

Education and Empowerment of Women in Ancient India: Exploring a Glorious Past

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Abstract

This comprehensive research article delves deep into the multifaceted history of women's education and empowerment in ancient India. Spanning across various epochs, from the Indus Valley Civilization to the illustrious Gupta dynasty, it meticulously examines the progressive ideals and societal values that laid the foundation for gender equality and the pursuit of knowledge. Drawing from a rich tapestry of primary sources – the sacred Vedas, enlightening Upanishads, and captivating epics – as well as archaeological evidence, this study illuminates the educational opportunities that were availed to women, their active participation in intellectual discourse, and their indelible contributions across myriad spheres of life. Through a nuanced comparative analysis, the complexities and intricate nuances surrounding the status of women in ancient Indian society are brought to the fore. By curating a diverse array of case studies that spotlight notable female figures, delving into the intricacies of legal and social norms, and critically analyzing literary representations, this research endeavors to craft a holistic understanding of the multifarious factors that facilitated women's empowerment, the formidable challenges they surmounted, and the enduring legacy of their remarkable achievements.

Keywords: Women empowerment, Ancient India, Women Education

Introduction

The narrative surrounding women's education and empowerment in ancient India stands as a testament to the progressive ideals that once flourished within the subcontinent's rich

cultural tapestry. During an era when patriarchal norms pervaded societies across the globe, systematically denying women access to knowledge and self-actualization, the civilization that thrived in ancient India

emerged as a beacon of enlightenment, recognizing the inherent worth and capabilities of its female populace (Pradeep, 2019). The Vedas, the foundational texts that shaped the philosophical and spiritual fabric of Hindu civilization, upheld the principle of gender equality, emphasizing the necessity of imparting knowledge to both men and women alike (Kapur, 2019).

This progressive outlook towards women's empowerment found its roots in the Vedic period, a time when women were revered as embodiments of the divine feminine energy, encouraged to pursue spiritual and intellectual growth (Rout, 2016). The ancient Indian educational system, which flourished under the patronage of enlightened rulers and scholars, established prestigious institutions of higher learning, such as the renowned Nalanda University. These hallowed halls of knowledge welcomed women as students and scholars, shattering the prevailing patriarchal norms of the era (Rout, 2016). The annals of ancient Indian history are replete with examples of women who achieved remarkable feats across various fields, from literature and philosophy to governance and warfare. The Rig Veda, one of the oldest scriptures in the world, bears testimony to the

intellectual prowess of women scholars like Gargi and Maitreyi, who engaged in philosophical debates with their male counterparts on profound metaphysical concepts (Kapur, 2019). The ancient Indian educational system nurtured the talents of women writers, poets, and dramatists, whose literary works continue to be celebrated and studied to this day (Pradeep, 2019).

During this illustrious epoch, women in ancient India enjoyed a status of relative prominence, with equal rights and opportunities compared to men. They actively participated in decision-making processes, managed household affairs, and contributed to community development (Rout, 2016). The institution of marriage and familial responsibilities offered profound insights into the status of women, with practices like swayamvara empowering women to exercise agency in selecting life partners, and the prevalence of monogamy and acceptance of widow remarriage highlighting societal evolution (Srivastava, 2017). Women's active involvement in economic activities such as agriculture, handicrafts, and arts underscored their indispensable contribution to the household economy. Beyond mere sustenance, this participation engendered economic independence and societal

recognition for women, challenging traditional gender roles and fostering economic empowerment (Shuani, n.d.). The recognition of women's rights in property and inheritance signalled a paradigm shift, as women asserted their entitlement to economic resources, marking a significant departure from patriarchal norms.

However, this narrative of progress and empowerment was not without its complexities and challenges. Despite societal recognition and empowerment, women in ancient India encountered numerous obstacles. Gender biases, restrictive norms, and discriminatory practices perpetuated unequal treatment and hindered women's full participation in socio-economic and political spheres (Srivastava, 2017). The deprivation of women's rights in decision-making processes and limited access to education reflected entrenched gender inequalities, underscoring the enduring struggle for equity and social justice (Shuani, n.d.).

