

ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE IS A BOON TO WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

Any society is made up of both men and women. In a male dominated society women are considered as the second rate citizens. The lower status of women is the result of her dependence and lower educational and social position. Traditions idealize her role as the mother, housewife and distributor of food. It is customary in all Indian households for the women to serve the family first and then to eat whatever is left. This paper examines the women role in Indian society along with the constitutional provisions to empower the women and at last evaluates how women can be empowered through economic independence.

Keywords: *Women, Economic Independence, Women Rights, Constitution Provisions, Indian Women*

By Education, I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man – body, mind and spirit. -- Mahathma Gandhi.

Any society is made up of both men and women. In a male dominated society women are considered as the second rate citizens. The lower status of women is the result of her dependence and lower educational and social position. Traditions idealize her role as the mother, housewife and distributor of food. It is customary in all Indian households for the women to serve the family first and then to eat whatever is left.

Both men and women are conditioned to the notions of good and bad about the women from birth, which is a consequence of the history of discrimination against women, namely, Gender bias, Sex difference is genetic whereas gender difference is the roles assigned by the society, in this case the patriarchal society. Some of the common beliefs regarding gender differences are that women are weaker than men physically because the hormones in women make them delicate prompting them to get aroused. Since women give birth to the children they are suitable for their protection and parenting. They have delicate fingers therefore they can perform micro jobs like stitching, embroidery. There is no truth in all these statements. There is a lot of similarity in the physical bodies of man and woman. Birth, death, hunger, thirst, belief, sickness, fatigue, aging, is present in both, with the exception of the differences in reproductive organs all the organs of men and women have no differences. It is essential to realize and to clarify through education that while sex is the physical difference between the male and female organism, Gender is the differences between the male and the female imposed by the society through the cultural values assigned to male and female, which have no biological or scientific validity.

Women are exploiting in Society in many ways. It starts in the family by birth and ends with her death. Still in rural side people are not giving proper importance to girl's education and girl's development. Women start to work at very early stage at house to helping her mother and it will continue throughout her life. But it is not considering as a valuable work, and not assessed in terms of money. She has to depend on her husband to fulfill her financial demands.

Hence women need economic independence to the following purposes:-

- Constitutionally there are equal rights and duties.
- To take part in political leadership.
- For decision making and to develop thinking ability.
- For the family welfare and future planning.
- National development.

Let us discuss the each point in detail.

Constitutionally there are equal rights and duties : In our constitution, there are special provisions in the Directive Principles (Part IV) which enjoin the state to place the two sexes on an equal footing in the economic sphere, by securing to men and women equal right to work and equal pay for equal work (Article 39, Clause (a), (b)). The Indian Constitution grants not only equality to women but also empowers the state to take special measures to raise the status of women. The National Curricular framework – 2000, besides being undifferentiated for boys and girls, emphasizes the core values such as equality between sexes, ending of social evils and the practices derogatory to women. But still there is no equality between men and women in Society.

Women comprise the world 50% population but they have not received the 50% of the status and 50% of the active part in any sphere. Two third of the world's work is carried out by women, but only one percent of the world's property is registered in women's names. Gender discrimination is found from birth to the death. Women's work participation ratio and her economic independence are very vital for determining the economic status of women.

To take part in political leadership :- The Indian Constitution guarantees political equality through the institution of adult franchise and Article 15 which prohibits discrimination inter alia on grounds of sex. According to Gandhi in young India, 17.10.1929, women must have votes and an equal legal status. But the problem does not end there. It only commences at the point where woman begin to affect the political deliberations of the nation. At present political leadership of women is very less, only few women are participating. In any party we can't identify 33% of women participation. It is however, clear from Mahatma Gandhi's statement that the equal and political rights of women were only to be a starting point to enable the society to transform itself by ending all exploitation, a process in which women would be the prime movers. Looked at from this angle, political rights and status appear as only instrumental for achieving general equality of status and opportunities and social, economic and political justice.

