

Who Is The Pillar Of Development In India

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ABSTRACT

Women have faced social and economic handicapped for centuries. Despite the rights granted by the constitution and special legislations, the reality is that there are widespread non-implementation of legislations, structural inequalities and power imbalances within the society. The right to equality between men and women is a fundamental right in Indian Constitution. The dignity of women has been made a fundamental duty of Indian citizens and all actions derogatory to such dignity are liable to be stuck down. Gender equality is relatively recent concept and most patriarchal societies have ordained rampant injustices and discrimination against women in the family and outside in everyday life. Women stand at the root of development.

INTRODUCTION

Most of the under developing and developing countries are rich in having the quantum of population but very much poor in having human resources. Again all the developed countries are rich in having human resources but poor in having population. At the stage of beginning of their development, they were also under developed. What was the miracle of their development? It is true and proved that the almost half of the population i.e., their women stood at the root of their development. So it means that more the empowered the women the country will be more developed.

Women form a part of a human resource. Unless this section of the population is given opportunities to prove their capabilities, the development would be imperfect. It was in the ancient period the women were recognised equally with men and in fact they were head of the households and participated equally in decision making like men.

From time immemorial, women have faced the challenges of coping with a male chauvinistic milieu. Even after several years of planned development in India, the status of women in our country is low and their socio-economic conditions are much more depressed than that of men. The debated topic in which Government of India, the non-government organizations and inter-governmental organizations including UN is taking interest on "women empowerment." But it is true that the real development of society is neither possible nor desirable by leaving half of the population in dark and depression. Realizing this virtue Gandhi advocated for the "women empowerment". By supporting women empowerment he writes, "of all the evils for which man has made himself responsible, none is so degrading, so shocking or so brutal as his abuse of the better half of humanity to me, the female folk, not the weaker folk. It is the nobler of the two, for it is even today the embodiment of sacrifice, silent suffering, humility, faith and knowledge". Therefore, he was in favour of educating women and giving them all freedom which men enjoy. He writes, men should learn to give place to women in the country or community where women are not honoured. He even encouraged the women to join politics hand by hand with man but also warned them to be independent in their thinking without simply carry the wishes of their parents or husbands. When the country was still struggling to escape from the clutches of foreign ruler, Gandhiji was thinking about to rescue the women folk from the clutches of parochial caste ridden thinking of Indian male bastion. But this progressive thinking of Gandhiji is yet to be realised even after 72 years of independence of the country. Still women are fighting hard to get their political justice with limited success in Panchayati Raj Institution where the seats are reserved for 33% of the women. The Women reservation bill is yet to be passed in our parliament which seeks to equalize the advantage of women participation in politics at the national level. Therefore, this made Gandhiji's thinking more relevant as we are still struggling to match his wishes to place women on an equal footing in our male dominated society.

The Women's Reservation Bill or The Constitution (108th Amendment) Bill, 2008, is a pending bill in the Parliament of India which propose to amend the Constitution of India to reserve 33% of all seats in the Lower house of Parliament of India, the Lok Sabha, and in all state legislative assemblies for women. The seats were proposed to be reserved in rotation and would have been determined by draw of lots in such a way that a seat would be reserved only once in three consecutive general elections (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women's_Reservation_Bill).

WHAT IS WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT?

Women's empowerment is the process in which women elaborate and recreate what it is that they can be, do, and accomplish in a circumstance that they previously were denied. Empowerment can be defined in many ways, however, when talking about women's empowerment, empowerment means accepting and allowing women, who are on the outside of the decision-making process. This puts a strong emphasis on participation in political structures and formal decision-making and, in the economic sphere, on the ability to obtain an income that enables participation in economic decision-making. Empowerment is the process that creates power in individuals over their own lives, society, and in their communities. People are empowered when they are able to access the opportunities available to them without limitations and restrictions such as in education, profession and lifestyle. Empowerment includes the action of raising the status of women through education, raising awareness, literacy, and training. Women's empowerment is all about equipping and allowing women to make life-determining decisions through the different problems in society.

