

Women's Movements that Changed the Picture of Women's Existence in the Modern World

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Abstract

The pursuit of gender equality has been propelled forward by women's movements on a global and national scale. Advocates generally have the greatest grasp of the challenges that women and girls experience in their own countries and areas, as well as crucial knowledge of how to advance the rights of women and girls. They cultivate their leadership abilities by advocating for change and holding accountable those in power, which some of them then use to enter and transform political spheres. In this paper, we discuss the women's movement, which contributed to transforming women's positions in society, both economically and mentally. The study discusses the evolution of women's rights and how such changes have affected the placement of women in South Asian societies. This study looks at the status of women in East and South Asia. One of the things that is being looked at is the rapid drop in the number of South Asian women who are working.

Keywords: Women's Movements, South Asia, Legacy, East Asia

Introduction

The Women's Movements changed the picture of women's existence in the modern world. Women have always been subjected to household work and taking care of members of the family. Women themselves have been considered as primary caregivers (Cerrato and Cifre, 2018). Somehow, it is believed that women are responsible for this suppressed situation. In her article "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman," which was widely read, the English writer and thinker Mary Wollstonecraft said that women are not necessarily less intelligent than men, but they are less educated. Her article also says that women should have the same access to education

as men because women's participation in society is important for the health of any country (Vogelstein, 2017).

It took women two centuries to be free both economically and socially. Today women's experience—politics, work, the family, and sexuality. But before the 19th - century women were considered mere child-bearers (stanford.edu, 2019). It was the First World War that changed the role of women as overnight women were expected to work at factories as men went to war. But after men returned women were forced to go back to their previous life. However women refused to as they realized that working in various establishments would help them to earn more bread for their families. Along with that life, expectancies increased affectedly, and the evolution of the service sector opened up thousands of jobs that were not dependent on physical strength. Despite these socio-economic revolutions, cultural attitudes (especially regarding women's work) and legal instances still reinforced sexual inequalities (Tikkanen, 2020).

Breathing the Inheritance: The Women's Rights Movement (1848–1998)

Women are always oppressed by society for numerous reasons (Mehmudda, 2020). But there was a certain section of women who stood against discrimination, and one of them was Margaret Mead, who was an American anthropologist. After a lifetime of observing very diverse cultures around the world, she said in her speech "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has (Ryder, 2001). The first movement for women's rights was started by Elizabeth Cady Stanton as she talked about the distress she was facing in ostensible society regarding women's work (nationalwomenshistoryalliance.com). In this regard, the first women's convention was held in the year 1848 by a group of 68 women and 32 men, where they signed the Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions regarding women's rights, which were later known as the Bloomers in the year 1849 (constitutioncenter.org, 2022). As the movement went on in 1850, the Medical College of Pennsylvania, Quaker physicians gave women a chance to learn medicine (Tuinman, 2014). In the years of the battle for equal rights in 1866, the first Equal Rights Association was founded to advocate women's suffrage (archives.gov, 2021). In 1870, for the first time in the history of jurisprudence, women served on juries in the Wyoming Territory(Viner, 2020). In 1872, it was the efforts of Belva Lockwood, who was a lawyer, who, after years of fighting, was able to pass a law to give women federal employees equal pay for equal work (Paranick, 2020). Women were pleased with these quick victories, but during WWI in 1917, women moved into many jobs in heavy

industry, including mining, chemical manufacturing, automobile and railway plants (Historynet). They also run street cars, conduct trains, direct traffic, and deliver mail. But after World War, I ended in 1918, men started returning to their homes and workplaces, and by 1945, women industrial workers began to lose their jobs in large numbers to returning servicemen, although surveys show 80% want to continue working (Sweet, 2021). But even after women's rights activists were able to provide equal rights to women, in 1957, the number of women and men voting was almost the same for the first time (Buchanan, 2015). With the mission to educate children, in 1978, for the very first time in history, more women entered college than men (Yellen, 2020). In the history of women's rights, in 1981, several women's organisations requested, then President Carter announced the first "National Women's History Week," which is now celebrated as International Women's Day on March 8 (altogether.swe.org, 2021). In 1996, US women participated in the Olympics and won 19 gold medals (10 silver, 9 bronze), which resulted in attracting a larger population of women to sports (brookings.edu).

