

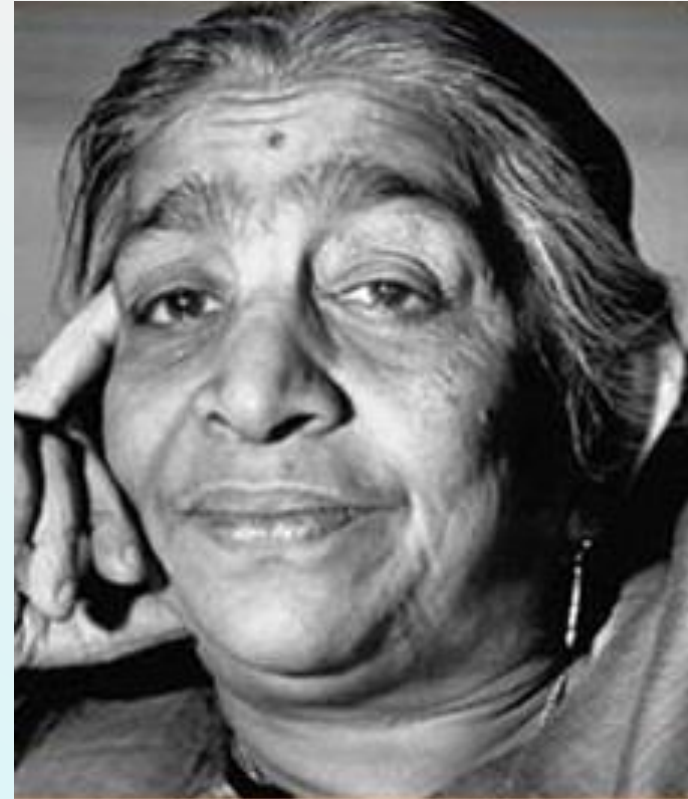
Changing Role of Women from Tradition to Modernity

“The fastest way to change society is to mobilize women of the world”

-Charles Malik, former President of UNGA

Smt Sarojini Naidu

- Born on 13 Feb 1879
- Celebrated as National Women's Day



What Constitutes Tradition ?

Tradition constitutes beliefs, values, aesthetic and ways of life, which are handed down to us by ancestors.

In the past week, Supreme Court formed a 9-judge bench to review the Sabarimala verdict.



- The westernization of Indian culture gave birth to modernity.
- Now tradition and modernity, both have become two sides of same coin.

Women in Stone Age and IVC Period

- Economic Role: At par with men during hunting gathering phase, nomadic life.
- Arts: Contribution in Rock Art and Cave Paintings.
- Religion: Women worshipped as Mother Goddess during IVC.

Women in Vedic Period

- Were given equal status as men in all spheres, therefore developed an independent thinking.
- Political Participation: Took part in Sabhas and Samitis, contributed their viewpoints freely, this aspect of their modernity we have still not been able to reclaim. (14.4% representation in indian parliament)
- Hugely contributed to the development of Vedic Philosophy:
 1. Conversations of Gargi with Vajnavalkeya
 2. Role of Maitreyi

The turning point

The advancement of agriculture, iron age and surplus production during post Vedic times:

- Led to specialization of work where women's role were neglected.
- Surplus led to reproduction, therefore women were confined to houses as a sub-servient to the male counter-part.
- Absence of economic freedom led to decline in political status.
- Climax reached during Gupta Period when instances of Sati were found.

Resurgence

- Under the various monarchies, women were given a respectable position as mothers and wives but role in public affairs was limited.

- Some exceptional achievements include:

Political:

1. Delhi Sultanate was ruled by Raziya Sultan (1236-1240)
2. Rudrama Devi ruled the Kakatiya Kingdom (1263-1289)

Religious:

1. Contributed to bhakti (Mira Bai and Andal) and Sufi movements (Hazrat Biwi) leading to rise of new literature, arts and music.

Political Roles

- India's first War of Independence: Rani Laxmi Bai and Begum Hazrat Mahal took the lead.
- Indian National Congress:
 - Annie Besant and Sarojini Naidu presided over the INC Sessions.
 - Played an active role in the mass movement phase of the Indian freedom struggle including the Swadeshi, non cooperation and quit India movements.

Political Role of women in India at present:

- Women as ministers holding important portfolios such as Finance, Defence and External Affairs.
- Running state machinery on their own as Chief Ministers including Mamta Banerjee, Mayawati, Jayalalita.
- Important partners in coalition governments influencing policy making in their favour.
- Acting as effective opposition.

Social Role

- Womens Education: Savitri Bai Phule founded the first women's school in pune.
- Child Marriage: Pandita Ramabai played an important role in opposing child marriage and advancing women's education
- Lawyers and Human Rights Activists:

Indira Jaising led the efforts to the enactment of Domestic Violence Act, 2005.

Vrinda Grover: lead role leading to enactment of Pocso Act

Karuna Nundy: Fighting the Nirbhaya Case

On the World Stage

- Geeta Gopinath: Chief Economist at IMF
- Vijaya Laxmi Pandit: President of UNGA, 1953
- PV Sindhu and Saina Nehwal: Olympic medalists in badminton
- Sakshi Malik and Geeta Phogat: Female Wrestlers
- Mary Kom: Olympics medalist in boxing.
- Banking Professionals: Arundhati Bhattacharya, Chanda Kochar.
- Indra Nooyi: Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of PepsiCo
- Space: Kalpana Chawla, Sunita Williams, Ritu Srivastava (Mangalyan).

Hindrances

- Political Stage: Despite 73rd and 74th CAA, women representation is low and used as proxies by their husbands.
- Sexual Harassment at Workplace: Despite enactment of Act and visakha guideline, these act as deterrent to their employment
- Workforce Participation: low at 26% despite higher education attainment, social hindrances to working women
- Women in STEM: Very low, especially lack of women role models
- Lack of Land-Titles in the name of women.

How To improve women participation

- Need of an hour
- Correct the incorrect attribute
- Some good practices that should be adopted from past
- Correct implementation of Govt policies

Conclusion

- Though women have earned laurels in many fields as described above, certain hindrances needed to be taken care of to achieve their full potential.