

WOMEN EDUCATION: STATUS, POSITION AND DIGNITY OF WOMEN IN INDIA

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Abstract

Despite India having crossed 7 decades of Independence, it still has to struggle against many social evils, in the male dominated society. Women empowerment refers to improving the social, economic political and legal strength of women, to ensure equal rights to women and to instill in them courage and confidence that they live their life with a sense of self worth, respect and dignity. To have a complete independent power over their life, to make freely their own choices and decisions, have equal rights to participation in social activities, get equal chances to get education and also employment without any prejudice is what women's empowerment aims at, would result in achieving a better and more progressive society. When women contribute equally along with their male counterpart for the benefit of society, the world would surely become a better place to live. Today a great percentage of women folk are studying in formal and informal educational Institutions at all levels right from school education to higher education and also going abroad for higher studies. Women today command better and dignified positions in the society.

Key Words: Dominated society, Women empowerment, Legal strength, Self worth, Courage and Confidence, Prejudice, Progressive society, Formal and Informal Educational.

Introduction:

India is a developing country and it is the 2nd largest populated country in the World, of which women constitute half of the population. If any Nation is marching forward for its development, the focus should be on development of the status and dignity of women which stands as a crucial factor in the National Progress on the whole.

Women need to be provided opportunity and be given access to necessary inputs required for enhancing their efficiency and productive ability. In other words Women need to be empowered..The concept of 'Empowerment' is given prime importance in the case of women, which means '**To Enable**'. It is to make women to have access and control the existing resources which are — material, human and intellectual aspects. This will lead to enhancement of quality of life. At the end empowerment of women enables not only the progress of a household or family but also the entire nation. Women can be empowered by eradicating the gender inequalities or disparities in all sectors of the society especially in academic educational institutions. The National policy on Education gave more importance to empowerment of women.

It is said "**The Hand That Rocks The Cradle Rules The World.**"

Women's education is so important that no one can ignore it. The development of any society depends on significant participation of women in all spheres. Family

is the first school for children. It is the mother who first teaches her children. Women's education leads to greater participation of women in labor market, reduction of family size, greater attention and care by the mothers to their children with regard to health, education and psychological well being. It is the women who pass on the heritage of the past and present to the future generations.

The World Declaration on Education of All in 1990 stated the most urgent priority is to give access to, and improve the quality of education of girls and women and also to remove every barrier that stands as an obstacle for their active learning and participation.

Dr. Natis Sadik Executive Director of the UNFPA said "Education opens the door to opportunity and choice for women. It is the key to overcoming oppressive customs and traditions that have relegated girls and women to the status of 'second class citizen's in their families and in their societies."

Pillai in 1995 defined "empowerment as active, multi dimensional progress, which enables women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life."

Education forum (26-28 April, 2000), made commitment to the attainment of the following goals:

- Ensuring that by 2015, all children (girls) belonging to minorities have access to free and compulsory primary education of good quality.
- Achieving a 50% empowerment in Adult Literacy by 2015 for women.

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- Equal access to basic and contributing education for all.
- Achieving gender equality in education by 2015. In view of the universal declaration on human rights, and in order to bridge the gap between male and female disparity, every year on 8th March, International Women's day is celebrated. India celebrated 'National Women Empowerment' in the year 2001. This gave a path for women education, bringing awareness about women's rightful place in the country's growth and development.

Since Independence, the Government of India has given importance to education. Yet literacy rates are low and still it is very low among women. According to the census literacy rates have gone up approximately 10% every 10 years.

Today the educational situation in India is completely transformed. Our country is one of the largest educational systems of the World, with largest number of primary schools, and the largest number of graduates from Indian universities.

Education will lead us and enable us to bring important changes in social and economic conditions. It will give clarity to live the values in our day today life. Democracy, Secularism, Socialism, Integrity, Brotherhood, Honesty, Courage, Truth and Respect for all Life Forms, different Culture and Language etc., constitute the mosaic of values which is very important to the unity of the society and country at large.

Based on HRD-statistics Government of India, the number of Primary schools has increased three times from 1950-51 to 2002-03. The increment rate during 1950-51 to 1960-61 is 36.54% and 1.5%. Though there is decreasing trend growth but on the other side in upper primary school it was 13,596 in 1950-51 and in 2002-03 it came up to 2,45,271. The increment is about 8 times more than 1950-51 to 2002-03. This shows there is an increase in opening of schools giving chance to girl child education. Also the numbers of female teachers in primary schools was 82,000 in 1950-51, in 2002-03, it increased up to 7,46,000.

According to the census 2001, regarding women in Higher education (2004-05), of the total students from general category enrolled for BA Degree in 2004-2005, only 41.2% were women. The literacy rate of women in India which was 8.86% in 1951, rose to 65.46% in 2011. The most notable thing is that in 2011 census, there was a sharp rise in women literacy rate over males.

