
'Women Power in India'

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Abstract

Without women's empowerment, no society and civilization can progress, thus 'Women Power' is very important and crucial for progress. In Indian culture & civilization, the girl child represents beauty, auspiciousness and prosperity. She is worshipped as Dawn, the bringer of hope. In ancient Indian history, the beautiful dancer of Mohenjo-Daro indicates a highly sophisticated culture and exalted position of women. Ours is an ancient culture and civilization. We revere human beings irrespective of gender. As India enters into an international leadership arena, we have to highlight our values. For this respecting, adoring, admiring and empowering women is the first major milestone.

Keywords: 'Women Power', 'Girl Child', 'Empowerment', 'Auspiciousness', 'Prosperity'.

Introduction

Women are a very important segment of development in our society without whose empowerment, no civilization can progress. Especially in Indian culture and civilization, the girl child represents beauty, auspiciousness and prosperity. She is worshipped as Dawn, the bringer of hope. In ancient Indian history, the beautiful dancer of Mohenjo-Daro indicates a highly sophisticated culture and exalted position of women. And woman is important as she is the mother of human-kind. Thus she should get her due share of respect everywhere.

In Indian history, the position of women started deteriorating after the first millennia. Though our constitution and many legislative acts have promoted gender equality, their status has yet to improve. Still more and more women have to be empowered so that they gain control and power over their own lives. It involves awareness raising, building self confidence, expansion of choices, increased access to and control over resources. Empowerment should come from within & thus women empower themselves. Inputs to promote the empowerment of women should facilitate the articulation of their needs and priorities and more active role in promoting these needs and interests. Women have a crucial role to play in the modern society. The gender mainstreaming strategy is aimed at making the goal of gender equality central to all development activities. In our country, there is a great upsurge in awareness about women's rights among all sections of society. The development programmes and policies give emphasis to improving women's social status. In spite of urbanization and industrialization, our culture and economy are predominantly agrarian and rural based. So empowering women who are the backbone of our agrarian economy, is a sure path to achieve major economic gains. Our development efforts have yielded creditable benefits for women in doubling their life expectancy over the last 60 to 70 years and considerably reducing female infant mortality & child mortality rates.

Our country is a knowledge based society and in this women's education is of much importance. Unless the light of knowledge dawns on the women force of our country, we can never

join the community of developed nations. Traditional in India, women are respected. So that economic empowerment will naturally lead to their political empowerment. They can be the harbingers of harmony in all spheres of life. They have great role to play in projecting our culture and way of life. In our country women specific projects continue to play an important role in promoting gender equality. Women & their organizations can play a very important role in achieving their overall development. They can play a powerful and positive role in confidence building and creating awareness in their daughters and other women to promote self-reliance.

Women represent half the resources and half the potential in all the societies. Efforts to promote greater equality between women and men thus contributes to the overall development of human society. The empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of women's social, economic and political status is essential for the achievement of sustainable development in all areas of life. It has been clear for decades that women in India make key contribution in areas of development such as agriculture, health, education & water resources management.

Education has been an important part of Indian social and cultural life. A great deal of evidences are there in Vedic literature about the status of women's education. Buddhism and Jainism also gave much importance to the status of women. Many of the madrasas set up by the muslim king's and attached to mosques, had both girls & boys as students. Extensive surveys conducted by Thomas Munroe in Madras (1822-24) Mount Stuart and Elphinstone in Bombay (1823-25), William Adam in Bangalore & Bihar (1835-38) & Punjab (1849) pointed out the existence of an extensive and widespread child education system irrespective of gender. Key to social development is good education. Researches carried out by the World Bank & many others have proved that more equitable access to education of women & girls can give very positive returns in improved family health, greater productivity & reduced family size. Investing in women education powers and improves the Gross National Product (GNP).

Woman is the mother of the human race and liaison between generations. It is the women who have sustained the growth of society & moulded the future of nations. In the emerging complex social scenario, women have a pivotal role to play. Now they can no longer be considered as mere harbingers of peace, but are emerging as a source of power & symbol of progress. Women have now taken professional roles in order to create a meaning for themselves. The traditional role of a housewife has gradually changed into 'working woman and housewife' Some of the reasons responsible for this are better education, change in sociocultural values and need for supplementary income. Nobody can deny now that Indian women have stormed almost all male bastions. She is entering into new fields including administration, science technology, medicine, journalism and the like but still they are in minority. The number of women in top positions has still to increase.

As we look back at ancient times, we find that in India there was eminent women philosophers like Gargi & Maitreyi who were given as much respect as men and participated in discourses and discussions at par with men. In our national freedom movement, the contribution of women has been no less than that of men. Women responded to the call of Mahatma Gandhi to join the freedom struggle, at a time when only two percent of women were educated. This should give an idea as to how difficult it would have been for women to come out of their homes but yet they did it. After

independence, women as members of the Constituent Assembly, participated in the task of drafting a constitution for free India. It is a matter of pride that as per the proposal of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, the constitution from its very inception has given the right to vote to Indian women, making India one of the very few countries to have done so.

Our attitudes towards women and the girl child need to change. The pillars of women's empowerment, essentially consists of good education, better health facilities and nutrition for the mother child, political representation and financial security, including opportunities for self-employment, options to become self-reliant. All this is dependent on making women aware about their rights, creating a conducive atmosphere and giving them opportunities to live a life of dignity.

Women have multiple roles to play and all these roles should be recognised. Women have a critical role to play in the survival of families, communities and society. They are agents who bring about changes in their own lives, in the lives of others, even more than the men of their families and communities, this should be recognised. There are several impediments to women being given the kind of social support they need. The first and the most important impediment is the way they are perceived. That has to be changed to a positive view.

In private businesses also women are actively involved, like in toy-making industries. In toy-making industries, almost 70 percent of the workforce is women. Similarly, in many other small scale industries concerned in making handicrafts etc., major part of the workforce is of women. In another field also women are very important, that is the of women entrepreneurs. Women entrepreneurs are there in large numbers. Empowerment has been at the centre of discussion for a long time now and is seen as a form of strength & confidence, instilled through the exercise of power-sharing and decision-making. Women entrepreneurship is central to any country's extensive and sustainable economic development. Thus the need to accelerate women's entrepreneurship in the country is immense. This is being promoted in India through Self Help Groups, Women-led Enterprises & Women-led Startups.

Women in India have now taken up professional roles in order to create a meaning for themselves. The traditional role of a housewife has gradually changed into working women & housewife.

India is an interesting case study when it comes to the role of women in society and the work place. While legally we have been granted and assured of the same rights as our male counterparts, socially & culturally equality has been slow in coming. Still, now they are adorning high offices in police, army and other male bastions.

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