Living the Legacy: South East Asian Women

Before the 19th century, both East and South Asian women were equally prosecuted, but throughout the 20th century, the status of women in East Asia changed while the situation of women in South Asia became more depressing (Sardone, 2021). The reason behind this was economic development, as women in East Asia joined the workforce to meet the demand for labour in the market. which made them economically and emotionally independent (World Bank, 2022). Due to patriarchal constraints and a slower pace of structural transformation, women did not get a chance to liberate themselves (Evans, 2021). Economic development is not the only factor that builds the gap; cultural and religious norms also play an important role in widening the bridge. It's not like women are not educated in South Asia, but due to family restrictions they hardly work, which can be seen as women's labour workforce participation, as only 23.6% of women are in the workforce compared to mine, which is 80% (World Bank, 2020). But growth is not the whole story. Cultural and religious norms have persisted despite growth. Even though women in South Asia have fewer children and are better educated than ever before, they seldom work outside the family or collectively challenge their subordination (Asian Development Bank, 2013). South Asia's gender equality indicators are still low compared to regions with similar levels of development or even to many poorer countries.

Southeast Asia is crowded and poor. It has extensive inequality, violence, political instability, and a high disease burden. When this region has thought about women's health, family planning and childbirth have been given more attention than mental health (Mittal and Singh, 2020).

Most of Southeast Asia is mostly patriarchal. People believe "girls are born to be nourished" and "boys are born to earn and maintain the family." People's discriminatory behaviour reflects this idea. Even poor families celebrate the birth of a baby boy with zeal, taking out loans if necessary. A baby girl isn't wanted. Some rural areas of India deny girls the right to life. In India, women are forced to terminate female foetuses during pregnancy. In a rural district of India, a woman's mother-in-law mashed toxic coriander into oil and forced it down her newborn's throat. Having a son after sacrificing a daughter. In Pakistan, although such extreme practices are not done, senior family members, especially mothers-in-law, urge couples to keep taking chances for a baby boy, which often results in five or six girls.

In this region, historical traditions and conventions promote women's violence. honour killings, exchange marriages, marriages to the Quran, Karo-Kari, bride price, dowry, female circumcision, questioning women's capacity to testify, home confinement, and restricting their opportunity to pick a partner (JICA, 2020). In Sindh, Pakistan, and Punjab, India, girls are denied marriage privileges to keep family property. A terrible custom that requires girls to swear on the Quran to leave their property to brothers adds to the anguish of jailed women.

Southeast Asian cultural standards reinforce women's social and economic subordination. In this location, young unmarried girls and women suffer from male violence (Sinha et al., 2017). Violence includes wife-beating, murder, kidnapping, rape, assault, and acid-throwing. Domestic quarrels over dowry payments are a common source of violence (UN, 2014). Many Southeast Asian women and children are trafficked and forced into prostitution, unwanted marriages, and bonded labour. Illiteracy, political factors, feudal and tribal culture, misinterpretation of religious precepts, and a girl's poor place in society foster and prolong the sexual exploitation of women. Employers, brothel owners, and even police officers rape and torture trafficked people (Niaz, 2003). Overt coercion, physical abuse, emotional blackmail, economic hardship, social isolation, and death threats perpetuate sexual servitude. Violence is justified by customs and traditions (ILO, 2022). There is a belief among Buddhists that if they renaissance as women in their current life, they have done something wrong, which led to less merit accrued in past lives (Paudel and Dong,

2017). Southeast Asian Islamic countries have always been liberal and above women's education and participation in the economy, but over the past few years, due to revolutionaries, they have been indulging themselves in correcting the dress and behaviour of women (notably wearing Hijab and Burkha) (history.house.gov). All Southeast Asian countries, excluding Laos and Vietnam, have signed the Convention on the abolition of all forms of inequality against women. They have been working for gender equality in their own countries, but it is hard to change the idea that sons are better than daughters, especially in India and Vietnam, which have strong Confucian roots (asiasociety.org).

