GCE A LEVEL



WJEC A-LEVEL RELIGIOUS STUDIES



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Glossary Key Terms

Gandhi, Indira - First female prime minister of India.

Gandhi, Mahatma - Notable figure of the Hindu renaissance. Leader in the struggle for Indian independence.

purusharthas - The four aims of human life - dharma, artha, kama, moksha.

Ram Mohan Roy - The founder of the Brahmo Sabha movement in 1828 and an influential figure in the Bengali renaissance.

Other key terms

dharma - The duties that are in are following rta, cosmic order. It is a fundamental way of living for a Hindu, which includes laws, virtues and duties that govern the Hindu way of life.

Stri dharma - the duties of women during the householder stage, as highlighted in the Laws of Manu scripture.

Laws of Manu - is an ancient Hindu scripture focusing on an ethical code of conduct. (Manusmriti)

sati - A now illegal practice in India, where a widow would throw herself onto her husband's funeral pyre.

dowry - The amount of money or property given by the bride's family to the groom's family. This practice was made illegal in India in 1961, including the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 and subsequently by Sections 304B and 498A of the Indian Penal Code. However, the practice still continues within the country.

Religious and cultural views on the rights of women

Historically Hindu culture has been patriarchal, meaning that the men hold primary power and predominate in roles.

Within the Laws of Manu in 300CE it states that women do not need to have money as their father will support them, and once a woman is married her husband will support her. This teaching was followed right up to this century, but now this idea is being rejected as a result of the economic changes within Britain and India. Many women in Indian cosmopolitan cities are getting well paid jobs. Furthermore, within British culture men wouldn't expect women to be so dependent upon them for their financial needs.

There are still some rules which were still expected to be followed within Hindu society:

- Men are only allowed led religious or Vedic rituals in mandirs. Women can
 perform puja at the home, but whenever there is a sacrificial act it is led by
 a male.
- Only boys within the top 3 varnas (castes) are allowed to do the Upanyana ceremony (Sacared Thread Ceremony) and complete all of the 16 samskaras (rites of passage).
- Only sons can perform funeral rites and the Shraddha (annual memorial of the deceased)
- Aman can choose from a number of potential brides, where it is uncommon for the woman to have numerous choices for marriage.

Indian culture has provided many rights for women over the last two centuries, however, they are not always followed.

There are the key legal rights that bring about equality for women:

Legal Rights today in India

Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 - Introduced monogamy and allowed divorce, on specific grounds, e.g. neither party is incapable of giving a valid consent to it in consequence of unsoundness of mind.

Hindu Succession Act, 1956- This act recognised the right for women to inherit parental property equally with men.

Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 - Dowry was often asked of the bride and family. This made many parents desire to have boys instead of girls, due to their financial burden. However, in 1961 it was made illegal. This practice, even though illegal is still done in many parts of India today, causing women to have no financial independence.

Equal Remuneration Act, 1976- This provides equal pay for equal work, for both men and women.

Commission of Sati Prevention Act, 1987 - this law was made to stop the abhorrent act of Sati, where the women would go onto their husband's funeral pyre. Sati is rarely done in India today.

National Commission for Women Act, 1990 - this was a commission set up to give women a voice within the Government of India, due to the underrepresentation of women Ministers. There has been backlash with regards to women having a voice in politics and an increase in 'Men's Rights' groups fighting against this (see below). They believe that women are given far more rights and a greater voice than men.

Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 - This Act protects women from all forms of violence. However, in India marital rape is still not illegal.

Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 - This protected young daughters from being forced into marriage at a young act, but again this is still carried out today, giving the child no choice over whom she is to wed.

Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinances, 2013- This Act was amended in 2013 due to the gang rape in Delhi (see case study below). It now provides judgements on acid attacks, sexual harassment, the Act with intent to disrobe a woman, voyeurism (watching people have sex publicly), stalking and finally this act provides harsher sentences for rape cases, giving the death penalty.

Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013. - This Act was to make women feel more comfortable in going to work. However, in India today 36% of India companies, including multinational companies, do not comply with this Act, according to FICCI-EY November 2015 report.

(http://ficci.in/PressRelease/2192/ficci-press-nov27-flo.pdf)

Also the Indian Supreme Court in 2017 stated that the ban on women of "menstruating age" entering the Sabarimala hill temple was discriminatory.

Despite these laws The Thomson Reuters Foundation (http://poll2018.trust.org/) conducted a global poll in 2011 and 2018, investigating the rights of women. The Foundation is a charity that wants to highlight any injustices in the world. They surveyed the world in 2011 and found the 5 most dangerous places for women were Democratic Republic of Congo, Pakistan, India, and Somalia. Noticing there were issues with sexual violence, human trafficking, lack of education and forced marriages.

The Thomson Reuters Foundation, investigated these places again in 2018 to see if there were any changes, especially since new Acts in India have been developed to help women's rights. The study noticed that the majority of women in India have difficulty in making a livelihood, owning land, or gaining inheritance and had a lack of access to education or adequate nutrition. Hence India was 3rd just behind Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia, on the worst place for discrimination towards women. India is the deadliest place in the world for women for sexual violence. This includes rape, domestic rape, rape by a strangers and a lack of access to justice within rape cases.

Between 2007-2016 four women in India were raped every hour, despite the laws. In New Delhi alone there were reported 40,000 rapes, even after the fatal gang rape of student in New Delhi. 2012 (see case study below). There are many cases of sexual harassment and coercion into sex as a form of corruption. Furthermore, India is the worst in the world for human trafficking, including domestic servitude, forced marriage, sexual slavery and forced labour. Illustrating that culturally, rights for women are very limited.

