I Am A Middle Class Indian Women: 
A Case Study In Ajmer, Rajasthan

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Abstract

A women is a women, she is not a man’s shadow of herself, even not an attachment, or an auxiliary neither an unwanted and neglected other. Rather she is overwhelmed with Power, Patience and Care. From a new born till she turns old; she plays several key roles loaded with responsibilities and sacrifices. She is a woman of this century and even centuries of the past and the coming future. A mother, sister, wife and daughter are the sacred relations attached with a woman. A woman who is a survivor by birth the one who have the power to create even her and the destiny of her family. A middle class woman of India is not less than a valiant fighter who fights with conditions, she dedicates her life to her family and children, meanwhile she also stand high in every commercial sector be it government, health, fashion or education. That is to say, for middle class Indian women, there is simultaneously empowerment and surveillance in the defining elements of modern urban life. Gone are the days when young middle class women were confined to the four walls of the house busy in nurturing the younger one’s and the members of the family. Through this article we are not highlighting any richest or most successful woman leader, model or actress but introducing you a common Indian Women of India who is categorized under the middle-classed-Indian-women tag. We interviewed 5 middle class women from Ajmer Rajasthan, who hails from different professional, social and religious backgrounds but their common goal is to fight with every odds they face and sacrifice with their needs to keep their family and society contented. The objective of our article is to highlight the emerging new middle class Rajasthani women who are very educated, aware, and responsible and are a fighter by birth. Through this manuscript we want to gather a stream of thoughts encompassing their problems, day to day struggles, means of happiness and their tale of progression and success.

Keywords

Introduction

Due to commercialization, urbanization and increasing employment opportunities, significant changes are taking place in Indian society. One visible change is the satisfactory emergence of a population of women who are employed in the various private and public sectors of globalized Indian economy. Such changes are influencing the image in which women perceive their identity.

Decade back smaller numbers of women were working outside the home or were literate. In early years the idea of women’s employment was entirely against the society’s biggest demand of the prerequisite of marriage. General misconception existed that if women were educated they were forced to grieved separation.

The 90’s societal setup state that women should obey men and their families leaving a little scope for a women to nurture. The entire gamut of a women life revolves around their families. From “Birth to Tomb”, women are popularly portrait as a “Gharalu Mahila”.

Traditionally women are considered the one who are Born to fulfill the role as a daughter to her parent, a wife to her husband and daughter-in law to his parents and a mother to her son and daughter. (Seymour 1999). Seymour in her study found that the identity and personal growth of a women is linked with her family duties. Women observed themselves as the tangible machinery that involved in groups of multidimensional roles and responsibilities; their individuality and individual growth is undistinguishably associated to the jobs they perform for the wellbeing of their families.

In the Western Circle the legal status of the women has been greatly enhanced but the Indian women is still chained by the ancient customs and traditions which guide her to follow a behavior that give due emphasize to submit her dreams, wishes, devotion, obedience and dedication to the well being of her husband and his family.(3).

This is the Indian persona which believes that the world of women should confine to the four walls of her house, she should not have a career, an independent life, her own world to breath. What she should wear, the food she eats’ and even the places she visits, utterly should be decided by her family and husband.

“Ladki ko kya padhana…Ladki ko toh baad main jakar chula chauka he toh sambhalana hain”.

“Padhai toh theek hain…Par ghar kay kaam ka shaadi kay baad yeh he kaam aata hain”

Ladki toh paraya dhan hain…kal apnay ghar chali jayegi……
Ladki ansh hain aur ladka vansh…..

These punctuations give you a universal idea about the popular culture being followed in India everywhere. Girls are considered as “Paraya Dhan”, one day she has to go, why to teach her and even If there is a need then give her an average education. If you really want to educate her, trained her in all house hold chores so that it will be helpful for her at her in laws place to endure.

But slowly and steadily the scenario is changing today the 21st century, educated Indian women are very well aware about her surroundings, they are dynamic, well educated, independent and decisive in nature. Under the collective influence of Urbanisation, Westernisation, relocation and increasing preference of employment in the middle and upper middle class, the family structure and the family function are influencing the lives of women (Banerjee 1999). For such families, education is a priority given to boys and girls equally (Saraswathi 1999). Precisely the parents approval to support daughters wishes and help her in establishing a professional prestige and occupation have increased (Chaterjee 1988; Gupta and Sharma 2003; Saraswathi 1999). In totality these factor’s helps in generating a positive self-image among women comprised of self-respect, self-confidence and self-fulfillment (Gupta and Sharma 2003; Jha and Pujari 1998; Parikh and Garg 1989).