Women's economic empowerment refers to the ability for women to enjoy their right to control and benefit from the resources, assets, income and their own time, as well as the ability to manage risk and improve their economic status and well being. Empowerment is a multidimensional in its approach which involves basic realization and awareness of women powers, potentialities, capabilities & competences, rights and opportunities of all round development in all spheres of life. Women empowerment is a process which enables women to have access and control over various factors necessary for their economic independence, political participation & social development. Empowerment is complete only when people are left with their own set of choices and it is an ongoing process (Veena Devi; 2005).

While often interchangeably used, the more comprehensive concept of gender empowerment refers to people of any gender, stressing the distinction between biological and gender as a role. Empowerment has mainly **five dimensions viz. economic, political, social/cultural, personal and familial**. Each dimension is very important because the real empowerment of women is increased access to economic resources, more strength, more self-motivation, confidence and courage for entering into the power structure and more say in the family matters. Women empowerment is a gradual and consistent process, which requires the support of many persons who are related to them in many ways.

IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Entire nations, businesses, communities and groups can benefit from the implementation of programs and policies that adopt the notion of women empowerment. Empowerment of women is a necessity for the very development of a society, since it enhances both the quality and the quantity of human resources available for development. Empowerment is one of the main procedural concerns when addressing human rights and development.

Women's empowerment and achieving gender equality is essential for our society to ensure the sustainable development of the country. Many world leaders and scholars have argued that sustainable development is impossible without gender equality and women's empowerment. Sustainable development accepts environmental protection, social and economic development, and without women's empowerment, women wouldn't feel equally important to the process of development as men. It is widely believed that, the full participation of both men and women is critical for development. Only acknowledging men's participation will not be beneficial to sustainable development. In the context of women and development, empowerment must include more choices for women to make on their own. Without gender equality and empowerment, the country could not be just, and social change wouldn't occur. Therefore, scholars agree that women's empowerment plays a huge role in development and is one of the significant contributions of development.

Without the equal inclusion of women in development, women would not be able to benefit or contribute to the development of the country.

Presently we are sure that developed country means that her women are developed and participating equally in every step of development. That is why; we can say that women are the pillar of all developments. If our country wants to go in the same rhythm what the developed countries follow, we have to follow them and give to equal right to the women.

ROLE OF EDUCATION

It is said that education increases women's self-confidence and also enables them to find better jobs and they can work shoulder to shoulder with men. They engage in public debate and make demands on government for health care, social security and other entitlements. In particular, education empowers women to make choices that improve their children's health, their well-being, and chances of survival. Education informs others of preventing and containing the disease, and it is an essential element of efforts to reduce malnutrition. Furthermore, it empowers women to make choices that can improve their welfare, including marrying beyond childhood and having fewer children. Crucially, education can increase women's awareness of their rights, boost their self-esteem, and provide them the opportunity to assert their rights.

Despite significant improvements in recent decades, education is not universally available and gender inequalities persist. A major concern in many countries is not only the limited numbers of girls going to school but also the limited educational pathways for those that step into the classroom. More specifically, there should be more efforts to address the lower participation and learning achievement of girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education.

In India, at present, there are as many as 1578 women's colleges. Along with this, there are five universities exclusively for women. Today the importance of education in capacity building and empowerment is no longer any unfamiliar notion. If basic education forms the preliminary step of women's progress, the higher education is, perhaps, the best medium to ensure social, economic and political empowerment of women in India. When any one talks about women empowerment, the topic involves a large number of issues like economic opportunity, social equality, political representation, participation in governance, property right. The agenda is always to remove the gender-based asymmetry in all events. All the gender-asymmetrical issues in all events against the women can be removed through enlightening of education.

For centuries, under an artificial dispensation, women's intrinsic qualities had been suppressed, and they were forced to live a wretched life. Not being counted as human beings, women did not even have voting rights.

It is only when men and women work hand in hand that the economic and political problems facing Arunachal Pradesh can be successfully resolved (The Assam Tribune, 12th March 2007).

A manual, developed after a year-long intensive research by the Gender Training Institute (GTI) of the Delhi-based Center for Social Research, deals with crimes related to dowry, illegal trafficking and domestic violence.

"The law is the same for both men and women. However, if those who implement it (policemen) lack sensitivity towards women's problems, that gets reflected in their behaviour," say Sucharita of the Purogami Mahila Sangathan, a national women's organization that has been active for close to two decades.

