CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

Pandit Jawaharlal's speech from the Red Fort on 15th August 1949, inspired the whole nation. He touched the cord of every Indian heart, when he said that, 'India has a tryst with the destiny.' That tryst with destiny was to revive the glory of the nation - be the world leader in the Civilization. Pandit Nehru always had a world vision. The Americans and the Russians were the super powers of the day. America was an altogether new Nation raised by the coloniers who broke away from the British. In no time they surpassed the British Raj from whom they broke away. Russia was a backward agricultural country. It was much more backward than India. Yet it had a head start. It was a dominant power in the allies which defeated the mighty Germany and Japan in World War II.
Karl Marx whose communism inspired Russia and China caught the imagination of many Indians too. If Russia can be a great power, why not India? And what was Japan in the eighteenth century? It was just a bunch of nondescript Islands. It suddenly transformed itself into a giant much stronger than the Giant China. China itself was very similar to India. A vast ancient country, yet a slave nation of the British Empire. It transformed itself into a super power, challenging not only British, but Japan, Russia, America - all in a row. Russia took barely forty years for this great transformation.

When Pandit Nehru spoke of tryst with destiny, he had all these models before him. If Russia can transform itself in forty years, why not India? When he launched the Five Year Plans on model of Russia, he thought that five, Five Year Plans - 25 years should be enough to catch up with Russia. After all we are a free nation now. Nothing should hold us back.

At the same time, Nehru also declared that, 'The greatest revolution in a country is the one that affects the status and living conditions of women'. That means the real indicator of the development is conditions of women. They cannot be treated as passive part of the society. The changes which are taking place have most dramatic impact on the Indian women. Man has always been the bread winner for the family. But with modern technological changes, Indian women are for the first time venturing out in totally new fields. The new role of the women is having far reaching implications for the whole society. Western movement of women liberation, just repudiated the traditional roles of women. Indian
woman still remains a family person. Her ties with the society are very strong. The study of status of women in India, is therefore indicative of the total changes in the Indian society.

Women in India have always been a hard working class. They have managed all the household chores in big families without aid of the modern gadgets. They have discharged all their religious and social duties and left the men totally free to do their jobs. Yet, she is not treated as ‘working woman’. This phrase is reserved for only women working in the organized field, where the wages are earned. Vast number of women are working in areas where the employment in terms of market economy is very nominal. Women work on their own farms, getting no wages at all. Even when she earns money, it is deemed to be a small supplementary effort. Women are paid less wages. It is presumed that their energies are primarily absorbed by household work. Their role even in the organized employment is supposed to be a minor supportive role. Tough jobs, tough decisions and hence heavily rewarded jobs are the male preserve.

But now the change in the traditional division of labour i.e woman looking after family and kids and man protecting and earning for the family, is taking place. Security function is taken over by the State. Women are taking over jobs in all the fields. Practically no field is left untouched by her. Let it be politics, science, research, policing, aviation, space or any thing else. This is the battle ground for forces of tradition and forces of change. By studying the social implications of women’s preference for such jobs, one can study the process of change in depth. It gives us
clear picture of the future trends. More importantly, it would help us to manage the change smoothly, without loss of blood. Of all the administrative tasks, bringing about the change is the toughest of all.

Occupational preferences of women on the face of it appears to be a small subject. Had the subject been 'occupational preferences of men, perhaps no in-depth study was called for. Any working person would normally seek job that would bring him or her money, power and status. The question assumes altogether different dimensions, when it relates to women and particularly Indian women.

Indian woman is a member of the family and society first and an individual last. Her childhood is spent basically for making her marriage worthy, acceptable in the new home. Her brother is to take over the role of the 'Karta' of the family - protector and bread winner. The upbringing of the two is basically different.

Begetting and bringing up the children, cooking, upkeep of the house, maintaining traditions of the family is the basic role of the Indian woman. In affluent families, she is not expected to earn money. However, India is a poor country. In poor families, even the lady of the house has to contribute in family income. This is done in different ways. While the man goes out and earns wages, the woman remains at home and contributes to production. She would wash clothes at home. She would process food stuff, make pickles and papads. She would also work on her own farm. Any contribution - short of stepping out of the family, is welcome in a middle class - respectable Indian traditional family.
The poor families - and they abound in India, need additional contribution by the woman. They go out and earn. They work as maidservants, as farm labours. In terms of toiling, Indian woman surpass the male. However, she is still held to be a non-working woman. The jobs, which she performs are not quantified in market economy. When she performs household chores - it is unpaid job. When she works on her farm, it is an unpaid job. When she works as a maid-servant or on a farm, it is deemed to be extension of the unpaid jobs in her family. Hence, she is paid pittance. The training which she gets for such jobs is free of cost. She is taught cooking by her mother. She has learned the family operations on her own farm or from other women, again free of cost. She does not use costly instruments either. The monetary investments in the job is low. There is surplus of labour in the over-populated nation. Monetary expectations from her are low. The main earning is by the male - she only supplements.