This research delves into the multifaceted narrative of women's education and empowerment in ancient India, exploring the intricate interplay of factors that shaped their status across different historical periods. By examining primary texts, archaeological

evidence, and scholarly interpretations, it aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of the continuities, changes, and complexities that defined the experiences of women in this era. Through this exploration, we gain not only a deeper appreciation for the progressive ideals that once prevailed but also insights into the enduring challenges that continue to resonate in contemporary discourses on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Historical Overview

The journey of women's education and empowerment in ancient India traverses through various epochs, each contributing its unique imprints to this multifaceted narrative. From the enlightened ideals of the Vedic period to the shifting societal attitudes of later eras, this historical overview traces the currents of change and continuity that shaped the experiences of women across different dynasties and cultural landscapes.

Vedic Period

The Vedic period, marked by the composition of the ancient Hindu scriptures known as the Vedas, stands as a pivotal era in the narrative of women's empowerment in ancient India. During this time, women were revered as embodiments of the divine feminine, and their

pursuit of knowledge and spiritual growth was actively encouraged (Rout, 2016). The Vedas themselves upheld the principle of gender equality, emphasizing the necessity of imparting education to both men and women (Kapur, 2019). This progressive outlook manifested in the establishment of prestigious educational institutions that welcomed women as students and scholars. The renowned Nalanda University, a bastion of ancient Indian learning, opened its doors to women, shattering the prevailing patriarchal norms of the time (Rout, 2016). The Rig Veda, one of the oldest scriptures in the world, bears testimony to the intellectual prowess of women scholars like Gargi and Maitreyi, who engaged in philosophical debates with their male counterparts on profound metaphysical concepts (Kapur, 2019).

Women's contributions to literature and the arts during this period further illuminated their intellectual and creative capabilities. The ancient Indian educational system nurtured the talents of women writers, poets, and dramatists, whose literary works continue to be celebrated and studied to this day (Pradeep, 2019).

Later Vedic Period

However, the progressive ideals of the earlier Vedic era encountered challenges as societal attitudes began to shift in the later Vedic period. A gradual erosion of women's rights and opportunities became evident, with the emergence of cultural beliefs that prioritized male offspring over female children (Shuani, n.d.). Girls were increasingly trained in household responsibilities from an early age, while their access to education was restricted based on the prevailing notion that their eventual role would be that of a wife (Shuani, n.d.).

This period marked a departure from the principles of gender equality that had once defined the ancient Indian society, reflecting the complexities and contradictions that often characterize the trajectory of social progress.

Maurya and Gupta Dynasties

The Maurya and Gupta dynasties, which ruled over significant portions of the Indian subcontinent, witnessed a resurgence of efforts to uplift the status of women and address gender disparities. Legal and social reforms were instituted, aimed at protecting women's rights and promoting their well-being (Women in Ancient India - Insights). During these eras, the continuation of educational institutions and the patronage of learning ensured that women's

access to knowledge remained a priority. Notable women scholars and philosophers emerged, contributing to the intellectual discourse of their time and challenging the prevailing societal norms (Women in Ancient India - Insights).

However, the progress made during these periods was not without its limitations. While certain segments of society embraced the empowerment of women, others remained entrenched in traditional gender roles and patriarchal structures, creating a complex tapestry of experiences for women across different social strata and geographic regions. Throughout these historical epochs, the status of women in ancient India was shaped by a confluence of factors, including religious and cultural beliefs, social norms, economic conditions, and political dynamics. The interplay of these forces resulted in a narrative that was at times progressive and empowering, while at other times marked by regression and marginalization.

One aspect that remained constant, however, was the remarkable resilience and determination of women who defied societal constraints to assert their agency and contribute to the intellectual, artistic, and cultural fabric of ancient Indian civilization.

From the revered scholar Gargi, whose philosophical insights challenged the patriarchal orthodoxy of her time, to the legendary warrior-queen Rani Durgavati, whose valor and leadership inspired generations, the annals of ancient Indian history are replete with examples of women who shattered glass ceilings and left an indelible mark on their era.

This historical overview serves as a prelude to a deeper exploration of the factors that influenced women's status, the challenges they encountered, and the enduring legacy of their contributions. By examining the complexities and nuances of this narrative, we gain a greater appreciation for the rich tapestry of ancient Indian society and the pivotal role played by women in shaping its cultural, intellectual, and social landscapes.

