

Demands for Human Equality from the Women

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A patriarchal and oppressed Indian society with an inhumane caste system supposedly based on religious faith, however, their religious beliefs are obviously not understood since their masculine domination acts against the religious base of men and women living as equals. Despite modernization, women's status remained low and devalued well into the 20th century. Women in India are beginning to follow the direction that the women of the Western world took more than eighty years ago; demanding treatment as human equals. However, it has become more and more evident as the revolution ages that Indian women may have to adapt the Western feminist method to their very traditional and religious culture. India has different complications that put the development of women in a completely altered context than their Western counterparts. Although the key targets remain similar: improvement of health care, education and job opportunities in order to gain equality between men and women in the various settings of public society, the workplace, the school yard and – possibly the most fundamental setting of all – the home. Women are striving to be independent on the equal level of men. The additional complexities that the women of India must also challenge are the caste system, the heavy religious customs, older and more traditional roles of the sexes, as well as the even stronger power that men hold in India. The status was at one time accepted, but with the Western women's revolution and perception, the role is slowly succeeding in its development through both independent groups of women and national and worldwide organizations based on the goal of gaining equality. They have all accomplished much, but have yet to overthrow the male dominated society in India. Demands for human equality basically demands for women's human rights.

The term women's human right and the set of practices that accompany its use, is continuously evolving International attention and attraction to improve the status of women. The women's movements in 1980 and 1990 pulled greater attention worldwide to study the problems and atrocities faced by women every day. In the evolution of what is becoming a global women's movement, the women's Human Right served as a customer accepted practice, which is for the development of Political strategies and concentrate political practices. Hence the women's

Human Right has become a vehicle for women to develop their political skills necessary for the twenty first century, but this status could not get in moment there is a long history of struggle behind it which is fought by the aware women to get their human rights equal to men.

A snapshot of history shows that women have always struggled for their rights and that progress is not a straight line; many societies where women are most depressed today were the most enlightened in the past. History shows us that rights can be won and they can also be taken away. From the initial year of women's struggle till this date we can see many stoppage of relief as well as hard struggle and failure but a long mileage to go even today. All countries have pride to become witness of the women's struggle. A birds eyeview on the roadmap of women search for equality:-

Ancient summer (Iraq), Egypt and Japan : In 900 BC adult women can own property, play active roles in the market place and even be clerics.

Pre-colonial Latin America : In this country some native cultures practice what anthropologists call 'gender parallelism' valuing equally the distinct and overlapping tasks performed by men and women. The agrarian societies that follow tend to be less egalitarian.

Nigeria : In 400 trade brings new status to women in some countries like Nigeria, among the Igbo, a wealthy woman can buy a 'wife' to work with her and Yoruba women elect their own female representatives to protect their trading interests.

France : During the French Revolution (1776) working women march on Versailles to demand bread. In 1701 this inspires French playwright Olympe de Gouges to issue the Declaration of the rights of women and the female citizen. She is executed by guillotine when demands for women's rights are rejected.

Britain : In 1792 Mary Wollstonecraft rejects conventional family authority, believes in female education, and bears a child out of wedlock. She writes a book which becomes a catalyst for subsequent feminist thinking.

New York : In 1848 world's first women's rights convention (with men as well as women) was held in Seneca Falls, New York, setting the agenda for the movement. In 1896 the National Association of Colored women, founded by Margret Murray Washington, unites Black women's organizations with Mary Church Terrell its first president. The NACW becomes a major vehicle for reform during the next 40 years.

Brazil : In 1850 women's urban newspapers like O Journal Das Senhoras (Ladies Journal) complain that marriage is 'an unbearable tyranny' and women deserve 'a just enjoyment of their rights'.

Russia : In the emancipation of serfs raises women's expectations of equality.

Japan : In 1880-1890 the Japanese women's movement is founded. Kishida Toshiko is hailed for a week after calling for women's horizons to 'as large and free as the world itself'. The Government eventually bans women's political participation.

New Zealand : In 1893 this country becomes the first country to give women the vote.

Egypt : In 1890-1923 Islam is used to justify the education of women. In 1923 Huda Sha'rawami founds the Egyptian Feminist Union. Women are at the forefront of the battle for independence from the British.

Mexico : In 1911 socialists observe 8 March as a day to honor the women who organized strikes for better working conditions. In Mexico Jovita and Soledad Pena organize La Liga Femenil Mexicanista (League of Mexican Feminists).

South Africa : In 1913 traditional women's organizations such as Manyano act as savings clubs for poor women. They are also at the forefront of the fight against apartheid.

America : In 1920 African American women discuss how they can stand side by side with women of the white race and work for the full emancipation of all women (Lugenia Burns Hope).

Turkey : In 1926, as part of his program for modernization, Kamal Ataturk abolishes polygamy, makes schools and universities coeducational, gives women political rights and recognizes the equal rights of women in divorce, custody and inheritance.