Previously the older view of restraining the women’s education to either primary schooling or graduation which was basically related with the reason of acquiring a good husband (Chanana 1996) was substituted by the notion that acquiring higher education is indispensable for self-rule and socio-psychological freedom (Parikh and Garg 1989; Jha and Pujari 1998).

The result is now a new life style is born which ranks the women as an autonomous entity, to fulfill their dreams and aspirations they are taking into account their own wishes. The women perceive her as individual machinery that follows a self-governing path, a life chosen by her without the interference of her husband and family. She is modern but yet traditional too. Quite aware about her duties and responsibilities, she knows the art of balancing her family responsibilities with her career requirement. The daily juggle she make’s not only infuses in her the confidence but also inspires others to follow her path.

The objective of our article is to highlight the emerging new middle class Rajasthani women who are very educated, aware, and responsible and are a fighter by birth. Through this manuscript we want to gather a stream of thoughts encompassing their problems, day to day struggles, means of happiness and their tale of progression and success.

We interviewed 5 middle class women from Ajmer Rajasthan, who hails from different professional, social and religious backgrounds but their common goal is to fight with every odds they face and sacrifice with their needs to keep their family and society contented. A printed questionnaire was provided to them to fill, the questionnaire addresses there education, awareness, family support, and their life struggle. Through this study the respondents get a chance to self-examine themselves, their independent opinions, availability of options and what is perceived as crucial in their lives.

Case Study 1.
Mrs. Shalu Kanwar, Station House Officer (Beawar), Ajmer
Married to a man who lost everything in gambling and drinking, all his property, the beautiful house they had saved all their lives for being a mother of two she realized that it was time she took control of the situation and start to trace their lives back the way they were.

She was well educated but wasn’t allowed to work after marriage because of her in-laws being old schooled. But with the downfall of their livelihood she decided to do anything in her power to provide a proper life to her children.
She applied for police services and finally after many futile tries she found herself with a job in Rajasthan Police.

Currently both her kids have passed out from school and are in Government College Ajmer. She owns a small house and is living a happy life.

Case Study 2.
Megha Sharma, Hair, Make up & Skin specialist at “Style nd Speak”, Ajmer
Divorced, mother of a 5 year old girl, when came back to her home town, had nothing besides a roof on her head. For one year she moved alone without her daughter to Jaipur to get trained in Hair and Make up from the Jaipur leading Make up professional expert. From day one she was very clear about starting her own Salon; the major issue was the finances, at that time of crisis her mother a widow came for her rescue and landed her some money to rent and furnished a shop for the purpose. Starting a new venture was not at all a bed of roses, competition; jealousy and a bad mouth of word about her divorce were coming against her progression.
She admits.. in the beginning there were times when not a single client entered her salon and it was running in losses but by the grace of God and the support of her family, one day her hard work paid, people started admiring her skills and with a positive mouth of word her salon is now the cities top most Parlour. In her journey of progression her family acted as an anchor and helped her to realize her actual potentials she expressed that without her family her tale of success was impossible.

Case Study 3.
Ruksana Malik, Suit Designer and Tailor, Madar Gate, Ajmer.
Ruksana mother of two girls runs a tailor shop with her husband in Ajmer, her job is Archetypal but due to long years of experience in tailoring, she is an expert. She came with her husband from her village near Bikaner in 1995 and started doing some low profile tailoring job from her home. Due to the sudden illness of her husband she started assisting him and started tailoring on the full time basis. When asked how she managed the work and the home…she added it is because the cooperation she received from her husband that gave her the strength to continue.

She further added I was married at the age of 14 and just to avoid similar situation for my two daughters we migrated from our village to Ajmer. Both I and my husband wanted our daughters to study, to get proper education, today one of my daughters is in class 10th and the other is pursuing M.Sc in Chemistry. We have left the girls liberated to decide about their own marriages.

Case Study 4.
Suddha Nagora, Private School Teacher, Ajmer
She lost her husband in a bike accident after 6 years of her marriage. At that stage she had 3 sons left behind by her husband to raise and educate. She was broken, shattered but not weak.