Case Study - New Delhi Rape 2012

On 16th December 2012 a 23-year-old female student of Physiotherapy, Jyoti Singh Pandey and male friend Awindra Pandey went on a private bus hoping to travel home safely. They boarded the bus at 9.30pm, not knowing that the 6 people on the bus, had stolen it. Pandey was suspicious when the bus was going on a different route, and the 6 men taunted the couple asking what they were doing at such a late hour. An argument erupted and Pandey was beaten and knocked unconscious. The 6 men raped and beat up Jyoti and penetrated her using a metal rode. Someone later found Jyoti partially clothed on the side of the road at 11pm. She was taken to the hospital where she was found with bite marks all over her body and she had incurred massive damage to her genitals, uterus and intestines due to the abuse of the 6 men by using a metal rod. There was excessive damage to her body, resulting in numerous amounts of surgeries, and ultimately causing her death on 29th December. There was massive outrage throughout the world, causing the adult abusers to be charged with rape and face the death penalty. However, one juvenile defendant received only 3 years' imprisonment. One of the rapists made some shocking claims, "When being raped, she shouldn't fight back. She should just be silent and allow the rape. Then they'd have dropped her off after 'doing her', and only hit the boy," he said.'

(https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-31698154). One of the abusers hanged himself before trial, authorities are unclear about whether it was suicide of murder. The Lawyer of the defendant, Manohar Lal Sharma, showed the lack of respect for the victims or the actual incident by sitting to the media, that the victims were responsible for the assault because they should not have been using public transport as an unmarried couple, so late at night. Manohar went even to say the male victim was responsible for the rape because he 'failed his duty to protect the woman' (The Sydney Morning Herald, 10th January 2013).

The widespread reaction around the case and attitudes towards rape in India itself caused changes to the law in India, the 'Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance, 2013 allowed for the death penalty for rape cases. (see law above).

"India has shown utter disregard and disrespect for women ... rape, marital rapes, sexual assault and harassment, female infanticide has gone unabated," said **Manjunath Gangadhara**, an official at the Karnataka State Government.

Culturally, widows, especially from the high castes have suffered discrimination. During the 13th century, the Muslim invasion paved way for the practice of Sati (widows would throw themselves on the funeral pyre of their dead husband), where women would choose to die with their husband instead of being taken by the Muslim invaders. When their husband died, it was believed that they should also burn themselves on their husband's funeral pyres alive. This practice was known as Sati. This was due to the fact that women could not own land, as it was only given to the men, therefore women had no financial independence.

Additionally, during the Muslim Invasion, it was believed that women should not integrate within society, especially when they were married. High caste women began to cover up more and go less and less in public, so they were not

kidnapped or raped by Muslims. It was the upper class/caste from North India who were covered from head to toe in sheets and accompanied by a male from their family, so that Muslim men would not attack them. However, poor women when out to get water, work or get firewood, they would wear veils.

Ram Mohan Roy in the 18th and 19th century tried to fight against this injustice. From Roy's and other's protests the practice of Sati was made illegal in 1829. However, the widows were not permitted to re-marry according to Hindu law. This caused extreme worry for the widow, they were seen as unimportant within society. It meant that these women had no rights, education or money to help them in society. As a result, many stayed with their husband's family, and acted as an unpaid servant. This was later changed in 1856 with the Hindu Widow's Remarriage Act.

Although, the act to legalise re-marriage happened in the 19th century, it took a long time for society to accept remarriage, which eventually happened in the 1940s. During the period of unacceptance, Professor D.K. Karve established a widow home in Pune in 1896. When Karve's first wife died, he married a widow called Godubai in 1893. There was widespread reaction to this by Brahmins, who felt the marriage was unethical and not living by Dharmic routines. Karve made sure these widows gained an education, raising the money himself. This home for the widows later became the Indian Women's University in 1916.

Within Hinduism, the divorce rules are referred to in the Dharma -Shastras. It was thought that marriage was for life, as Vivaha (marriage rite) was done in front of the sacred fire, God's presence. The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 stated that marriage could be ended by divorce. The higher caste did not practise divorce because it was given such a social stigma and as we have already learnt it is very difficult to re-marry.

The last right or expectation for women is the idea of dowry. The bride's parents were expected to give dowry or money to the bridegroom's parents. This was the bride's family's inheritance that is given to the bridegroom's parents subsequently, the amount of money the bride's parents gave her new family affected her status in the new home. This meant that women never owned land or had any financial independence. This in turn put a huge amount of pressure on the parents when their daughter was getting married. Furthermore, it made the parents desperately want to have a son instead of a daughter, as the son provided money for the future and a daughter was a huge financial burden to them. There are 6.4 Million abortions each year, many of which are due to the parents not wanting a girl. Even though, dowry was made illegal in 1961, it is still expected by the bride's parents and very few women still own land.

Traditional Views on the Roles of Men and Women in Hinduism

Traditional roles for men

Males within the top 3 varnas holds the main dharmic duties. They have to follow both their Varna Dharma (caste duty) and Ashrama Dharma (life duty). It is the men that fulfil all the Samskaras (rites of passage) and especially the last stage of the Antiyesti (funeral) customs, where the son lights the pyre and circumambulates the fire in an anti-clockwise direction. Firstly, within the first ashrama (Brahmacharya) they have to complete the Upanyana Ceremony (Sacred Thread), where he will gain an education and learn Hindu truths from scripture. Furthermore, during this time, the Hindu boy will have to be celibate until marriage, respect his elders, aid those in need through sewa (charity) and do puja three times a day.