Factors Influencing Women's Status

The status of women in ancient Indian society was shaped by a myriad of intricate factors, forming a complex tapestry of experiences that transcended societal strata and historical periods. This multidimensional exploration delves into the intricate interplay of elements that both empowered and marginalized

women, offering a nuanced understanding of the forces that sculpted their lived realities.

Empowerment through Rights and Opportunities

At the heart of women's status lay the degree of empowerment they received, intricately intertwined with the rights and opportunities afforded to them within the societal framework. When women were granted autonomy and agency, they thrived in terms of knowledge, skills, and abilities (Pattanaik, 2018). The independence granted to women in ancient India reverberated across various facets of life, enabling them to actively participate in decision-making processes, manage household affairs, and contribute to community development (Rout, 2016). The provision of equal rights and opportunities compared to men was a pivotal factor in elevating women's status during this epoch (Rout, 2016). The encouragement of intellectual and spiritual development among women underscored the acknowledgement of their potential to contribute to societal advancement. This ethos fostered an environment where women emerged as architects of social change, reshaping the cultural landscape through their active engagement in leadership roles.

The institution of marriage and familial responsibilities offered profound insights into the status of women. Practices like swayamvara, which empowered women to exercise agency in selecting life partners, and the prevalence of monogamy and acceptance of widow remarriage highlighted societal evolution and a departure from regressive traditions (Srivastava, 2017). Within households, women wielded authority over family affairs, nurturing and shaping future generations, thereby cementing their pivotal role in the domestic sphere.

Participation in Various Spheres

Women's active involvement in economic activities, such as agriculture, handicrafts, and arts, underscored their indispensable contribution to the household economy. Beyond mere sustenance, this participation engendered economic independence and societal recognition for women, challenging traditional gender roles and fostering economic empowerment (Shuani, n.d.). The recognition of women's rights in property and inheritance signaled a paradigm shift, as they asserted their entitlement to economic resources, marking a significant departure from patriarchal norms that had previously restricted their access to wealth and assets. The multifaceted

involvement of women in religious ceremonies, social gatherings, and economic endeavors underscored their diverse talents and capabilities. Their participation in these spheres enriched cultural traditions, bolstered community cohesion, and fostered societal progress (Srivastava, 2017). This active engagement highlighted the indispensable role of women in shaping the socio-cultural fabric of ancient India, fostering a climate of inclusivity and diversity.

Contributions within the family and household were widely acknowledged, underscoring the pivotal role of women in nurturing and upbringing. Their influence extended to decision-making processes, with women actively shaping familial dynamics and community welfare (Shuani, n.d.). This recognition of women's contributions emphasized their agency and significance in ancient Indian society, fostering a culture of respect and appreciation.

Challenges Faced by Women

However, despite societal recognition and empowerment, women in ancient India encountered numerous challenges that hindered their full potential. Gender biases, restrictive norms, and discriminatory practices perpetuated unequal treatment,

limiting their participation in socio-economic and political spheres (Srivastava, 2017). The deprivation of women's rights in decision-making processes and limited access to education reflected entrenched gender inequalities, underscoring the systemic barriers women faced in asserting their autonomy (Shuani, n.d.). The stigmatization of widows and the cultural beliefs that prioritized male offspring over female children were symptomatic of the patriarchal structures that persisted in certain segments of ancient Indian society. These regressive attitudes not only undermined women's agency but also contributed to the erosion of the progressive ideals that had once defined their status (Shuani, n.d.). Furthermore, societal divisions based on caste, class, and regional affiliations played a role in shaping the experiences of women, creating disparities in access to rights, opportunities, and resources. Elite women often enjoyed greater privileges and autonomy, while women from marginalized communities faced compounded challenges due to their intersecting identities (Women in Ancient India - Insights).

This complex tapestry of factors highlights the nuanced nature of women's status in ancient India, where empowerment and

marginalization coexisted, shaped by the interplay of cultural, religious, and socio-economic forces. It is through this multidimensional lens that we can gain a deeper appreciation for the struggles, triumphs, and enduring resilience of women who navigated these intricate landscapes, leaving an indelible mark on the annals of ancient Indian history.

Case Studies

To truly comprehend the multifaceted experiences of women's education and empowerment in ancient India, it is imperative to examine specific case studies that illuminate the complexities and nuances of this narrative. These individual accounts offer a lens into the diverse realities faced by women across different social strata, historical periods, and spheres of influence, providing tangible examples of the factors that shaped their lived experiences.