However, Kiran Bedi, India's best known police woman feels that on its own, the manual will struggle to solve problems related to the way the police treat women. Welcoming it as a significant step, she says, "The manual is a very clear road map which tells the trainer exactly what path he should take. However, the problem may lie not with the trainer, or the training method, but with the trainee," she says (The Telegraph 12th July 2006).

Former Human Resource Development Minister Arjun Singh said, it is civil society to understand that a nation can only progress if the women are literate, since the child learns his words from her. The country can only be proud when the rate of literacy among all sections of society is high.

Women's empowerment and their full participating on the basis of equality in all spheres of society are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace (IV World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995).

Former minister M P Murlidhar Bhandare said that it was necessary for the Govt. to take programmes of the female literacy on a war-footing and ensure that adequate funds are put at the disposal of the implementing agencies and non-Govt. organizations for the purpose (The Arunachal Times, 4th September, 2005).

The resolution on the National Policy on Education (1968) stressed the importance of women education in these words, "The education of girls should receive emphasis not only on grounds of social justice but also because it accelerates social transformation".

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (1967) took note of the great contribution made by women to social, political, economic and cultural life and the part they play in the family and particularly in the rearing of children and recommended the following in Article 9 of the Declaration: "All appropriate measures shall be taken to ensure to girls and women, married or unmarried, equal rights with men in education at all levels and in particular.

- (a) Equal conditions of access to and study in educational institutions of all types, including universities and vocational, technical and professional schools;
- (b) The same choice of curricula, the same examinations, teaching staff with qualifications of the same standards and school premises and equipment of the same quality, whether the institutions are co-educational or not;
- (c) Equal opportunities to benefit from scholarships and other study grants;
- (d) Equal opportunities for access to programmes of continuing education, including adult literacy programmes.
- (e) Access to educational information to help in ensuring the health and well being of families.

PHENOMENAL PROGRESS SINCE INDEPENDENCE

Education is a vital channel to prepare people for the kind of effective role mentioned above, to achieve a sound democratic system, with full knowledge of the citizens' duties and rights. The benefits of education are many. Education is the best investment that a country could make, of lasting benefit.

Importance of education of women has been recognized since the achievement of independence. Accordingly strenuous efforts have been made in this area. The following figures in Table-1 and Fig.-1 reveal that literacy among women has increased proportionately as compared with men. Yet much more is needed to bring it with men. Male-Female Gap in Literacy Rate is also shown in Table-1 and Fig.-2 since 1951 census onward. At the very beginning i.e., in 1951 census, the literacy rate was very low in both males and females. That is why the gap was also low. After 1951 census, it was up and down and after all in 2011 it was very low, i.e., only 16.68. But the way of standard of life will be better when the Male-Female Gap in Literacy Rate will be zero.

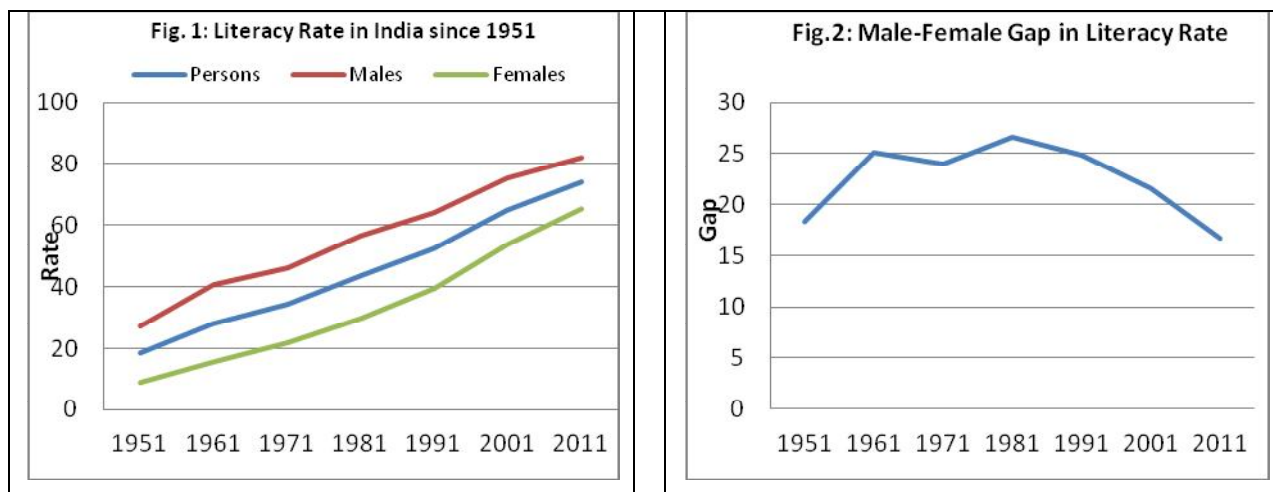
Table-1: Literacy Rate in India since 1951

