



## Women Empowerment and Education

**Minesh T. Patel**

Assistant Professor

Department of Education, (S.F.)

VNSGU, Surat, Gujarat, India

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### ABSTRACT

*Womanhood has been revered in the ancient Indian culture as a manifestation of divine qualities. Womanhood is a symbol of eternal virtues of humanity expressed in compassion, selfless love and caring for others. The Indian philosophers of yore (the rishis) considered that the seeds of divinity grow and blossom in a truly cultured society where women are given due respect and equal opportunities of rise and dignity. The contributions of women rishi in making the ancient Indian culture a divine culture were not less than those of their male counterparts. In the later ages too, women had always been integral part of cultural, social and intellectual evolution of the human society. In spite of the declining phase of medieval era, where suppression and exploitation of women occurred at a faster pace than moral devaluation, women constituted to prove their existence in every dimension of life.*

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### Introduction

The Indian constitution resolves to provide quality education to all and in an effort to fulfill the educational needs of the country specifically for the diverse societies and cultures of the country the government has chalked out different educational categories. Despite serious handicaps of means and resources, the country has built up in the last 50 years, a very large system of education and has created a vast body of men and women equipped with a high order of scientific and technological capabilities, robust humanist and philosophical thought and creativity. Promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, has given prominence to recent efforts.

The principle of gender equality so 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. Gendered poverty is the recognition that women and men face poverty for different reasons and both experience and respond to it

differently. There are many other factors that influence the status of women, such as income, reproductive health and environmental and socio-cultural constraints. Bradshaw and Lineker (2003,in Chant,2003), “ list three factors that contribute to the relative poverty of women: (1) Women generally have fewer opportunities to transform work into income (2) Women still have limited decision-making authority and (3) When women actually do make decisions, they tend to act for the benefit of others first.”

### **Impecunious rural women**

Poor rural women face multiple disadvantages. They tend to have limited access to income, land, water, capital, education and other social services, which can lead to illiteracy, malnutrition, disease, high infant mortality and low life expectancy. Despite these disadvantages, rural women shoulder heavy responsibilities, such as growing and firewood, cleaning the home and looking after their children and though they work hard, the productivity of these women is diminished by the lack of credit, technology and extension services, which could ease their burdens, and socio-cultural constraints.

### **Impecunious urban women**

It might be expected that urbanization would improve the status of women, various studies have shown that impoverished urban women face many of the same constraints as their rural counterparts (Fernandez, 1991). Like rural women, they are affected by low socioeconomic status, lack of property rights, environmental degradation and limited health and educational resources. Rapid urbanization also leads to increased unemployment and underemployment in urban areas, expansion the informal sector and intensifying shortage urban social services, which can no longer meet the needs of a groaning population. The urban poor are at the interface between underdevelopment and industrialization and their disease reflect the problems of both.

### **Empowering Women**

“Women are Honored where, Divinity Blossoms there.” (Yatra Naryastu Pujyante, Ramante  
Tatra Devata)

One of the most important characteristics of the promising and innovative empowerment is that they provide multi-dimensional responses to multi-dimensional challenges.

The United Nations Population Fund defines women's empowerment through five major of self-worth:

1. Women's sense of self-worth.
2. Their right to have and determine choices.
3. Their right to have access to opportunities and resources.
4. Their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home.
5. Their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic orders, nationally and internationally.

Women's economic empowerment requires bold and sustained action to advance women's opportunities and rights and to ensure that women can participate and be heard. To increase their economic opportunities, women need access to more and better jobs, a business climate that supports them in starting and doing business, a financial sector that gives them access to financial services tailored to their needs and greater livelihood security in times of high food and fuel crises. This is especially true for women living in rural areas and vulnerable environments.

Securing women's legal rights, especially to land and other property and ensuring that women's voices and priorities are heard and acted on are vital components of empowerment-securing women's land rights has a direct impact their ability to access finance.

Equal access to education for women and girls will be ensured. Special measures will be taken to eliminate discrimination, universalize education, eradicate illiteracy, and create a gender sensitive educational system, increase enrolment and retention rates 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. Sectorial 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.

**Women's economic empowerment advances by:**

- Advocating for increased recognition, reduction and redistribution of women's unpaid care work.
- Supporting women's entrepreneurship through training in production skills and techniques, business management and functional literacy.
- Supporting research of customary law to help women gain access to land and participate in decision-making form.
- Helping to certify businesses that adhere to equality standards in the workplace.
- Supporting efforts to strengthen women's legal rights to property.
- Involvement of the private sector in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment and expanding partnerships between the private sector and other sector.
- Strengthen opportunities for post primary education for girls while simultaneously meeting commitments to universal primary education.
- Guarantee sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- Invest in infrastructure to reduce women's and girls' time burdens.
- Guarantee women's and girls' property and inheritance rights.
- Eliminate gender inequality in employment by decreasing women's reliance on informal employment, closing gender gaps in earnings and reducing occupational segregation.
- Increase women's share of seats in national parliaments and local government bodies.
- Combat violence against girls and women.

Ultimately, economic empowerment depends both on each woman's individual circumstances and on whether or not her society embraces policies and institutions that they are conducive to empowerment. Local leaders can do a lot to promote an enabling environment for women's empowerment, which on turn can have significant effects on the women's roles in household relationships.

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