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Women's Revolt of Consciousness

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Abstract:

My paper proposes the various areas of womanhood traditionally conceived by herself and by her own counterparts. It discusses the psychological differences that have been documented in the treatises of patriarchal traditions. The gender which has been an organizing principle in carrying forward social interaction, expected behaviour, personality, goals, aspirations, has now crossed boundaries of marginality and that is the way women's revolt of consciousness relate itself with the other's gaze which relishes it an object of desire rather an individual who functions in society in countless ways and leads the development of numerous competing perspectives.

'Consciousness' means women have already been aware of her potentialities and responsibilities. She has been serving the family as a housewife and as a dual-earner, but whenever she as an Indian woman, living in Indian ambience, is unable to fulfill the wishes of work and family, she suffers from guilt and she is prone to get into negative spirit and her positive complex is lowered down by herself and by her family and society members and by state at large and that consequently harms her health and she is fallen into psychotic diseases. Subsequently the post-modern women have revolted against her own consciousness. She has and she wants to acquire her rights, her existence and wants recognition for her contribution to society as an individual constitutionally and socially as a human she wants platform to accomplish her desires as per traditional requirements. Her 'individual reality' is now her prime concern. This is what we can say 'the women's revolt of consciousness'. She is concerned how to delegate responsibilities, how to seek opportunity to grow, how to contribute creatively to the family, work and for herself, for nation and society. Irrespective of caste, class, creed and religion she is becoming resourceful. Women of this post-modern period whether belonging to elite, bourgeoisie and proletariat class has been able to break silence of being passive performer.

To understand and appropriate the standard sets of the aptitude of women in four-fold labels of persona and then problematizing it in the context of her resistance in performing her awareness and the society's consciousness-raising attitude towards the new woman, that has been lopsided by the structure of society and religion.

- "In a recent comprehensive review of models of the self and gender it was argued that, in general, men construct and maintain independent self-construal, where representations of others are independent of the self, whereas women are thought to construct and interdependent self construals. This makes it intimately linked with conceptualizations of femininity and masculinity"ⁱ

The myths locate woman's stature as *the human power* for building the capacity and image of her counterpart and her children. She is the passive soul-work force cordially managing the house affairs of rearing children according to accepted attitudes of society.

- "Their actions always occur in a context which includes others. To see themselves as part of a relationship seems to be central in these women's lives"ⁱⁱ

At the ceremonious auspicious occasions in the family or during uncertain unavoidable mishaps or sudden crisis she bears an image of the *power* that can forbear pain and agony in the form of widowhood, divorcee, or as a daughter/sister/wife/mother or she is the ideal bride/laxmi/proud mother bearing sons and possessing the wealth of daughter-in-laws. She is to carry the burden of adverse circumstances or she has to be the woman of vain beauty and luck for the family. This is the good side of her picture in the society, but when she brings ill-luck or responsible for crisis, her position in the family undergoes through superstitions, exorcism, diabolic accusations and the members of the family do not hesitate to reproach females of any age for bringing death, suffering, disease and decay to the male members especially. She is discarded as 'witch' 'bitch' 'dakan' 'dayan' etc. The National Commission of Women reports the cases of violation of her dignity and chastity are on such grounds of gross charges of being unlucky to family. There is no redemption for her, no redeeming help. Such miserable predicament questions and contradicts her role as a woman of power. Moreover, the males whosoever come forward to support are deprived of their privileges or beaten, lynched, ostracized and harassed. Such cases of victimized victims convey the attitude of society in India that:

- “She is not allowed to see herself as the main actor in her own life, that she is not important in herself for herself. The second is that she must always be connected with others and shape her life in accordance with a man’s. Together these lead to another concomitant of a woman’s role: she must learn to anticipate the needs of others, thereby putting her own needs second”.ⁱⁱⁱ

The woman since ages in India a great helpful *human resource and capital* who contributes in the output of production and who works strenuously day and night as an input for management of handicrafts and agricultural industry. Behind the curtains her active performance is outwardly a passive economic performer. She regularizes household affairs, rear children, bear other duties of looking after elderly people in the house along with her marital duties. Simultaneously in the conservative pattern she can be still observed doing embroidery, stitching, knitting, crocheting, tatting, spinning thread, weaving cloth, carpets, cultivating paddy fields and other crops, reaping and harvesting and carrying bundles of crops on her head like a gleaner, cutting wood for cooking, burning *chulahs*, milking and feeding the cattle, cleaning and cooking besides all the procreation responsibilities as a married woman. It is a pride for women to perform various roles in the family. The whole foregrounding for the progress of a family or of the nation is shaped by the females of the house- whether it is mother, mother-in-law, daughter, and daughter-in-law. Even when the sons of the family grow, the other gender is constantly directly/ indirectly involved in the assistance and support to care of the males of the house. It is the pattern of gender patriarchy that has assigned such distribution of labour to the female folk within the house and in the family. In urban areas she is hard-task force – coping with both family and work pressure in the poor- psychological conditions.

