Social Approbation Towards Women Empowerment: A Glimpse

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ABSTRACT
A woman’s contribution to the mankind has been widely recognized in every field of life. Days have been designated for her role in appreciation of motherhood-the divinity to the mankind, her recognition as a person, her quality to man, celebrating the girl child, protection of women in the society, happiness, joy and entertainment for women empowerment of rural women. Social approbation is must to execute various policies framed for empowerment of women. Using scientific information (women scientist Scheme) to improve the lives of women will help unravel the vast amount of untapped potential as it equips them with a scientific outlook and logical thinking ability which would greatly influence the mindset of the society.

Key Words: Empowerment, Social approbation, Laws for women, Science, Innovation.

INTRODUCTION
Women empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social or economic strength of women. Government has mainly followed the welfare route with schemes and special programmes for anaemia, maternal mortality, pregnant and lactating women, and credit, all reinforcing the women’s primary role as mothers. There is a need to see women’s role beyond the reproductive role towards their empowerment, which is possible only through economic empowerment. The National Policy for Empowerment of Women, 2001 adopted in the Ninth Five-Year Plan stated that the ‘Application of science and technology is vital for the advancement of women (Kumar 2008). Technology will reduce household drudgery and provide better working conditions for women, particularly in rural areas, with emphasis on the improvement of the environment and quality of women’s lives at affordable cost (Sangar 2014).

A. Social Approbation of Woman Hood
The importance of woman for man and the society could be gauged from a famous quote from Helen Rowland, “A wise woman puts a grain of sugar into everything she says to a man; and takes a grain of salt with everything he says to her”. A woman’s contribution to the mankind has been widely recognized in every field of life. Days have been designated for her role in appreciation of motherhood-the divinity to the mankind, her recognition as a person, her quality to man, celebrating the girl child, protection of women in the society, happiness, joy and entertainment for women empowerment of rural women and some other days related to or recognizing contributions of women in various fields besides appreciating women and related health issues. Some dedicated days for women are given below:

Mother’s Day-Second Sunday of May
Celebrated in most parts of the world to honour mothers and their motherhood. This day was first celebrated by Anna Jarvis in 1908, for her mother in Grafton, West Virginia. Then she launched a campaign to make “Mother’s Day” a recognized holiday in the United States (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mother’s _Day).
International Women’s Day-March 8

International Women’s Day has been observed since early 1900’s. It was an era of expansion and turbulence in the industrialized world. On the eve of World war 1 campaigning for peace. Russian women observed their first International Women’s Day on the last Sunday in February1913. In 1913, this day was shifted to March 8 and since then, this day has been observed as the International Women’s Day. In 1914, women across Europe organized rallies against the ill effects of war and expressed women’s solidarity. With time, this day has earned more importance so that it is now observed to celebrate achievements of women in economic, political and social fronts in the past, present and forthcoming possibilities (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Women’s_Day)

Equal Pay Day

Equal Pay Day was originated by the National Committee on Pay Equity (NCPE) in 1996 to make people aware of the gap between men’s and women’s wages. It is also strongly advocated same pay to women for performing the same job (www.pay-equity.org/day.html?).

International Day of the Girl child-December 19

International Day of the Girl child-December 19 recognizes girl’s right and the challenges faced by the girls, especially child marriage. It aims to support girls who are already married by providing them with willing options for schooling, sexual and reproductive health services, livelihoods skills opportunity, and take care of domestic violence (http://www.un.org/en/events/girlchild/).

National Girl Child Day in India-January 24

The Government of India declared January 24 as the National Girl Child Day. This coincides with the day of swearing in of Madam Indira Gandhi. As the first woman to become Prime minister of India. This day is observed to take care of female feticide, domestic violence and malnutrition of the girl child in the national interest. (www.indianexpress.com/news/national-girl-child-day...today/1064208/?).

Meena Divas in South Asia-September 24

Meena is the famous cartoon character conceptualized in 1991, in Bangladesh. She owes her recognition throughout South Asia being a communication tool advocating child rights, particularly girl’s right to an education, protection, access to civic amenities and other services. UNICEF has developed the Meena Communication Initiative (MCI) aimed at changing perceptions and behavior that are detrimental to the survival, development and protection of girls in South asia. (http://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/media_3287.htm).
International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women- November 25

Violence against Women and girls is one of the most heinous crimes besides violation of human rights. On this day, we pledge to fight out Violence against Women. The origin of this day goes back to 1960 when the three Mirabal sisters from the Dominican Republic were violently assassinated for their political activity. These sisters were later known as “Unforgettable Butterflies”, and in Latin America, it became a symbol of the crises of Violence against Women. Observation of this day commemorates their lives, recognizes and voices strongly against such violence (http://www.un.org/en/events/endviolenceday).

