

Depiction of woman's social status in Ancient Cultures and Civilizations in Urdu Feminist Critique

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Abstract: Like other languages, Feminist Critique written in Urdu also depicted many debates about the place and rights associated with women in different cultures and civilizations. Among the ancient civilizations of the world, Greek civilization, Roman civilization, Iraqi civilization, Sumerian civilization, Egyptian civilization, Iranian civilization, China, and even in Arabia, the humiliation of women has been maintained. Women were not considered socially. Their condition was pitiable to such an extent that in Arabia they were buried alive due to fear and honour of famine and in India, they were cremated along with the dead body of their husbands.

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A woman's relationship with society is an integral part. Women have been created by Allah Ta'ala with subtle emotions such as love, sadness, and fantasy. The development of the human race is not possible without the cooperation of men and women. Global women have such an important role in society which critics, Scholars and educators of all eras have not only mentioned their views about them but also the greatness of women has also been acknowledged.

If you study the cultural history of the world, you will know that over time, as the small units of families emerged as a society and the early signs of culture and civilization became visible, The man began to dominate the woman by assuming power and domineering attitude. This exploitation further led towards biased social behaviours towards women on gender bases. Fehmeeda Kabir writes about this regard:

At the time of the beginning of the human race, woman was a free and empowered person in society. Male supremacy was not established in the society. The main reason for this was that women were equal partners with men in labour. Her housework was as important as men's work. The society was based on common labour and common property. One of the reasons for the superiority and importance of women in society was that the civilization of that era had a matrilineal culture and the line of inheritance went through

the mother instead of the father. However as human society progressed, the autonomy and importance of women decreased. Finally, a point came when the complete power of the man over the woman was established. This goal is the beginning of civilization. In the same period, the patriarchal family was founded on the line of descent and inheritance instead of the mother. (1)

Since ancient times, the Neo-Greeks have been considered advanced in terms of their poetry, music, sciences and arts, especially in terms of culture and civilization. But no dowry of a woman was recognized anywhere among them, Nor was a woman allowed to interfere in any matter, a woman was the property of her husband. And a woman's only duty was to obey her husband. The humiliation of women in this society was at the extreme.

The husband would hand over his wife to his friends as a share. courtesan and prostitute class had a special influence on the environment of women being so humiliated. Every person belonging to the lower and upper classes used to come to his room. Dr Toheed Khan writes about prostitutes in Greek society:

In Greece, the prostitution was already common and ancient. But the rise of women's humiliation started visibly at this time When Solon (Solon) officially introduced brothels in Athos in 594 BC. Solon could have given official authority for the pleasure of men, But a woman who had sexual intercourse with her beloved was a great sinner in his eyes. Around 1,000 prostitutes were associated with the Aphrodite (Aphidik) temple in 400 BC which were used throughout Greece for pleasure. (2)

In Greek poetry, the concept of woman as a cause of destruction and a burden in economic terms is prevalent. These tendencies are seen in their poetry. According to Maulana Maududi:

A woman was a low-level creature. In every aspect of the society, their status had fallen. And the place of honour was reserved for men. (3)

In the ancient history of Greece, Plato's position is important in world knowledge and literature, culture and politics. In his book "The Republic" " he has mentioned the various problems of the state, knowledge, literature and other things and has laid down laws for them. He has also discussed at large the status of men and women. In his opinion, all the abilities that a man has, are also given to a woman by nature. In this regard, Shamim Nukhat writes:

The Greek city where women had the most freedom was Sparta. The famous lawgiver of Sparta, Lai Curgis, has given considerable importance to women in his code of laws. Compared to this, the amount of restrictions imposed on women in Anthis was not in any other province of Greece. Compared to all other provinces, the social condition of women in Sparta was better. Usually, the girls used to live here naked. She could participate in physical exercises and sports with the boys. She learned to play songs with great enthusiasm. But here as well as in the provinces, the doors of philosophy, logic and other sciences were closed to women. (4)

After the Greeks, Romans rose to prominence and established for centuries. Roman civilization was not the worst place for women. Like the Greeks, women were owned by men. The man was the ruler and in all matters, he had supremacy everywhere. The position of woman was secondary and she bore many restrictions in every sphere of life. And then, along with the development of civilization and culture, the

concept of women also changed in Rome. A woman was given a place in inheritance. Women became economically independent In society, they were indulged physically. During this period, a woman ran naked in a game called Flora. In Jana-domi-Trichur, the subjects of the examination were explained frankly. And this literature was very popular in every special and general.

