

EMPOWER MOTHER FOR AN EMPOWERED NATION

Dr. Reena Parti*

ABSTRACT

Indian society has undergone great transformation from Vedic, post-Vedic to contemporary times, with fight against rudiments of patriarchal society changing its forms. Indian women have undergone suppression and deliverance. Inclusive and sustainable development calls for an emphasis to be laid on the pillars of health, education and economic empowerment. An educated employed mother is better capable of looking after educational and health needs of family and child and also her own health needs. The paper brings out a percentage decline in maternal deaths viz-za-viz certified total deaths and total female deaths but an increase in both maternal deaths per lakh and maternal deaths due to anemia per lakh of population. Though there has been an increase in employment, yet the pattern of employment is indicative towards casualization and self-employment with skewed wage and salary disparities. Share of educated female workforce has exhibited a decline, with percentage share declining at higher levels of education indicating that majority of the females are engaged in the unorganized sector. It concludes that nation's level of happiness is most closely associated with health, wealth and provision of education and calls for directed effort towards creating more opportunities for women, generating entrepreneurial skills for their empowerment.

Keywords: Maternal, Health, Educate, Empower, Entrepreneur, Inclusive-Sustainable Growth.

Introduction

Sarvodaya Society based on 'welfare of all' through transformation in the character of the people by development of consciousness in them; the spirit of adwaitavadiness (followers of the path of in separateness) has been very momentous. The timeless motto of ancient civilization has been of universal happiness and peace. The genesis of Swaraj under British rule laid itself in Su-raj and the end sought for was human happiness, for the improvement in various socio-economic factors governing the nation, and what flowed was making justice and right, and fair play to include humanity as a whole, our goal—a vastly finer and bigger thing than independence. In independent India this aspiration found a voice in the provisions of the Constitution. It contained the declaration to secure to all its citizens—justice, social, economic and political, liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship—equality of status and of opportunity and to promote among them all fraternity, assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the nation. It would bring about empowerment of the people and nation, by instilling in them a sense of personal dignity and self-respect. Liberty, Equality and Fraternity would be secured and protected with social justice, economic empowerment and political justice to all its citizens under the rule of law, in the absence of which it would be existence like an abject amoeba. With such lofty ideas of development that existed in pre-independent India and also that formed the foundations of democracy imbibed in the Constitution of the country, it can be significantly put forth that any development that bypasses half of the humanity, both in terms of opportunities and outcomes, can neither be meaningful nor sustainable.

* Guru Gobind Singh College for Women, Sec-26, Chandigarh, India.

The Indian society has undergone a great transformation from Vedic to post-Vedic and to contemporary times, where we still are fighting with rudiments of a patriarchal society. The Indian women have historically undergone both subjection and deliverance. She has been oppressed and suppressed and also been revered as the deity of the household. The Vedas, the ancient Indian texts that serve as the bedrock of Indian society brought out equality between men and women in this world and that humanity should be mindful of it in all their dealings. Man and woman were envisaged as two bulls yoked in a chariot and women as the stepping stones of families in Taitriya Samhita.

Objective

In line with this idea, that is in search of voice of significant aspect of humanity a 'woman' and significant role played by 'woman as a mother' the paper aims to explore the 'significance of the role' and her empowerment by focusing on the health, employment and education patterns of a 'mother' in independent India, in connivance with significant role played by a woman as a mother. It is ascertained that an educated and an employed mother is better capable of looking after the educational and health needs of her child and family and also of her own health. Hand that Rocks the Cradle Is the Hand that Rules the World. So, it is through an Empowered Mother that we can have an Empowered Nation. An enhancement in their health and skills can make them successful entrepreneurs, empower them and promote inclusive and sustainable development.

Review of Literature

The role of a woman and especially motherhood has been irrefutable in our society. There is ample literature to shed light on the significant role played by woman as a mother and also as an entrepreneur.

Maharishi Vyasa very strongly brought out the role of a mother in Indian society in conversation between Maharshi Jabali, in Brihadharma Purana- "What components are supreme in all three worlds?" *There is no better location of pilgrimage than the Ganges, no greater world sustainers than Lord Vishnu, no one as venerable as Lord Shiva, and no greater master than one's own mother.* The Manava Dharma-Sutra states that motherhood is ten lakh times more important than that of a teacher (upadyaya, one who gives formal knowledge), a lakh times more important than that of a preceptor (acharya), and a thousand times more important than that of a father.

