

## Women And Polity - Old And New

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“God save our Queen

Gave save our gracious Queen”<sup>1</sup>

PERHAPS the most controversial problem faced by globular polity is whether a woman should be called to govern or she should remain governed for ever. “Today you make a woman equal, tomorrow she will supersede you”<sup>2</sup>. In the sphere of polity there are two types of governances, the first monarchical and the second democratic ; the prime question is whether a woman at the helm of affairs in monarchy is more formidable, for ‘out of two things whether a prince should be loved by his subjects or feared ; though it is better that he should be loved, yet it is always safer that he should be feared, rather than be loved’<sup>3</sup> or is a benevolent oikodespot in democratic enlightened despotism. The misogynists have denounced her political role by declaring ‘he for sword, for needle she’<sup>4</sup>; what is ignored in this hypothesis is the practicable dictum that sword cannot replace needle ; the masculine utilisation of sword is meant for cutting or disintegration, while needle is meant for joining together or integration ; former culminates in the policy of divide and rule, and the latter in the process of unification, such as unification of Italy and that of Germany, which is a democratic process.

The state owned responsibility of the betterment of women is as old as Peloponnesian war ; in his famous funeral oration Pericles declared that the warriors sacrificed their lives for public administration or the participation of citizens in governance ; “let us remember that the contribution of the widows of soldiers is of no less significance, it is our duty not only to look after them well, but let them feel also that their voice is of equal significance as their husband’s might have been, had they been living.”<sup>5</sup>.

The thesis statement requires no modification that the best of political ideology springs from the pages of literature, from where the

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despots learn how to govern for the greatest good of the greatest number ; the Egyptian monarchy during the triumvirate period of Roman history provides its example. Cleopatra ‘the serpent of Nile’<sup>6</sup> was the queen of Egypt and Antony was a regent from Octavius Augustus in her imperial court ; the shafts of Cupid were more barbed than the lance of the Roman militia. Antony was effeminated by the amorous glances of the Egyptian queen for ‘age canot wither her nor custom stale’.<sup>7</sup> On the advice of Cornelius Agrippa, an attempt to matrimonial alliance was made, when Caesar’s sister Octavia was married to Antony ; but it ended in smoke, as the emotional appeal ‘April is in her eyes’<sup>8</sup> fell flat on Antony’s ear, and Octavia came back, making her brother exclaim ‘the coming of Octavia would have been announced by dust raised by the hoof of Antony’s steed’.<sup>9</sup>

In insular England, the Plantagenet Monarchy provides an altogether different instance ; in eleventh century, the famous Clarendon Constitution, curtailing the rights of the clergy, was to be passed, but it was resisted by St. Thomas Becket, the Arch Bishop of Canterbury ; though the play ends with episcopal murder, yet the evangelical torch could not be extinguished. In the mighty hands of T.S. Eliot there was seething the epoch-making play Murder in Cathedral, the chorus comprised not the enlightened citizens, but illiterate and passive suffering women of canterbury ; they exclaim ‘Kings rule or Barons rule, we are to suffer’<sup>10</sup>.

The Tudor monarchy manifests another scenario, Queen Elizabeth was at the helm of affairs, her individual life was tinged with the romance with the Earl of licester, however her Catholie Policy met with mixed reaction, during her regime England became the nest of singing birds and Edmund Spenser immortalised her as Gloriana in his famous The Faierie Queen, a political allegory. Sir Philip Sidney gave his life in the battle of Zutfen saying, ‘Thy need is greter than mine’<sup>12</sup> while offering his glass of water to a dying solier. Such were the sublime ideals breathed by a female monarch in the soil of Albion.

Not only in England, but in other European countries also, female despots have presented commendable examples. In Austria, the

Hapsburg monarchy gave to the Western World Maria Theresa, the emboldened lady, whose diplomacy had sown seeds of what later on was to become the Congress of Vienna under the able leadership of Metternich.

In the land of Ganls and Trobadours, the Bourbon monarchy in the form of pansy had to tepeat a tragic tale. The unfortunate monarch Louis XVI had to bear the brunt of the famous Tennis Court oath, fall of Bastille and the Reigen of Terror led by Robbespierre. Once again literature was to dominate the course of action, Voltaire's play Candid and Rouseaus epoch making treatis Social Contract ignited the spark of Revolution with the assertion, "Man is born fre, but als! everywhre he is in chains". The king was guillotined and so was the queen, Maria Antoinette, "The young imperial maiden of sentence has new become a worn out and faded widow of seventy"<sup>12</sup>. This should not lead to conclusion that the queens only did the commendable work, quite countrary, the golden deeds were performed by insignificant women also, and they changed the world. In the same land there was a shepherd girl named joan of ARC; She and arranged led an army, in the seige of Oleans, the British were defeated and France became free, the irony is that this lady patriot was burnt alive on the charges of witch craft. George Bernard Shaw remarked, "How long will the world take to accept the saints, God how long"?<sup>14</sup>

The soviet Revolution worked on another blue print. It was influenced by the dictun, "you have to lose nothing but shackles, but to gain a world beside, so the workers of the world unite". It was based on the ideals of social justice analysed gender discrmination and marginalistion of women. It is strange that women themselves stood against Socialism and Socialst poltical system were dismantled, as was evident from Soviet disintegration during the Iraq.

Indian peninsula is not only idealistic but theogenous also. Woman is adored as an emblem of power, side by side the formula is not universally applicale. The Artha Shastra reveals how a prince should be at his guard against the uxorious conspiracies of venomous girls or Vishkanyas. In the Harshva Charita the character of Rajyashree, the

sister of Harsha has been sublimated. Kalhana's Raja Tarangini is a treatise on the basis of which Daleep San hita, the foundation volume of Kashmir annexation was made. The basis is the claim of regal right over temple sanctum property in case of emergency arising out of foreign invasion. The golden deeds metamorphosing polity were also performed by Indian women such as the johar or group Immolation by maidens like Padmini of Chittor, the sacrifice of panna, the governess in order to save Udai singh, the royal successor are glories of our nation.

During the war of independence, the contribution of maharani Laxmi bai, sung in Subhagra kumari chauhan's poem, the Begums of Oudh, and Independent india Sarojini Naidu, the Governor of Uttar Pradesh and Nightingale of India, Indira Gandhi and her excellency Mrs. Pratibha Devi Singh Patil are enough to indicate that Indian woman are also capable of changing the polity of the world. recently the role of Dr. Kiran Bedi in fighting the Devil of corruption is not unknown, the erstwhile Jana Lokpal Bill has become a reality.

#### References:-

1. *National Anthem of Great Britain.*
2. *A Greek Proverb.*
3. *Nicolo Machiavelli : The Prince.*
4. *Alfred Lord Tennyson : The Princess.*
5. *Thucydides : Peleponesian War.*
6. *Shakespeare, William : Antony and Cleopatra.*
7. *Shakespeare, William : Antony and Cleopatra*
8. *Shakespeare, William : Antony and Cleopatra*
9. *Shakespeare, William : Antony and Cleopatra*
10. *T.S. Eliot : Murder in the Cathedral.*
11. *Edmund Spenser : Astrophel.*
12. *Jean Jaques Rousseau : Social Contact opening line.*
13. *Thomas Carlyle : The French Revolution.*
14. *George Berward Show: St. Joan epilogue.*