International Day of Rural Woman-October 15

Rural woman are integral component of rural socio-economic fabric. Observance of the International Day of Rural Woman recognizes their role and ample contribution to enhancing agricultural productivity and sustaining rural development, improving food security as well as eradicating rural poverty, per se. (http://www.un.org/en/events/ruralwomanday).

Provider Appreciation day in USA-Friday before Mother’s Day

Provider Appreciation day is observed on the Friday before Mother’s Day, to recognize the services provided and tireless efforts made by the child care providers, teachers and other educators of young children. Observance of this day was started in 1996, by a group of volunteers in New Jersey (USA) (http://www.providerappreciationday.org/about/).

Amelia Earhart day in USA-July 24

This day is observed to commemorate achievements of Amelia Mary Earhart, an American aviation pioneer as well as an author. She was the first person to fly alone across the Atlantic Ocean and for this; she became the first woman to receive the U.S. Distinguished Flying Cross award. She write two best-selling books like 20 Hrs., 40 Min.: Our Flight in the Friendship(1928) and The fun of it (1932) about her flying experiences. She also founded The Ninety nines, an organization devoted exclusively to lady pilots. She was a visiting faculty member of the Perdue University aviation department in 1935. She inspired many women for choosing aviation as their professional careers. She was also an active member of the National Woman’s party, and supported the Equal rights Amendment. She met with a tragic end during a navigational flight in 1937 over the central Pacific Ocean near Howland Island.

Role of woman as teacher’s in the Society Recognized as Teachers Day-September 5

A number of Days have been recognized to make us aware about various aspects of woman and womanhood, their contribution to society, caring for the society and what is expected from the society for their protection and well-being. There is a need to recognize the importance of woman as a sister, and a dedicate aday for this; of course in Indian culture this has been widely recognized as “RakshaBandhan” and “BhaiDooj”.

B. Legislations and Laws For Women

Several women-specific and women-related legislations to protect women against social discrimination, violence and atrocities and also to prevent social evils like child marriages, dowry, practice of Sati etc are in existence. The recently notified Prevention of Domestic Violence Act is a landmark law in acting as a deterrent as well as providing legal recourse to the women who are victims of any form of domestic violence. Apart from these, there are a number of laws (given below) which may not be gender specific but still have ramifications on women.

Equal Remuneration Act of 1976 provides for equal pay to men and women for equal work.

Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 amended in 1976 provides the right for girls to repudiate a child marriage before attaining maturity whether the marriage has been consummated or not.

The Marriage (Amendment) Act, 2001 amended the Hindu Marriage Act, Special Marriage Act, Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, the Code of Criminal Procedure providing for speedy disposal of applications for maintenance; the ceiling limit for claiming maintenance has been deleted and a wide discretion has been given to
the Magistrate to award appropriate maintenance.

The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act of 1956 as amended and renamed in 1986 makes the sexual exploitation of male or female, a cognizable offence. It is being amended to decriminalize the prostitutes and make the laws more stringent against traffickers.

An amendment brought in 1984 to the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 made women’s subjection to cruelty a cognizable offence. The second amendment brought in 1986 makes the husband or in-laws punishable, if a woman commits suicide within 7 years of her marriage and it has been proved that she has been subjected to cruelty. Also a new criminal offence of ‘Dowry Death’ has been incorporated in the Indian Penal Code.

Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1976 raises the age for marriage of a girl to 18 years from 15 years and that of a boy to 21 years and makes offences under this Act cognizable.

Medical Termination Pregnancy Act of 1971 legalises abortion by qualified professional on humanitarian or medical grounds. The maximum punishment may go up to life imprisonment. The Act has further been amended specifying the place and persons authorized to perform abortion and provide for penal actions against the unauthorized persons performing abortions.

Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act of 1986 and the Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987 have been enacted to protect the dignity of women and prevent violence against them as well as their exploitation.

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 provides for more effective protection of the rights of women guaranteed under the Constitution who are victims of violence of any kind occurring within the family and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. It provides for immediate and emergent relief to women in situations of violence of any kind in the home.

