



STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIA

We must realize that, first and foremost, how many of us women can become financially independent, and if at all we do so, the point to be then considered is that after achieving financial independence, do we women start feeling equal to men, or do start getting treatment like men? If not then women are putting in a fruitless effort.

When we talk of status, we understand that it implies the social and legal position of an individual or and individual's standing vis-à-vis others. I do wonder why, in a country where women were at one time (and even today) worshipped as incarnations of goddesses, there should be any problem of status for women. However, this is the irony of the fate of Indian women that their status which should have been an identity to reckon with, has become a topic of debate. This situation has emerged in India during the period of Muslim domination wherein was set the purdah system with all its concomitants.

This system so deteriorated, as time passed that the status of women became an issue to be discussed on several platforms. The last few decades have seen a mushroom growth of organizations struggling to get for women their dues, and their organizations have also made great headway in this direction, but, how far has this helped in the improvement of the status of women in the home, in society, in office or in the country as a whole, is still a debatable issue. The last few decades have no doubt seen women coming out in the open and joining the mainstream of development of the country. Ever, it is to be seen whether this has helped them in achieving a status for themselves, in the minds of people at large. Can we consider women now equal to men in status, at least those who are working with men? No, I really

don't think this has been achieved. Women are today, found in every field of man's working and several have even become economically independent but has even that enhanced our status? On the contrary, with this onward march on the one hand, we can see a mushroom growth of crimes against women, never heard of ever before. At one time a young girl only was an item of lust for men, but with this advent of so called women's lib, infant girls of four to five years and even less, or ladies of sixty and above are becoming objects of man's lust. It is high time that we analyse the cause of all this, for it our achievements on the one side result in such chaos on the other, we will have to weigh the advantages accrued to women against the holocaust set for them. The last fifty years the independence of India, we have seen women coming out to be educated, to do jobs, to make careers, yet the perception that women are second to men has not been erased. Now thus, it is time to study and analyse the anomaly that, though she work shoulder to shoulder with men, she still remain second why? We women are fighting in the wrong way. Why do we women feel that it is only by entering into the domain of men can we bring succor to our pained nerves and does experience of the last fifty years justify this by our achievement in the field of status? I feel that, the more we are going out, the more we are prone to dangers, and the more we are destroying our images, and the more we are making men feel

adamant against us, women. This is because we enter their domains, thus causing of working outside the home but that should not be our sole objective, because when we do that, we are trampling on men's toes, our women's objective should be to excel in our domain, instead of entering the domain of men.

Our field of work is no mean task, if we have to try to emulate men and get into their avenues of work. I feel that even though continuing to achieve a greater spectrum for ourselves to work upon, we should also need to change our attitudes to our targets. Happiness for women obviously does not lie in emulating men, but in doing our own tasks with excellence and continuing our onward march towards equality with men in status. We must remember that, when we educate a woman, we educate a family. So this is clear that, our present march forward should continue but our attitudes to the matter should change for, our status will not change only by entering the world of men, but by creating a niche for ourselves, as best as we can.

I do not vouchsafe that women should not enter job, etc., no, it is not so, but if we expect only this to produce results, I'm afraid, the past experience of fifty years has shown that this is not enough. We must realize that, first and foremost, how many of us women can become financially independent, and if at all we do so, the point to be then considered is that after achieving financial independence, do we women start

feeling equal to men, or do start getting treatment like men? If not then women are putting in a fruitless effort. Are we getting any extra honour and respect at home, in society and from the world at large, if not then what have we done, where have we gone wrong? Our pursuit of status for ourselves is obviously not giving the desired results, so I feel that we women are their equal partners, only with different attitudes and different assignments. On the other hand, women must understand that by emulating men, we will not become their

equals, instead, they will start taking us as their rivals and so never cooperate with us. We must realize that our women status depends a lot on how we carry ourselves in this male dominated society. Two people having different assignments can be equal only if they have a clear perception of their roles. By interchanging or exchanging roles we achieve nothing tangible, we only trample each others feet and call for an altercation instead of amity. So now, after five decades of trying to emulate men it is time for us women to take

stock of the situation and make a more rigorous effort to fight for our rights and equality with men with a changed attitude and not only a change of assignment or appearance. Two people with different assignments can surely be equals so, why do we women have to hanker for stepping into mens shoes and take up the roles of men. Let us now change our strategy of the struggle and not only stamp men but create for ourselves as a new horizon.

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COM. AJMERA – A LEGENDARY LEADER

Com. Jagdish Ajmera, Ex President & Chief Adviser of WREU, Editor of Railway Sentinel, passed away on 1st July 2012 at the age of 95 years. Com. Ajmera was a veteran Freedom Fighter and a staunch socialist and his contribution to the socialist movement and trade union movement is immense. During the freedom struggle, he came in contact with Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and leading socialist workers like Yusuf Meherally, Purshottam Trichumdass, Saad Ali, H.Z. Gilani, Gaurishankar Bhatt, Varaskar, Ashok Mehta, N.T. Shroff, M.L. Shah, Rohit Dave, and others. Com. Ajmera and late Shri Madhu Dandavate were room partners for a long period.

Com. Ajmera was born on 9th November 1917 in a Jain Bania family in Lakhnaka, a tiny village in Saurashtra region of the then Bhavnagar State. After completion of his Matriculation from Sir Jaswant Singh High School, he joined Shamaldas College, Bhavnagar in 1940. In the year 1940, he shifted to Bombay and came in contact with the Congress Socialists and became active in the socialist controlled trade unions of the workers of General Motors, Ford Motors, BEST, Richardson and Crudas, Godrej, etc. He was associated with the Gumasta Maha Mandal and union of private motor drivers. He also took interest in student's wing of the socialists. During his activities, he came



in contact with eminent personalities like Jayaprakash Narayan, Achyutrao Patwardhan, Sane Guruji, A.C. Sen, Dr. G.G. Parikh, Dr. Shanti Patel, Priya Gupta, S.R. Kulkarni, Manohar Kotwal, Tulsi Boda, T.C. Jain, Sanat Mehta, K.R. Prabhu Desai, K.A. Khan, F.M. Pinto, Vasant Khanolkar, S.M. Joshi, Bagaramji Tulpule, Mrinaltai Gore, George Fernandes and many others.

At the age of 23 years, he took active part in the freedom struggle. He carried out lot of underground activities during Quit India Movement. He had attended a very important meeting organised by Yusuf Meherally with Shri Jawaharlal Nehru at the residence of Late Shri Hati Singh to discuss how Quit India Movement should be conducted underground by

socialists and youth after most of the all India leaders were arrested. He participated in historic Quit India procession at August Kranti Maidan on 9th August 1942 and was detained under Defence of India Act. He was submitted to all methods of torture in CID Lock-up and then kept in Worli Detention Camp. During his detention, when he was taken to Sir J.J. Hospital for treatment, he dramatically escaped from the police custody. However, he was re-arrested in June 1943 and tried in Mazagaon Court. He was jailed for 9 months in Arther Road Jail and subsequently shifted to Yerawada Jail, Pune. He was released from Yerawada Jail on 14.4.1944.

Com. Ajmera joined Railway Trade Union Movement and became a Branch Secretary of Dadar Branch of the then BB&CI Railway Employees' Union in 1946. He was elected as Vice President of the BB&CI Railway Employees' Union in 1949 and thereafter as its Secretary, which Union is now known as Western Railway Employees' Union (WREU) after merger of BB&CI Railway into Western Railway post independence.

He served as Secretary of WREU for long 28 years and thereafter as a Working President during the period 1977-1980. He was President of WREU from 1980 to 2000 and Vice President of All India Railwaymen's Federation (AIRF) upto 2001. Since 1951, Com. Jagdish Ajmera is

publishing "Railway Sentinel", mouth piece of WREU, and was its Editor till his death. The newly built Hall in WREU Complex, Grant Road, Mumbai, was named as "Jagdish Ajmera Sabhagrih" in his honour.