Agriculture is the way of life in India. Unlike the industries, it is not in the organized sector. A very large portion of the economic activity thus remains outside the market economy. With this subsidy, the labour in the organized sector is also cheap.

When we talk of job preference for women, it is not a question of totally non-active person now taking to contribution to the economy. It is more a question of shift of the job from non-market to market, from unorganized to organized economy. Whether such a shift is desirable or not is not easy to answer. Because such a shift has social and emotional implications. Family is the basic social organization in India. The
institution is so old and all pervading that it is very difficult to critically analyze this institution in a dispassionate fashion. It is more than a working unit. Human beings do not live by bread alone. Apart from money, they need power, ability to influence and dominate others and status in the society. The equation of mutual relations in the family are so ancient and well settled in India that they are sacrosanct. Ram, Sita, Laxman, Pandawas are the permanent role models in India. The woman in this set up has a low status. She is protected and maintained by the man and in turn she serves him. Any departure from this model upsets everybody.

But in the 20th Century, in India we hear a lot about 'Women's Liberation Movement'. In the western countries the phase began about four decades ago. It is understandable too. Traditionally women have been confined to household duties only. They were not supposed to play much active role in measurable economic activity.

After independence, attitude of the Indian society towards women is also changing. Employment pattern is also changing. Every year, more and more women are joining the work force, the reasons being varied like industrialization, inflation, urbanization, growth in education etc. We notice women in almost every sphere of economic activity. Even some of the fields which were traditionally dominated by male, are now not left untouched by women. In fact, some of our great political leaders pointed out at status of women as parameter of progress and condition of any society. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, after becoming first Prime Minister of Independent India said that 'when we talk of revolution, be political or
economic, the greatest revolution in the country is one that affects the status and living conditions of its women.

We cannot understand the role of Indian woman in economic activity today unless we study her historical position in the society. A comparative position of the status of women in careers in the past and their current position would give us a good idea of the preferences of the present day women in the choices of careers.

However, a mere objective assessment of the career preferences of the present day woman would be of academic interest only. There is a global movement for emancipation and empowerment of the woman. Indian women movement is deeply affected by the global movement. A comparative study would give us an insight into the direction and speed in which the Indian women movement is moving.

The dynamics of the movement has many practical implications. After independence, India is making conscious efforts for uplifting the society by deliberate planning. We want to make up the backlog and catch up with the world as fast as possible. Our political-economic planning has definite relationship with the social movement. Social engineering is as much a reality as civil or mechanical engineering.

20th century was a century of civil, mechanical and most importantly, electronic engineering. 21st century all over the world would be century of social engineering. Economic prosperity would bring us no happiness, unless it leads to social harmony and progress.
The study of dynamics of the women's movement would be an important tool in devising strategies for rapid, smooth and efficient 'social engineering' for the good of all. Western countries, while making rapid progress in material prosperity have created tensions leading to global and domestic strife and insecurity. Indian society traces its roots to its ancestors who had accumulated a lot of practical wisdom of living in social harmony. The plan of the study would indicate to us how to combine the wisdom of the East, with the experience of the West for rapid social progress, avoiding the pitfalls of the West. Mere aping of the West would be ruinous.

The study would culminate in a ready action plan with positive practical recommendations, which could be adopted and implemented straight away.

**STATEMENT OF THE TOPIC**

Human societies all over the world are undergoing vast changes. The pace of change is also accelerating, though there are some differences in both the quality of change and speed of change in different societies, some universal trends are clearly indicated. The position of women in the human society is changing. This change has been smooth and rapid in some societies. It has been slow and turbulent in other societies. Though these differences are felt by us, the feelings are very vague. We welcome some changes, put up with a few changes and oppose other changes. This happens more due to emotions and instinct. It also develops unnecessary strains, some times we get frightened by the change and
feel that new generation is heading towards doom. These nightmares eventually prove to be false alarms. By the time we realize this, a lot of misery is caused due to frustration. All these miseries could be avoided, if we now understand the causes of the change, if we could understand the dynamics of the change. A scientific study of the social changes is thus very useful. We do not have to study all the aspects of the changes and all the fields in which changes are taking place. The doctors have a biopsy of a small tissue to diagnose the condition of the body. Much depends on the selection of the part which one selects for the biopsy. Career prospects for the women is by itself only a small part of the entire process of social changes. Yet it is a very vital part. Status of women has always been a good indicator of the advancement of the society. The women all over the world are stepping out of the kitchen. They have taken to jobs. They are now rising in the jobs. The level achieved by the women in the jobs and careers is therefore a key factor which indicates the health, vigor of the advancement of the society. Some women have become heads of the state and heads of the government. Some of them are powerful entrepreneurs running business houses and multinational goods of industries. Some of them are heads of government department. A study of the career of women, therefore, can throw a good deal of light on the dynamics of social changes. Understanding it properly, will not only satisfy the academic curiosity but also help in accelerate the process of change for the healthy growth of the Indian Society too.