Iraq is home to the world's oldest civilization discovered in ancient times, Iraq was known as "Adam's canals". It is the first civilization in the world. It made its home in the Tigris and Euphrates valleys. In history, it is known as the Sumerian or Babylonian civilization. The concept of Sin in the Sumerian civilization was not associated with relationships with women. Here there was a romantic concept of women. With time, as the male society became stronger, a strict attitude was taken towards women. A woman could marry with her father's permission only in return for payment of a lot of money without her consent. Dr. Mushtaq Ahmad Wani writes about the women of the society:

The Sumerians' moral standards towards women were so low that they would force their daughters to commit adultery in times of financial trouble so that they could earn money. On a specific day of the year, the marriageable girls would be collected at a place where many men were also present, then a broker would describe the qualities and beauty of these girls, and the bidding and buying and selling process would begin, but all these girls were sold on the condition that the buyers would marry them. (5)

Polygamy was common in Sumerian society. If a woman's husband did not return for a long period in case of trade or war, the woman had the right to have relations with another man in his absence. Apart from this, there was also a section of holy women in the society. Those women also perform marriages, do business and conduct religious ceremonies in temples. Apart from the pagans, the Christian religion also adopted it with restrictions and made it a part of their civilization. In the Sumerian civilization, women had no status. He was treated with extreme persecution and contempt. His condition was very desperate and pathetic.

After the Sumerian civilization, the Egyptian civilization reached its peak. In Egyptian society, the position of women was high and she also had a central position in the society. A woman was not only independent in her own house, but all the property went to the heirs on her behalf. There the lines of inheritance passed to the eldest daughter instead of to the son. On the occasion of marriage, the husband used to transfer his property to his wife. In Egyptian society, however, women had a great deal of freedom and were treated with respect. But some evils were also created in this society which no society likes. Chiefs usually married their sisters so that they could share in the inheritance they received from their mother. They could not bear that their property should go into the possession of another. Some pharaohs used to marry their daughters. They would justify it by saying that by doing so, their children would be clean and their blood would remain free from all suspicions. While the main reason was financial interest. The practice of marrying one's sister became common among the people. Before marriage, the girl used to take the initiative in expressing love. The status of the Egyptian woman was high because property and inheritance were in the possession of the woman. Therefore, royal women and to some extent, common women were particularly free in their sexual behaviour. Wealth and prosperity gave more privileges to the royal family and nobles. The kings had huge harems in which there were many concubines and similarly these nobles and the kings had all kinds of freedom. Shamim Nukhat writes:

In the last days of the pharaohs of Egypt, when the era of luxury and comfort came, the number of marriages increased greatly and the rights of women that they enjoyed socially began to be undermined. After some time, women became concerned about protecting their rights, so they set different conditions for marriage. It may not be wrong to say that the marriage certificate was first invented in ancient Egypt. Earlier in any country it was not customary to write down the conditions and sign them at the time of marriage. (6)

The Iranian civilization began in 1500 BC. In Iranian culture, fathers also disliked the birth of daughters. This civilization also exploited women a lot. The woman was completely under the influence of the man and was oppressed by him. The life and death of a woman was in the hands of a man. In the 5th century AD, historical evidence shows that the king there married his daughter and later killed her. Similarly, women's specific days were considered contemptible and auspicious. Mushtaq Ahmed Wani writes about this:

During the special days of women in Persian civilization, such women used to go away from their homes and live in small tents that were set up on the outskirts of cities or towns. It was not considered permissible for anyone to associate with them. These tents were identified by the place where the women lived on certain days. Even their servants who carried their food and drink were enjoined to go there with their heads covered and their noses and ears covered with thick cloths. They took this precaution because they believed that if they touched them or their tents or anything of theirs or the air, they would become unclean. (7)