Year	Persons	Males	Females	Male-Female Gap in Literacy Rate
1951	18.33	27.16	8.86	18.30
1961	28.31	40.46	15.35	25.11
1971	34.45	45.96	21.97	23.99
1981	43.57	56.38	29.76	26.62
1991	52.21	64.13	39.29	24.84
2001	64.83	75.26	53.67	21.59
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46	16.68

Source: Census of India, Various Issues.

Notes: (i) Literacy rate for 1951, 1961 and 1971 Censuses related to population aged five years and above. The rates for the years 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011 Censuses relate to the population aged seven years and above. The literacy rates for the population aged five years and above in 1981 have been shown in brackets.

(ii) The 1981 rates exclude Assam where the 1981 Census could not be conducted. The 1991 Census rates exclude Jammu and Kashmir where the 1991 Census was not conducted.

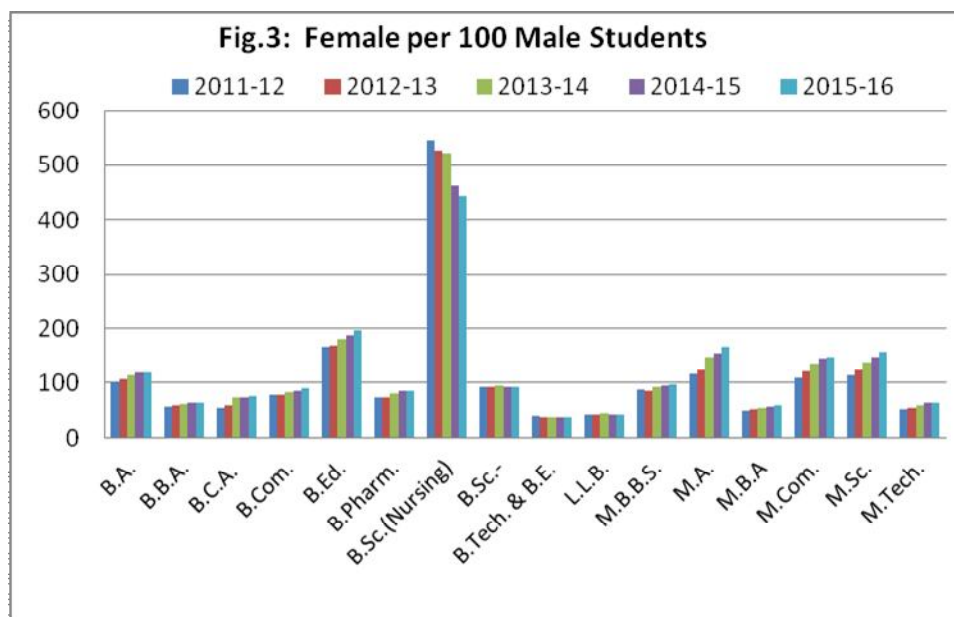


The number of females per hundred males since 1951 to 2011 is depicted in following Table-2 and Fig.-3 in India. From the very beginning the women were much lagging behind the men but in the later part they are getting much progress in the field of higher education. As per All India Survey on Higher Education (2015-16), MHRD, Deptt. of Higher Education, New Delhi in 2016, it is seen that the females have much progressed. The survey was conducted since 2011. The females are now more conscious and more attentive than males. It is well known and well accepted that the females are more sincere and heartfelt than males in every step of life.