Historically, the social evolution has had a close relationship with general evolutionary process. Man did not plant trees, he just gathered fruits. Over a period of time he learnt and mastered agriculture. The
day is not far when synthetic food from factories will replace the farms dependant on the rains. Man no longer depends on the miracles and magic for treatment of ailments. He has developed the science of medicine. Bio-engineering has taken big strides. Animals have been cloned. Cloning of human being is not very far. Man is finding himself to be the master of the change, not a subject of the change.

Same is likely to and should happen about social changes. Why should man sit back and helplessly watch the slow evolution of social structure? Society is a human creation. Man can and should now design his own society and bring about the necessary changes in a controlled fashion. Good aspects should be encouraged and bad be eliminated. A planned social change would not only be very rapid, it would also be more pleasant and avoid human costs. This is more so in India where there is a huge backlog of development as far as women are concerned. A systematic study of the social development is more necessary in India, so that a course of rapid development could be charted.

IMPORTANCE OF THE PROJECT

Let everybody be happy, let all be free from blemish, let everybody be good, let nobody suffer slightest pain. This has been the motto of our civilization, right from the Vedic period. The nation as a whole, the entire society should feel that they have adopted a course of action which
is in the interest of one and all.

We came close to this situation during the freedom struggle. For a certain period the nation was of one mind. Freedom was perceived to be good for one and all and we were willing to sacrifice everything for it. Unfortunately, this unity was lost towards the end. A substantial section of society perceived partition to be in their interest. What happened is history. The freedom which the nation secured was at a fantastic cost. The non-violent movement which did not kill the British, killed lakhs and lakhs of the members of its own society. The wounds are still festering.

Here is a lesson for us. It brings us home the wisdom of our ancestors. Western countries believed in the greatest good of the greatest numbers. Let a few suffer, if most others were to be happy. Partition demonstrated to us what happens, when the nation is not of one mind.

The nation has now embarked on a noble mission of upliftment, prosperity, happiness, for the billion of Indians. The course is as noble as the freedom struggle. Unfortunately though the aim is common, we are not of one mind on the course of the action to be taken for the development.

Various classes are perceiving a given strategy for the development as in the interest of the class and not in the interest of the other. Men and women are naturally the biggest classes, which vertically split the society in equal halves. We are plagued by serious doubts about our woman policy. Is it only in the interest of woman? Is it detrimental to
the interest of men? Will it ruin our homes? Will it completely westernize us and end our ancient glorious civilization?

The project aims to answer this nagging question. Should women and men be identical in every respect? Should woman give up her obligations towards the family and the children and take to office jobs? Should she be a soldier, a merchant, a farmer, a factory worker exactly as a man? Is this natural? Is it in the interest of all concerned?

This question has to be answered in a very scientific way, if it is to convince one and all. Platitudes may help a politician win the elections, but nation cannot be founded on such brittle and weak foundations. We have witnessed the Mandal riots. Mere lip service to the cause of women will only lead to build up of hidden hostility. The volcano of mistrust and hatred may burst open one day giving a permanent set back to the national development.

The study is a sincere search for a course of action, which will be clearly seen by men and women alike, as in the best interest of them all. Careers for women, is the most vital part of our woman policy. This study aims to pin point the guiding principles for evolution of the career plan for women in India.

Finding the status of career for women in the past, present and future trends, comparison with women of different strata of society of Indian women and Western women is naturally inevitable. However, the aim is not only to give a factual picture. There is no dearth of data on the
subject in India and abroad. A passive matter of fact reproduction of the
data would not lead us anywhere. The study tries to discover the hidden
underlying processes, and urges that have lead to the present situation
and that would dominate our future. Man is a rational animal, but so he
is emotional. He is touchy about certain values of life. Only a very
scientific study can make him balance his reason and his emotion.

The study is undoubtedly very ambitious. It is to seek the truth.
Truth according to our ancient civilization is that which ultimately
succeeds सत्यमेव जयते is our state motto but what makes us quite distinct
from other is our definition of truth, सत्यम हृदयात् | प्रियम हृदयात् | सत्यमपि अप्रियम मा
हृदयात् | सत्यम for us is the same as सत्यम, शिवम सुंदरम | Any truth of this nature
alone can lead to सर्वेऽदुःस्विनः सन्तु | सर्वं सन्तुपि निरामयः |

The project is ambitions. Failure is possible. However it is not the
failure, but the low aim that is crime. Failure is but a step further to
success. With this inspiration, the author has embarked on the project
to study the career preference of women in India.
"Our future depends greatly on whether the Indian woman has wisdom and discrimination to distinguish between what to respect and what to reject, whether she is able to achieve a harmonious synthesis between the best of our tradition and desirable of the modern".

- Indira Gandhi