

# Woman: An Integral Member of the Society

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**Abstract—** Women empowerment is the need of the hour. Education for women has improved rapidly over the past decade in urban areas, whereas in rural areas the situation is stagnant. The reasons are many, but the chief ones are mentioned below. The patriarchal society in India, which prevails even today, is one of the main causes for illiteracy amongst rural women. Child marriage and other social customs stress that there is no necessity of educating a girl as she is going to sit at home. Poverty has also proved a stumbling block in a girl's education. In short, people in rural areas feel that women's education is a total waste of money and time. This article seeks to highlight the causes of rural women's illiteracy and how the various measures taken by the government to aid women in rural areas can brighten the lives of women.

**Index Terms—** Women, Women empowerment, Women education, Rural women

## I. INTRODUCTION

Empowerment is a process of becoming stronger and reclaiming one's own rights. This study seeks to bring in a realization that women comprise an integral part of the society. And when and only when the woman gets respect, recognition and equal status in society, the nation will march on the path of development. This empowerment of women especially those in rural areas will be possible only through education, which will lead women to a life free from bondage and an enjoyment of financial independence. The Government of India has taken various steps for the upliftment of rural women, but awareness should be created among them.

The upliftment of rural women and their empowerment through education will be deliberated on in this research paper. It should also be realized that these women are under the yoke of the patriarchal society, social customs, and crime. The impact of these setbacks is great on the economy as the true potential of women is not realized when they are constrained by the society. India is a land of villages and it is of utmost importance that women in the rural areas be brought to centre stage. Women enrich the economy with their hard labour and work force. But they are often paid less in comparison with their male counterparts. Therefore, there is a vital need of the hour for the nation to wake up and recognize rural women as assets of the nation.

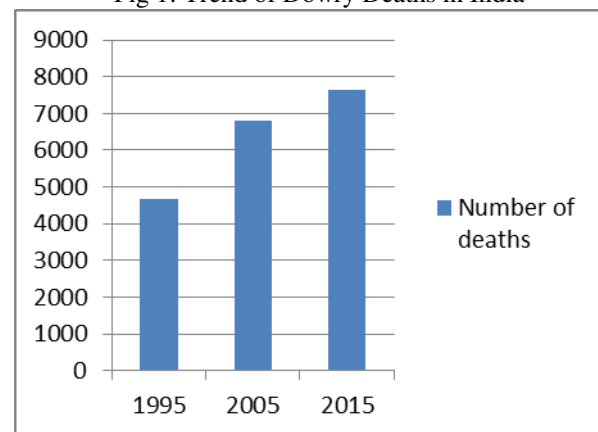
## II. WOMEN EDUCATION

The patriarchal society we live in today, especially in the rural areas, feel that it is better to spend their resources on educating their sons rather than their daughters as a son could earn and support the entire family whereas there was no

second thought given to educate a girl who was going to be married at a young age. Moreover they also worry about the dowry they have to pay to get a girl married. Spending additional money to send a girl to school is seen as a waste of resources.

It's the mark of a backward society-or a society moving backward -when decisions are made for women by men. Dowry has been abolished since 1961, but the system still prevails and along with it the death toll due to it is also on the rise. Statistics show that twenty women die every day as a result of some form of harassment because of dowry.

Fig 1: Trend of Dowry Deaths in India



Source: Times of India, 23rd April 2019

The census taken during 2011 states that literacy rate of the country includes 65% of women and is 15% lesser than that of men at 80%. Education is the vaccine for violence. The violence which still strives today proves in many ways that illiteracy is still on the rise.

## III. CASE FACTS – AN ILLUSTRATION

Meena didn't tell her parents when the older boys started harassing her on the hour-long walk to school from her home in Madanpur Khadar, south Delhi – grabbing her hand and shouting "kiss me" – because she knew she would be blamed, as if she had somehow encouraged them. She was right: when her family found out, they banned her from going back to school, worried about the effect on their "honor" if she was sexually assaulted. The plan now is to get her married. She is just 16 years.

Durga Sharma is a drop out. She is 24 years. She studied up to class VIII. Her mother is illiterate and her father studied up to class IV. Her father works in a government office. During her school days, Durga used to do lots of household tasks which did not allow her to concentrate in her studies. Eventually she failed in class VII and thus dropped out as she had no support from her parents.

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**IV. INDIA’S INITIATIVE**

There are many women welfare schemes put forth by the Government of India. ‘Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao’ is a scheme that ensures the survival, protection and education of the girl child. Under this scheme, the government funds the entire cost for educational purposes of the child. ‘Pradhan Mantri Ujjawala Yojana’ is a comprehensive scheme for prevention of trafficking and rescue, rehabilitation and re-integration of victims of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation.

The One Stop centre (OSC) scheme is a similar scheme which aims to provide integrated support and assistance to women affected by violence, both in private and public spaces under one roof. The OSC scheme also aims to facilitate immediate, emergency and non-emergency access to a range of services including medical, legal, psychological and counseling support under one roof to fight against any forms of violence against women.

**V. REFORMATIVE DISCUSSIONS**

The initiatives taken by the government and various organizations for the wellbeing of women and children are highly appreciated. On reviewing various policies and acts pertaining to women and child development, the researcher insists that further amendments are possible for further improvement, and has called for discussions in select aspects as in the following section:

Right to Education Act- The Right to Education Act passed in August 2009 states that the children from the age of six to fourteen are entitled to free and compulsory education. This RTE act although ensuring education for children aged six to fourteen but the children below the age of six are exposed to child labour. But the RTE failed to acknowledge, and therefore address, the most pressing reason why girls have been unable to go to school in India: housework. The RTE has no provision for banning housework or agricultural work for children.

Table 1: Girls dropping from education

Year	Percentage of girls dropping out
2006	10.3
2018	4.3

Source: Time magazine, 27th June 2020

Dowry Prohibition Act 1961- This act prohibits giving or accepting dowry. One of the loopholes in this act is, only dowry is illegal but ‘gifts’ are legal. Under the new term ‘gifts’, the system of dowry is still in disguise.

Child marriage prohibition Act 2006- This act provides for the prohibition of solemnization of child marriages. The act was particularly ineffective because of its one loophole that it failed to make all child marriages void. Child marriages were only considered void only when the child was taken away from the guardian’s custody. Thus child marriages are still occurring at an alarming rate with the consent of parents or guardian.

**VI. CONCLUSION**

The Right to Education Act, if reformed further will mean more to the economy as the age of girl is increased from 14 to 17 years. The clause under the Dowry Prohibition Act that states that gifts are legal must be amended, so that there can be a decline in dowry harassments and deaths. The Child Marriage Prohibition Act, if amended would make all child marriages illegal and void, and not only the ones occurring without the bride’s consent. An economy cannot grow if half of its significant population is being suppressed due to many reasons. The Government has done a lot on this path, but it is also the responsibility of the society to create awareness among themselves and help the under privileged women to benefit from the focus schemes of the government.

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