Table-2: Female per 100 Male Students in important programmes of Higher Education in Regular mode of education

Programme	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
B.A.	103	108	115	118	118
B.B.A.	58	59	63	64	65
B.C.A.	54	61	75	75	76
B.Com.	78	79	83	86	90
B.Ed.	165	169	180	188	197
B.Pharm.	74	73	82	85	85
B.Sc.(Nursing)	546	527	523	462	445
B.Sc.-	94	92	95	93	93
B.Tech. & B.E.	40	38	39	39	38
L.L.B.	44	43	46	44	44
M.B.B.S.	88	86	93	95	97
M.A.	117	124	147	154	165
M.B.A	50	52	56	58	61
M.Com.	109	122	136	145	148
M.Sc.	113	123	138	147	157
M.Tech.	52	55	61	64	64

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education (2015-16), MHRD, Deptt. of Higher Education, New Delhi, 2016, p.49



CAUSES OF SLOW PROGRESS OF WOMEN EDUCATION

- Economic backwardness of the rural community.
- Lack of proper social attitudes in the rural areas for the education of girls.
- Lack of educational facilities in rural areas.
- Lack of women teachers.
- Lack of proper supervision and guidance due to inadequate women personnel in the Directorate of School Education.
- Lack of proper incentives to parents and children.
- Lack of suitable curriculum.
- Early marriage of girls.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROMOTING WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

- Facilitate the scholarship for every female student.
- Special facilities should be given to the girls students such as transportation, hostel facilities, separate wash room, security inside and outside of the school, college and university.
- Government should formulate and implement policies for stopping drop out of girl students in any educational institutions from lower classes to higher classes.
- Cannon will be framed in such a way that there will be no trace of any type of harassment within and outside institutions.
- Formation of Counseling Committee , who counsel the parents and girls from door to door and inform them the facility given by the governments to the girls students.
- Education Policy should be framed in such way where special package will be more attractive for girl students from the primary education to higher education.
- No financial problems should be felt by the girl student.

8. Establish more female educational institutions in urban as well as in rural areas and as much as possible more female teachers, female instructors and female officers should be appointed in female educational institutions.
9. More women representatives in decision making bodies should be recruited to facilitate the females' education.
10. More women should be recruited in defence sector, which will encourage the women for education.
11. Last of all, the attitudes of the male should be changed and do in favour of women participation in education.

SOME SELECTED OPINIONS OF GREAT MEN

Ex-President Late Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, said, "Empowering women is a prerequisite for creating a good nation, When women are empowered, society with stability is assured. Empowerment of women is essential as their thoughts and their value systems lead the development of a good family, good society and ultimately a good nation".

Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru once said, "To awaken the people, it is women who is meant to be awakened, once she is on the move, the family moves, village moves and the nation moves".

Again, Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru stated once, "Truly no argument is required in defence of women's education. For my part, I have always been strongly of the opinion that while it may be possible to neglect men's education, it is not possible to neglect women's education. The reasons are obvious. If you educate the women, probably men will be affected thereby, and in any event children will be affected."

The father of nation, Mr. M. K. Gandhi in his *True Education* said clearly, "As for women's education I am not sure whether it should be different from men's and when it should begin. But I am strongly of the opinion that women should have the same facilities as men and even special facilities where necessary. The question of the education of children cannot be solved unless efforts are made simultaneously to solve the women's education. And I have no hesitation in saying that as long as we do not have real mother teachers who can successfully impart true education to our children they will remain uneducated even though they may be going to schools. She must have special knowledge of the management of the home, care of children, their education, etc. --"

Again, Mr. M. K. Gandhi stated, "There is no occasion for women to consider them subordinate or interior to men".

Dr. Radhakrishnan has very emphatically stated, "Women are human beings and have as much right to full development as men have. The position of women in any society is a true index of its cultural and spiritual level."

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose said, "The best means of conquering lust are to visualize the mother image in all women, to invest women with the halo and to worship God in the mother form, such as Durga and Kali. When man contemplates God or Guru in the form of the Mother, we learn to see divinity in all women...."

Swami Vivekananda also once said, "There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on one wing. Likewise no nation can flourish keeping half of its population in negligence and ignorance, as women constitute half of its human capital. A modern society cannot bring all round development without utilizing the talent of its women".

