

Historical Development of Women.

by Janet Jagan



The history of man has been divided into three main stages—savagery, barbarism and civilization. These stages are mainly concerned with the progress in the production of food. Savagery, briefly, was the stage in which man developed from simple food-gathering (fruits, nuts, roots) to fishing, and finally, by the use of the bow and arrow, to hunting. In this stage man also discovered the use of fire, the stone axe, and dug-out canoes. Barbarism dates from the introduction of pottery. In this period, man began to domesticate animals and began simple farming. The upper stage of barbarism begins with the smelting of iron, which meant the beginning of agriculture with the use of the iron plough drawn by cattle. The third stage, civilization, begins with the invention of alphabetic writing, and embraces a period of industry proper, and of art.

Anthropologists indicate that women in the stages of savagery and barbarism enjoyed a more free and honorable position in society than that of civilized women. The reason for this is basically economic. One of the earliest forms of the family system was the communal type, where all worked together to

produce the necessary things of life—food, clothing and shelter. It is believed that at this time there existed a system of group marriage where men and women lived together, instead of the present system of monogamy, where one man and one woman are mated. Descent was reckoned, not from the father (patriarchy), but from the mother (matriarchy) and the female line was therefore regarded as the only valid one. Primitive woman, because she was a vital part of the economy held a respected social position. Frederick Engels in "The Origin of the Family" writes:— "Among peoples where the women have to work far harder than we think suitable, there is often much more real respect for women than among our Europeans. The lady of civilization, surrounded by false homage and estranged from all real work, has an infinitely lower social position than the hard-working woman of barbarism."

As society changed from one stage to another, the family system changed from group marriage to paired marriage. Agriculture and cattle raising were developing to a higher form. According to the division of labour in the family at that time, the man's job was to obtain the food and make the implements of labour. Therefore, in the event of husband and wife separating, he took his instruments of labour with him, and she retained the household goods. Thus, he was also the owner of the new source of subsistence, the cattle, and later of the new instruments of labour, the slaves. According to mother-right, with the decent and inheritance reckoned on the female side, a man's property did not go to his children, but to the blood relatives on the mother's side. Thus, with the increase of man's material wealth, and as the implements of labour, etc. became more important than the household goods, his position in the family became more important than the woman's. For the man to become all-powerful, he must overthrow this system of inheritance and matriarchy. Present day systems of inheritance and the use of the husband's surname by the woman and child-

ren, indicate that this was accomplished. Frederick Engels wrote on this subject—"The overthrow of mother-right was the world historical defeat of the female sex. The man took command in the home also; the woman was degraded and reduced to servitude, she became the slave of his lust and a mere instrument for the production of children. This degraded position of the women especially conspicuous among the Greeks has gradually been palliated and glossed over, and sometimes clothed in a milder form; in no sense has it been abolished."

With the beginnings of written history we can trace the position of women from early times through the Middle Ages and into the modern period. When one traces the development of women along with the economic progress of each era, it is not difficult to notice some correlation. When women were an important part of the economic structure, as in the primitive days, their position was one of excellent status. As the means of production spread outside the confines of the home, the woman was forced to remain in the home to perform the household duties and care for the children while the man had to step outside to obtain consumer goods either through his labour or by trade. With the growth of agriculture and small manufacturing and the necessary function of trade, types of governments had to be formed to regulate trade and to coin money. The man assumed these duties and further forced the woman into the home.

The Middle Ages was probably one of the most difficult periods in the history of woman. It was really the dark ages for womanhood. Her activities were restricted, she was allowed few liberties, and was almost the slave of her husband. Her education was almost nonexistent and it followed naturally that she had no voice in the government. Woman was regarded as merely another article adding to man's material wealth. Marriage was more a commercial transaction, and women were sold and traded as slaves. The use of the veil for covering her face in public was another symbol of her low position. We need not be led away by the tales of chivalry we sometimes read. The knights developed many formal courtesies toward women in that era which became known as the Age of Chivalry,—but one fact must be noted, the knights were

only chivalrous to their numerous lady-loves, and never to the wife they kept secluded in home.