Times were such that they didn't have bread to eat. The children used to crave and starve for food. They had no one from her paternal family to support them. She realized that all of us come here alone and thrive alone and finally die. Meanwhile, we have to serve our purpose on this earth.

It was then she decided that her life was meant for this. This was her purpose, to struggle, to fight back and to survive the battle against life.

From then she took over all the responsibilities of raising her 3 sons and giving them a quality education. Her husband had been litigating as an advocate in Ajmer district court. She started working in a Private School in Ajmer and finally landed up at a respectable position. From that day she never looked back. With a strong head she made a place for her at her workplace.She educated her sons in one of the good schools of Ajmer and sent them for attaining professional degree of B.Tech in Delhi. The eldest son is now placed in a good corporate company and the other two are about to finish their degrees.

She says once she gets to see all her son settling down, she will finally accomplish the mission of her life by playing the role of both father and mother in her children's life.

Case Study 5.
Tannu Shekhawat, Proprietor, Brajballa Hobby Classes, Ajmer.
Married in a typical orthodox family, Tannu faced many hardships in getting her talents recognized by her family, especially her in-laws. Where the daughter-in-law was expected to spend her entire day in the kitchen or taking care of the children, Tannu, different from the herd decided it was time for her to embrace the skills and talents she had acquired over the years.

It wasn’t easy, getting the consent of her in-laws but with the support of her husband and her will power she was able to overcome that barrier, her in-laws finally saw the hidden qualities she was gifted with.

Her skills in art, craft and her grace in dancing so well known that parents and even they themselves were lured into learning from her. She became so popular that parents started requesting her to take summer classes for their child.

Today, not only is she a housewife, working towards a happy house but a mother, nurturing her child and at last a beloved teacher whose skills are valued and people, young and old enjoy learning new things from her.

We come from a country where Rani of Jhansi fought against the British for her empire with a child on her back. Where women activist like Irom Chanu Sharmila has been sitting on hunger strike for years. Where women like - Chhavi Rajawat, the first woman sarpanch of Jhansi; Reena Kaushal Dharmsaktu, first woman to reach the southern-most tip of the world, the South Pole, Chanda Kochhar, ICICI Bank CEO, Sapper Shanti Tigga, became the first Indian...
woman, who is a mother of two, to become a jawan in the Indian Army, have emerged through all the obstacles and have made themselves at par with men.

The above women are some common middle class women to name a few who have risen from their weakest state to become one of the most powerful women of the country. And here I see these emerging Rajasthani middle class women wrapped up into inexpensive saris, plain faces revealing the impeccable honesty in their eyes, the bindi on their clad head portraying unflinching courage and story of their struggles. They are no less and are on the same tracks as the women mentioned above.

It gives us immense gratification and pride to perceive that, the day is not far away when the Rajasthani women will be highly empowered, will stand tall, stout and brave setting examples for their female counterparts out there. Indeed, they are brave, with brave broader hearts beating inside making them realize the sweat and tears it has taken for them to reach at this stage. Struggling and breaking against all the obstacles in their daily life, to secure a position for themselves is a heroic and chauvinistic deed in itself.

For the majority of the Rajasthani women who are still tackling against their orthodox society, and the atrocities inflicted upon them, should break open and derive inspiration from these women around in their same own society, who have been heroes in disguise. All they need is realization, awareness and courage to fight back against all odds. The importance of becoming conscious of their worth and inbuilt skills will give them recognition in the society once they crack their confinement and start polishing their natural skills. Legal education also plays an important role in order to enlighten the provisions made for women and standing up for such rights. If there is no awareness, there is no fearlessness.

When a few of these women can rise up challenging all odds, then all of us also can. The only evil which prevents them is weakness. Weakness when converted into strength becomes success. Women’s strong qualities have become despised because of their weakness. Men are only physically strong but women are stronger than them in all other aspects and for this reason they are called “Durga” or NAARI SHAKTI.

As mentioned in our Vedas a woman is the daughter of Fire. She is made up of sunlight, crashing waves and fireworks. The obvious remedy is to create a feminine character with all their emotional and mental strength. The need of the hour for these Rajasthani women is to raise their voice, stand up. Let them beat you to death. Even if it takes all the pain and tears, your victory will be worth it if it means standing for the right cause and for “Yourself”, your heart is a bushfire and the next time if those men try to control you, burst out and ravage them in flames.

References:


