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**TARABAI SHINDE'S *STRI-PURUSH TULANA*: A CRITIQUE OF THE  
CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY**

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**Abstract:**

*Tarabai Shinde was a protester of gender equality and explorer of women's suffering. She wrote as a representative of the contemporary women in her writing that is 'Stri Purush Tulana'. She was a strong supporter of women's dignity which they deserve. Tarabai Shinde survived from 1850 to 1910. She exposes all those old traditions followed by the contemporary society. A woman had no respect in her own family. After marriage a woman had to break all her maternal relationships. Tarabai Shinde was highly aware of these matters of the women. Hence, she developed a strong desire in her inner mind that women should have equal rights and opportunities as men in society. Tarabai Shinde was highly influenced by the social reformers since she wrote for the better life and social status of woman. She proclaims that woman is also a human being with emotions. Hence, the present article is humble attempt to introduce the readers about the creative writer who wrote on an important issue.*

**Keywords:** Equality, Gender, Tradition, Status of woman, Protest, etc.

**Introduction:**

Tarabai Shinde regarded as a spirited protester of gender equality and a passionate explorer of women's suffering in the contemporary society. She dared to write during the time when woman was not acceptable, not even to talk with her husband in front of the senior family members. Any type of communication with the strange persons was like a taboo for a married woman. Woman was generally taken as a maid servant or a companion of her husband to fulfill his demands without any complaint. Tarabai Shinde wrote about women in her widely evaluated book, *Stri Purush Tulana*, that is *Man-Woman Comparison*. She was a strong supporter for the positive change in women's life. She was a vigorous feminist and an activist during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

The writer, Tarabai Shinde talks on gender prejudices and exposes the traditions against woman in the name of family esteem. According to the writer, woman was like a slave being imprisoned for lifetime in the dark custody that is called home. A woman had little respect in her family and treated merely like a servant. She had to suffer humiliations only for the sake of food and shelter. After her marriage, a woman had to break all her maternal relations. The writer was highly aware of the matters of the women world. Tarabai Shinde was highly influenced by the profound social activists who asserted that women should have equal rights and opportunities as men in society. Savitribai Phule was one of them. Tarabai Shinde wrote for the



better life and social status of woman in her home and society. The writer has a lot of frustration about the disgusting life of women in the society. She affirms that being a woman she has emotions, nevertheless a woman should not be suppressed and oppressed in the society.

Tarabai Shinde exceptionally and very passionately wrote on society, culture and traditions. She writes on re-marriage of widow, tradition of polygamy, and equality of man and women etc. As a contemporary woman writer Tarabai Shinde wrote *Stri Purush Tulana* at her mid age. This book is a master piece on feminism because, "Feminism stands for the struggle against their continuing low status at work, in society and in the culture of the country. Women are set to fight for emancipation and liberation from all forms of oppression by the state, by society and by men. It is the more powerful movement that swept the literary world in the second half of the twentieth century by different woman depending upon their class background and level of social consciousness" (Pulakesh, 19). This book was 'Originally published in Marathi in 1882. "Man-Woman Comparison" was a severe assault on the conventional mindset in male dominated society. The pamphlet is a critique of cast and patriarchy and is often considered the first modern Indian feminist text" (Tharu, 221).

The author wrote this book deliberately on very sensitive and burning issues related to the man-woman relationship. At this time the ratio of woman education was very low. There were no public primary schools in rural areas. Even the girls were not allowed to enter into the schools as it was against the social and cultural practice. Education for woman was like a ridiculous matter. Education for woman was forbidden. The women who are somehow educated were only interested in reading the religious and mythological stories.

However, Tarabai Shinde talks furiously about the problems related to the relationship of man and woman. According to her both man and woman are dependent on each other. She says man's life is incomplete if there is no woman in the life of a man. Equally life of a woman is also imperfect without an existence of a man in her life. A woman after her marriage takes care of her husband like a mother and always ready to serve her husband as it is her holy responsibility and pious duty. She says that women are naturally timid, tender and fragile. Wife is always obedient to her husband. But man as a husband treats her rudely. Tarabai Shinde has a complaining voice about the male dominated culture and traditions in the society. She says that women are deliberately prohibited education and kept into dark dungeon in unending fear and unsecure feeling. They are forbidden to come out of homes and be familiar with the modern world. She criticises men's injustice towards women. She says that a widower has a social right to remarry instantly after his wife's death. But it doesn't happen in the case of a widow after the early death of her husband. She has to suffer her remaining life in isolation and has to carry a miserable and abusive life. A widow is forbidden to attend any religious programs. She has to manage a simple and helpless life. Here, Tarabai Shinde admires the British Government for providing essential education for women that brought some social change for women in the society. Women became aware of better life and equal rights. She expresses her gratitude for the then British government in India for the improvement of women's life. According to the author it is hypocrisy to call a woman as a goddess without equal dignity and honour. She says it is a fact that the position of a woman in major of the middle-class and the higher-class families is nothing but a working woman in her own home. A woman has to work hard without rest from early morning to late night only to support her





family. Women are suffering continuously and becoming the victims of traditions. Having worked with the upper-class widows who were forbidden to remarry, Tarabai Shinde was well aware of incidents of widows being impregnated by relatives. The book analysed that a woman must walk between the “‘good woman’ and the ‘prostitute’”.

Tarabai Shinde assumes that the religious mythological stories are full of the predicament of woman because these stories are about woman's moral sacrifice and their struggle for chastity. As Dr. Reshu Shukla admits, 'In Indian society the concept of womanhood reflects the mirror image of legendary figure from Ramayana and Puran as Sita and Savitri, the mythic models from the Hindu Scriptures and the idols of Indian womanhood, embody the characteristics of ideal Indian woman who is supposed to incarnate the virtues of devotion, dedication and sacrifice as the inevitable features of her personality to justify her role as a mother, as a sister, and an ideal wife. Surprisingly these legendary symbols designing the canvas of Indian womanhood, paint the whole picture with one highlighting colour which determines the complete surrender of a woman, in almost her every role, to male-dominated society. She patiently plays every role bearing her never ending sufferings behind the four walls. These highly professed parameters and characteristics ruled Indian culture and society over many decades (Reshu, 5).

Tarabai Shinde's study was not only limited to the mythological books and contemporary newspapers but she had a critical study of contemporary stories and novels of the contemporary writers. As a feminist activist Tarabai Shinde aggressively talks on “religious scriptures themselves as a source of women's oppression, a view that continues to be controversial and debated today” (133) patriarchy and suppression and harassment of woman in so-called high-class society. Tarabai Shinde asks a very fundamental question that if the universe is created by God, it is regarded that man and woman are the creation of the same almighty God, then why there are gender prejudices? Why woman is not equally treated in the society? Why she is not considered as important as man? Why a woman is always taken as weak, timid, helpless and fragile. There are so many adjectives which are used to show that woman is substandard to man. Women are blamed for all vices and foibles. The writer says with the extreme pride and fervour for her fellow women, “I wrote this essay only to explain the doubt that if a woman is a symbol of the foibles and vices, are these foibles and vices existing in the nature of men too?” (Shinde). Tarabai Shinde talks on cultural change in women's clothing, jewellery like necklace, rings, bindis, and brooches etc. Tarabai Shinde admits her helplessness being a woman who suffered harshly in the male dominated society.

So many sensitive problems concerned with the stressed life of the contemporary woman are confidently presented by the writer. However, the writer says that she is not referring a particular cast or community in this respect but her writing is only a modest attempt to compare and contrast women and men in the contemporary society.

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