There is ample literature to support this premise both in pre and post independent period. Sarojini Naidu (1906), *Therefore, I charge you, restore to your women their ancient rights, for, as I have said, it is we and not you, who are real nation builders, and without our active co-operation at all points of progress all your Congresses and Conferences are in vain. Educate your women and the nation will take care of itself.*¹ Emphasis was laid on the education of women due to a significant role played by them as the mothers in the society. It was viewed to enhance the social presence of women and enable them to adapt to a changing external situation.² The Indian Factory Commission Report (1908) laid down that, *On the woman rests the main responsibility of producing a healthy race,*³ and in response to the critics who accused them of undermining the future of the 'race' by neglecting children's health and education in their desire for public role, women claimed that they deserved equal rights because they 'were mothers of the race'.

In independent India also, some examples can be cited to establish the point. Women's education and autonomy status has a significant influence on child malnutrition and calls for strengthening of social sector investments in health and education. For sound health of children on which, depends health status of a nation, it is essential to address to the health needs of mothers. Nutrition challenges continue throughout the life-cycle, as mal-nutrition is a life-cycle phenomenon, beginning in utero and extending, particularly for girls and women, well into adolescent and adult life, and span generations. Under-nutrition that occurs during childhood, adolescence and pregnancy has an additive negative impact on the birth weight of infants. Denial of education of comparable quality and content as given to men, deprives the women to access well-paid, formal sector jobs and are captivated in the jargon of wage-differentials. The risk increases for the society as a whole for the next generation of children will be ill-prepared, for nutritional status and educational attainments are enhanced by having better educated parents, particularly the mother.⁴ An increase in the share of females in the reproductive age group would on one hand enhance family's income and on the other bring about their economic empowerment. Being educated they are better enabled to take care of their health and educational needs of their children.

Education, health and economic empowerment would go towards the enhancement of the entrepreneurial skills of a mother. There is ample literature in support of the fact that mothers are good entrepreneurs.

Yael Kochman(2014), *a mom and an experienced entrepreneur and graduate of the first batch ever of Google campus for moms program, after leading her own startup, now the Head of Marketing at Roojoom, a successful startup revolutionizing the way we present and share information online. She has brought out that being a mother actually qualifies you more to become a successful entrepreneur. The top five skills, learnt since having her first child that have helped her become a better entrepreneur are those of working under pressure, negotiation skills, creativity and ability to crowd source, putting ego aside and weathering ups and downs.*

Winson (2014), Motherhood is an amazing teacher that teaches skills and brings out `talents that are as valuable to our littlies as they are to a business' stakeholders. It might be scary but believe it or not, there are some very good reasons that moms can be the successful entrepreneurs they dream of becoming. Seven reasons cited are those of: Clear values that stay front of mind, organisation, negotiation skills, multi-tasking, discipline to follow through, fear of unknown and been there and ability to do anything.

Taylor(2014), has brought out that running your own business is no piece of cake. Neither is raising a family. In the article, 10 single moms, have built successful companies and manage to do both with a mix of intelligence, creativity and sheer determination. For some of these mompreneurs, starting a business was a means of creating a better life for their kids, for others, the kids themselves inspired the business idea. All of them have learned critical lessons along the road to success.

Kauffman Report (2020), put forth that working moms make great entrepreneurs because they already have a similar mind-set when it comes to combining the responsibilities of a household with responsibilities of a paying job.

Sweeny (2021), If broader economy is unable to support working mothers', then they may find entrepreneurship affords them the necessary flexibility and autonomy within their career path.

Hinai (2023), has brought out that mothers can multi-task, negotiate and manage time efficiently, thereby possessing all important skills required for managing a business. Supporting them will not only help them thrive but also the global economy.

These however, call for basic entitlement to women in form of education, health and economic empowerment. For the paper it would be ascertained by accounting for the health and education and employed mother through following indicators.

Indicators

Health

- Maternal Deaths (15-54) years
- Maternal deaths as a percentage of Certified Total Female Deaths
- Maternal deaths as a percentage of Certified Total Deaths
- Maternal deaths per lakh of population
- Maternal deaths due to anemia per lakh of population

Education and Employment

Female Main Workers in the Reproductive Age Group in accordance with their Educational Levels

As far as the health indicators are concerned maternal deaths as a percentage of total female certified deaths registered a decline from 38 percent in 1991 to 36.4 in 2001, to 33.22 in 2011 and 28.6 in 2021. Likewise maternal deaths as a percentage of total certified deaths also registered a decline from 14 percent in 1991 to 12.73 percent in 2021. However, as far as Maternal deaths⁵ per lakh of population is concerned they have registered an increase from 6.61 in 1991 to 10.57 in 2011, to 13.17 in 2021.

