

FEUDAL VALUES IN THE MODERN INDIAN SOCIETY

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Plato thanked God for three things, that (i) he was born a Greek not a barbarian, (ii) he was born a free man and not a slave, and (iii) he was born a man not a woman. During the days of Plato, Greece was considered to be a centre of great civilization and culture unlike many other societies by which it was surrounded. There was the system of slavery and human beings were sold as a commodity in the market. The position of women, in Greece, being a patriarchal society, was much lower than that of man.

very difficult to provide a scale on which this hypothesis can be scientifically tested. Nevertheless, it is true that, in India, we are still living with many feudal values. There is tyranny of custom in India. Custom is the king.

The traditional and relatively speaking, backward status of women in the Indian society cannot be understood separately from the entire social structure. Broadly speaking, the poor status of women is a part of the total way of life which is predominated by the feudal values.

We bring out here a paper which was presented at the local TNAI sub-branch conference held at Indore. The author in this article discusses about the feudal system in Indian Society, social evils and the place of women in the Indian society. Dr. Phillip is a Professor of Social work, Indore. He is also the Chief Editor of Indian Sociologist, Indore University. He has greatly contributed in the field of social research.

—Ed.

However, this was so many centuries back and the social values have profoundly changed since then. No one country to-day can claim to be the centre of world culture and civilization, the custom of slavery has been abolished in almost all the societies, and the position of women has radically changed. The turn of the 20th century has, therefore, witnessed the beginning of the women's liberation movement. Women to-day have been able to achieve a status unprecedented in the human history. Whereas in the west, much has been attained and women have come much closer to men, if not quite equal, in respect to social status, in the most of the developing countries of east, women's liberation movements are gathering momentum.

On the scale of modernization, Indian society is still classified to be a traditional society, though it is

Of all the inequalities that exist in society, the inequalities on the basis of sex are most irrational and unfortunate. The Indian woman has been facing such social injustices as child widowhood, restriction on remarriage, separation and divorce, dowry, polygamy lack of right to property, female infanticide etc. There are hundreds of superstitions associated with women.

Consequently, her status in family, religion, political, educational and economical spheres has been pitiable. Her life has been confined within the four walls of home with the responsibilities of bearing and upbringing of children.

The social and religious reform movement had a tremendous impact on the centuries old but outdated irrational traditional social structures. Consequently Indian

women were given adult franchise in 1937 and during that time India was ranked third, in whole world, for having a large number of women legislators in the assemblies.

Additionally, the impact of the western culture, during the period of British rule on the Indian Social Structure cannot be ignored. Even during the time of British rule a number of social legislations were passed. Most of them were concerned with the position of women in the Hindu society for example, restriction on child marriage, Widow Remarriage Act etc., which were later included in the Hindu Marriage Act.

Many social legislations have been passed, more can be passed. Frankly speaking, the only purpose they have served so far is that of decorating our constitution and libraries and beyond this, it is very difficult to say that these legislations had any impact on either rural or urban societies. Inspite of these radical social legislations, the feudal attitudes and values towards women in India continue.

The reason for this is that it is comparatively easy to pass legislation within a day or two, but difficult to uproot the century-old institutions and established attitudes whose roots have gone very deep in our social soil. Therefore, whenever there is conflict between a custom and a law, custom wins.

It does not, however, mean that social laws are useless. They do set ideals before the society, they do strengthen the arms of social reformers. What we need to-day is a crusade against all those social evils which impede the social mobility and progress of women in India. In fact, the young men and women of the country should wake up and carry the crusade of social reforms in the remote villages as a large section of our population resides there. The upliftment of rural women is equally important and should be given due attention.