



"CHALLENGES OF WOMEN PANCHAYAT MEMBERS IN PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM IN INDIA"

ISSN: 2249-894X

IMPACT FACTOR : 5.7631(UIF)

UGC APPROVED JOURNAL NO. 48514

VOLUME - 8 | ISSUE - 8 | MAY - 2019



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ABSTRACT:

Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru once said, "You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women."

"The status of women in any civilisation shows the stage of evolution at which, the civilisation has arrived the term 'Status' includes not only personal and proprietary rights

but also duties, liabilities and disabilities."

KEYWORDS: *civilisation, stage of evolution, liabilities and disabilities.*

INTRODUCTION :

"A comprehensive understanding of the true nature of women's status in society can be obtained when we study the role they play in the productive process and the control they exercise over the means of production."¹

In the case of Indian women, it has been subject to many great changes over the past few millenniums. From a largely unknown status in ancient times through the low points of the medieval period, to the promotion of equal rights by many reformers, the history of women in India has been eventful. In India, gender as a category needs to be seen within the larger social, regional

and location context. India is a land of rich diversity and it is also a country of sharp disparities.

"Within the sub-continent there have been infinite variations on the status of women, diverging in accordance with the cultural background, family structure, class, caste, property rights and custom. Ancient erotic manuals, quasi-medical texts and such like, all speak of the capabilities and idiosyncrasies of women, some of which are said to be individual features and some occupational or regional. A curious intermeshing of low deification defines women. The role, status and position of women have been far from static or uniform, ranging from an occasional display of authority to a position of subservience."²

"The role of women has been full of contradictions so far as Indian

customs and traditions are concerned. On one hand, we hear of the 'Vedic age' when everywhere that they are ridiculed and exploited as the weaker sex, totally dependent on the men. Ever since women stepped out of the 'Vedic utopia', they entered a world where men established absolute proprietary rights over them."³

"In no society today do women enjoy the same opportunities as men. This unequal status leaves considerable disparities between how much women contribute to human development and how little they share in its benefits. It is true that, after centuries of neglect, the past two decades have seen unprecedented human development efforts contributing greatly to rapid progress in building women's capabilities and in closing gender gaps in those capabilities. Despite this