**RESEARCH WORK ON**

**WOMEN FIGHTING TO ENTER TEMPLES AND MOSQUES**

**By:-**

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***Women fighting to enter temples and Mosques***

**ABSTRACT**

In this activity the researcher would like to discuss about the scenario where the women in India are fighting to enter the temples and mosques. However evolved or modern the society ,there are still a lot of myths and believes revolving around the element of religion. The most surprising factor among all these is that nobody ever tries to move beyond religion and achieve the true spirit of human life instead they are still clinging on to the rules made the humans for the humans as a central element to attain the Gods grace. Along with the fire of religion imagine when the same is tied with the prominence of the women in the country. However the given research paper will be focussed on the aspect of the situation of the women fighting to enter into temples and mosques. This shall be followed with keywords, abstract, a short introduction, discussion of the topic, critical analysis of the author, reference made and a brief bio about the author.

**KEY WORDS**

Temple/ Mosque entry, Ban, Right to pray, fight, Taboo.

**INTRODUCTION**

When I was 12 years old one fine morning when I woke up and took my brush to clean my teeth I felt a terrible pain under my tummy. It was an itchy and painful moment and I found blood stains on my intimate wears. It was then my mother told me I was at my menarche and I was not supposed to enter any holy places of worship at house or outside during the menstruation days every month. This system in India where women are not allowed to enter any place of worship was prevalent since time immemorial. If the reason is asked, I don’t believe in the answers told to me. The most popular answer to this question is because of the impurity of the female body during the menstruation days one female who enters the temple are said to make the holy premises of the deity impure. This practice of utter discrimination which violates the fundamental right of the female was brought into the court of law and certain legal complications was followed there after. The same situation is existing in other religions as well. The researcher however will be focussing on this aspect in Hindu and Muslim religion.