Higher Education between age 18-24, is funded by the Government in India. Despite women making 24-50% of higher education, enrollment, there is still an imbalance

within higher education. Only one third of science students and 7% engineering students are women.

Union Minister Smt. Maneka Sanjay Gandhi, released the draft National policy for women 2016, for stake — holder comments and consultations. The policy aims to create sustainable socio — economic, political empowerment of women, to claim their right, control over resources and formulation of strategic choices in realization of the principles of gender equality and justice.

The National Policy 2016 for women has main objectives to create a conducive socio — cultural, economic and political environment. To enable them enjoy their fundamental rights and realize their full potential, the main priority areas are — Health which includes Food security and Nutrition, Education, Economy, Governance and Decision making, Violence against women, Enabling Environment, Environment and Climate change. The policy also describes emerging issues such as making . cyber space's safe place for women.

The first ever 'All India Women Journalists' workshop with participation from nearly 250 journalists concluded successfully. It is said women journalists are agents of social change. Over 250 journalists from 30 states across the country, representing 120 media organizations came together on a Single platform at the first ever All India Women Journalists workshop, organized by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in association with press information, Bureau Ministry of Information and Broadcasting New Delhi.

Over the past few decades, because of education and socio — economic conditions, women are stepping-out of their role of home maker and started getting involved in earning activities and there have been increasing women's activity rates in the entrepreneurship sector.

Women need to be empowered by enhancing their skills and knowledge. This will work as a novel opportunity to enhance women's access to information and knowledge. Women play a vital role in a all fields of life be it a social, political, legal and religious area.

The induction of women fighter Pilots in the Indian Air Force was cleared on 24th October 2015 by the government. The defence Ministry stated that by inducting women into fighter stream, and providing them with an equal opportunity to prove their ability to combat role as well.

Much is said and done on women's education and women Empowerment. We are in this 21st century. Women have taken a long journey. Women have taken active participation in all walks of life even excelling and doing better than male counterparts. But it is very sad

to see that we have become victims and succumbed to various criticisms and become even victims of political games. The best example is the Nirbhaya case where on one hand people supported and questioned the security of women in India and on the other hand, some even turned it into a political agenda.

As per NCRB Annual statistics, crime against women is on the continuous rise year by year. On comparing reported crimes against women for the year 2012 and 2013, it was shocking to note that number of crimes in year 2013 has increased by 26.7% in comparison to the year 2012. In absolute numbers, it increased from 2,44,270 to 3,09,546 in 2013 with an increase of 65,276 cases in one year. Analyzing the major crimes against women, it was found that assault on women modesty (molestation) registered an increase of 56% followed by kidnapping and abduction 35.6%, rape 35.2% and cruelty by husband and relatives 10.9%. this phenomenal increase in crime against women may be partially attributed to improved reporting but the substantial increase in crimes cannot be undermined and ignored on this pretext.

Women's groups are of the opinion that the figures are still gross under— estimates of the reality on the ground. Women are very shy and often afraid to come forward to report rapes or domestic violence.

In this present 21st century, we need to create awareness specially among the women as well as the whole nation, since on the global level many issues are discussed with regard to Women Empowerment. The United Nations Commissioner on the status of women took a theme: 'Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women' for its 52nd session, at United Nations head quarters in New York from 25th February to 7th November 2008.

Throughout the world, the sphere of women is stained by violence and [injustice. Metro.co.uk](http://www.metro.co.uk). on its 16 Feb edition reported that ISIS militants raped four Iraqi women and then stoned them to death for committing adultery.

The episode of abortion in India is an irrefutable fact. Why are female foetuses aborted and not male ones? In every community and religion, men dominate and decide for women and as a consequence, the women suffer abuse, violence, attacks, rejection, injustice, denial of their fundamental rights.

Statistics say that in every seven minutes a crime is committed against women in India. Every 26 minutes a woman is molested. Every 34 minutes a rape takes place. Every 42 minutes a sexual harassment incident occurs. Every 43 minutes a woman is kidnapped. And

every 93 minutes a woman is burnt to death over dowry. One — quarter of the reported rapes involve girls under the age of 16 but the vast majority are never reported. Although the penalty is severe, convictions are rare.

If a woman cannot find safety in her society, where else can she go? What is wrong and where? Every woman is a person. She is a mother, sister, grandmother, spouse, daughter... why do we treat them as things? Why do we treat them as second class citizens? Can humanity live while destroying its feminine side? Can human life be sustained while killing its own soul?