C.   Path Breaking Initiatives By Women in Sugarcane Industry

Around 650 public and private mills are working in India. Most of them are led by men and traditionally, the role of women in industry had been quite meager not only at the management level but even at workforce level. However, today we have about 20-25 women industrialists with international impacts. At the same time, the strength of women workforce in the industry has increased to around more than 10%. Ms. Meenakshi Saraogi, Chairman, Balrampur Chinni mills Ltd., Uttar Pradesh, Dr. Raj Shree Pathy, Chairman and M.D., Shri Raj Shree Sugars Ltd., Tamil Nadu, Dr. Vidya Murukumbi, Vice President & M.D., Shri Renuka Sugars Ltd., Karnataka are amongst the few who have brought glory with significant positive changes to their respective industries.

Ms. Meenakshi Saraogi, the Homemaker-turned-businesswoman transformed a single factory into a coveted Sugar Empire. She took the reins of company in 1982 when she was absolutely clueless about the business. She began her work at field level with bone-rattling journeys on potholed roads of Balrampur, one of the most backward parts of Uttar Pradesh, having virtually no industries, a low per capita income and poor infrastructure; for educating illiterate farmers about fertilizers for raising cane productivity. The first few years were really bad for her with farmers boycotting cane, because they had not got their due of the previous year and much of their stock had remained unsold. She guaranteed them that she would buy every stalk cane they grew and it worked. Ms. Saraogi visited the fields during the sowing and harvest season to discuss seed quality with farmers. She learnt to improve yields through soil and water management and organized the purchase of best of the crop from 50 odd centres in eastern U.P. from farmers, three days in advance, after which a bumpy 70 KM ride brought her to a purchasing centre.

At the industry level, her first step was to raise the efficiency of the mill by promoting efficient employees. She gave her employee 20% bonus instead of mandatory 8.33% and paid all workers in the first week of each month, rather than waiting until the second week as allowed by the government guidelines. She showed exemplary courage in building scale through buyouts of new projects and capacity expansion. Her purchase of Babhnan Sugar (1990), Tulsiapur Sugar (1998) and the Rauzagaon unit of Dhampur Sugar Mills (2005)
added crushing capacity to 11000 tonnes per day. New Projects at Akbarpur, Mankapur, Kumbhi and Guleria, all in eastern U.P. contributed another 31000 tonnes by 2009. Her company has also diversified into an alcohol derivatives and power and has commissioned three distilleries, seven bagasse-based power plants and integrated sugar complexes. She has also extended the integrated mills at Haidergarh, Mankapur, Akbarpur, Kumbi and Guleria produce sugar, alcohol and power. Over 28 years, she single-handedly built Balrampur Chini from single factory that crushed 1600 tonnes of sugarcane a day into a great organization with 10-mill empire with a total capacity of 73500 tonnes today. It is one of the most efficient sugar producers with an attractive 14% net profit margins, the balance sheet is the least leveraged of the top sugar manufacturers.

Dr. Rajshree Pathy, the Chairperson and Managing Director of Rajshree Sugars and Chemicals Limited which is listed on the National Stock Exchange and Bombay Stock Exchange, has three integrated sugar plants in the state of Tamil Nadu and one in the state of Andhra Pradesh producing sugar, alcohol and by-products and co-generating electric power. Her company is major player in the sugar sector with an annual production capacity of 3,50,000 tons of sugar, 35 million liters of alcohol and export of 200 million units of electricity. The Union Ministry of Petroleum nominated her to head the task force to co-ordinate between the petroleum companies and the ethanol manufacturers to arrive at a workable solution for blending 5% ethanol with motor spirit in 2005. Ms. Rajshree Pathy created each of her sugar factories into an invaluable resource centre for the dissemination of scientific agronomics practices. She identified the potential of a sugar factory to contribute to reduction of Green House Gas emissions and establish the first Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) compliant sugar co-generation unit in 2005 and get it registered with the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change) and trade in Carbon Credit under the Kyoto Protocol. She established a dedicated Research and Development Wing, recognized by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR), Ministry of Science and Technology, GOI.

Exclusive women officers have been appointed to R&D and Farmer Training position to disseminate technology to the rural farmers. Women employees are appointed in the shop floor also. The R&D Wing is continuously engaged in field testing new sugarcane varieties in collaboration with the Sugarcane Breeding Institute and the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University. Her company has also adopted a novel Sustainable Sugarcane Initiative (SSI) technology package for wider space cultivation, drip irrigation and chip bud method of planting with active support of the state government to promote mechanization and improve productivity with minimum inputs and wastage. She is recipient of many prestigious awards, the highest being the Padamashree by the President, Govt. of India. She has been recognized as “Global Leader for Tomorrow and Woman Entrepreneur of the Year” by Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts (FRSA), UK and Founding Curator – Global Shapers Community. She has also been awarded with Rashtriya Samman (Tamil Nadu Region) and Most Powerful Women in Indian Business by Business Today.