**FIGHT OF THE WOMEN TO ENTER TEMPLE AND MOSQUE IN INDIA**

It is only in churches in India where men and women enjoy equal access to worship. Temples and mosques regularly practise discrimination. One such place where women's entry is prohibited is Mount Athos in Greece. Also not only women, but also female animals are not allowed. Mount Athos houses about 2,000 Russian and Greek monks living in orthodox monasteries. On Mount Omine in Japan, the same method of forbidding women is practised. "No woman admitted" is written at the entrance. However it has been designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.[[1]](#footnote-2) We are all quite aware of the CEDOW[[2]](#footnote-3) convention where all forms against violence is eliminated. But in this particular context I think ban of female entry to holy places because of menstruation is also a form of indirect violence.From the current literature available on disasters and in terms of gender and resilience, we understand that disasters affect in social relations. How shocks and stresses contribute to modifications Gendered norms and relations of power, and whether Such improvements tend to be to the detriment or advantage of it is still uncertain to marginalised groups, however.[[3]](#footnote-4) There was an incident were a Muslim girl shared her experience when she was told by the mosque administrators of Haji Ali in Mumbai that the women were prevented from entering to the inner chamber of the Mosque due to two main reasons, that while the women bend down to touch their forehead on the grave, their *pallus* would fall and that would show their chest cleavage and could arouse the men present there who watches it. And the second major reason was due to the monthly period they have and while the women are on their menstruating days they are impure so if they enter the chamber of the Haji Ali that would pollute and make the shrine unholy. Based on this, A petition was filed by the BMMA[[4]](#footnote-5) in the courts demanding the lifting of the ban and pointing out that even saints were born from wombs. So the denial of the fruit full of a Womb is equal to denying the pious and dignity of the mother herself. Three years later, this bitter legal battle was coming to an end, with a verdict set to be declared on 18 January by the Mumbai high court. It would set a precedent for those combating discrimination against women in places of worship if the judges decide that the ban must be lifted. Women were permitted to enter the inner sanctum of Haji Ali Dargah until 2011, when their entry was abruptly forbidden. In 2014, BMMA filed a petition against the ban, and the Mumbai court ordered the mosque's confidence to lift it in August.[[5]](#footnote-6) Many Hindu temples forbid women from entering when they are in their monthly bleeding time. Kerala's Sabarimala temple goes a step further, The Sabarimala temple restricted menstruating females from entering the temple between the ages of 10 and 50 years. The limitations and their origin are based on the fact that the deity of the temple, Swami Ayyappa, is a NaishtikaBrahmachari '(celibate) and therefore an epitome of purity that menstruating women should not violate. Rule 3(b) of the Hindu Places of Public Worship Rules of Kerala (Authorization of Entry), 1965, restricts the prohibition of women by forbidding them to enter the Sabarimala.[[6]](#footnote-7) As it is difficult to know whether a woman is menstruating, all women between the ages of 10 and 50 have been barred. Prayar Gopalakrishnan, president of the temple management board, said that only after a computer has been developed and built to detect whether they have their time will women be allowed to enter.[[7]](#footnote-8) Similarly, Muslim men and women begin the journey together on foot to the grave at the shrine of St. Nizamuddin Auliya in the Indian capital. They split when they enter the final part, where they take off their shoes, purchase wicker baskets of rose petals and walk down winding narrow steps toward the grave. Behind a carved stone screen, women are seated. The men go to the grave inside and put consecrated shrouds over it.[[8]](#footnote-9) On the basis of these happenings, On Friday, the Supreme Court sought a reply from the Centre to a plea seeking the entry of Muslim women into mosques throughout the country, arguing that such a ban was "unconstitutional" and violated fundamental rights to life, equality and gender justice. [[9]](#footnote-10)It also claimed that the alleged customary tradition is regarded as 'in constitutional and in violation of Articles 14 (right to equality), 15 (right to justice between men and women) and 21 (right to life and liberty) of the Constitution.' Referring to the constitutional provisions, the petitioners stated that no discrimination on the grounds of faith, colour, caste, sex and place of birth should be discriminated against by any citizen of the country. They added that the most sacrosanct pillar is a life of integrity and equality. The plea sought guidelines from state authorities and Muslim bodies to allow Muslim women to join the mosques to give namaz there. The petitioners had told the court that the privileges and grants given to them by the State were enjoyed by the mosques in India and could therefore be directed to allow women to join mosques.The Supreme Court had earlier claimed, while issuing the notice, that it would hear the PIL only because of its judgement in the Sabarimala temple case.[[10]](#footnote-11) In the sabarimala Temple case also , the ban on the entry of the women of the menstruating group was challenged by the petitioners claiming that it was a violation of their fundamental rights.[[11]](#footnote-12)Later on in November the CJI Dipak Mishra headed constitution bench in a 4:1 ration decided that temple violated the right to worship and equality granted by the constitution of India and ruled that women shall enter the temple.[[12]](#footnote-13) However Justice Indu Malhotra dissented the plea and ruled that considering the deepest religious and customary sentiments, the permission for women to enter the temple shall spoil the faith of umpteen number of devotees of the lord Ayyappa across the globe.[[13]](#footnote-14) In any case, the practise of excluding women from the Sabarimala temple is not an essential religious practise and the Court must refuse to give constitutional validity to practises which derogate from women's integrity and equal rights to citizenship.[[14]](#footnote-15) In a constitutional order, notions of 'purity and pollution' that stigmatise people have no position." Justice Malhotra fought, however irrational, for letting faith be." "Issues of deep religious faith and sentiment must not normally be interfered with by courts in a secular politics." However, she drew the line at pernicious practises such as sati under the context of Sabarimala verdict.When, following the verdict of the Supreme Court last September, the Sabarimala Temple, one of the world's largest Hindu pilgrimage centres, opened its doors to women of menstrual age, women were unable to enter as hundreds of protestors fought street battles with police to keep them out. Indian courts have been increasingly acknowledging women's rights, questioning Indian culture, which is profoundly conservative.[[15]](#footnote-16) The day when the sabarimala verdict was pronounced the country was just not like the exact day before.There were enormous protests outside the temple nestled in the Western Ghats in Kerala's Pathanamthitta district; 50,000 protesters were booked by the police at its height. The protests were supported by temple priests who insisted that Lord Ayyappa, the presiding deity, is a celibate and women of menstruating age can not be permitted due to "purity"[[16]](#footnote-17) A right-wing Muslim women's group based in Kerala is planning to approach the high court, calling for women to join all mosques across the country. In addition to obtaining permission for women to give prayers in mosques, NISA, a radical women's forum, will also fight to nominate them as 'imams' (clerics).[[17]](#footnote-18) She urged the community's orthodox section to clarify who had asked them to place certain limitations on women that constitute violations of constitutional rights. The Bench, headed by India's Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, demanded that the government respond to a petition lodged by Yasmeen Zuber Ahmad and Zuber Ahmad challenging the ban on Muslim women's entry into mosques as unlawful, unconstitutional and a violation of their dignity. They demanded that the court order the Muslim Personal Law Board of All India and the Central Waqf Council to open the mosques to Muslim women. Under the Jamaat-e-Islami and Mujahid denominations, women are currently permitted to give prayers at mosques. Women are excluded by the majority Sunni group from mosques. Except in mosques where women are permitted, men and women have separate entrances and enclosures for worship. The petition argued that such a bar was "violative of Article 44 of the Indian Constitution, which encourages the State to ensure that all citizens are covered by the Uniform Civil Code by removing the discrepancies between the various personal laws currently in force..." Similar to this above scenario, the Shani Shingnapur in Maharashtra, women do not have access to the sanctum sanctorum like Haji ali Msque. Critics was so much agitated against this and they commented that even “Gods are themselves believed to be celebrities”.[[18]](#footnote-19)We must not forget, since they are born as women, that women are marginalised. Rape, gangrape and sexual harassment cases are rampant. Women suffer from poverty, are abused for their dowry, and are faced with domestic violence.[[19]](#footnote-20) A woman's body and mind are governed by men.[[20]](#footnote-21)The way women in the civilised world are, female animals are not subjugated and tortured in the jungle. Animals appreciate justice, we do not.[[21]](#footnote-22) Regarding all these challenging various traditions across the country, An activist who was at the forefront of the "Right to Pray Campaign," Trupti Desai, said their war has little to do with religion. "We are not critical of tradition, we are critical of traditions that are wrong."[[22]](#footnote-23) Citing the factors around Shani Shingnapur temple in Maharashtra, the high court of Mumbai ruled that women have a basic right to join temples in the state of Maharashtra.[[23]](#footnote-24) A 1956 law makes it a crime to keep women from joining Hindu temples, but authorities have barred women from worship at some temples, citing centuries of tradition. The female activists accessed the Shani Shingnapur temple compound in Maharashtra but were stopped by temple officials and villagers from entering the inner sanctum. Local authorities removed the women to an area about 100 meters away.[[24]](#footnote-25) Case of shakira sheikh a house wife and the mother of four children based in UP told that she was always barred from entering the holy shrine and later when her family and herself moved to a Mumbai slum there also the same had been existing. Sheikh's misunderstanding of her religious right to worship in a mosque shows the irony of the official statement submitted by the All India Muslim Personal Law Board in an affidavit to the Supreme Court on Wednesday.[[25]](#footnote-26) This is why Sheikh did a double take when she learned that the All India Muslim Personal Law Board had confirmed that Islam requires women to pray in mosques.[[26]](#footnote-27) Taken aback by the study done on this area, A fatwa issued in 1998 by the head imam of Palayam Jumma Masjid in Thiruvananthapuram, PKK Ahmed Kutty Moulavi, allowing women to enter the mosque and offer prayers during the month of Ramzan, spurred a strong demand by progressive sections of the Muslim community to end gender discrimination in places of worship.[[27]](#footnote-28) After the Imam's Council issued a counter fatwa denying women entry into the mosque, the activists who spearheaded the campaign beat a retreat and pushed a squad of Kazis to conduct a door-to-door campaign against the plea. [[28]](#footnote-29)Since then, demand has re-emerged several times from different parts of the state, but has been suppressed by the conservative sections.[[29]](#footnote-30) However the verdict of the sabarimala, many Muslim women are at the brim of hope regarding the same matter.

However based of many criticisms regarding the female entry in the sabarimala, it has been pointed out by the activists that if the sabarimala temple was a *boys only school* not any of these issues would have outbroken (hypothetical assumption). Because the constitution already guarantees certain freedom with reasonable restrictions. The reality is that India's Hindu temple status is based on a difficult compromise between religion and state. The state takes the temple over and agrees to respect religious feelings in the running of temple affairs in return. The question is what conditions the state should interfere in. Where there is a structural social inequality that denies dignity to a community of people, the state should intervene and set things right.[[30]](#footnote-31)

**CRITICAL ANALYSIS**

What ever the Indian tradition and culture beholds, myself is absolutely proud about it. Being an earnest spiritual being I have always taken the pride of being a Hindu and had lost in the discovery of the many valuable things we had. Coming to the religious side we have, India had lived in ignorance. Sheer Ignorance! I always had thought about the many Gods to worship. From the mighty God who lives in Mount Kailash to the lord Krishna who is said to dance with the females and took them to their own self in their multiple births. But according to me, if I am prevented from entering the temple and I am asked to stay away from calling out the lords name during my monthly periods, then I wish to know how each one of us was born into this world. When each girl in this country is diagnosed with infertility, they call out the God for blessing them with a baby. Then and there the relevance of a fruit full womb is rememebered. The doctors prescribe medicines to make the periods regular. When I was during my early adulthood days which is just some years back I used to have no periods or delayed periods and it was during I used to suffer a lot due to hormonal imbalance. Being a spiritual person later in my life, performing yoga made things pretty back normal. But I remember due to my ultra busy schedule I couldn’t work out and I used to pray to God to make my periods back to normal. Is this one aspect of the taboo existing in the society and the ban of female entry into the holy places. Does it make absolutely any logic? All these things which we practise as customs immemorial and traditions old, there is one aspect to be accepted. That is nothing but the brutal truth that men and women are equal, they are equally level headed and if men got to enter holy places for prayers then women also can. When the female wing trigger things to be taken legally forward remember one thing that they are educated and they are potent enough to fight for their own rights. All is well and before putting an end to this area, I would like to recall that all of us who are to leave this earth at some point of time, it would be great if we could live consciously and in harmony so that the total karmic debt which we are to leave behind will reduce and the peace and purity shall be handed over to the coming generation making this world a better place for life.

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the study conducted so far the customs which was prevalent since time immemorial was broken down when the female power of the country approached the SC. When the constitution guarantee the fundamental rights, it shall be enjoyed equally by all the people of the country. That includes the right to pray and all the benefits of Art 21 of the constitution. The above taboo which was exiting in the country is an absolute violation of Articles 14 (right to equality), 15 (right to justice between men and women). Change is a inevitable as we press forward as a youthful nation founded on ancient cultural values. Phase of slow-moving, Via rules, campaigns and trials, we move forward steadily and continuously. Orders to uplift our women's status is just a small step towards the same- A decision comes along every once in a while that gives this slow an extensive drive. It is about cleaning our head's taints on menstruation and the impurity principles associated with it. On those 60 days a year it's about making our girls free without believing that they are children of a smaller race. Important problems such as menstrual hygiene, longer-lasting sanitary protection, open access to School, sports, travel, social life and any other daily activity is all founding concepts which shall be curbed as we shift our focus to taboos. Thus being a female is equally a happy phenomenon and we are not any less unimportant, impure or separate class of the society. Like men, according to their belief, women also have the constitutional right to offer worship. So like in Sabarimala, women also need to enter all mosques, cut across denominations and establish their right to worship.[[31]](#footnote-32)

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