Living the Inheritance: South East Asian Women at Work

The workplace is not an unfamiliar space for women in the Southeast Asian region (Bagchi and Poddar, 2019). The Philippines ranks seventeenth in the world for gender equity and first in Asia where women are allowed to participate in politics, to have multiple seats on company boards (Global Gender Gap Report, 2021), and so on. whereas Cambodia, on the other hand, ranks low (www.statista.com). Increased female labour force participation is vital, but so is ensuring that women have access to decent jobs where they can contribute fully to inclusive and sustainable growth and use their educational and skill investments (ILO, 2016). The correlation between the number of women in the labour force and GDP growth follows a U-shaped curve in South Asian countries (Asian Development Bank, 2016). FLFP is highest in pre-industrial or agriculturally dominant societies, declines as household income rises, allowing some women to forego paid employment, and then rises again as societies prosper (Basargekar and Singh, 2022). The phenomenon can be seen through a comparison of different countries and different times. Even when FLFP data is restricted to women who have never had children and are now entering the labour force as their incomes rise, several studies show that the link remains (ILO, 2022). When deciding how much to work, women give greater weight to the needs of the household and the ability to provide for their dependents than men (Verma et al., 2020). As disposable income rises and welfare systems expand (Verma, 2020), women are better able to pursue careers in housework and child care. Even though salaries are low, more people may be willing to work if their other sources of income are meagre. When there is sufficient additional income in the home, women feel less pressured to work outside the home (Achor et al., 2018). Because of the income effect, middle-income countries may have lower FLFP than high-income countries (Prydz and Wadhwa, 2019). Eventually, a mature economy's substitution impact will come to dominate additional shifts in family labour supply. Women are more likely to

participate in the labour force when their salaries rise since it becomes less attractive to stay at home and pursue leisure activities or produce goods for the household. Improvements in education and the rate of births per woman stimulate employment (Asian Development Bank, 2015). Supporters of women's economic empowerment from the policy and business sectors, as well as civil society organisations and academics from around the world, convened in Kathmandu (www.adb.org, 2015). The policy dialogue was coordinated and backed by the Evidence for Policy Design and the International Growth Centre. While its FLFPR of 80% is higher than any other South Asian country, on the UNDP's Gender Development Index, it ranks below Sri Lanka, India, and Bangladesh and just above Pakistan (Ramakrishnan, 2016). Since many men have left the country, women are left to work in the agricultural sector in low-productivity, low-paying occupations. The de facto household heads have their backs on the door and the computer (Johnson and Gulati, 2017).

Conclusion

The paper led us to discover that women have to put up a significant amount of resistance in order to obtain their legal and emotional rights. Since we live in a patriarchal culture, it is generally accepted that men are the primary breadwinners. However, as time went on, women progressively gained the right to work outside the home and participate in family decision-making. However, there is still a significant amount of work to be done because women in the south and east have taken various approaches to independence. When compared with South Asia, women in East Asia have a greater number of rights. The acceleration of economic growth in East Asia led to a rise in the proportion of women entering the labour force in order to satisfy the growing demand for workers in the region. Because of this, they were able to achieve economic as well as emotional independence. Whereas women did not have the opportunity to liberate themselves due to patriarchal limitations and a slower pace of structural change (Evans, 2021). Not only does economic growth contribute to the widening of the divide, but cultural and religious norms have also played a significant part in this process. It's not like women in South Asia don't have access to education, but many of them are restricted from working by their families, which brings into question their involvement in the labour force.

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