



The position of women during wodeyar's period

Prof. Mahadevi

¹Rtd., ICSSR Senior Fellow, Department of History, Karnataka State Open University, Mysuru, Karnataka, India

Correspondence Author: Prof. Mahadevi

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Abstract

Women empowerment has been playing a pivotal role in reducing the gender inequality. Right from the day of civilization women are subjected to injustice, they are deprived of equal opportunities; particularly it is to the greater extent in developing countries. India is one of the developing countries, has seen more discrimination about women. The changes are taken place in the 19th century. Earlier to India's independence the suppression of women rights was very much, where all bad evils were practiced. Only few native rulers emphasised for women empowerment. The Wodeyars of Mysore Kingdom have contributed immensely for the women empowerment. Many acts formed to provide equality to women.

Keywords: women empowerment, gender inequality, traditional bad evils like Sati, ban of widow marriage

Introduction

Women empowerment has been one of the agendas of development across the world, particularly in developing countries many welfare policies are evolved to empower women. Though women constitute 50% of total global population their participation in decision making, sharing property, and political power is very low. Many organisations and institutions have been working for ensuring the equality to women. The western world realised the need for equal participation of women in all walks of life after Second World War.

India as a colonial country had different position for women. Women in India were victims of a multiple socio-economic and cultural factors. In India the social reforms of the 19th century for the first time attempted to bring changes in the conditions of women by educating them raising their social status. The reforms were abolition of Sati and Child Marriage, removal of restrictions on widow remarriage and provision of educational opportunities for women. In the later part of the 19th century the women of the middle and upper class families led women movement. Women began to question the disparity in values of the male dominated Indian society. The women demanded for equality in the society. The process of women emancipation gained momentum during the years of freedom struggle under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, Annie Beasant, Phule and others. Since different parts of India ruled by different rulers under East India Company the struggle for women liberation was localised.

The Mysore Kingdom which was under Wodeyars rule was a very progressive state particularly, the Nalvadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar was a progressive thinker brought several changes in his state. He dedicated his whole life to the development of his state until it became a model state in India. Nalwavi Krishnaraj Wodeyar introduced many reforms to give opportunities to all sections of society including women. As history reveals women were the sufferer and deprived of equality and freedom. To empower the women and ensure equality the Hindu Law

Amendment Bill was passed and came into force from 1st January 1934. It related to the position of women in Hindu society in Mysore state.

Earlier to Nalwadi Krishnaraj Wodeyar, Jayachamarajendra Wodeyar passed an order in 1892 baring these two systems, i.e. Devadasi System and Gejje Puja System which were immoral and soial stigma for lower caste women. In 1910 an order was passed to prevent the practice of Gejepooje and violation of the order subjected to punishment. The Muzarai proceedings dated 29th June 1910 No. 1872 directs with certain observations, the discontinuance of the performance of "Gejje Puja" or any other similar ceremony by the dancing girls within the premises of Muzarai temple. In 1911, the prevention of Juvenile Smoking Act was announced to protect the teenager from the habit of smoking.

The Queen Kemparajammani as a widow led the state efficiently when Nalwad, Krishnaraj Wodeyar was a minor. She proved herself as an able administrator. Until the Nalwadi Krishnaraj Wodeyar, the education was prohibited to women due to prevailing customs and traditions of society except Rajamatas. Nalwadi Krishnaraj Wodeyar had witnessed position of women when he visited foreign countries. When he toured Burma in 1901, he saw that women were participated in trade and commerce which influenced Wodeyar.

Similarly, when Nalwadi Krishnaraj Wodeyar visited Baroda in 1916, he distributed prizes to the women teachers as Chief Guest. Inspired by this, Nalwadi Krishnaraj Wodeyar declared that he would introduce women teachers training college. Maharani's Women College was started in Mysore during Nalwadi Krishnaraj Wodeyar which paved the way for promoting education to girl students in Mysore Samastana.

Apart from encouraging education to women many social reforms were introduced to eliminate the bad evils practiced in society. It was intended to ensure equality and empowerment to women. The bad evils practiced were Devadasi system, Basavapadati, Gejje Pooje. In order to eliminate these, a state level committee was constituted to study the preventing law of

preventing prostitution in the important cities like Bombay, Madras and Calcutta, and submit the report for formulating the law. As the result Nalwadi Krishnaraj Wodeyar passed on act suppression of Immoral Traffic Act.

In order to eliminate the bad practices prevailed in the society such as restrictions on widow marriage, Sati system, not having rights to get the share of property, practice of Devadasi, a committee was constituted as per the desire of members of representative Assembly of the State. The king endorsed the recommendation and a committee was constituted under the chairmanship of retired justice K.R. Chandrashekar in 1929. The terms of reference to this committee were three.

- a) It was to examine all questions how to improve the position of women under the Hindu law.
- b) It was to submit a report in what respect Hindu law administered at the time needed a reform.
- c) It was to draft a Bill embodying the recommendations of the committee.

For bringing changes in the old Hindu Law several distinguished lawyers and judges in the country were consulted to get the suggestion to reform the Hindu law. Though entire India was under British rule and different customs and practices followed in different states, Mysore state was compact and different from other states, and “governed by one uniform law called MITAKSHARA System”.

“The Committee drafted a Bill amending the Hindu Law and named it, A bill to amend the Hindu Law as to the Rights of Women”.

The bill included five reforms such as:

1. Inheritance
2. Separate and property adoption
3. Women’s full estate
4. Women’s limited estate
5. Maintenance

These were the five major reforms recommended by the committee. The Law Secretary of the Nalwadi Krishnaraj Wodeyar explained the need and details of the proposed bill to the Representative Assembly in its Budget Session in 1931. The Assembly consist of both orthodox and modernist, committee views both groups’ views. “The Law Secretary further explained that it was high time for a change in the position of women. they have proved equal to the men in matter of education. In other sectors of life too they have shown their mettle. It was no longer possible to confine them only to household duties”. In the discussion on the Bill in the Representative Assembly two women members namely, Smt. Kamamma and Smt. Sakamma took participation in the discussion. They argued that “Women had suffered most in social system where she had to bear not only birth pang to perpetuate human race but also limitless obligations of a joint family. If men had muscle, woman had mercy. If men were known for thinking, women were known for feeling. If man shines abroad, women shine at home. Nature had made both complementary each other. Why should man think superior to woman.”

Thus with very valid discussion the Bill was introduced in the Legislate Council of the King Nalwadi Krishnaraj Wodeyar on 19th February 1932 and the Select Committee did not change much passed by the Legislative Council and got the assent of the Maharaj which came into force from 1st January 1934 in the Kingdom of Wodeyar.

Similarly, in 1936, Hindu Widow Remarriage Act was passed to facilitate the remarriages of widows. Apart from this the age of marriage of girls enhanced to prevent the child marriage which practiced in the society.

This act aiming to empower the women was implemented before independence. Therefore, thoughts of King Nalwadi Krishnaraj Wodeyar made a drastic change in the Hindu society. The introduction of changes to Hindu Law Act paved the way for changes in the position of women in Mysore State during Wodeyar regime.

Conclusion

Wodeyar dynasty which ruled for century in Mysore Kingdom brought several changes in the society. All bad evils practiced pertained to women were eliminated. Particularly the Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar who was known as “Raja Rushi” brought changes to the Hindu Law of Rights to Women. The act made women more empowered. The education institutions of all level opened to women in the state. Women enjoyed the freedom.

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