- “Her well-being and survival seems likely to be linked to the sex marking and segregation present in society. Women and men are raised to act and react differently, so it is reasonable that this also should apply to work related situations. To a great degree, women and men also have different labour markets, and so are exposed to different health risks. This difference in their prerequisites (both biological and social) most likely explains the differences in work related problems women and men experience”.^{iv}

The meaning of *human identity* does not belong to the recognition of an image or persona in the context of social idea. It is associated with the self-respect, self-perception and self-identity. For the past ages women have been entitled to accomplish certain roles and responsibilities. Their slight resistance and reluctance cause friction in the family relationships and impeachment of the norms and values of culture. The whole gender patriarchy in India condemns criticizes, disparages and depreciates the nuances she generates by her attitude of denial or refusal. Mirabai, an example in the medieval history faced ex-communication and exile by her own members of the ruling family in Mewar although being on constructive path of spirituality and humanity. There may be hundreds of examples of such women treading on divergent untrodden roads to seek their self-dignity, yet could not get acknowledgement during their life-time. The women’s identity as human identity is not circumscribed by self-identity. This consciousness implies individual reality of women and it is apt to say here:

- ‘Feminism is a protest against the relegation of women to a secondary status. It questions the myth of male superiority and aims at empowering women to claim a state of equality’.^v

The *Vedas*, the *Puranas*, the *Upnishads*, the literary scriptures of mythical India, all delineates woman as the symbol of *human strength*. Do you think *Sita*, when abducted by Ravana, was then the image of human strength? Could *Draupdi* when molested in the public by Kauravas exhibit her strength? When tradition and rituals depict the worship of women in shrines as goddess of wealth, power and learning and knowledge, it appears as farce to the modern contemporary women, who has soared higher and higher in all fields where men had strong foot-hold. But there on the contrary an ordinary, self-effacing woman who has been the source and the root that blossoms the soil with fruits and the family rises with its aspirations. She passively and silently grants strength by her sincerity, modesty, humility and honesty. Both types of women are strengthening the family and the nation respectively. But don’t you think inspite of all her efforts, of all her silence, of all her sacrifice, of all her cordiality she has suffered marginalized status in the matters of education, progress and issues of freedom of expression and opportunity and employment, therefore such forums of the revolt of consciousness are organized in order to obtain empowerment, emancipation and elimination of discrimination.

Otherwise why celebration of International Women’s Day, Mother’s Day, Daughter’s Day is there? Why are there establishments of the Associations of Women, National / Regional Commissions for Women, Centre for Women Studies throughout India? The established ladies are the resource persons for the upcoming, uprising women and female social activists are working as volunteers committed to promote the cause of Women, Work and Health at national and international level. Today media has availed to us the progress of women in all forms obscurely or unobscurely, yet the collective consciousness among women folk is still missing. The reason for such distancing is gender biased society which women herself has not been able to shatter.

- “The women are shown as having no sphere of their own, no independent identity, no living space. They go down in collective memory as organic imperfections, ramshackle, rickety, unhinged creations, mere fictional constructs of the ‘fragile- handle with care’ male ego”.^{vi}

The visible and invisible source of human power, human capital and human identity and human strength is none other than the woman. This is the reality of woman as an individual and of woman who is the part and parcel of tradition of the world. She is essentially the symbol of solidarity, integrity and humanity as well as beauty. This image generation after generation has been accidentally been governed by social responsibilities, social values, norms and traditions of the society. In the context of Indian culture and civilization women's role is identified with the benefactor who upholds the principles of wealth, virtue, tradition and community bonding.

With the advancement in the living standard due to science, technology, capitalism and industrialism her world of ethnicity and identity has undergone metamorphosis. The tradition of gender role and responsibilities has corrupted the tradition and has clashed with her individual reality. It has malignantly caused stress and tension among the women folk due to the duality of her role in the family, work-place as well as in her self because now her perspective of individual reality is depended upon her being as social and economic force for the nation rather than merely as the essential being of the traditional society. This is the cause of her revolt of consciousness and paradoxically it is the social cohesion and cultural anarchy of women's role in the society. That problematizes the gender disparity in relation to her marginal identity. Her image-building capacity indicates her individualistic pursuits, which also symbolizes her protest of the individual consciousness. Her identity crisis questions the collective identity of her being a woman in human society. She wants to search meaning in life and her aim to have meaningful existence has threatened the traditional pattern of social values for and against women in any sphere of social and economic life. She has plunged herself emotionally and sentimentally to dismiss the set system of gender discrimination from her growth.

Although her individual consciousness is aware of well-defined limits of family, society, and community and work-place yet her confrontation to overcome her alienation and identity crisis as regards her progress in a technologically advanced society with a high standard of living and leisure or in tribal/rural society has been in a transition phase, which is against the tradition. It is now in the process of psychological mobility instead of mere social mobility.

The search for realization of her consciousness individually or collectively has crumbled age-old male-dominated norms, it has thrown challenge to manage her empowerment issues, and it has fallen apart the forces that have captured her image between illusion of tradition and reality of her Self.

In such transitional phase of society in India, women have been undergoing through the individual and community restrictions and prohibitions, they are under stress and need to redefine their identity values individually and collectively. This dilemma and crisis need to be located within themselves first of all socially, then it need to be realized sentimentally and declare to self and others 'who they are'. Women need to build their managerial skills and social relationships by venturing into multi-disciplinary areas. They need to search their power of expression in the inter-disciplinary contexts. They have to shackle the walls of privacy of their own occupied knowledge. They have to initiate cross-cultural communication and encourage sharing and caring so that the movement of strengthening women from upper to lower level can become stronger and apprehensions at workplace, family and of health can be resolved strongly and then only both at personal and global level her identity would be able to combine humanity and well being, otherwise she would remain a mere object for the well being of others, but not for herself and all at large

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