

## WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: BE SAFE

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**Abstract:** Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social or economic strength of individuals and communities. It often involves the empowered developing confidence in their own capacities. Gender equality is, first and foremost, a human right. A woman is entitled to live in dignity and in freedom from want and from fear. Empowering women is also an indispensable tool for advancing development and reducing poverty. Empowered women contribute to the health and productivity of whole families and communities and to improved prospects for the next generation. Equality between men and women exists when both sexes are able to share equally in the distribution of power and influence; have equal opportunities for financial independence through work or through setting up businesses; enjoy equal access to education and the opportunity to develop personal ambitions. A critical aspect of promoting gender equality is the empowerment of women, with a focus on identifying and redressing power imbalances and giving women more autonomy to manage their own lives. Women's empowerment is vital to sustainable development and the realization of human rights for all. Educational empowerment: About two thirds of the illiterate adults in the world are female. Higher levels of women's education are strongly associated with both lower infant mortality and lower fertility, as well as with higher levels of education and economic opportunity for their children. Political empowerment: Social and legal institutions still do not guarantee women equality in basic legal and human rights, in access to or control of land or other resources, in employment and earning, and social and political participation.

### Empowerment of Women in India

"Authentic empowerment is the knowing that you are on purpose, doing God's work, peacefully and harmoniously."-Wayne Dyer, American motivational speaker.

India, which is a conglomerate of diverse ethnic, linguistic and geographical features, today is at the cusp of a paradigm change in its growth and its position in the world. However, India is even known for its sobriquet 'male chauvinistic nation'. Indian myths describe our country as 'Mother India' who is a woman that serves as the mother of every Indian. While such a woman looks after every Indian child, women in general are simply being disregarded at the dominant men's best. But we should not forget that history in a witness to the women who have in the past demonstrated unique leadership capabilities. Razia Sultana, Rani of Jhansi Laxmibai, Sarojini Naidu and Indira Gandhi are the examples of women empowerment. The need for Women Empowerment was felt in India long back. Raja Rammohan Roy, the religious, social, and educational reformer and 'the maker of Modern India', demanded inheritance property rights for Women, gave tremendous effort to abolish the defunct custom 'Sati', the Hindu funeral practice. Key figure of Bengali Renaissance, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, championed the uplift of the status of women in India. Jyotirao Phule, Pearicharan Sarkar etc also fought for uplift of women. Later, Mahatma Gandhi had announced at the Second round table conference that his aim was to establish a political society in India, in which women would enjoy the same rights as men and the teeming millions of India would be ensures dignity and justice-social, economic and political.

The architect of Indian Constitution was of the opinion that unless and until women are empowered, nothing was going to bring about any change in their destiny.

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 favour of women. Constitutional Privileges for Women includes Equality before law for women (Article 14), The State not to discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them (Article 15 (i)), The State to make any special provision in favour of women and children (Article 15 (3)), The State to direct its policy towards securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood (Article 39(a)) equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Article 39(d)), The State to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief (Article 42), Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat (Article 243 D(3)).



**Safety for Women (Biggest Challenge in India):** The condition of women in India has always been a matter of grave concern. Since the past several centuries, the women of India were never given equal status and opportunities as compared to that of their male counterparts. The patriarchal nature of Indian society, which even though gives respect to women as they are our mothers and sisters, has greatly hampered both the independence as well as the safety of women. Even in today's times of modernization of society, many working women are still subjected to immense pressure to shoulder the dual responsibility of a housewife and a working woman simultaneously with little or no help from their husbands. It is the same mentality which, some generations ago, used to think of women as mere objects of attaining sexual pleasure and a servant of the husband, who was considered "parameshwar" which literally translates to "supreme God".

