
WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN EDUCATION AND HEALTH

SHUBHENDU AKALWADI

Abstract: Women have been victimized time and again from generations, irrespective of age and Nationality. Molestation and rape; sexual harassment and abuse; gender bias- these words have become quite common in the news dailies. However, this does not imply that offences against the female community are peculiarly an Indian Problem. On the contrary it's a global phenomenon with India being no exception. The 21st century is taking a big step towards a more stabilized society, where the gender bias does not exist. A glance at the national dailies would reveal the sordid legacy of atrocities inflicted on the women. Indian women- who, as a girl child is sometimes bargained for a bridal price, or when she grows up, serves as a supplier for dowry for her husband's family who as a widow, immolates herself on her husband's pyre to be acclaimed as sati. Male chauvinistic milieu has reduced her status to a plaything of man's whims and fancies. The awareness for women Education, women Health, women Rights, Crimes against women have increased drastically in the recent past. Yet, the facilities to avoid atrocities against women fail to satisfy.

Key words: Literacy, de-facto, de-jure, malnutrition

Introduction: For thousands of years woman had a venerable place in Indian society. It was said "Yatra Nariyastu Poojyante Ramane Tatra Devata". The place where women are respected is the abode of gods. This however, is used only in writing rather than in the actual scenario. Women today, believe in accepting challenges, and living them.

The reporting of the cases of abuse, molestation, harassment etc has increased, thereby, depicting the resentment of the female community against crimes. Although, the status of woman has increased from mere housewife or homemaker to an economically and socially independent and liable person. The Article 14, 15, 15(3) of the Constitution of India makes it very clear that every individual is equal in all respects before the Law. However, with the passage of time, the society has changed its values. The Father of our Nation Mahatma Gandhi said, "Man can never be a woman's equal in the spirit of selfless service with which nature has endowed her". For centuries now, women have been raising their voices against the atrocities they have been facing.

The Constitution of India also protects the Rights of Women, Hindu Act, Dowry Act, Act against female feticide, divorce act, rights to equal employment act ensures that a woman can lead her life with respect. NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN (2001). The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favor of women. Goal and Objectives: 1.11 The goal of this Policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women. The Policy will be widely disseminated so as to encourage active participation of all stakeholders for

Achieving its goals. Specifically, the objectives of this Policy include (i) Creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential (ii) The de-jure and de-facto enjoyment of all human rights and

fundamental freedom by women on equal basis with men in all spheres – political, economic, social, cultural and civil (iii) Equal access to participation and decision making of women in social, political and economic life of the nation (iv) Equal access to women to health care, quality education at all levels, career and vocational guidance, employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security and public office etc. (v) Strengthening legal systems aimed at elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (vi) Changing societal attitudes and community practices by active participation and involvement of both men and women. (vii) Mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development process. (viii) Elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and the girl child; (ix) Building and strengthening partnerships with civil society, particularly women's organizations.

Education For Women: While the country has grown from leaps and bounds since its independence where education is concerned, the gap between women and men is severe. While 82.14% of adult men are educated, only 65.46% of adult women are known to be literate in India. Equal access to education for women and girls will be ensured. Special measures will be taken to eliminate discrimination, universalize education, eradicate illiteracy, create a gender-sensitive educational system, increase enrolment and retention rates of girls and improve the quality of education to facilitate life-long learning as well as development of occupation/vocation/technical skills by women. Reducing the gender gap in secondary and higher education would be a focus area. Sectoral time targets in existing policies will be achieved, with a special focus on girls and women, particularly those belonging to weaker sections including the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes/Other

Backward Classes/Minorities. Gender sensitive curricula would be developed at all levels of educational system in order to address sex stereotyping as one of the causes of gender discrimination. Education and Employment are interrelated. More educated a women better employment status. The female work participation in India increased from 19.7 percent in 1981 to 24.7 percent in 2001. As in education there are wider regional variations among major states, in employment as well. Despite increase in work participation rate there has not been much change in working conditions. Besides, majority of women in India are in informal sector, or low paid work or in part time work. Women's earning's along with household work which is still un-paid has both advantages and disadvantages. In case a woman has control over her earnings she is empowered but her response to household needs leads to more stress and continued exploitation

HEALTH FOR WOMEN: A holistic approach to women's health which includes both nutrition and health services will be adopted and special attention will be given to the needs of women and the girl at all stages of the life cycle. The reduction of infant mortality and maternal mortality, which are sensitive indicators of human development, is a priority concern. This policy reiterates the national demographic goals for Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) set out in the National Population Policy 2000. Women should have access to comprehensive, affordable and quality health care. Measures will be adopted that take into account the reproductive rights of women to enable them to exercise informed choices, their vulnerability to sexual and health problems together with endemic, infectious and communicable diseases such as malaria, TB, and water borne diseases as well as hypertension and cardio-pulmonary diseases. The social, developmental and

health consequences of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases will be tackled from a gender perspective. In a society where resources are scarce, the needs of the child are the first casualty. She is ruthlessly ignored in matters of health care, nutrition and immunization, as a result she gets poor food, insufficient nutrition and inadequate medical care. Discrimination which begins in the womb and continues throughout a female's life cycle, if she is not allowed to be born, or grow into a healthy person, it can have grave consequences for future generations and the developmental potential of the nation. Massive deterioration of social values leading to female feticide and infanticide more aptly termed as "genocide". Son preferences and devaluation of girl child are mutually interacting. Health services do not meet the need of adolescents; the primary focus is on children in 0-5 age group and on pregnant and lactating mothers. This accounts for low health status and low health facility for adolescent girls. This negligence hampers the constructive development of girls stepping into adulthood. Nutrition In view of the high risk of malnutrition and disease that women face at all the three critical stages viz., infancy and childhood, adolescent and reproductive phase, focused attention would be paid to meeting the nutritional needs of

women at all stages of the life cycle. This is also important in view of the critical link between the health of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women with the health of infant and young children. Special efforts will be made to tackle the problem of macro and micro nutrient deficiencies especially amongst pregnant and lactating women as it leads to various diseases and disabilities.

Sanitation Special attention will be given to the needs of women in the provision of safe drinking water, sewage disposal, toilet facilities and sanitation within accessible reach of households, especially in rural areas and urban slums. Women's participation will be ensured in the planning, delivery and maintenance of such services.

Conclusion Female Education is key to empowering nation. Without appropriate education, ignorance can breed contempt. In such situations, the right to education to women becomes even more fundamental. It is mandatory to provide education to all the women so as to get a tag of 'developed nation'. In the same way Health is also important for a woman. It is because women fill multiple roles in the society which plays most important role and helps in development of nation. So women's nutritional levels should be higher as they play vital role.

References:

1. Equality before law The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth
2. Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.
3. Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children.
4. The National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) to the Constitution of India have provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision making at the local levels.
5. <http://wcd.nic.in/empwomen.htm>

6. http://www.legalservicesindia.com/article_955-1.html
/article/women-education-and-media-
7. <http://wcd.nic.in/empwomen.htm>

Shubhendu Akalwadi, B.A, LL.B (5 Years),
Karnatak University's, Sir Siddappa Kambali law College, Dharwad, e-mail:
ssakalwadi@gmail.com