After his formal education, the parents will help him find a wife, making sure they belong to the right caste, and are in line with the horoscopes at birth. It is traditional for the parents to find the son or daughter an appropriate partner that can match cosmically, in line with rta. After Vivaha (marriage) the man will enter the grihastra stage, where he should get a job, and earn money for the household. It is hoped that within a marriage they will have a child soon after the wedding. The man is the protector of the woman, this is made clear in the story of Rama, when Rama went and saved Sita from the clutches of Ravana. His bravery is highlighted with him fulfilling his dharmic duty of the warrior caste, to restore order in society but also protecting his wife. It is a husband's dharma, as part of the ghirastra (householder stage) must protect his wife until the end. He must be faithful to her, just as Rama was faithful to Sita. However, there are exceptions to the rule, for example if the wife cannot produce children or she has committed adultery, the man can leave his wife. During the Householder stage, the man not only has to protect and provide financially to his wife, but also his aged mother and any dependent daughters, who haven't married yet. Hence why many parents want to have sons, as they are the carers for the elderly.

It is clear in the Laws of Manu that the men were very fearful of the Muslim invasion, therefore protecting of their women:

"Her father protects (her) in childhood, her husband protects (her) in youth, and her sons protect (her) in old age; a woman is never fit for independence." Laws of Manu (Manusmriti)
9,3

Traditional roles for women

According to Dr. Srinivasan, 'women in the Hinduism are the true gatekeepers of dharma and culture.' (Sirnivasan, Dr Amriutur V:, 'Hinduism for Dummies', John Wiley and Sons, (2011),p.343, ISBN:978470878583)

In the beginning of the development of the Hindu religion as we know it today, women were not seen as subordinate or inferior. Some of the key figures within Hinduism were women. During Vedic times women could lead worship, they were sages and even did the Upanyana (sacred thread ceremony). For example, Vachaknavi (7th century BCE) was a female philosopher who explained and expounded on the Vedas. She is referred to in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad as one of the sages challenging Yajnavalka's knowledge. She asked him questions about the metaphysical nature or the soul, then the material world and finally asked him questions about Brahman. This shows that in ancient time women were given equal status even in the 7th century BCE.

In Post Vedic only males in the top three varnas (castes) could study scriptures to a high level. Furthermore, women were given essential roles in maintaining Hindu traditions within the home, known as Stri Dharma (dharma of a woman, or righteous duty). There are clear duties of the wife and what makes a good wife, fulfilling their dharmic duties. In the Laws of Manu, women are essential to aid the dharma of men even though it might mean it is subsidiary. This submissive but supportive role was clearly highlighted by Sita within the Ramayana. She was submissive to her husband by walking through the fire, to highlight her purity to Rama, even though she didn't want to.

Within the Laws of Manu women are praised as being essential in the household. The Laws of Manu (Manusmriti), show the reverence for women by stating 'Gods are pleased where women are worshipped.'

However, the laws also state that they can also be fickle, corrupt, promiscuous and unreliable; hence they could not be given any independence of men. Many people claim that the reason for this scripture was due to the Muslim invasion of India.

'women were confined to the inner quarters of the home. In order to protect Hindu girls from being abducted, they were married off in their childhood, giving rise to the practice of child marriages.' Seeta Lakshani

Lakhami, Seeta, 'Hinduism for schools', 2005, Vivekananda Centre London Ltd, ISBN: 0954956702.

Within Stri Dharma (Dharma of a woman), the woman would think of her husband as a god. This is highlighted within the Vivha ceremony, during the Kandyan (entrusting the daughter to the groom), which is performed in front of the fire. The Bride's parents will first hold hands, in the hope that the son-in-law will look after their daughter. The bride's father asks the groom to promise to fulfil his dharma (moral duty); artha (earning money honestly); kama (enjoyment of life) and moksha (spiritual liberation). The father will say to the groom, 'she is given as a collaborator in the performance of the religious duties which a householder ought to perform. She is to inspire and stimulate and she is to lead you on the path of Dharma.' Then they will wash his feet as they believe that he is the Lord Vishnu, whom they are handing the rightful consort of Lakshmi in the form of their daughter. Furthermore, it is believed that the bride should try to look like Sita, in order to emulate her virtuous and loyal behaviour to her husband.

One of the key expectations of the Stri Dharma is to have children, and to love, protect and bring them up into the faith. If they cannot provide children, it brings true shame on the family. This desperation is highlighted by the increase of IVF, Niyoga (use of a male sperm donor - naturally through sex) and surrogacy. (see Theme 4C, Bioethics). It says in the Laws of Manu 'may you be the mother of a hundred sons', showing that a woman's status his heightened when she bares a son. A son is seen as the bringer of financial gain and the person to continue the family line. Within the key part of the Vivha (wedding ceremony), the groom says the bride, 'May you be faithful to me. Let us have many sons, may they reach a ripe old age.' Jamison (Jamison, I., 'Hinduism', Philip Allan Updates, (2006), ISBN:1844894207). These vows highlight the subordinate role of the woman within the dharmic framework.

Women are to be an expert in household affairs, keeping the home clean and beautifully decorated. During the festival of Divali, it is believed that Lakshmi won't visit their home and provide gifts if their house is not clean and welcoming to her. This act of cleaning is a sign of devotion and service or sewa to her husband, as he is seen as a god in her eyes, according to the Laws of Manu.

Tradition recommends four prominent roles for a married Hindu woman:

- 1. As a **servant (dasi)**, where she must serve her children and husband. **Vandana Shiva**, a physicist and female scholar believes that women's caring, motherly role, has been the backbone of society, and as a result, women have been seriously repressed and overlooked.
- 2. As an advisor or counsellor (mantri)- In the Ramayana, Sita did counsel her husband, aiding him in the thinking of key political decisions. Furthermore, Draupadi (in the Mahabarata) had five husbands, whom she would give clear advice and sometimes put them in their place. The woman, is meant to be the friend and support for the man, in doing his dharmic duty. This was revealed in the final wedding step of the Sapti Padi, when the woman makes the seventh step and the groom says, 'may you be my friend.'

