

The intention of this volume is to review women's position from past-present perspectives of India. Women are being hackled in various ways in the present day also. They are not getting their due honour, and are being deprived of their minimum right. The headlines of the daily news papers bear the evidence of this crude reality. In order to bring the women in the same platform where the men are standing, the government of India is adopting many measures and formulating different types of plans and programmes. But practically, it has been seen that all these are almost abortive. If we look at Vedic period, we can see that women were assigned a high place in the society of Veda. Accordingly, in this volume an attempt has been made to evaluate the status of women in present times in the light of our tradition and culture which is our root. Vivekananda told that women have to be taken as one of the wings of the bird which can fly if its two wings are in operative. Hence, we cannot ignore women. If we ignore them, there is no chance for the welfare of the world.



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- *Humanity Over and Above Divinity : A Contemporary Indian Approach (Essays in Honour of Professor Raghunath Ghosh).*
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The Present Status of Women in India: An Evaluation

Purnima Das

The present paper deals with the present status of women in India and my own reflections on the injustice done to women having the age of menstruation by way of denying their entry in the Sabarimala temple. Discrimination and torture on women in the form of sexual harassment, demanding dowry etc. are the common pictures in our society from the very ancient period. For example—‘*Satīdāha-prathā*’ (burning alive women with their husband’s pyre), ‘*Bālyavivāhaprathā*’ (early marriage of a girl child) etc. have been found in the history of Indian society. Apart from this darker side we are acquainted with some brighter images of Indian women including highly intellectuals like Lopāmudrā, Gārgī, Maitreyī and Khanā from our ancient Indian history. The stand taken by the priests or other members of the temple authority to women for not allowing women having the age of menstruation in the temple is not logically supportable. First, to a deity there should not be any discrimination between male and female, because all are God’s children. Secondly, the denial of entry to the temple leads to the gross violation of democratic right. Thirdly, if woman can destroy the celibacy of God, He is not to be taken as God. It is in fact the superimposition of human behaviour to Divinity. Lastly, it is not true to consider a woman having menstruation is inauspicious. Rather it is natural phenomenon opening the door of motherhood and fertility, which God cannot dislike.

The term ‘woman’ is quite similar with ‘*Prakṛti*’ of Sāṃkhya Philosophy. In English *Prakṛti* means nature. To every sensible