

## **Hindu Women: Religion and Human's Rights**

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Hinduism is said to be the oldest living religion in the world about 80% people in India believe in it (Britannica). The teaching of Hindu and The Laws of Manu treat women as wicked and restricts women's legal independence. Despite the recent activities happening all over the world to improve women's rights, the situation in India has not improved because of these deep-rooted traditions. In India, the number of cases, for murder, rape, and domestic violence, are occurring more frequently (2014, 2015, p.1-2). Thus, it is essential to provide education, to tell people the importance of protecting human equality, and give more financial support to women in order to promote independence from men. Women's rights in India are often violated by the teaching of Hindu, even though most people believe in it, it is essential to protect religious freedoms, but it is important to explain why some teachings are a problem, and provide education, and give women financial support.

There is a tradition called "dowry" among Hindus all over the world. A dowry is the money, goods or estate that a woman brings to her husband or his family in marriage (Britannica). It is important for woman to bring this, since she might be murdered by her husband or in-laws when her family cannot raise the requested dowry gift. This custom, however, is prohibited by the law (The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961), still, the number of reported dowry death cases is over 7,000 in 2019(Statista). To avoid larger dowries, some parents make their

daughter marry at young ages, even though marriage under the age of 18 is also prohibited (The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929). Thus, the numbers of girls are kept away from education which not only makes harder to earn money but also become independent. Even worse, infanticide occurs instead of paying dowry. Sex ratio at birth decreased from 905 in 2001 to 899 girls born per 1000 boys (UNICEF). Normally, sex ratio at birth is 940-960 girls per 1000 boys (Our World in Data). Compared with “natural” sex ratio at birth and sex ratio in India, it is obvious that the sex ratio at birth in India is unnatural and more girls are killed. Woman must have a right to make a decision by herself about her life including education and marriage. Therefore, it is important to tell people why the dowry system was abolished, the necessity of following law, and how can women become independent by being educated.

Tradition called “sati” is also violating woman’s rights among Hindus. Sutte, Sanskrit sati (“good woman” or “chaste wife”), is the custom of a wife immolating herself either on the funeral pyre of her dead husband or in some other fashion soon after his death (Britannica). It is also the prohibited custom by the law (The Commission Sati (Prevention), Act, 1987), the last known sati is said to be occurred in 2005, according to the report by Khabar Lahariya (2018). According to The Fact Factor, the case of Roop Kanwar led this prevention pass (Hemant More, 2019). Roop Kanwar married Maal Singh, 24, when she was 18. She is from Jaipur, the capital city of Rajasthan. She immolated herself on her dead husband’s pyre on the September 4<sup>th</sup> 1987, approximately eight months

after marriage. As the villagers watched, she sat on the wood piled up to burn the corpse, and there were said to have been four to five thousand spectators. Roop Kanwar's parent heard their daughter's death in the newspaper next morning. The first article in an English newspaper, "A young woman commits sati", it is said the police reported that an 18-year-old woman has committed sati and that 4 relatives have been arrested for aiding suicide (Indian Express, 6<sup>th</sup> September 1987). In this case, the village of Deorala is well off, it has five primary schools and the level of education is higher than the other regions and Roop Kanwar's case was the fourth case of sati committed in this village, and its last known sati took place seventy years ago (Tanaka, 1998). The supporters claimed that she voluntarily committed sati as a final wifely duty, however, she was said to have been in a drugged state, and her in-laws were found to be earning enormous sums from worshipers at a shrine (Bose, 00, p.2).

According to the data that 39% of men, women think that it is sometimes or always justifiable for a man to beat his wife (UN women, 2012), it is possible to say many people in India have predominate men over women mindset. Even if this idea came from the culture of Hindu, it is essential to secure woman's rights. To secure woman's rights, education will play vital role to change people's thoughts toward women. However, according to recent number of gross enrolment ratio in secondary education in India was 74.3%, while ratio in Japan was 99.0%, and the number of gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education was 25.5% in India, while Japan got 63.4% (knoema.com,

2014). In addition, adult literacy rate in India in 2018 was 74.4%, and adult illiterate population in 2015 was 64.7% (knoema.com). Thus, these reports indicate that India needs more quality education to change their value toward gender roles.

As a possible suggestion to improve education in India, introducing some of the education system of United Arab Emirates (hence forth UAE) will be suitable. UAE is a country, located in eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula with about 9,279,000 citizen. It's 62.0% of citizen believe in Muslim, 21.0% with Hindu, 9.0% of Christian and others (Britannica). While compulsory education in India is free for all children up to age 14 is only among the directive principles of the Indian constitution, UAE provides compulsory education free and mandatory at the primarily and the secondary levels for all children from 6-18 years old (Britannica). Muslim in UAE mostly believe in Sunni. It is often said that the Islam is also the religion which restrict women's independence, but actually, it is originally not. These days, the idea of Islam differ from how people interpret the Qur'an, so it is sometimes regarded as religion which dominates women, but when the idea of Islam first emerged at 7 A.C., it gave women a right to stay alive equally as men and it was said to be innovative idea at that time. The UAE has focused on educating both men and women. In 1975, the rate of adult literacy was 54 percent among men and 31 percent among women (UAE Gender Balance Council). Today, literacy rates for both genders are close to 95 percent. Surprisingly, UAE ranks first out of 132 countries in

“Women Treated with Respect” (Social Progress Index, 2015). The gross enrolment ratio in UAE from pre-primary education to tertiary education is increasing year by year with little gender gap (UNESCO Institute of Statistics). Therefore, it is possible to improve education level while believing in religion and improve women’s rights. It is important to encourage people to believe in a Hindu section that supports the idea that there is not any superiority between men and women.

Some Hindu teachings like The Laws of Manu, include the dowry system, and sati that violate women’s rights or worse directly kill women. However, many women are believe in Hinduism, so abolishing Hinduism is not appropriate, no one should be forced to believe in another religion. Instead, it is necessary to introduce education to everyone regardless of castes, genders, and ages as was done in the UAE. Through education, people can learn that there is no superiority between genders while still believing in Hinduism, making them realize why some traditions were abolished or should be abolished and why they must follow the law of India will improve society. More support on education not only improves India’s literacy rate and increases the enrolment rate, but it also can make Hindus’ reconsider their out dated traditions and practices toward women, and make Hinduism a more inclusive religion.

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