For decision making and to develop thinking ability :- Women are allocated the role of child rearing and carrying out of household activities, because of gender differences that it is the responsibility of the women to do the chores. Social customs and traditions like dowry, purdah, restrictions on widow re-marriage, stand as a testimony to women's low status. Awareness and participation in the social activities are the other dimensions with the help of which the status of women can be determined. The status of women in urban areas is higher than that of rural women, urban women are comparatively educated and liberal.

Margaret Cormack (1961: 109) found in her study of 500 university students that girls were ready to go to college and mix with boys but they wanted their parents to arrange their marriage. Women want new opportunities but demand old securities as well. They enjoy their newly found freedom but at the same time wish to carry on with old values. Hence, there is a need of economic independence. There is an opinion that political equality is meaningless in a country where the mass of population suffers from poverty, continuous threat of starvation, illiteracy, lack of health and inequality of class, status and power. It is more so in the case of women who suffer from another dimension of inequality namely the weight of traditional attitudes that regard them as physically, intellectually and socially inferior to men.

The preamble envisages not only a democratic form of government but also a democratic society, infused with the spirit of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity, the offering of equal opportunity to men and women, irrespective of their caste and creed, in the matter of public employment also implements this democratic ideal. Hence women have to develop a positive outlook regarding her own life and her role in society.

For the family welfare and future planning: Economic independence of women is needed to two important issues: (a) Reducing gender inequalities and (b) Building equality in nation's development Economic independence of women benefits individuals, families and communities. By the employment of women, our country can reduce poverty, improve productivity, ease population pressure and offer its children a better future.

To empower women literally speaking is to give power to women. Power does not mean a mode of domination over others, but a sense of internal strength and confidence to face life, the right to determine one's choices in life, the ability to influence the social process that affects one's life an influence in the direction of social change, a share in decision making and capacity building to contribute towards national development.

National Development: Half of the population in the country is women. The education and economic independence of women is very essential for happy and healthy homes, improvement of society, economic prosperity and national solidarity. Empowerment of women is essential for the National development. Empowerment means encouraging and allowing individuals to take personal responsibility for improving the way they do their jobs and contribute to the organization's goals. Empowerment brings about far reaching changes in the organization. It leads to development of mature human resources, effective communication, readiness for change and an atmosphere of trust in the organization. Women empowerment has multiple, inter related and interdependent dimensions – economic, social, cultural and political. It can be understood in relation to resources, perceptions relationships and power. Hence for the proper development of the country economic independence of the women is must. The child's first education begins at the family. The making or unmaking of his or her future life depends on his early experiences in the family. The mother influences the child immensely. After the mother, the father and sisters, brothers, guests, servants and casual visitors leave their impact on the child. Hence capacity building has to start in the womb, without any deprivation, for the mother of the child, particularly the girl child. Her survival, protection and development as identified in the National Plan of Action for the girl child (1992) has to echo through all sectoral programmes. Access to education, health, information and resources are therefore, the vital areas of concern, that need to be effectively addressed in future to obtain many of the goals for the next millennium.

For full development of our human resources, the improvement of homes and for the moulding the character of children during the most impressionable years of infancy, the education of women is of greater importance than that of man. Laying stress on the need of women education, National Policy on education, says—the education of women should receive emphasis not only on grounds of social justice but also because it accelerates social transformation. Education is very essential for the economic independence of women. Today the education of women is considered as an essential feature of our National life. Women is a part of family, society and centre of life. Both the man and woman are equally important to lead a richer and complete life. Today we are living in a democratic society. In our democracy each and every individual are equal and having equal rights and duties. Hence to realize his or her capacities, education is must. After education economic independence is also needed. Especially for women economic independence gives status, security and position in life. She can be independent in all sphere of life. She can be able to lead complete life without having any inferiority complex or social fear and anxiety. Hence economic independence is a boon to women to develop her own self as well as the country.

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