**The recent incident in which a 23 year old paramedical student was gang-raped by 6 men inside a moving bus near a posh Delhi locality and thrown off the bus naked after herself and her male friend were beaten and assaulted with an iron rod has undoubtedly shocked the nation to its core.**

#### **Violence against Women in India:**

In India even in the 21st century, women cannot step out of their house at any given time, assured of her physical and sexual safety. Even today in India, women can't move at night in secluded places and even at daytime at crowded places. Hundreds and thousands of incidents of physical / sexual abuse and culturally justified violence happens every day to women in this country. Even at the very beginning of her life, a girl may be the target of sex-selective abortion or female infanticide in cultures where son preference is prevalent. During childhood, violence against girls may include enforced malnutrition, lack of access to medical care and education, incest, female genital mutilation, early marriage, and forced prostitution or bonded labour. Some go on to suffer throughout their adult lives – battered, raped and even murdered at the hands of intimate partners. The 17-year-old girl, who is pursuing studies in fashion designing in the national capital, was attacked on July 13th at Guwahati, Assam when she was returning home after celebrating the birthday of her friend, a teenage girl, at a bar. The girl was subjected to assault and molestation for nearly half an hour before being rescued by some passers-by. This brutal act was carried out in a busy road while everyone was watching as if they were being entertained with some fun. The teenage girl was molested, groped at and beaten up, all in full public view, by a mob in Guwahati, triggering widespread protests in the state. Over 32000 murders, 19,000 rapes, 7500 dowry deaths and 36500 molestation cases are the violent crimes reported in India against women. There are many instances of crime especially against women go unreported in India. These are figures released by the National Crime Records Bureau recently. While Madhya Pradesh is worst off among the states, the national

capital New Delhi continues to hold on to its reputation of being the most unsafe city in India. Delhi takes the top slot for crimes ranging from murders and rapes to dowry deaths and abductions.

It's always better to view a situation in its totality. Many times when we look at a situation, we tend to view only a part of it because we are already biased in our approach. Safety of girls and women in India is a grave issue. First and foremost, exemplary punishment would be the best method of sending the correct message throughout the society. Potential criminals will be deterred once they see that justice is done and it is done within a time framework. Secondly, skewed sex ratio is bound to bring crimes into picture. India needs to be educated that girls should be allowed to live. Advertisements, films, television serials need to portray women as human beings and not just as sex-agents. Women and girls, like all other human beings, exist for many things apart from satisfying and fulfilling needs of the body. If an experienced Chief Minister says that the journalist should not have gone out all alone at two in the night or a fatherly figure from Haryana says that cellular phones should be used by girls with discretion, the feminist brigade is all claws out. They fail to see the simple common sense of a well-meaning remark. Why only girls, even boys and men should avoid going out all alone in the dead of the night. If a girl agrees to consensual sex to her boy friend on phone and goes out in anticipation of the adventure, there are possibilities that the so called 'boy friend' will turn up with two or three extras. This is exactly what has happened in many recent cases. But our discourse tragically remains lopsided. All elderly men of Haryana are not villains. Most of them want girls and women to be safe. Education, correct representation of women in media, transparency in social interaction of the two genders, liberal and accepting attitudes, and most importantly a speedy and strong justice system will go a long way in ensuring safety of girls in our country. -

**Police to shoot film on women safety:** The commissioner ate of police have decided to produce short films on measures to prevent crimes in the city and screen them in theatres. Police have selected three themes-women, senior citizen and traffic-on which the films would be shot. "We have started the process. The films would be of 30-second duration each. We are planning to release these on the raising day on January 2," twin cities commissioner of police R P Sharma told TOI. According to sources, the short films on safety of women would revolve around laws for their protection and preventive measures to be taken at workplace and while travelling. Similarly, the films on 'senior citizen' and 'traffic' would educate people about the initiatives taken by police to protect the elderly and minimize road mishaps respectively. Police would rope in corporate houses and banks to sponsor the short films. The films would cost Rs 1 lakh each, sources added.

Empowerment of women needs to begin with her

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participation in different spheres of life. Education is a great determinant in this regard. To achieve empowerment women have to be educated to be aware of their rights and privileges in a modern society. Dr. Ambedkar tried to break down the barriers in the way of advancement of women in India. He laid down the foundation of concrete and sincere efforts by codifying the Common Civil Code for the Hindus and the principle is capable of extension to other sections of the Indian society. The task is not too difficult to achieve. The honesty and sincerity on the part of those involved is a must. If the lots of women change, definitely it will

have a positive impact on society. Hence, the women's empowerment is the need of the time.



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