



Women in
CONTEMPORARY TIMES



Understanding the Socio-cultural Barriers

Editors :
Dr. Sajmina Akhtar
Daisy Priya Gogoi

Contents

- Editorial 5
- Addressing Anguish: Visiting the Naga Society through the Literature and Writings of Naga Women 7
 - *Gaurab Sengupta*
- Ajanta's "Pencil Heel" : A Resistance to Sexual Molestation 15
 - *Moina Mili*
- Class and Caste Barriers: Comprehending the Nuances from Perspective of Ishmat Chughtai's Short Story "GAINDA" 21
 - *Ishani Hazarika Singha*
- Deconstructing Regressive Wedding Rituals of the Hindu Bengali Community 30
 - *Debapriya Barua*
- Exposing the Patriarchy Camouflaged as Compassion Through Charlotte Perkin Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" 37
 - *Daisy Priya Gogoi*
- Factors that Cause SC/ST Girls' to Dropout in Higher Education: A Literature Review Report 44
 - *Dr. Padma Dutta*
- Females in Business: Problems Confronted by the Female Entrepreneurs in India 57
 - *Dr. Deepali Bhattacharjee*
- Gender Disparity and Domestic Violence: A Dalit Feminist Study of Bama's *Sangati* 63
 - *Jimpy Dutta*
- Gender Roles and Status of Women in Japanese Society 73
 - *Raktima Goswami*
- Mapping of Global Research Output on the Topic "Women in Contemporary Times": A Scientometric Assessment Based on Scopus Database 78
 - *Nayana Borah*

GENDER ROLES AND STATUS OF WOMEN IN JAPANESE SOCIETY

Raktima Goswami

ABSTRACT

In a society, there are various gender roles that are predetermined for a male and a female even before they are born into the world. These gender roles have existed as long as society has and it has become so banal that it seems almost a natural occurrence. Gender roles are not laid down upon the humans by divinity. However, society has been constructed in such a way that there are specific rules of conduct for both the male and the females. These gender based norms often pose as a barrier to establishing equality between the two predominant genders in the society. Through this paper, I have made a little attempt to focus on the gender roles and to trace the status of women in the Japanese society in different periods of the timeline. A society can be best defined as a dynamic concept with fluidity. With due course of time society witnesses various changes and created a space for adoption and adaptations that makes the whole concept of society a flexible in nature.

Keywords: gender roles, society, women

INTRODUCTION: A society can be best defined as a dynamic concept with fluidity. With due course of time society witnesses various changes and created a space for adoption and adaption that makes the whole concept of society a flexible in nature. Arnold. W. Green, once stated "*Culture and the social institution which transmit culture to succeeding generations are themselves moral norms, social values, culture and social institution all changes through time*"

Through this paper, I have made a little attempt to focus on the gender roles and to trace the status of women in the Japanese society in different periods of the timeline.

One of the wrong notions that is prevailing in the society since then, till the date is the clubbing of two terms into one i.e: "gender" and "sex". Whereas, gender is an outcome of the social construction and sex is biological. One is born with "XX" and "XY" chromosome is sex where as the "masculinity" and the "feminine" is gender. Gender is the social cleavage of the society which determines different roles in respective to their sex. Which is known as gender roles? Unlike any other societies Japan is also not an exception too in determining strict gender roles.

While tracing back to the history, it can be assumed that a change in the base, determines changes in the super structure, where the base is the economy and the upper structure is the society and polity and so on, in my attempt to throwing light on tracing the status of the women it can be perceived that the status and the roles of the gender changes in per demand of the society and the time, while in the initial period, the position of women in the Japanese society was an impressive one, they even hold the position of the empresses and even they hold the respects as the female counterpart of the emperors too. During the Heian period, Japanese women could inherit a property,

The position of women underwent a change during the medieval period, with the change in the mode of production during the later Edo to the Tokogawa period, this period witnessed a feudal mode of economy where land became a significant marker of status and wealth where agriculture is a chief means source of livelihood, in this labor intensive economy its became mandatory to hold a control over both land and the women, this shifts the position of women from a productive asset to a mere reproductive means who procure labor to the agriculture women no longer holds any means of production rather than an economic asset women position was deteriorated to a liability for the society.

Apart from the economic scenario, the Confucianism philosophy has a deep influence in determining the status of women, as it focuses on the family, patriarchal nature of the family. He advocated "*Three obedience and Four virtues philosophy*" which determines the gender role of a women, being a daughter she should respect her father, being a wife homage should be pay to her husband and as a widow she should respect her son on other words an women must stay under a male shadow. Apart from being an obedient woman, her role is also determined by the virtues of behavior, speech, demeanor, diligent work. Her existence is related with the four corners of the home in managing the household, bearing and rearing of kids. Her role is more seen as a mother, wife and a daughter but not individually as an women. Her identity was hardly recognized in the society,

The double moral standards: The society is not determines the role as per the gender but it also acts as judge in formulating punishments. This biasness is reflected in the legal framework where an women would be punished for maintain an adulterous relationship, where as a man can easily involved in the illicit affairs. A man can keep as many wives he wants whereas, an women sexuality is tightly hold by a man for the life time.

While the society from the medieval and the modern period, the nature of the disparity and exploitation took a new drift. Now women experienced an another sort of biasness in the public domain,

- there is a wide wage discrimination among the male and the female workers,
- In textile factory, girls were also physically exploited by the owners.
- The unhealthy working condition and long working duration

This was the backdrop of the scenario where women began to appeared in the public space and began to fought for their rights, they demanded their presence in the political meetings, better working conditions and their hereditary rights. Though not all their demands were fulfilled in one go. But with the factory law of 1911, granted better working condition and protection of pre-natal, post-natal and pregnant women.

Japan experienced an economic prosperity, after war period also witnessed an improvement in their status politically and socially, women associations collaborate with the proletariat parties , as both sought for upliftment from their downtrodden condition. Whereas, during the world War-II, women were rewarded for being mothers of many sons, as the state is in a huge need for man power, they began to hold various economic ranks. But still the primary concern is manifested in being a good women with the parameters of daughter, wife and mother. The whole process of rewarding a mother is a binary opposition to the women who can't bear children as an evil.

Though the American intervention improved the condition of women to an extent providing greater access to the education by establishing schools , primary education became mandatory irrespective of any sex. In 1946, women were admitted for the first time in the imperial university, in the same year women were also granted with suffrage right.

Thus, the access to the political and educational changes was not an overnight progress, Japanese women had to fight for this basic necessities. Though it seems like Japanese women made a rapid progress in politically, socially, economically, but a closer observation into it reveals a less optimistic picture where the rural women were still unaware of their rights and developments, they still considered an obedient wife and motherhood is their basic virtues of life. The over emphasize of the American role in improving the status of the Japanese women is a pro western tendency of the recent times, but the process has begin way before the intervention of the US military forces. But their intervention definitely gives the efforts a push in a definite pattern.

In attempt to going through some literatures dealing with the status of women throws light on the following opinions of various authors:

Mikiso Hane and Louis G.Parez, states that "*Meiji Japan may have legally abolished the Tokogawa class system, but it did nothing to change the status of women*".

Janet E Hunter, examines the whole scenario and describes that gender based roles and the statuses of two sex, "*she was of the opined that Japan experienced a greater disparity of Gender roles than any other society*"

REFERENCES:

- Green A,W, Sociology; *An Analysis of Life in Modern Society*, McGraw Hills, New york
- Katyama.T, 1938, *Women Movement in Japan*,Tokyo, The Foreign Affairs Association of Japan