Gargi Vachaknavi: The Philosophical Luminary

One of the most celebrated figures in the annals of ancient Indian history is Gargi Vachaknavi, a renowned philosopher and scholar whose intellectual prowess challenged the patriarchal orthodoxy of her

time. As recounted in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, Gargi fearlessly engaged in philosophical debates with revered sages, including the illustrious Yajnavalkya, on profound metaphysical concepts (Kapur, 2019). Her incisive questioning and penetrating insights not only demonstrated the depth of her knowledge but also served as a powerful testament to the intellectual capabilities of women in the ancient Indian tradition.

Gargi's story exemplifies the profound impact that women could have in the realm of philosophical and religious discourse, shattering the prevailing gender norms of the era. Her legacy as a trailblazer in the pursuit of knowledge continues to inspire generations of scholars, underscoring the transformative power of education and the importance of creating spaces for women's voices to be heard and valued.

Ubhayabharati: The Polymath Scholar

Another remarkable figure who defied societal conventions was Ubhayabharati, a multitalented scholar who excelled in various disciplines, including literature, philosophy, astronomy, and mathematics. Known for her erudition and intellectual prowess, Ubhayabharati's contributions to the fields of

knowledge spanned multiple domains, showcasing the boundless potential of women when provided with access to education and opportunities for self-actualization (Women in Ancient India - Insights).

Ubhayabharati's life serves as a compelling case study, highlighting the transformative impact of education on women's empowerment. Her achievements stand as a testament to the rich tapestry of intellectual discourse that flourished in ancient Indian society, where women were not mere passive recipients of knowledge but active contributors to the advancement of various disciplines.

Rani Durgavati: The Warrior Queen

While the realms of philosophy and scholarship offer insights into the intellectual empowerment of women, the life of Rani Durgavati, the celebrated warrior queen of the Gondwana kingdom, sheds light on the multifaceted nature of women's agency in ancient India. Renowned for her valor, military acumen, and unwavering leadership, Durgavati defied societal expectations, commanding her forces into battle and defending her kingdom against formidable adversaries (Women in Ancient India - Insights).

Durgavati's legacy as a fearless ruler and strategist challenges the notion that women in ancient India were confined to domestic spheres. Her story serves as a powerful reminder of the diverse roles' women assumed, transcending traditional gender boundaries and asserting their agency in domains traditionally dominated by men, such as warfare and statecraft.

Literary Representations: Sita and Draupadi

Beyond historical figures, the literary representations of women in ancient Indian epics and texts offer valuable insights into the societal perceptions and ideals surrounding the status of women. The character of Sita, the virtuous and steadfast protagonist of the Ramayana, has been revered as an embodiment of wifely devotion and strength (Srivastava, 2017). Her unwavering loyalty to her husband, Rama, and her ability to endure trials and tribulations have been celebrated as exemplary qualities, reflecting the cultural emphasis on female virtues and resilience.

In contrast, the character of Draupadi, the polyandrous wife of the Pandava brothers in the Mahabharata, represents a more complex and multidimensional portrayal of womanhood. Draupadi's assertiveness, sharp

wit, and defiance of societal conventions challenged the traditional notions of femininity, while her unwavering determination in the face of adversity showcased the inner strength and resilience of women (Srivastava, 2017).

These literary representations, while offering a glimpse into the cultural ideals and societal expectations surrounding women, also highlight the diversity of experiences and perspectives that existed within ancient Indian society. They serve as a reminder that the narrative of women's status was not monolithic but rather a tapestry woven with complex threads of empowerment, marginalization, and the constant negotiation of agency within the prevailing social structures. By examining these case studies, we gain a nuanced understanding of the various factors that influenced the status of women in ancient India, from the pursuit of knowledge and intellectual prowess to the assertion of agency in traditionally male-dominated domains. These narratives not only shed light on the remarkable achievements and resilience of individual women but also illuminate the broader societal dynamics that shaped their lived experiences, offering a window into the

complexities and contradictions that defined this pivotal era in the history of women's empowerment.

Analysis and Discussion

The narrative of women's education and empowerment in ancient India presents an intricate tapestry, woven with threads of progress, regression, and the constant negotiation of agency within the prevailing social structures. Through a comparative analysis across different historical periods and an examination of the factors that shaped women's experiences, we gain a nuanced understanding of the complexities and contradictions that defined this pivotal era.

Comparative Analysis across Different Historical Periods

The Vedic period stands as a beacon of enlightenment, where women were revered as embodiments of the divine feminine, encouraged to pursue spiritual and intellectual growth (Rout, 2016). The establishment of prestigious educational institutions like Nalanda University, which welcomed women as students and scholars, shattered the prevailing patriarchal norms of the time (Rout, 2016). Women's contributions to literature, philosophy, and the arts during this period are

a testament to the intellectual prowess and creative talents that flourished when provided with access to knowledge and opportunities for self-actualization.

However, as the later Vedic period unfolded, a gradual erosion of women's rights and opportunities became evident. Cultural beliefs that prioritized male offspring over female children gained prominence, leading to a restriction of girls' access to education based on the prevailing notion that their eventual role would be that of a wife (Shuani, n.d.). This shift in societal attitudes underscored the fragility of progress and the enduring struggle against deeply entrenched patriarchal structures.

The Maurya and Gupta dynasties witnessed a resurgence of efforts to uplift the status of women, with legal and social reforms aimed at protecting their rights and promoting their well-being (Women in Ancient India - Insights). However, the progress made during these periods was not universal, as different segments of society embraced or resisted the empowerment of women, creating a complex tapestry of experiences across different social strata and geographic regions.

Factors Contributing to the Empowerment of Women

Throughout the annals of ancient Indian history, several key factors emerged as catalysts for women's empowerment, fostering an environment conducive to their intellectual, social, and economic growth. The provision of equal rights and opportunities compared to men was a pivotal factor in elevating women's status (Rout, 2016). This ethos fostered an environment where women could actively participate in decision-making processes, manage household affairs, and contribute to community development, asserting their agency and challenging traditional gender roles. Women's active involvement in economic activities, such as agriculture, handicrafts, and arts, engendered economic independence and societal recognition, further bolstering their empowerment (Shuani, n.d.). The recognition of women's rights in property and inheritance signaled a paradigm shift, enabling them to assert their entitlement to economic resources and challenging patriarchal norms that had previously restricted their access to wealth and assets.

Furthermore, the acknowledgment of women's contributions within the family and household underscored their pivotal role in nurturing and shaping future generations, fostering a culture of respect and appreciation for their agency and

significance in ancient Indian society (Shuani, n.d.).

Challenges and Limitations Faced by Women

Despite the progress made in empowering women, the narrative of ancient India is replete with examples of the challenges and limitations they encountered. Gender biases, restrictive norms, and discriminatory practices perpetuated unequal treatment, hindering women's full participation in socio-economic and political spheres (Srivastava, 2017). The deprivation of women's rights in decision-making processes and limited access to education reflected the entrenched gender inequalities that persisted, underscoring the systemic barriers women faced in asserting their autonomy (Shuani, n.d.). The stigmatization of widows and the cultural beliefs that prioritized male offspring over female children were symptomatic of the patriarchal structures that prevailed in certain segments of ancient Indian society. These regressive attitudes not only undermined women's agency but also contributed to the erosion of the progressive ideals that had once defined their status (Shuani, n.d.).

Additionally, societal divisions based on caste, class, and regional affiliations played a

significant role in shaping the experiences of women, creating disparities in access to rights, opportunities, and resources. Elite women often enjoyed greater privileges and autonomy, while women from marginalized communities faced compounded challenges due to their intersecting identities (Women in Ancient India - Insights).

Significance and Impact of Women's Education and Empowerment

The narrative of women's education and empowerment in ancient India holds profound significance not only for understanding the rich tapestry of the subcontinent's history but also for informing contemporary discourses on gender equality and social justice. The remarkable achievements of women scholars, philosophers, and leaders serve as a powerful reminder of the transformative potential of education and the importance of creating spaces for women's voices to be heard and valued. The empowerment of women through access to knowledge, economic independence, and decision-making power has been shown to have far-reaching impacts on societal progress and development. When women are empowered, they can become agents of change, contributing to the advancement of their communities and shaping the cultural,

intellectual, and political landscapes of their era.

Moreover, the challenges and limitations faced by women in ancient India resonate with the enduring struggles against patriarchal structures and gender-based discrimination that persist in contemporary societies. By examining these historical narratives, we gain insights into the root causes of gender inequalities and can draw lessons for addressing systemic barriers and fostering a more equitable and inclusive world. Ultimately, the study of women's education and empowerment in ancient India serves as a powerful testament to the resilience, determination, and agency of women who defied societal constraints and left an indelible mark on their era. Their stories inspire us to continue the pursuit of gender equality, to dismantle patriarchal structures, and to create a world where every individual, regardless of gender, has the opportunity to realize their full potential and contribute to the collective progress of humanity.

Conclusion

The narrative of women's education and empowerment in ancient India is a tapestry

woven with threads of progress, resilience, and the enduring pursuit of equality. Through this exploration, we have gained a nuanced understanding of the complexities and contradictions that defined the experiences of women across different historical periods and societal strata.

The Vedic period stands as a beacon of enlightenment, where women were revered as embodiments of the divine feminine, encouraged to pursue knowledge and intellectual growth (Rout, 2016). The establishment of prestigious educational institutions like Nalanda University, which welcomed women as students and scholars, shattered the prevailing patriarchal norms of the time (Rout, 2016). This era witnessed the emergence of remarkable women scholars, philosophers, and literary figures, whose contributions continue to be celebrated and studied to this day. However, the narrative of progress was not without its ebbs and flows. The later Vedic period witnessed a gradual erosion of women's rights and opportunities, as cultural beliefs prioritizing male offspring over female children gained prominence (Shuani, n.d.). This regression underscored the fragility of social progress and the enduring struggle

against deeply entrenched patriarchal structures.

The Maurya and Gupta dynasties ushered in a resurgence of efforts to uplift the status of women, with legal and social reforms aimed at protecting their rights and promoting their well-being (Women in Ancient India - Insights). However, the progress made during these periods was not universal, as different segments of society embraced or resisted the empowerment of women, creating a complex tapestry of experiences across different social strata and geographic regions.

Throughout this narrative, several key factors emerged as catalysts for women's empowerment, including the provision of equal rights and opportunities, active involvement in economic activities, and the acknowledgment of women's contributions within the family and household (Rout, 2016; Shuani, n.d.; Srivastava, 2017). These factors fostered an environment conducive to women's intellectual, social, and economic growth, enabling them to assert their agency and challenge traditional gender roles. Conversely, the challenges and limitations faced by women in ancient India remain a sobering reminder of the enduring struggle against gender-based discrimination and

patriarchal structures. Gender biases, restrictive norms, and discriminatory practices hindered women's full participation in various spheres, underscoring the systemic barriers they faced in asserting their autonomy (Srivastava, 2017; Shuani, n.d.). The narrative of women's education and empowerment in ancient India holds profound significance not only for understanding the rich tapestry of the subcontinent's history but also for informing contemporary discourses on gender equality and social justice. The remarkable achievements of women scholars, philosophers, and leaders serve as a powerful reminder of the transformative potential of education and the importance of creating spaces for women's voices to be heard and valued. Besides, the challenges and limitations faced by women in ancient India resonate with the ongoing struggles against gender-based discrimination and patriarchal structures that persist in contemporary societies. By examining these historical narratives, we gain insights into the root causes of gender inequalities and can draw lessons for addressing systemic barriers and fostering a more equitable and inclusive world.

As we reflect on this exploration, it becomes evident that the pursuit of gender equality and

women's empowerment is not a linear journey but rather a continuous process of navigating complexities, overcoming obstacles, and celebrating hard-won victories. The stories of women in ancient India who defied societal constraints and left an indelible mark on their era serve as a powerful reminder of the resilience, determination, and agency that have been at the core of this enduring struggle.

Moving forward, it is imperative that we continue to learn from these historical narratives, drawing inspiration from the triumphs and acknowledging the challenges that lie ahead. By fostering an environment that values education, promotes economic independence, and champions women's voices in decision-making processes, we can create a more equitable society where every individual, regardless of gender, has the opportunity to realize their full potential and contribute to the collective progress of humanity.

Eventually, the study of women's education and empowerment in ancient India is not merely an academic exercise but a call to action – a reminder that progress is possible, that change is within reach, and that the pursuit of equality is a worthy endeavor that

transcends the boundaries of time and geography. It is through this lens that we can forge a future where the ideals of gender equality, once celebrated in the ancient past, become a lived reality for generations to come.

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