Cognizance of female deaths due to anemia in the reproductive age group is also significant for besides, posing risks during pregnancy, anemia increases women's susceptibility to diseases such as tuberculosis and nearly one-third of female infertility in India is caused due to it.⁶There has been an increase in maternal deaths due to anaemia per lakh of population from 0.18 in 1981 to 0.26 in 2011 to 0.49 in 2021. Thus, both per lakh maternal deaths due to all causes as well as anaemia have registered an increase overtime and that needs to be accounted for.

For an assessment of education and economic role played by a mother the data on 'Female Main Workers in the Reproductive Age Group' in accordance to their Educational Levels⁷ has been undertaken.

In so far as the education and employment trends are concerned the share of female workers in the reproductive age group as a proportion of total female workers, has increased at all-India from 77 percent in 1981 to 90.38 percent in 2011 and to 89.9 percent at rural level and 92.23 at urban India, revealing that around 90 percent of the females in the reproductive age-group are employed.

Since 2021 Census Data is not available according to PLFS Report 2020-21, suggests a decline in female (15-59) years LFPR on CWS. It is 25.1 percent and WPR is only 24.1 percent at all India level. Usual Status employment data brings out that 64.8 percent of female workers in rural and 38.4 in urban areas are self employed and 26.2 and 11.5 percent work as casual workers in rural and urban areas respectively. Gender earning gap is most skewed as far as self-employed and casual workers are concerned. Share of regular wage and salaried female workers is very less in rural (9.1 percent) and urban (50.1) percent, thereby not only exhibiting gender but also rural-urban disparity.

The census data on 'Female Main Workers in the Reproductive Age Group in accordance with their Educational Levels' from 1981 to 2011, has revealed a decline in the illiterate female main workers at all-India (82.46 to 60.05) percent, rural (86.81 to 65.65) percent and urban (52.22 to 34.36) percent and a rise in the share of literate women main workers. Yet, the literate working females in the reproductive age-group was less than 50 percent of the total main workers (39.94) percent in 2011, moreover having registered a decline from 2001(41.96) percent, with their proportionate share decreasing with higher levels of education and only 1.02 percent of females having attained post graduate degree at all-India level and 0.29 at rural and 4.02 at urban India. Thus, while 90 percent of females in the reproductive age group constitute the main workers, the share of educated female workforce is less than 40 percent, with it being 31.4 percent according to PLFS, 2020-21, with their percentage share declining at higher levels of education indicating that majority of the females are engaged in the unorganized sector where there exist the wage differentials. This can be accounted to the high drop-out rates at the elementary and secondary levels of education.

Conclusion

Thus, these attributes apparently exemplify the need to strengthen the hand that rocks the cradle and health, wealth and education in trio can assure the strength and happiness and enhance the existing entrepreneurial skills in women. The State of World's Mothers 2003 Report exploded the myth that increased income can guarantee better deals to women who are mothers. It emphasised that education helps mother better monitor and safeguard her own and her child's health, and ensures that her children will receive schooling and participation of women in national government. Further, in accordance to the World Map of Happiness⁸, its status can be improved by an improvement in these three indicators as the nation's level of happiness was found to be most closely associated with health levels (correlation of 0.62), followed by wealth (0.52) and provision of education (0.51). In this 75th year of independence it calls in for realization and more directed effort towards creating more opportunities available for women in terms of empowering them through concerted efforts in the fields of education, employment and health. Every mother counts. The route forward will be different for everyone, but we can recover and move towards inclusive and sustainable growth only if we support mothers and women experiencing economic inequities, and generate for them equal opportunities for employment, decent salaries, and the resources they need for entrepreneurship. Only then the data that shows majority of Indian women workforce engaged as self-employed and as casual workers would be able to benefit. Through an Empowered Mother we can Empower our Nation.

Notes

- Sarojini Naidu said in speech to Indian Social Conference in Calcutta, 1906.
- Thapar, S., 1993, p.83.
- Kumar, S., 1993, p.50
- Behrman J.R. and Wolfe, B.L. (1984), Sharma, R. (1998)
- refer to various reports of Medical Certification of Cause of Death (MCCD). Female deaths in the age group (15-54) years, all causes as specified in the Medically Certified Causes of Death.
- WHO (1980), Scientific Working Group Reports 1978-80, WHO/CDD 80.1 Malnutrition is widely believed to predispose to tuberculosis, but available evidence on this point is only indirect.

- Calculated using Census Table on Main Workers by Age, Sex and Education
- World Happiness Report, 2013, where India has been ranked 111th nation (4.772) and in 2022 it has been ranked 136th with score (3.819)

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