From the feudal economy of the Middle Ages to the beginning of the Industrial Age women had little place in the economy of the world, which consisted mainly of the crafts, trades and feudal forms of agriculture. With the Industrial Revolution, the factories began using woman labour; but without proper legislation, women were paid extremely low wages, still making their emancipation a matter for the future. With modern large-scale production, in some countries, particularly the Soviet Union, women are given equal wages with men.

Before World War II, in most countries, it was difficult for women to enter into the economic sphere. Her duties in the home coupled with raising children made it almost impossible for her to become a wage-earner. There was also the added fact of large scale unemployment in various countries which contributed to her forcibly becoming unemployed. In modern Russia the solution to this problem has been solved by the state. Women are encouraged to study and work in all fields of life. For example, there are more female than male doctors in Russia. In industry they hold good positions and receive equal pay with men. Women send their children to nurseries and kindergartens that are managed by people specially trained for that work. During her period of pregnancy, a woman is given adequate protection in her work by the state. She has no fear of becoming unemployed because she receives sufficient time-off with pay.

The supremacy of man in the family is a consequence of his strong economic position and with the abolition of the latter, equality should reign. The problem, of course, is to find economic equality among the men and women of the future.

Education did not begin to play an important part in the advancement of women until recent times. When primary and secondary education are given free to all children, women will have a far better chance to advance. Therefore you find in the U.S.A., where lower education is free and university education not so expensive, a great many women show their

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LOVE

By

GOVINDA R. BANERJEE

Love ! Oh ! 'tis love,
An unfathomable mystery,
At this juncture regardless unforeseen,
Advances becomingly,
Strangely indeed !

'Ware of those who dwell in it ;
Shall find a pleasure.
Untimely, and a gall that's bitter
And timely, a preserving sweet.
On some, sometimes lived
They who stumbled in its path ;
And bye-and-bye, on its way capturing
those deserving.

Aye ! 'tis lovely and illimitably sweet
When Heaven's bid lovers meet,
Administering profoundly
That which is intended, and so
Solves a Universal problem
By two eager and earnest hearts
entwined.

O Bright-Eyed Maiden.

BY "CHINA"

O bright-eyed Maiden ! When did you arise
And bind the sable tresses of the night,
And with a veil of saffron, wondrous bright,
Enrobe the boundless archway of the skies?

When did you steal into my chamber close
And on my brow your kisses warm impress?
Smiles on your rose lips dance, and in your
eyes
Sweet innocence in all its richness glows.

See, from your face what dazzling brightness
beams
As lights my soul with pleasure infinite !
My poet trips in the soul-kissing light
Which scatters gems in never-ending
streams.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN

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abilities in the professions, in engineering, research, social welfare and in all phases of life. Only in this century, with the woman suffrage movement, have women obtained the right to vote and to participate in politics. Dr. Hewlett Johnson, the Dean of Canterbury wrote in "Soviet Power" : "The good citizen rather than the good house-keeper is the type of woman deemed most attractive in modern Russia." The same should be said of any other country in the world.

THE FUTURE OF OVERSEAS INDIANS

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economic position is sound, but when that goes they will begin to give way gradually and then finally in the end a minority will remain but they will have gone through the test. Such as I see it, is the fate of Indians overseas and it is inevitable. It is the course of evolution and it is the fate of other races in the world.

Due to the fact that the time calls for brevity, I am unable to consider the biological aspects of the matter, and I hope my readers will some day read that aspect of the question elsewhere.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE YOGIS

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"If you want to do anything, which will prove effective in some way or other, your social standing or your personal integrity, or in the many walks of life, in the affirmative or the negative, then by all means :— (1) Imagine a ball of fire lingering in the horizon ; this must be done automatically to avoid regrets. (2) Before committing the act imagine the aftermath clearly written on the ball of fire. (3) If it is beneficial, go ahead, if not let your reason create a check.