



## SELF-REALIZATION OF AN AUTONOMOUS IDENTITY: A CONFIDENT *SURAKSHIT* WOMAN

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### ABSTRACT

SIMONE DIU BEAUVOIR, the famous author of "THE SECOND SEX" asks, "What is a woman?"

She argues that man is considered the default, while woman is considered the "OTHER", but this other is of so much importance for the spontaneous growth of society and we have to see it functioning normally and fully absolutely without unnecessary hazards. Hence the present paper deals with absolute swaraj in context of women in the following terms:

1. Social and economic freedom
2. Physical autonomy
3. Autonomy of decisions
4. Swaraj in claims of her rights
5. Her valuation by her own eyes
6. Ensuring ahimsa for women in all ways

The gist is that women need to have a healthy approach so that no woman has to take the issue of suraksha for granted. Efforts will have to be made for this.

For this study, a regular interaction with almost 190 pupil-teachers of my B. Ed faculty was done which became the basis of my paper. Besides this 50 working women as well as 105 housewives were surveyed to take a virtual idea of their status of autonomy.

### KEYWORDS :

Swaraj means self-rule, self-discipline or self-administration that leads us towards autonomy. This is not restricted to our political arena only as is widely misunderstood but also leads us to social, economic, ideological individual development of the people. Professor R.K. Chaubey of University of Allahabad was very apprehensive about the virtual realization OF ABSOLUTE SWARAJ as unless we have not achieved swaraj, there cannot be any *purna* swaraj or absolute swaraj.

### THREE IMPORTANT UNIVERSAL ASPECTS OF SWARAJ RELATED TO WOMEN:

1. Groups of women have to realize that in comparison of our historical past, our status has changed a lot, and in a positive way. Absolute swaraj will only come by a lack of feeling of inferiority and by depending on ourselves, and not on our parents, guardians, brothers or husbands.
2. Too much of dependency on others or too much protection provided to us has made us lethargic and habitual of always asking for help. This has led us to slavery rather than swaraj. Women should enjoy the fruits of self dependency.
3. Mental Swaraj is another form of absolute Swaraj. We have to stop perpetuating an image, which shows girls or women as 'bechari' i.e. a poor girl or a pitiable woman. We have to stop shedding tears which is many times a sign of weakness that leads towards exploitation. Demonstration of weaknesses should be avoided.
4. Be a decision maker especially for yourself. Gaining guidance from others is acceptable, but it should be ensured that the final call is yours. It's your prerogative.
5. Demolishing sexism begins at home, and only after women themselves believe that they are no less than any man. The immense sexism in our culture exists because children are, since birth, taught certain misogynist stereotypes that make them into adults who are sexist without even knowing so. Sexism can gradually be curtailed by education children the right way.
6. Women need to be fearless. Less of a people-pleaser, more of an audacious participant in her own life. There is a need for women to step up and answer to and educate people who have an orthodox, oppressive mentality about women.
7. Women should have the right to their bodies. No one can control and tell them about their sexuality, what to do or wear or when. They have the right to choose when, and if, to abort a child. Nobody else should be allowed to continuously make decisions on behalf of a woman, thereby belittling them.

### AN INWARD JOURNEY OF AUTONOMY:

All the features said above are the steps of progress of our inner self and help us begin our inner journey leading us towards an outward journey. Battles of AHILYAS, SEETAS, NIRBHAYAS, all have been the landmarks of this journey. Recent rulings of SUPREME COURT over issue of TRIPPLE TALAAQ are another feather in the cap of women. "WHEREVER THE RAYS OF LIGHT TOUCH THE UNIVERSE, WOMEN ARE THE PART OF THAT."

For the sake of future and progress of society, contribution of women is must. No country can make progress in terms of absolute Swaraj unless and until the women of that country are practicing self rule at the level of thought process, decision making, rationalizing intelligently, at home, at office, inside her as well as outside her. She has to be physically fit as well as mentally strong. She has to raise a generation which is not biased against women.

"Suppression of women is a denial of AHIMSA," and of course I'm not alone in saying so. But there are undoubtedly hindrances in her way of swaraj.

In the ancient times, we have found matriarchal dynasties which have been good times of women. Medieval period saw lows in the status of women. But in the modern times we are seeing both the extremes hence it is very ironic that even 70 years after independence of India, the invocation of *ajadi* evokes bitter conflicts. Are the women empowered to participate fully in economic life across all the sectors to build stronger economies? Are they improving the quality of their life? Even the CEO of PepsiCo INDIRA NUI felt the pressures of domestic responsibilities while she narrated one of her bitter experiences of womanhood.

When SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR says, what is a woman? When she says that man is considered the default while woman is considered the "OTHER" – She further says that humanity is male and man defines woman and not she herself but as relative to him. "She is not happy at such conclusions. So she rejects the views of FREUD and ALFRED ADLER. BEAUVOIR further says that two factors explain the evolution of women's conditions: participation in production and freedom from reproductive slavery. It is here that women should decide about themselves.

She is of the opinion that motherhood left women riveted to her body like an animal & made it possible for men to dominate her.

This, it has to be changed. With her virtue of motherhood, she is to enjoy it and not make it a handicap.

PYTHAGORAS wrote "There is a good principle that created order, light and man and a bad principle that created chaos, darkness & women. Man succeeded in the world by transcendence but immanence is the lot of women".

These biased ideas are the ones that chained womanhood.

Although we can see that there were different cases too. In Sparta, in ancient times, there were no restraint on women's freedom; women were treated with more rights in Rome.

### **EMPTY FREEDOM AND REAL FREEDOM**

In the 19th century industrial revolution gave women an escape from their homes. They participated in trade unions and had their say in political movements. But insignificance of the female element in a body of work is symptomatic. That pattern of life was refusing life to them. So it needs a change in thinking. Female element is rejuvenating, so we as women are supposed to be present everywhere to solve issues in a better way.

### **COMPARISONS ARE POINTLESS:**

Useless comparisons that who is superior and who is inferior is pointless because in spite of natural differentiations both have certain plus and minus features.

Many times it feels that Indian women in comparison of western women live in grave conditions. They don't have equal rights nor possess good status as well as opportunities compared to their male counterparts. Traditional Indian patriarchal society and its approach is to blame in this where they often give respect to women as they are the mothers, sisters and daughters. It has, as a matter of fact, hampered both the independence as well as the safety of women. They have become overprotective towards them making them dependent to an extent.

### **LIMITED TO DOMESTIC FIELD:**

Another factor as hindrance is the handicap of woman in the mentality which makes woman inferior to man by merely limiting their importance to the maintenance of the household, the upbringing of children, pleasing their husbands and serving other members of the family as well as society.

In modern times also, working woman are still subjected to immense pressure to shoulder the dual responsibility of a housewife and a working woman simultaneously with little or no help from their husbands who think themselves as the PARAMESHWARAS i.e. God of woman. Times are changing fast but not the people of Indian society.

### **COMMODITY VS WOMEN:**

Sexual crimes are committed only when the women is considered an object of lust. Rapes are nothing but the demonstration of power by men who consider themselves superior to women and hence feel its right to harass, hurt and abuse women who try to step out of the objectified, inferior and oppressed mould these men have made for her. Moreover these males are from all strata of society and from every part of India, of all the age groups. Also the weak provisions or loopholes of the existing legal system of India make them walk and roam freely.

### **EDUCATIONAL HAMPERING:**

Another reason of women losing their hold in the society is their illiteracy. Education in the present scenario is a liberating as well as democratizing force, cutting across the barriers of cast and class, smoothing out inequalities imposed by birth and the other circumstances.

A woman, when she becomes educated develops an insight, an intellect, an understanding of the people and life, in general.

Autonomy of a woman gives her an opportunity to accomplish things and gain a personality of her own as an individual. She emerges as a whole person, a decision maker, a counselor and eventually, a success.

### **SCIENTIFIC APTITUDE:**

Women with a dream of complete swaraj should become a person of reason or rationality. When one moves in the direction of reason, one automatically becomes a rational person. Reason gives her grace and decision making capacity. Hence, an aura is developed.

**INTELLECTUALISM:** Although it is an important task in life to feed hungry people yet woman when tends to think beyond that, she starts thinking a lot – thinking in terms of beyond self.

### **CONCLUSION:**

AMARTYA SEN writes in his book, "ARGUMENTATIVE INDIANS"

"Gender disparity is, in fact, not one affliction but a multitude of problems." But this gender disparity is a mental condition. Women should not let themselves get trapped in this condition. They are equal to, and often better than men in numerous things. Now the main focus should be on breaking the stereotypes and set matriarchal notion a base of society. Girl child and woman both should claim for their rights. They should organize events and debates on key issues and frame healthy opinions about women based on facts and figures.

Since ancient times women have been treated as mere objects, or properties to be transferred from father to husband. Women were supposed to be virgins, which is why the concept of 'virginity' is so hyped, so that a man could ensure that the child is really his and nobody else's. Thus, even though a lot of oppressive and misogynist ways of thinking made some sense in the distant past, they absolutely do not, anymore, and should be curbed as soon as possible.

However, the transition takes time and we're living in the best possible times for women yet, in the recent history. Consequently, it is important to remember that we're all in this together. All women need to come together and support one another instead of competing and pulling each other down. Only when we ourselves comprehend the extent of sexism, the dynamics of feminism and women empowerment is when we will be able to think of changing our lives, and with it, the world.

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