If you do not raise the women who are living embodiment of the Divine Mother, don't think that you have any other way to rise. All nations have attained greatness, by paying proper respects to the women. That country and that nation which does not respect the women have never become great, not will ever be in future. You will find in the Vedic and Upanishadic age Maitreyi, Gargi and other ladies of revered memory have taken the place of Rishis. In an assembly of a thousand Brahmanas who were all erudite in the Vedas Gargi boldly challenged Yajnavalkya in a discussion about Brahman. --Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) (*The complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol VII*).

The union of man and women will represent a perfect co-operation in the building up of human history on equal terms in every department of life. (Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941))

According to Vedas, women should have opportunity to attain knowledge of Vedas from all the four corners. —Atharved: 14.1.64.

In Vedas, woman has been called updeshtri of knowledge and this indicates women as teachers.—Rigved: 1.3.11.

From the point of view of reverence due, a teacher is tenfold superior to mere lecturer, a father a hundredfold to teacher, and mother a thousandfold to father.—Mnusruti: 2. 145.

Where women are respected, there the gods delight, and where they are not there all work and efforts come to naught. There is no hope of rise for that family or country where they live in sadness.—Mnusruti.

Atreya's reply that 'In this region several savant sages like Agastya and others, reside. I am coming from the ashram of Valmiki to study Vedas from them.' Clearly indicates women's educational pursuits in ancient India.—Uttar Ramcharitmanas:2.3.

Indeed, if the education is to have its maximum result, it must begin even before birth. The part of education which the mother has to go through is to see that her thoughts are always beautiful and pure, her feelings always noble and fine, and her material surroundings as harmonious as possible and full of a great simplicity. --Aurobindo (1887-1950)).

"Several forms of gender discrimination emerged from a contradiction in the Indian Constitution. It ensures equality for all before law and prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth but it also guarantees freedom of religion – the right freely to profess, practice, and propagate religion. This provision of religious freedom takes away much of the freedom and equality extended to women by the Constitution."

Prof. S.C.Dube, Sociologist

(*Indian Society*, NBT, 1990)

"If the Indian civilization has survived for the past several thousand years, while others there have vanished, it is because of our strong sense of culture and morality which is rooted in our families. Central to this is the role of women. Whether the woman is a wife or mother, she has always played a crucial role. Can we afford to vulgarize her?"

Promod Navalkar, Maharashtra Minister of Transport and

Culture (Replies to S. Balakrishna's question),

The Sunday Times of India, August 6, 1995.

"Education must be illuminated and re-illuminated in the light of the soul.... The new community of girls and women in India must be a community of Light. And Light knows no distinction or creed or community."

Sadhu T.L.Vasvani

"Despite my thirty years of research into the feminine soul, I have not been able to answer... the great question that has never been answered what does a woman want?"

Sigmund Freud

"The history of woman is the history of the continued and universal oppression of one sex by the other. The emancipation of woman is her restoration to equal rights and privileges with men".

Tennessee Claflin

"The history of men's opposition to women's emancipation is more interesting perhaps than the story of that emancipation itself".

Virginia Woolf

“Why are women ... so much more interesting to men than men are to women”?

Virginia Woolf (The Times of India, 8th March 2007)

CONCLUSION

The greater demands for more gender equality and women's empowerment that are being made both socially and politically are certainly not the result of public policy promoting gender equality, but rather emerge from past and present gender oppression and discrimination against women.

Women have all the power and capacity as the men have. But they fail to manifest themselves for different reasons. In men dominated society they get rare chance to express their voice. In some cases father or husband create hindrance in their path. Women are lacking in getting opportunity to present themselves on account of our differentiating them in many ways. We, the parents understand that in many ways daughter gives better results than son but we are bound not to give chance our daughter in many cases to allow them to leave the home for higher studies or work because of our society's norms or fear of unexpected *Gunda element (anti-social element)*. Because of society's norms, we have to pressure our daughters to get married as early as possible. Thus we are destroying the future of our daughters. Again in many cases, we cannot allow our daughters to go outside of our houses in night for urgent work such as to call rickshaw for hospitalizing a member of family during illness. Before changing our thinking, our attitude towards women, the norms of the society have to be changed first and any crime against women should be stopped. Education is the milestone to empower the women. It will be possible when women participations in higher education are enhanced.

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