- 3. As Mother (mata)- It is the main dharma of the women to be a mother and bring up her children in the Hindu faith. She plays a key role in doing the festivals, which help to educated her children in Hindu beliefs and traditions. For example, she may tell her children about the story of Rama and Sita, during the festival of Divali; highlighting the dharmic roles that both of them show. The role of the mother is illustrated quite clearly in the story of Parvati; where she not only created her son but also showed her fierce side to Shiva for chopping of Ganesha's head. As a result, Shiva dutifully found her son a head that eventually became the famous elephant head. As a mother, they are also seen to be carers of the children's needs, i.e. emotional and physical upbringing. The mother must bring up her daughter in preparation for her new family, when she gets married. It is essential that her daughter is ready to fulfil her dharmic roles later in life. 'daughters are raised for someone else's family', The Laws of Manu.
- 4. As a lover (rambha) as a result of Vivha, the Hindu couple are now legally allowed to have sex in the eyes of God (rati). Furthermore, it is her duty to have sex with her husband, to enable the father to have a son and continue the family line (prajana). Sex is highlighted as one of the 4 main aims in life (purusharthas), kama enjoyment of life. Even though the Laws of Manu seem quite oppressive on woman's rights, it is the duty on both sides for mutual satisfaction. Within Indian culture, this desire to please people equally is shown in the book, the Karma Sutra which is not a sacred scripture, but merely a guide to the art of making love. However, some see this book as going too far in people's minds and Hindu dharma, as it even has a section on how to seduce another man's wife.

Within the Hindu community in Britain the status of women is still quite a sensitive issue. Many of these communities still impose patriarchal values. They still want the ideal of a wife and daughter as shown in the Laws of Manu, to continue. 'Hindu women of them revolve around themes of modesty and self-effacement, the preservation of a virginal status prior to marriage, obedience to one's parents husband, and in-laws, Chasity, as sacrificing spirit and selfless service to the family.' Warrier, Maya: Faith guides for the Higher Education. 2006, p21, ISBN: 9780954452483. Although, there are liberal fractions of third and second generation Hindu immigrants, most remain conservative; where the men in the community still influence the behaviour of the women. Hindu scripture has an eclectic mix of ideas on the role of women in, some could be interpreted positively and negatively. The story of Sita in the Ramayana gives a portrayal of a goddess, not as a fierce goddess like Durga or Draupadi but being pure for her husband, as part of the Grihastra (householder) stage in life.

From a positive perspective within the fundamental beliefs of Saguna Brahman, the feminine side of God or Shakti (comic energy, in charge of the dynamic forces within the universe) is key for the physical maintenance of the world. For example, Brahma could not create the world without the sound of 'aum' provided by Saraswati, the goddess of music and education. This shows that the male and female aspects of Brahman have equal status. There are stories in which the

goddesses are seen in a good light. For example, Rama was seen as the perfect man but so was Sita, showing purity, devotion and faithfulness. However, some female Hindus believe people have used Sita's example as a way to make women be more submissive to their husbands.

There are so many goddesses in Hindu tradition which even go back to the Indus Valley Civilization (2500 BCE), which had the female dancing figurine. Furthermore, in Vedic times there were female seers who revealed the Vedas. Within Hinduism today each main male deity has a female consort to balance the rta (cosmic order) in the universe. It is believed that the male is the spiritual aspect and the female is the physical creative aspect of Brahman. These varieties of goddesses are part of the ultimate manifestation of Maha Devi, or Great Goddess. One of the most popular is Durga, who slayed the buffalo demon, Mahisa, as told in the Bhagavata Purana. Mahisa was an exemplar demon, reading scripture, meditating to Brahma. As a result, Brahma gave him a boon (wish), for his devotional behaviour towards him. Mahisa asked to be immortal, to which Brahma replied saying he could not give that wish, no-one should make a man immortal. Mahisa changed his boon to that he could never by killed by a man, which Brahma granted. With his new power, Mihisa conquers the world and is ready to battle in the heavens. Knowing that the gods cannot defeat Mahisa due to the boon that Brahma gave, they created a goddess out of light, hence the name Durga (light). The gods gave replicas of their weapons and a lion to ride and defeat Mihsia and his army. Durga battled and defeated Mahisa, as Dr Flood states, 'she (Durga) is far more powerful than the gods, for only she can defeat the all-conquering demon.' (Flood, G., 'An Introduction to Hinduism', Foundation Books, (2004), ISBN:817596028.)

Also within the Bhagavata Purana it refers to the Mahabarata as being written for both women and lower castes.

"Out of compassion, the great sage thought it wise that this would enable men to achieve the ultimate goal of life. Thus he compiled the great historical narration called the Mahabharata for women, labourers and friends of the twice-born." **Bhagavata Purana**

Bhagavad Gita, provides the pathway for all, including women through Bhakti yoga. "For whoever makes me his heaven, based born through he may be, Yes, women too, and artisans, even serfs - theirs it is to tread the highest way." Bhagavad Gita 9v32. Before this scripture was written, the pathways to reach moksha, were only open to males in the top 3 castes after the Upanyana (Sacred Thread Ceremony). After the ceremony they would learn the pathway to moksha from the teachings of the Guru and scriptures.