Nigeria : In 1929 the 'women's war' in Nigeria is a response among Igbo women's trading networks to the planned imposition by the British rulers of a new tax on women's property. The British put down the revolt by firing into the crowd, killing 50 women and injuring 50.

US (1941) : In the US almost seven million women take jobs during the war; two million as industrial 'Rosie the Riveters' and 400,000 joining the military.

India : In 1947 Gandhi expresses strong opposition to male domination of women, and India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, calls for equal educational and work opportunities for women and men. Nationalists adopt the slogan : 'India cannot be free until its women are free and women cannot be free until India is free.' The 1947 constitution guarantees equality between the sexes.

Egypt (1948) : In Egypt, Doria Shafik forms the Daughters of the Nile Union. In 1951 she organizes an invasion of the Egyptian parliament by women and in 1953 creates a women's political party that is then suppressed by the government.

Eastern Nigeria : In 1959 2,000 women protest their declining status by occupying and setting fire to a market. They negotiate a resolution that eliminates all foreign courts and schools and expels all foreigners in the area. **Argentina :** In 1977 Argentinean women form the 'Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo' to defy the murderous military junta that seized power from President Isabel Peron of Argentina.

1975-2001 : The birth and growth of the feminist movement : First international women's conference in Mexico, launching the United Nations Decade for Women and the formation of women's groups all over the world, including feminist newspapers, student organizations, professional women and lesbian feminists. Followed by conferences in

Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985) and Beijing (1995). Women's rights become enshrined in law in many countries.¹

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Woman search for equality in disguise of women rights

The adoption of a Universal Declaration of Human Rights 60 years ago has made the countries of the world recognize human rights to be universal and fundamental. The United Nations Charter was the first Global treaty which called for equaling between women and men. The UN Charter, in its preamble, declared their faith "in the fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of human person in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small." The UN Charter goes on to proclaim that one of the purpose is to achieve International cooperation in promoting and encouraging result for human rights and fundamental freedom for all people without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. The UN Charter recognizes that everyone has the right to take part in the Government of his country directly or indirectly through freely chosen representative. It has equalized the status of men and women in the enjoyment and exercise of political rights in accordance with the provision of the United Nations and of the universal declaration of human rights. The document clearly states what should be obvious but too often is no. "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience. In this entire where do women rights begin? The women conditions one screwing and depicting a miserable picture of the violation of their human rights. Human rights and particularly women's rights must also be defined as being seen and treated as equal defined as being seen and treated as well as domestic and private areas. The participation of women in the political and the social realm allows for delegitimizing discrimination against women and achieving genuine equality not only under the law. It also affects individual cultures that previously denied woman the possibility of an education and confined them to a world of silence.

The universal declaration of Human rights, created in 1948 an international body of laws, was meant to protect the integrity and dignity of human beings.

Until the late 1980 few authors, academics and human rights experts within the united nations or regional bodies, addressed the question whether women were enjoying the human rights guaranteed to them in the universal declaration and the two covenants on 'civil and political rights' and economic, social and cultural rights. Indeed, it had not been a foregone conclusion, that the universal declaration would include the right to the equal enjoyment and exercise of rights by women as well as men.

Women's Rights and International Forum

It was UN commitment to women's rights include the establishment of a commission on the status of women in 1949, the UN sponsorship of the decade for women and four UN meetings on women, beginning in 1975, in Mexico city and ending in 1995 in Beijing, which

were followed by the Beijing plus 5 meetings in June of 2000. The establishment of CEDAW 1979 and the 1993 world conference on Human Rights in Vienna, were important in codifying and reemphasizing the centrality of women's human rights, As an instrument invoked by women's groups and interpreted by it's monitoring.

The result of the 1993 UN Human Rights conference in Vienna, was the declaration that women's rights are human rights. In this regard, the platform for action, adopted by 189 delegations at the fourth world conference of women in Beijing in 1995, constitutes a comprehensive action plan for economic and political empowerment of women for achieving the UN objective of full equality for women. UN action for the advancement of women has taken four clean directions as promotion of legal measures, mobilization of public opinion and International action, research and training and direct assistance to disadvantaged groups. UN conventions or treaties have helped to define and promote women's human rights. All states parties are united to honoring the provisions of such treaties.

Concern for the women's fundamental freedom has not only been expressly dealt in the universal declaration of Human Rights or the two International covenants on Human Rights. The International Labour organization (ILO) has been focusing on women and gender equality in the world of work since its creation in 1919. It adopted (i) Convention on Equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value 1951 (ii) convention concerning night work of women employed in Industry 1948 and (iii) Convention concerning maternity protection (revised) 1952. Many conventions specially concerning women has been adopted by the UN General Assembly, these are (i) Convention on the Political Rights of women 1952; (ii) Convention on the nationality of married women 1957; (iii) Convention against Discrimination in Education 1960, prohibiting discrimination on account of sex (iv) Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women 1979 and (v) Convention on the Rights of the child, 1989 with special emphasis on Girl child.