Even in ancient China, men were given priority over women. A woman was considered only as a means of pleasure. The condition of women in China was so bad that men were drunk and lying at home and women were stumbling outside for a living. The same concern for earning had created many types of evils in society. The male class had become addicted to drugs. This was one side of the exploitation, on the other side some areas of China had the opposite standards like Lotus Feet to exploit women. This tradition of having very small feet as a standard of beauty was adopted to restrict their movement outside their houses and to make them dependent on their males. Rao Muhammad Umar comments on such exploitative behaviours in such way:

“From ancient times to modern times, the situation of women has been generally degraded and exploited. Even in modern times and modern civilization, their work is only to advance the generation. The story of their rise and equal rights in different periods has been limited to very short intervals. In the ancient Egyptian civilization thousands of years ago, they had the right of inheritance, but even there, men used new tricks to destroy their chances. Through the intermarriage of siblings, men found a way to prevent their inheritance from leaving the family. Apart from this, from the 10th to the 20th century AD, the ritual of small feet or lotus feet is also seen in different regions of China, in which women's feet are tied tightly in small mould-like shoes. would have been given, by which the structure of their feet would have started to change. There was no specific age for the beginning of this process, but generally, it was started from the early age of women. In this very painful process covering a long period, their toes would be twisted and the structure of the feet would change. In this society, these small feet were considered a symbol of beauty. Men would have specifically required this trait along with other traits for marriage. A

foot of three inches (3 inches) or seven point six centimetres (7.6cm) would have been considered an ideal size. Due to such small feet, they would have faced difficulty in walking. That is why they were confined to their houses. They were forced to live and they had to depend on their families and their husbands.”(8)

Similarly, in ancient Arabia, before the spread of Islam, the social status of women was very low and she was not considered as anything. On the birth of a daughter, wives were treated with contempt and the daughters were buried alive. The entire Arab society was tribal, so the patriarchal lifestyle prevailed. The women who were related to swordsmanship, horse riding poetry and literature got some prominent status. Such women were respected even within the family. They were consulted even in the wars of the clans and in the life inside the tents they held the status of ruler. The Arabs maintained their economy with camels, horses, goats and sheep, and women used to help them. Referring to Fatehpuri, Shamim Nukhat Niaz writes:

When the Bedouins of the Arabian desert find it necessary to change their place of residence to find fodder for animals or a source of water, their only task is to carry their camels empty-handed. Take it and go. Then it was the woman's job to dismantle the tents, collect all the goods and load them on the camels. The women used to do this work with such speed that the men's caravan did not reach far before they joined them with all the tools. (9)

A woman's status in the family increased when she gave birth to a son. On the birth of daughters, husbands not only looked down on their wives, but they also did not value the daughters and killed them alive. Because they were not convinced to bow down to a person by giving their daughter to him. Raven Levy has presented the reasons for "living oppression" as follows:

"It is not far-fetched, however, that a sacrificial ideology was at work behind female infanticide at the very beginning and later provided a rational justification for it. One reason is also stated that poor parents used to bury their girls alive as soon as they were born due to poverty because they were afraid that they would not be able to feed them while rich parents used to kill their girls because they were afraid that their girl would not spoil their honour by marrying a stranger. One of the justifications for fearing the birth of girls was that there was also a custom of marriage by arrest. Therefore, it is possible that the girls are captured in the war and the enemy keeps them as their wives or daughters. The proverb is quoted as saying; "The best husband for a girl is the grave and it is an honor to marry her alive." (10)

In short, According to feminist critique written in Urdu language, women had no such status as they deserved In ancient cultures and civilizations. In any country and region of the world, women were despised. Islam gave women a high position, gave them pure relationships and made them respected among people. Similarly, the changing situation of the socio-political and economic system in the nineteenth century brought about a slight change in the status of women. Many intellectuals and various socio-religious movements have made their efforts to bring women out of poverty and exploitative standards and give them a better position in society and create a sense of freedom in women themselves. Due to their hard work, significant changes took place in the women's scenario and better and positive

results were also produced. The Feminist movement and critique written under this movement played a vital role in depicting women's miseries and their socio-political issues at the global level. This is the reason why today women are standing on their own feet and living a dignified life as independent people. However, this aspect is also welcoming and hopeful that deep consciousness and awareness regarding the social and political rights of women can be seen in the feminist criticism written in the Urdu language.

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