Furthermore, in the Mahabarata, we read about Draupadi who knocked down a warrior called Jayadratha when he approached her and made advances. There is also Queen Kunti who showed complete devotion (Bhakti yoga) to Krishna. "Both Kunti and Draupadi are included among the Five great women of Hinduism," Rasamandala Das (Das, R, 'The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Hinduism,' Lorenz Books' (2012) ISBN:9780754820567).

'The innumerable goddesses of local traditions are generally regarded by Hindus as the manifestations or aspects of a single Great Goddess or Maha Devi.' Dr G. Flood

(Flood, G., 'An Introduction to Hinduism', Foundation Books, (2004), ISBN:817596028)

Historically, in Hinduism it wasn't just men that led worship. In the south of India there where mystic poets known as Alvars, and Andal was the only woman within this movement in the 8th century CE. These Alvars are considered the 12 supreme devotees to Vishnu. Andal wrote poems devoted to Vishnu and refused to marry anyone, demonstrating her deep Bhakti yogic practices. Today Andal is worshipped as a goddess, as legend tells that Andal disappeared in the Sri Raganatha/Vishnu Temple, in Srirangam. It is believed that when she reached the doors of the Vimana (inner sanctum of the Temple), she merged into a god. Throughout Andal's life she created two works devoted to Krishna and Vishnu's consorts. Her works showed both a feminine and wrathful side, while still praising God. Her impact is still shown in many temples which have deities of her, as she is now considered the incarnation of Bhudevi (Vishnu's wife and the mother goddess).

There are places where equality is shown, via the stories of goddesses and some teachings in the law books state that 'men and women are equal as sons and daughters.' Laws of Manu, highlighting the spiritual equality between genders. Furthermore, Advaita Vedanta breaks down any mere role or even gender because we are all seen as just atman, who is in reality, Brahman. They believe 'Tat Tvam Asi', or 'you are Brahman'. Therefore, our gendered bodies are just shells for the atman, who is actually God; then there should be no difference or discrimination. The dharma sometimes ignores the spiritual aspect, that 'we are all Brahman'. A story highlighting this was when Sita's father, Janaka was wondering in the woods and came across a beautiful female ascetic. He asked the woman, 'to whom do you belong' - highlighting the Ashrama Dharma, whether the woman is either a daughter under her father's authority, or a wife, under her husband's authority. She replied, not in a dharmic manner, but in a more spiritual way, 'you don't realise I am not a woman, I am not a man, I am a spiritual entity.' After the statement by the female ascetic, Janaka walked way being spiritual enlightened, illustrating that we are not just dharmic entities, but also spiritual ones too, that have no gender.

Development of the role of women with reference to Indira Gandhi

The patriarchal roles, within Indian culture have meant that women stayed at home in preparation to be a wife and did not receive an education. As a result, there is still a massive gener gap in the workforce, as mostly males are educated and subsequently get the top jobs. However, since the Independence of India and the National Commission for Women Act, 1990, more women have gained an education. Even though education and women in work has been rising, the workforce has dropped. According, to the Asia Foundation (https://asiafoundation.org/2016/03/09/where-are-indias-working-women/) the labour participation has fallen by 7% from 2005-2012. Women are mainly in the agricultural sector, where they do mere manual work. The study noticed that women could not change to roles those that men would traditionally perform due to 'family honour' and understanding of gender roles within Indian traditions. 'Social implications of women's economic empowerment have further ossified patriarchal attitudes that intrinsically believe that the safest space for women is at home.' Mandakini Devasher Surie is The Asia Foundation's senior program officer. (https://asiafoundation.org/2016/03/09/where-are-indias-working-women/)

The decrease in the workforce is mainly due to the growing concerns of safety for women, the gang rape in 2012 (see above), clearly highlighted the danger. The Wall Street Journal found that 2 weeks after the rape case in Delhi, many women in the IT sector either reduced their working hours after sunset or quit their jobs. Therefore, employment of women in the IT sector dropped by 40%. (https://blogs.wsj.com/indiarealtime/2013/01/04/after-rape-women-employeesscared-to-work-late/). Despite this, woman are involved in many sectors, like science, media, art, technology and even politics. According, to Naaree.com an online magazine for stay-at- home and work-from-home-mums, career and business women in India, they state the top 10 best jobs for women are: teaching, cabin crew, hospitality, within the entertainment industry, medicine, nursing, law, fashion and design, sports, online jobs, beauty and cosmetics and finally sales and marketing. Still highlighting that the mainly traditional 'masculine' jobs are not the best for women. However, interestingly it does support law, which is mainly male dominated. However, since there are major injustices of women in India, it is clear to see why many women would like to be involved in law.

One of the most powerful roles of leading the country of India, was given to a woman; Indira Gandhi. The constitution of the Independent India allowed for women to participate in all activities of education, sport, media, art, the service sector, technology, science and obviously politics; hence Indira Gandhi. The Constitution of India guarantees equality to all women, including no discrimination by state, equality of opportunity and finally equal pay for equal work. However, from what we have already noticed that this is not always the case due to deep rooted beliefs about cultural and religious expectations of the duties of women.

Indira Gandhi

Indira was born in 1917 and was the daughter of the first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, after India's independence. She was extremely intelligent and studied in schools over the world, including, Switzerland, India and England, specifically in Oxford, where she studied, History, Political Science and Economics. Both her education and observing her father as Prime Minister, paved the way for her to become one of the most powerful women in India. Even though there were mostly male role models in her life, Gandhi at the age of 8 was fascinated by the female heroine, the Joan of Arc. She told her Aunt, 'Someday I am going to lead my people to freedom just as Joan of Arc did!' Norman, D. 'Indira Gandhi: Letters to an American Friend, 1950-1984', Harcourt, (1985), ISBN:9780151443727.