Convention on the Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (1979) : Among the International human rights treaties, this convention takes an important place in bringing the female half of humanity into the focus of human rights concerns. The spirit of the convention is rooted in the goals of the United Nations is to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and human .²

In Its preamble, the convention explicitly acknowledges that “extrusive discrimination against women continues to exist”, and emphasis that such discrimination “violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity.” The convention spells out the meaning of equality and how it can be achieved. In so doing, the convention establishes not only an international bill of rights for women, but also an agenda for action by countries to guarantee the enjoyment of those rights. It commits states to endeavoring to eliminate sex-role stereotype (Art 5); to eliminate traffic in women and the exploitation of the prostitution of women (Art 6); to providing rights surrounding maternity such as protection from dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy, the right to maternity leave, and the right to special protection for women in types of work proved harmful to them (Art. 11). It may be said that the convention intends to end discrimination and not to enumerate a list of rights for women.

Article 10, 11, 13 affirm women's rights to nondiscrimination in education, employment and economic and social activities respectively. These demands are given special champions with regard to the situation of rural women in article 14. Article 15 asserts the full equality of women in civil and business matters, demanding that all Instruments directed at restricting women's legal capacity shall be deemed null and void.

International Decade for Women: Under the auspices of the UN, the world conference of the International women's year was held in 1975 in Mexico city and it was decided to observe the decade of 1976 – 85 as United Nations decade for women. The conference adopted the declaration of Mexico on Equality of women and their contribution to development and peace. The need to define, understand and implement women's rights gained global recognition during the International decade for women 1976 – 85. In 1980, the world conference of the United Nations decade for women was held in Copenhagen.

The commission on the status of women has also recommended certain suggestions to remove the obstacles for the smooth facilitating of the Nairobi forward looking strategies: (a) awareness to the rights of women (b) elimination of negative stereotypes role of women in books (c) training on gender issues to teachers (d) the ratio of women involved in economic – decision and in paid employment to be increased. (e) Achieve thirty percent of women in decision making bodies by 1995 and equal representation by 2000. The commission also wanted that extreme poverty should be removed as it often creates hurdles in the path of women's development, access to education and health family planning series should be given to women on priority basis.³

Beijing world conference on Women in 1995 reaffirmed that the human rights of women and the girl child are inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. The full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedom by women and girls is parity for Governments and the UN and is essential for the advancement of woman. Government must not only refrain from violating the human rights of all women but must work actively to promote and protect these rights. The International conference on population and Development reaffirmed women's reproductive rights and the right to development. A number of countries have established mechanism to strengthen woman's ability to exercise their rights.

Governments must create or strengthen independent national institutions for the protection and promotion of these rights, including the human rights of women, as recommended by the world conference. In Human Rights, develop a comprehensive human rights education programme to raise awareness among women of their human rights and also raise awareness among others of the human rights of woman and ensure the implementation of the recommendation of the world conference on Human Rights for the full integration and mainstream of the human rights of women. Government must strengthen cooperation and coordination between the commission on the status of women, the commission on Human Rights, the commission for Social development, the commission on sustainable development, the commission on crime prevention and criminal justice, the united Nations Human Rights treaty mentioning bodies, including the committee on the elimination of Discrimination against women, and the United Nations, Development Fund for Women, the International Research and training Institute for the Advancement of women, the united Nations development programme, the united Nations children's fund and other organizations of the united nations system, acting

within their mandates, in the promotion of the human rights of women and improve cooperation between the division for the advancement of women and the centre for Human Rights.

Women's Rights in India: In Indian society where about half of the total population and three fifths of the females are illiterate (1991 census), customs and tradition bound beliefs and practices cannot be dispelled overnight. It is also easy to create a strong public opinion against these practices. Legislations, of course make some impact but it can only be introduced very cautiously and in stages.

The important rights assured by the constitution of India to women, like women.

1. Right to equality, that is equally before law, equal protection of the live not discriminating against any person an grounds of sex and is matter of public employment on the gender grounds.
2. Right to freedom, that is freedom of speech, expression, residence, occupation and mobility.
3. Right against exploitation that is against forced labour (beggar).
4. Right to freedom of religion, that is, professing practices and propagating religion freely.
5. Right to property, that is acquiring, holding and selling property.
6. Cultural, educational rights, concerning one's culture and seeking admission to educational institution.
7. Right to constitutional remedies, that is approaching courts for enforcing fundamental rights.

Besides assuring these fundamental rights the state has also been empowered to enact special laws for protecting the interests of and giving preferential treatment to females and weaker section. On this ground the state has been taking legislative measures formative to time for performing its obligations of bringing in a social order in which justice prevails.

Women search for equality is definitely come to its saturation point but yet full satisfaction is not achieved by women. Women rights are achievements of women in quest for equality but there are miles to go for equality and empowerment.

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