.

Recent researches conducted indicate that several women are now willing to become entrepreneurs due to various factors, Margabanthu [in women's contribution to India's economic and social development edited by Mahajan,
1989) classified these factors as 'pull' factors and 'push' factors. Pull factors are those where women entrepreneurs choose a profession as a challenge and adventure with an urge to do something new and so have independent occupations. ‘Push’ factors means where women taken up business enterprise to get over financial difficulties and responsibility is thrust on them due to family circumstances.

Nigum (1992) has made an attempt to examine the role of women as household workers engaged in manufacturing activities in her article on ‘women in household industry emerging trends and issues’. Nigum said that a large proportion (56.36%) of women in manufacturing are engaged in household industry as self employed wage earners doing a variety of activities like manufacturing beedi, food processing, garment worker, spinners, potters, basket makers, lace and zari workers, repair workers etc. The author is of the opinion that household women workers combing domestic work with home based productive work for cash income, the latter is normally referred to as a hobby or by a few enlightened soils as subsidiary activity which supplements the income of the bread earner.
Next to agriculture manufacturing in household enterprises constitute the single biggest source of employment for women.

**Need for Women Entrepreneurship:**

Entrepreneurship of women will not only enable them to get better jobs and economically self sufficient or independent, but society will also gain. This education must be practical and well adapted to their needs, especially in relation to health, nutrition and legal rights. When women move forward, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves. Employment gives economic status to women. Economic status pave the way of social status.

Generally speaking, the circumstances are difficult for girls, especially severe in rural areas and consequently they record a higher drop out rate as compared to boys.

It can be concluded that among various reasons poverty is one of the prime causes for lack of education and higher drop out rate among girls specially in rural areas. Some of the off-cited factors as reasons for dropping out as per girls are: reluctance of parents to send school, have to participate in domestic activities, helping in the fields, teacher's unfair behaviour, illness, death in family, poverty and lack of interest
in studies. Spending on education, especially educating a girl child in rural areas is perceived as waste of money and resources as here is no immediate gain from education. Despite the clear advantages of female education, parents tend to prefer to educate their sons. Often a choice is made between sending either boy or girl to the school and parents would rather spend scarce family resources educating a boy as it is considered as a long-term and sure investment. It is commonly perceived that she would be married into another family and would take advantages she gains from education. Before or after marriage, a girl's role in family is primarily linked to the household; thus expenditure on her formal education is seen as a waste of resources. Families and parents believe that girls are required much more for domestic and household chores. In some cases girls even find school environment as discouraging, putting extra pressure on them thus diverting their attention from domestic work. World over, particularly in patriarchal social setups, parents view daughter's education as secondary to her role as a home maker. Such biased notions have clear cut implications on investments in educating girls. In sum, cultural stereotypes, poverty, financial constraints and reluctance are some of the factors responsible for the high drop-out rate among girls from school and consequent lack of education among girls.
It has been increasingly realized that nothing is more central to sustainable development than the economic, political and social participation and empowerment of women. Education as a means of socio-economic, political empowerment has profound impact on development. A broad set of data shows that women's education increases their control over resources and livelihood. In nutshell, education of women is key to prosperity in any society. After independence, India has adopted different oaths and strategies for national, social, political and economic development. Socio-economic development has opened doors to education for both sexes, and women have gained in many respects. Enrolment at various levels such as elementary, primary, secondary education, vocational and higher education has improved tremendously and so has women's entrance into traditionally male dominated domain. Whatever and however big may be, the problems persist due to cultural ideologies. "Particularly in rural areas cultural ideologies and religious values contribute to low expectation for girl's education and parent's unwillingness to invest on educating their daughters. Moreover the colonial history of India, religious values and the caste system subjugated women further under threefold burden, restricting their roles to be largely mothers and
daughters. In all, gender inequality results from the interactive influences of traditional and cultural ideologies, caste system, sexism, religion, regional differences and rural-urban disparities resulting in low educational achievement of girls.

The Indian society has accorded differential status to women throughout the history. But there has been a significant change in the status of women in modern India. Educating women is critical to socio-economic development of nation. In the words of Former President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam "Empowering women is a prerequisite for creating a good nation, when woman are empowered, society with stability is assured. Empowerment of women is essential as their thoughts and their value system lead to the development of a good family, good society and ultimately a good nation. Women will gain power only when both men and women begin to respect and accept the contribution of women. Education would emancipate and endow women with ability to control her life, accomplish her dreams and enhance her status; the task is challenging yet not impossible. Education and the empowerment of women are both essential and indispensable for prosperous nation.