She showed women, that they did not have to follow the traditional norms of Hinduism, by staying at home and caring for their husband. However, before her step to power, she did marry a man called Feroze Gandhi (no relation to Mahatma Gandhi), who she met while studying in London. Her husband was not a Hindu but a Zorostrian or Parsi. They had two sons, but the marriage later fell apart in 1960.

While her father was in power, Gandhi followed him around the world, learning how to speak to leaders from other nations and how to lead a country. Gandhi was her father's unofficial assistant. She got involved with Congress and helped of the internal menial day to day matters. By 1955 Gandhi served as the President of the congress. Then her father died in 1964 and Gandhi was given the power of the Rajya Sabha (Council of States) in the Upper house of the Parliament of India, where there is only a maximum of 250 members. She worked in the second Prime Minister's (Lal Bahadur Shastri) government as a Minster of Information and Broadcasting. However, an opportunity came about when Shastri died 2 years later, senior leaders in the congress wanted Indira to lead the party, as she was seen as someone who could be easily manipulated, (being a woman).

'Congress President Kamaraj orchestrated Mrs. Gandhi's selection as Prime Minister because he perceived her to be weak enough that he and the other regional party bosses could control her, and yet strong enough to beat Desai [her political opponent] in a party election because of the high regard for her father...a woman would be an ideal tool for the Syndicate.' Genovese, Michael A., ed. 'Women As National Leaders', Sage Publications, (1993). p.110, ISBN:9780803943384. This was a massive misjudgement by senior ministers, as her education and the observations she had made of her father made her a very strong and powerful leader. She made sure that the democratic process was easier for the everyday people.

"the enduring effect of her rule was to open the state to a deeper and more accessible democracy.". Professor Sunil Khilnani, BBC Podcast: https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b0741lv7

Within her first year, many of the males within congress didn't like the idea of a woman in power that could not be controlled. This was highlighted by the Deputy Prime Minster as the time calling her a 'Dumb Doll'.

There were many positive things she did as the first female Prime Minister. helped the troubled economy and extreme poverty. When she became Prime Minister 65% of the population were below the poverty line and when she was assassinated in 1984, the figure was down by 45%. Furthermore, her desperation not to be dependent on other countries for aid and especially food, led her to help the food production by giving seeds to poor areas. As a result, she increased food production by 250%. The economy growth from 1966-1969 was a massive 4.1% Gandhi's experience of education, led her to push for education for both boys and girls; giving more economic opportunities for future generations. This provided women with opportunities they didn't have before without an education. She increased the literacy rate by 30%. Also, during her leadership, she encouraged more and more women to vote. She also pushed for the equal pay for equal work for both men and women. Furthermore, before she was Prime Minister, Indira was an active member for women's rights in the Congress Party's Women's Department in 1956. All of these socialist actions gave her the title Indira- Amma (Amma, meaning 'mother'), by the Indians in the rural areas. She was a female role model to the women of India, proving that they can be independent of men and work just as well if not better than the men in parliament. Her work ethic and dedication to improve India, was clearly respected by many but especially the women and the out castes.

'There is no way out of the difficulties, except hard work, except trying to go faster, except trying to make our plans successful.' Indria Gandhi

However, not everyone favoured her in such a positive light. Many of her actions were very polarising. *Indira Gandhi in many ways issued the greatest threat to democracy in independent India's history," says Professor Khilnani, "weakening constitutional regularities established by her father.*' https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b0741lv7.

Indira was not the best role model for women within Parliament itself, she didn't encourage any women to join the government, making her seem just a blip in the male dominated system. Furthermore, she ruled with an 'Iron Fist', commanding respect by many of the people within government. In 1975 the High Court declared Indira's election was based upon malpractice, due to the use of government money for campaigning. Indira reacted in an aggressive way and declared a 'State of Emergency' due to the disorder and people wanting to take away her political position. Therefore, during the two years of the 'State of Emergency' (1975-1977), Gandhi brought the entire country under her rule, imposing curfews and detaining citizens who would go against her rule. There were many journalists who were detained for writing anything that would put Indira Gandhi in a 'bad light'.

Gandhi rejected the claim that she was a feminist, but believed in equal opportunity for both male and female, by writing to her to a close friend from America, Dorothy Norman in 1952, "I am in no sense a feminist, but I believe in women being able to do everything... Given the opportunity to develop, capable Indian women have come to the top at once." Norman, D. Indira Gandhi: Letters to an American Friend, 1950-1984, (1985) Harcourt, ISBN- 13- 978-0151443727.

Contemporary View on the Role of Women and feminism (with reference to Madhu Kishwar)

The definition of feminism is the advocacy of woman's rights on the grounds of equality of sexes.

Feminism within India has had 3 stages. The first being in the mid-19th Century, due to the European influence, women fought against the abhorrent acts of

Sati. This was highlighted by Dayananda Saraswati (1824-1883) and the Arya Samaj, which believed a widower could re-marry to stop the practice of Sati. Saraswati also believed that girls and boys should be educated and they should stop child marriage.

The second stage was from around 1915 when Mahatma Gandhi wanted women to join the fight for independence for all. Gandhi believed women would be perfect in the non-violent protests, due to their passive nature. There were many women who joined Gandhi in the non-violent protests. However, there were also revolutionary women who took up arms and fought against the British. For example, there were two Bengali women (Pritilata Waddedar and Kalpana Datta), who raided a police armoury in the 1930s along with other Hindu males. Furthermore, there was a woman called Kanaklata Barua who joined the freedom movement, and unlike Waddedar and Datta, she participated in acts of noncooperation with the British. She joined the Mrityu Bahni (freedom fighters) and carried the National Flag to a local police station, owned by the British. Kanakalta led this procession, and was told by the British police to stop or there would be consequences. Kanakalta, ignored the threats and marched forward, stating that it was her duty. She was shot, while holding the flag and passed the flag to someone else to hold before she died. This highlighted the unity of women and men during the fight of independence, most men supported the women in the common fight for freedom against the British.

