



Representation of Minority Women Issues in Textbooks, Popular Literature, Media etc.

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Abstract

Women are the most blissful creation of God on this earth. It has been bestowed with multitudinous tasks and responsibilities. She is a mother, a wife, a sister, a daughter, a friend, a born teacher, nature's caretaker, a natural physician and the list goes on.... but even after been so important in this world somewhere or the other she is sidelined, insulted, marginalized, victimized, exploited, harassed, tortured, seduced and even forced on every level of her life.

It should be noted that this sort of treatment is not limited to poor or uneducated families. Even in so called high class society, the position of a woman is even worse. They are used as commodities and objects of exchange, business deals and bargain chips. They are forced into relationships to bring monetary gains, business exposure, familial contacts and fame. They are informed what are their responsibilities, what is expected of them, what are their duties towards their families and to the family they are going to call their 'home'.

We have become so accustomed of seeing these situations that a little independency of women creates havoc in society. Women with their own mind and thoughts are considered very advanced and out of control. Independency and self sufficiency of women is considered a trouble for her marital life. A rejection to agree with the other gender is treated with acid attacks, rapes, kidnappings. And the irony is that our society treats the victimized as a culprit and the culprits roam freely amongst us with their chest swelled high with pride.

This paper is going to explore solutions to such atrocities and how these issues are dealt in our literature and media. Can they be a change? Or they are responsible for this situation?

Key Words: Women, deplorable conditions, societal trends, media, literature.

'Woman' this word has many connotations in itself. People jestingly describe that it is hard to be a woman because a woman has to think like a man, has to act like a lady, look like a young girl and should work like a horse. When we hear it we have a laugh and we move on because we know it is true and accepted notion. We have taken women, on the whole, as a guaranteed product which will render services 24/7 without uttering a single syllable of negation. This condition of women is not a present situation but has been like this from time immemorable. We suggest it as an Indian custom or an Indian situation. But when we explore the world we find that women everywhere irrespective to where they belong are living this sort of life. But if we take into consideration according to this paper only minority issues or matters related to minority women we find a whole new perspective.

Who are minority? This is the question. After independence, it was determined that to safeguard the populace that is less in number in comparison to the majority has to be categorised and given special benefits so as to have a better and secure survival in this country. But as we are aware of the situation that we live in a patriarchal society and whether it is the women of minority class or majority class the condition is going to remain the same.

Women in our country are given many rights. Right to Equality, Right to Speech, Right to Education, Right to Vote, etc. in short all the rights that a true native citizen must have. But have they actually been given the right to process and possess these rights in action. We feel proud when Indian



business women, politicians and bureaucrats make it in the most powerful women of the world list and also we feel very proud when girls top in the board examinations. But what after that?

The percentage of the girls passing in the examination, to the number of girls enrolling in the colleges and the number of girls going for further education. This statistics is a reality check for those who think that girls are the future of this country. It is always considered that the worth of a civilization can be assessed correctly only from what status it provides to the women. Once in his speech Swami Vivekananda had described that it would be the best thermometer to the progress of nation is to see how a nation treats its women.

Considering only the condition of women belonging to minority consolidates the wider picture but it is worth exploring. Pen is mightier than the sword is a famous dictum when we praise the power of written words. It is known facts that go against the flow is very difficult and risky. But it is also known that to trod on the newer path may be difficult but the result is worth trying.

The plight of the minority section women have been brought forth by many writers who thought that it would bring into light the atrocious ways in which the women suffer. Literature is a medium which has always been the best method in which things can be explained, described and expressed. The main issue on which the women of the minority section suffer is the level of education and assertion of their will. God has bestowed everyone with sound thinking ability, creativity and talent. But still when we see the minority sections we still find that male gender wants to decide everything for the other gender. Freedom of thought is suppressed so adversely that if a decision is left on her, she will not be able to decide what to do. Take the case of the Swat Valley or the present Talibani conditions. No religion has ever obstructed the path to knowledge. In fact religion is the higher path to enlightenment. No person can be called a true human without sound knowledge of his surroundings or who does not have the basic instincts of right or wrong.

A girl of just fourteen years understands the importance of education and fights for girls education is considered a threat to religion. And to a religion which is totally based on logic, reasoning and scientific proofs. There may be incidents which remain hidden or are kept hidden for unknown reasons just to maintain the customs that are created by so called workers of God. These things come to light when media steps in. Media is a boon as well as a curse to our society. When media works on its real ethics to bring reality, give voice to helpless and bring justice to the denied then we find the real importance of this medium. But when this same medium becomes the mouthpiece to the highest bidder it creates confusion in the society as to what to believe and what to reject. This is a dangerous situation.

Similar is the case of the textbooks, it should be understood on a wider scale that it is dangerous to play with the mind a child. Textbooks are like religious books. They create the mind, give ideas, provide knowledge, and give food for thought and reasoning. These books determine the future course of the young mind. Because the mind digests every word. Children are like earthen pots it depends totally on how to mould them. Things that are learned in childhood are never forgotten, the mindset developed in the young age remains in the mind and soul of an individual throughout his/her life.

In a recent event, the governor of a state when asked that what should be the way in which a community can progress. Her reasons were so simple yet profound. She explained that to put the whole burden on one gender is the biggest drawback that our country faces. Why to teach all the household works to only girls, why not boys share these activities. So many things that are unsaid and are accepted by the society come in forefront when media takes charge and responsibility to awaken the society.

There are several measures that are to be taken into consideration when we discuss the role of



media, literature and textbooks can play in safeguarding the rights or improving the life of minority women. When we read the works of Nafisa Haji or Razia Sajjaad Zahir or male writers like Khuswant Singh or Chaman Nahal, who have directly or indirectly brought the women issues in light. Literature has provoked these issues so exceptionally well that the people have been stirred to the core.

Textbooks should be written and designed in such a way that it creates respect and sensitivity in the minds of the children from a very young age towards women and women related issues. Representation of women as weak or vulnerable or prone to danger should be avoided but it does not mean that reality be suppressed or hidden but it should be expressed in such a way that it generates suggestions and solutions to women oriented issues. Also it should not be provocative to social chaos or anarchy. This should be applied to all sorts of literatures, magazines and newspapers as well to electronic media such as news channels and advertisements.

But moreover it is the matter of mentality and psychology of the people which should change with the change in time. The stereotype view or judgmental approach is suffocating the talent, ability of a strong workforce.

As we are aware of the importance of women in our life and how we are dependent on them for our survival so it is bound duty and responsibility on us to stride forward to ensure dignity to women and in doing so we will help the noble cause of the peace, progress and prosperity of our nation on a broader perspective.

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