Com. Ajmera devoted his whole life for the benefit of working class in general and railwaymen in particular. He was married to Miss. Indra Mane who also supported him in trade union activities. Com. Ajmera under the leadership of Late Maniben Kara and Com. Umraomal Purohit worked hard along with Com. G.B. Sukhi, V.B. Karnik, Dr. Amul Desai and many others for making WREU one of the strongest unions of the country. He was one amongst the leaderships of WREU/AIRF to spearhead 1960 and 1974 nationwide Strikes of Central Government Employees and Railway Employees. A large number of achievements such as Establishing Joint Consultative Machineries, Absorption of Casual Labours, Restricted Hours of Work, Overtime, Weekly Off, Improvement in Pension and family pension, Productivity Linked Bonus, Compassionate Ground Appointments, RELHS, Cadre Restructuring, Group Insurance, Improvement in Privilege and Complimentary Passes, Enhancement of Maternity Leave, Child Care Leave etc. etc. were secured by AIRF under the leadership of Com. Umraomal Purohit and Late Com. J.P. Chaubey in which Com. Ajmera had played important role. Com. Ajmera was a founder member and Lifetime Trustee of Maniben Kara Foundation. Com. Ajmera was honoured with Tamrapatra by Hon'ble Shri Sharad Pawar, the then Chief Minister of Maharashtra for his honourable services in Freedom struggle. He was Adviser of Guru Swami Forum and Guru Swami Alamelu Labour Research Centre. He struggled for free, independent and democratic trade union movement and socialist pattern during his life time. After demitting the post of President/WREU in the year 2000, he was elected as Honorary Member & Chief Adviser of



★ At the Inaugural function of newly built Hall, from Left to Right - S/Shri Rakhal Das Gupta, Dr. G.G.Parikh, Umraomal Purohit, J.P. Choubey, Jagdish Ajmera & C.S. Menon.

WREU and continued his guidance for effective functioning of WREU and helped Late Com. C.S. Menon and Com. J.R. Bhosale in leading WREU in their capacities as General Secretaries.

His body was kept in Jagdish Ajmera Sabhagrih, Grant Road (West) on 2nd July 2012 for paying last tributes, where hundreds of railway employees, trade union leaders, friends and relatives paid tributes to the great trade union leader. Thereafter, his body was taken to Chandanwadi Crematorium at Marine Lines in open truck accompanied by hundreds of railway employees and others shouting slogans "JAGDISH AJMERA AMAR RAHE". A condolence meeting was arranged at the Crematorium where many of the eminent leaders remembered their memoirs with Com. Jagdish Ajmera and prayed for peace of departed soul. After last rites, his body was put to flames with thousand shouting slogans "COM.AJMERA AMAR RAHE - AMAR RAHE". His death is a great loss not only to WREU but also to whole trade union movement in the country.

Prarthana Sabha & Condolence Meeting was arranged at Jagdish Ajmera Sabhagrih on 10th July, 2012 to

pay homage to **Late Com. Jagdish Ajmeraji**. Senior trade union leaders, family members of Late Ajmeraji and large number of railway employees attended the same. Cultural team of Western Railway, Churchgate, sung Bhajans and devotional songs from 3.00 P.M. to 4.30 P.M. and condolence meeting started from 4.30 onwards. Com. Umraomal Purohitji and prominent leaders and relatives of Com. Ajmeraji showered rose petals before the portrait of Late Com. Jagdish Ajmeraji and all the participants observed two minutes silence and prayed for peace of his departed soul. Veteran trade union leaders - Dr. Shanti Patel, S/Shri S.R. Kulkarni, Shivajirao Patil, Abdul Gani Serang, R.P. Bhatnagar, Y.G. Joshi, Mukesh Mathur, Kum. Champa Verma, Smt. Shankuntala Waval and others in their speeches spoke about the sacrifices of Com. Ajmeraji for the nation and the working class as a whole and his contributions for betterment of railwaymen.

Condolence meetings were held all over Western Railway by all divisions/branches/ units of WREU to pay homage to late Com. Ajmeraji.

 **J. R. Bhosale,**
General Secretary,

Western Railway Employees Union, Mumbai