The final stage is the contemporary movement in India we have seen today. There have been many laws introduced into India over the last 40 years, to provide more equal status for women. These contemporary feminist groups are fighting against the patriarchy that is still seen in India and the abuse that women see daily. The key things that women are fighting for are freedom in the workforce, fair treatment by husband, the right to have a voice politically and legally.

Madhu Kishwar (Born 1951-)

One of these contemporary feminists is Madhu Kishwar, an Indian academic writer and a professor in Delhi. She focused her study on religions and culture in India. She has written many books on freedom and independence of women, and has published many articles that fight for women's right. For example, the Amended Hindu Succession Act, 1956, which allows women to have equal inheritance rights. She felt that even though legally women should be able to own a property, men still failed to allow women to do so. There is still a clear patriarchal understanding of what women can and cannot do.

Madhu Kishwar states, "women's equal inheritance rights, daughters in countless Hindu families don't get any share in parental property. Instead, parents seek to "compensate" daughters by giving them dowry at the time of marriage, which has been declared illegal by the Dowry Prohibition Act."

(economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/60238796.cms?utm_source=content_ofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst_)

Madhu Kishwar went to the Supreme Court of India in 1996, to fight against the State of Bihar, due to them not abiding by the Hindu Succession Act (the Act where women should be allowed to own some of the inherited family property). The patriarchal nature of Bihar and most of India, ignored the fact that women should inherit property too, as well as men. In court, Kishwar contended the customary law operating in the Bihar State and other parts of the country excluded women from inheritance of land or property belonging to father, husband, mother and conferment of right to inheritance to the male heirs or lineal descendants being founded solely on sex is discriminatory.

Madhu Kishwar, clearly fights for laws that have attempted to bring equality for women in the Indian Constitution to be followed, where the men largely ignore the legal expectation in favour of the traditional expectations. For example, she disagreed with the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, where Hindus are not allowed to marry within the same village and clan (gotra), it is seen as immoral and an incestuous act, as people within the same clan are like a brother or a sister. Also, she feels that marrying within your varna puts pressure on women, as they are meant to be this perfect example of a wife, for a male within their caste to desire. She feels that all these laws are controlling for both men and women, but especially the women:

'Tribal customary laws are lethally weighted against women without anyone daring to touch them because the issue is seen as politically volatile.' Madhu Kishwar from the Economic Times (2017) (see

//economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/60238796.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst)

Madhu Kishwar is particularly vocal about the expectation of a dowry, making women be seen as an economic problem. Even though it has been made illegal in India, many Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs still follow this cultural tradition, putting pressure on women. Madhu Kishwar worked with the UN Division for the

Advancement of Women, in 2005. She created a detailed written document on 'Strategies for Combating the Culture of Dowry and Domestic Violence in India' (http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/vaw-gp-

2005/docs/experts/kishwar.dowry.pdf) because she believed so strongly that the law was largely ignored by men. She believed there was a correlation between parents who did not give dowry and domestic abuse. She believed that without dowry given to the groom's family, the family will see the new bride as having unequal status, therefore incurring abuse. She states, that the mentality of the Indian Patriarchal society is, 'If young women go empty-handed to their husband's home, how can they expect that they be treated as equal partners? The dowry is, therefore, an investment made by parents to secure a share for their daughter in their husband's family property.' (see

http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/vaw-gp-

2005/docs/experts/kishwar.dowry.pdf. Kishwar has fought long and hard against domestic violence for around 15 years, prior to the 2005 Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, she states that only around 6 men have been convicted for murdering their wives, amongst the thousands who have done so. We can also see from The Thomson Reuters Foundation, have investigated that female abuse and domestic violence has not stopped, even in 2018 (http://poll2018.trust.org/)

How these (feminist) ideas have impacted on the role of men

Feminism has gained both positive and negative reaction in India and the UK. Firstly, in the UK where feminism is constantly highlighted in laws, the media and society; Hindu male reactions vary. Most Hindu males have ignored the ideals of liberalism, equal roles of women and adhere to patriarchal values.

'Several Hindu communities in Britain tend to foster patriarchal values, and these impose considerable constraints on the behaviour patterns and social activities of their womenfolk.' Warrier

(Warrier, Maya, 'Faith Guides for Higher Education, A Guide to Hinduism', Alden Group Limited, (2006), ISBN:0954452488).

However, with the rise of second and third generation Hindus who immigrated to Britain, they are moving towards more liberal ideals. Some British Hindu men allow their wives to go out and work, and thus gain financial independence. British laws make it easier for women to live a more independent life, as health care, legal rights and education are all freely available. Moreover, many men accept women working due to the high cost of living; many households need two main earners. Though according to Warrier, there are some areas of conservativism in the UK that still try to influence the choices a women make (Warrier, Maya, 'Faith Guides for Higher Education, A Guide to Hinduism', Alden Group Limited, (2006), ISBN:0954452488).

In India there has be extreme polar opinions in response to feminism. Some men support the full rights of women, in relation to the UN Human Rights. Contrastingly, there has been a new movement called the 'Men's Rights' group who are fighting against any form of feminism, wanting the traditional roles to stay where they are.

Sabarimala Hill Temple Case Study

There was a Supreme Court ruling in 2017 that have rejected conservative Hindu views on women being banned from entering a mandir whilst at menstruating age (which is defined from 10-50 years old). This ruling was specifically focused on a temple in Kerala, called the Sabarimala Hill Temple, which is one of India's holiest temples. The religious reason behind the barring of women and girls was that the deity, Lord Ayyappa, was celibate and would be angered by their presence. The men and strong conservative Hindus believe that Lord Ayyappa must completely abstain from all luxuries and senses; he must not even hear stories of women and rich people, let alone be in contact with them. In Lord Ayyappa's eyes menstruating women are believed to be sexually attractive, as a result, he must abstain from them. As Lord Ayyappa is meant to be a Brahmacharya, which is the student stage, where they must take a vow celibacy, it would disrespectful to see women in his temple. Even though, there are clear religious reasons for women of menstruating age should not to enter the temple, the court ruled in favour of making gender discrimination unlawful. Chief Justice Dipak Misra stated, "the right to practice a religion is available to both men and women." https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/09/28/indias-top-court-revokes-banwomen-menstruating-age-entering/

As a result of the ruling, there were 49 petitions seeking a change in the law and many men from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) made it very difficult and dangerous for women to enter the mandir. The women who bravely dared to enter the Sahbrimala Hill Mandir were abused and beaten up. For example, Bindu Thankam Kalyani was attacked on route multiple times whilst approaching the shrine. She was threatened by the BJP and RSS, being asked to leave the area. All the women who attempted to visit the temple were tracked and beaten until they left. Bindu stated:

"The movements of these women were being tracked by Sangh (organized group) elements in various districts. We have intercepted audio messages where Sangh Parivar groups have told their people to dress up in black, carry the irumudikettu (offerings) and come posing as Ayyappas (Hindu god of growth) to Sabarimala. The RSS has given leadership to this protest. Their intention was to transform a religious place into a battleground."

https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/harassed-abused-forced-hiding-womans-ordeal-attempting-sabarimala-trek-90453.

Kanakadurga became famous by being the first women to enter the temple after the court ruling. However, she was later beaten up by her husband's relatives, who were pro-BJP and criticised her for entering the temple. Even though she was admitted to hospital having only minor injuries, this highlights how some men are fiercely fearful of change, especially when they feel that there is religious justification.

If men are to follow the new laws that provide equal rights, men should be happy for their daughters to not stay in the home and just prepare to become a housewife. Instead, they should allow their daughters to have an education, even get a career before they marry, or be happy if they their daughter chooses not to marry. Fathers should allow their daughters to choose who they marry, without force or coercion. Additionally, fathers should give their daughters, and husbands should give their wives some of their inheritance of land, due the Hindu Succession Act, 1956. Men now have to treat women with complete respect within the home, and not allow domestic violence to happen, or 'wife beating' as it is termed in India, due to the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.

Furthermore, the men within the community cannot stalk, abuse verbally or physically women in public according to the Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinances, 2013. Men have to accept that women will be in the work place and have equal rights as themselves. Also they must not harass any women within a place of work, according to the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013 and the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976. Some men are happy to follow these changes, mostly within the cosmopolitan, cities.

However, there is the 'Real Indian Men's Rights Movement', which was started in 2000 in Bombay. This group was set up to fight against, what they believed growing accusations of rape within marriage, forcing the women to pay dowry and unnatural sex. Some men are worried that they will not have a voice, because no-one will believe them above a woman, due to the growing number of laws protecting women. Many men within this group want to be given respect by women, not women overpowering men.

The Save Indian Family Foundation (SIFF), founded by Anil Kumar is a thriving organisation that wants to defend men who believe that they have had their rights taken away by false accusations. It has the slogan 'men can be vulnerable too.' SIFF is the umbrella group for men's rights in India today, where there are around 200,000 members. This organisation is specifically fighting against 498a the Indian Penal code which deals with cruelty to a wife and the Dowry Prohibition Act 1961. SIFF has claimed that many women have used act 498A as a way to get the husband to give them more money and to control them. SIFF has claimed that there has been a high rate of suicide with married men since these feminist laws have come into place. However, many feminists believe that SIFF use the rare false accusations as a way to abolish all of the recent equality acts.

'Whoever, being the husband or the relative of the husband of a woman, subjects such woman to cruelty shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years and shall also be liable to fine.' Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code

SIFF has even pushed for political candidates who will be a voice for both male and female rights, on an equal playing field. Anil Kumar, the founder of SIFF wanted to be a voice for the men who were being falsely accused, or men being domestically or harassed by women. However, many people within this group still want the traditional roles to stay the same, where women are at home, looking after their husband and children. The main people within the group reject the statistic of the women who are raped, domestically abused or even kidnapped as they think many of these women's claims are false in the first place. This group is angered by the 40 laws which have come into place over the last 60 years, giving women more rights, than men; or so they claim. Even though this group may seem to be small it is growing in momentum, especially since some political parties have claimed that they might make martial rape illegal. Since these politicians have made this claim, to gain women's votes according to SIFF, the Men's Rights group have been protesting for the right to rape their wife, as in their mind it is not rape or they are worried that they could be falsely accused of rape by their wife.

A female, Supreme Court Lawyer, Karuna Nandi who has been fighting for women's rights in India for years, reacted to this group and claims, 'there is a pervasive sense of victimhood which is very interesting to me and I think that sense of victimhood comes because they misunderstand feminism as being women against men rather than people against patriarchy.' (see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fKSqmwDzFxA). Nandhi believes just as some laws are misused, it doesn't mean these equality laws shouldn't be there, because laws are there to protect people and keep them safe.

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Further Resources

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WJEC Unit 3E: Hinduism Scheme of Work

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