Systematically a genocide is going on destroying the female side of humanity. Look at the female — male ratio in our country. The current Sex Ratio in India is 944 females for every 1000 males (2016). Nature does not show any partiality but we do. The **figures** and facts explain the cruelty we slap on the weaker section of the society. In every walk of life, in every religion, in every institution, the position of women is at risk. A woman is paid less for the same profession. A woman is respected less for the same position. A woman is regarded less for the same status. The fact of being a male or female decides many other factors. By being a male, there is already an advantage, there is already a greater privilege.

In India, our Government has to play vital role in strengthening the women capacity to undertake broader decision making and representative roles. Also the women in rural areas need to be given special attention in developing their leadership qualities.

Our Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on 17th Jan. 2018 Wednesday said the Andhra Pradesh government would encourage women entrepreneurs in a big way by offering many incentives. Mr. Naidu was speaking after inaugurating the three-day women entrepreneurs' conference on innovation, incubation and industrialization, by the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) member countries.

The conference was organized by the Association of Lady Entrepreneurs of India (ALEAP) in association with the State government. The Chief Minister utilized the occasion to announce that 19 lakh SHGs formed by women would be converted into self-business groups soon.

Mr. Naidu said women had proved their mettle in the IT industry and other fields, adding the State government would go out of the way to ensure inclusive development. The CM said A.P. had been ranked by the World Bank No. 1 in case of doing business and urged delegates from SAARC countries to start their units in Visakhapatnam

He pointed out that women members of his family his wife Bhuvaneswari and daughter-in-law Brahmani — had become successful entrepreneurs. He said in the last two and a half years, they had signed MOUs envisaging an investment of Rs. 13.47 lakh crore to create 30 lakh jobs. He also invited the delegates to the third edition of the CII Partnership Summit-curri-Sunrise A.P. Investment Meet next month. The Chief Minister said the government was encouraging MSMEs because of their huge employment potential.

SAARC Secretary General Amjad Hussain B. Sial said SAARC would extend full support for promotion of business by women.

Now it's the time that we women need to stand erect and claim our rights which are due to us. Let us look up our women leader of our country. Mother Theresa, Sania Mirza, Saina Nerhwal, Latha Mangeshkar, Kalpana Chawla, P.T. Usha, Apama Kaur and Mary Kom, whose efforts and hard work and commitment made our country proud, putting it on the International map. Let us encourage our women to march forward, with full courage and conviction to live their lives to their fullest potential.

Women are the most discussed subjects, more used objects, with and without their knowledge and permission. Both men and women have the need to be received by each other. Why cannot we admit it? Rashmi Chandran (Founder & Chairperson, Natural health and Environmental Research, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India) wrote that women by divine nature have the greater gift and responsibility for home and children and in nurturing them and other settings of the society

In our society, if we just compare women leaders with men leaders, one could notice that women organizers could run all departments not just chairing the administration. Instead men administrators need more assistance to fulfill his duty.

Apart from cooking, looking after their children and family members, women work as low – paid labor in factories and enterprises, which is normally referred to as the informal sector, where they face discrimination and are paid less than men. Low wages also latwer their status in family despite the fact that they too help in running their families.

Though we have faced many hurdles, the barriers to change keep increasing making it difficult for the women to progress in society. From biologically destined fate of being subservient and only fit for household work, women have fought and conquered many platforms and are no longer the ignorant, voiceless lot. Though the society revolves around the patriarchal system, women are no longer succumbing to oppression.

Conclusion:

***"Human rights are women's rights and women's rights are human rights."*– Hillary Clinton.**

We commemorate International women's day on 8th March every year. This event is not only meant to celebrate Womanhood at the global level, but above all, to empower women – through education, enlightenment and employment.

Real empowerment comes not through economic strength but through education. Education is not restricted with literacy but the disciplining of mind and character. Women do not fight for food, clothing and place to stay. Their demand is for obtaining and living their fundamental rights of equality, freedom and dignity. It is common battle. Men should join women in the fight against all abuses and atrocities. Men should be protectors of women. Equality and dignity are to be obtained by both men and women. It should be the mission of every one. Every child must be taught how to respect women. Traditions and practices which degrade women should be erased. There is certainly a way for equality and freedom. Things slowly change now. Education has paved the way for a sea change in the perspective with which we look at women. Let the song of equality be sung from every home. Let women write their story by themselves. Let her – story be told everywhere as a song of liberty.

Women have come a long way showing the world that nothing is impossible. Women rise like the phoenix, instilling, hope and confidence in the hearts of many. Let each woman continue to sing and pray the song written by Rabindranath Tagore:

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high
Where knowledge is free
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments
By narrow domestic walls
Where words come out from the depth of truth
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way
Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit
Where the mind is led forward by thee
Into ever-widening thought and action
Into that haven of freedom, my Father, let my country
awake.

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