Dr. Vidya Murkumbi has become a sugar industry legend and is also referred as Sugar Queen, First Lady of Sugar Express and Best Business Person. She has been the first women President of the Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA), (2004-2005). She has also served two 2-year terms as President of South Indian Sugar Mills Association (SISMA), for the biennial term of 1995-1997 & 2007-2009. Her entry in the sugar industry created waves when for the first time, the cane growers and the shareholders set up a sugar mills with 2500 TCD, with 11 MW of Generation in the share market where and investment of Rs 5000 by them appreciated to the tune of Rs. 12 lakhs over a period of five years. Dr Vidya has got seven sugar factories of its own including two sugar refineries in West Bengal and Kandla in Gujarat. Her industry is the second largest supplier to the fuel ethanol with a capacity of 110 million liters of alcohol. In addition, she carried Shree Renuka Sugars Ltd. to the world stage by entering into Definitive Agreements with Group Equipav for an investment of $ 600 million leading to a majority controlling equity in Equipav,
one of the largest sugar/ethanol companies in Brazil, which have with integrated co-generation facility in Sao Paulo State in South East Brazil, having continuous crushing capacity of 10.5 million tons of cane per annum, in addition, Equipav has co-generation capacity of 203 MW.

D. Empowerment of Women Through Scholarships

Inclusive development must involve women since poverty is particularly acute for women living in rural households. There is a need to empower these poor women through science and technology (S&T). Science is the source of progress and the contribution of woman is vital to its future. In India, women constitute about half the population and in nearly all convocations of our universities, women scholars are generally the toppers. In recent years, they have also received the maximum numbers of medals and other forms of academic recognitions; however, due to various circumstances and social responsibilities, they have been left out of the S&T activities further, which needs to be addressed. The problems faced are several but; significantly, most often the break in their careers arises due to motherhood and family responsibilities. The options for carrying over the professional further women are unavailable and due to age limits and qualifications. In an attempt to provide more career opportunities numerous scholarship providers have created options specifically for women. The shortfalls are often attributed to the lack of clarity on the purpose of women’s education in educational planning (Chaudhary 1995).

Many of these programmes have clear goals in mind, such as propelling women into male dominated fields such as science and math and preparing them for leadership positions after completion (Bal 2005). Such scholarships can begrest news for women as they can help to pursue a career that may not have originally considered or to follow your dreams without taking out a lot of loans. Indian government has also taken a keen role in providing fellowships for promoting aspiring women. In this regard, mainly to government funding agencies DST and UGC have different category wise schemes for women who want to prosper in their careers. Under the women scientist Scheme (WOS) scheme initiated by Department of science and technology (DST), New Delhi, deserving women between the age group 30-50 years are being encouraged to pursue research in frontier areas of science and engineering, on problems of societal relevance and to take up S&T based internship followed by self-employment (Moza 2004). This endeavor of DST has made an effort to give women a strong foothold into the scientific profession as bench level scientists that help them re-enter into the mainstream and provide a launch pad for further forays into the field of Science and technology. There are three different categories of scholarship for women under this science in both institutional and non institutional modes. Under the institutional mode, national and state level organizations, recognizes universities, educations and R&D laboratories are considered for grant while under the non institutional mode, S&T based Non-Government, Voluntary and non-profit organizations, working on social issues and having the legal status of a registered society would be considered by the Department of Science & Technology. These scholarships are provided to those who have pursued in the following subject areas: Physical Science/Chemical Science/Mathematical Science/Life Science/Earth Sciences/Atmospheric Sciences or Engineering Sciences. A project proposal is required to be submitted in active collaboration with an academic/R & D institution in the chosen subject area. The three different category scholarships under it are as follows: Scholarship for Research in Basic/Applied Science (WOS-A), Scholarship for Research in S & T-based Societal Programmes (WOS-B) and Internship for the Self-Employment (WOS-C).

WOS-A scheme is aimed to provide opportunities to women scientists (especially those having breaks in careers) and technologists for pursuing research in basic or applied sciences in frontier areas of science and engineering. WOS-A will provide a research grant with an upper limit of Rs. 23 lakh (for Ph.D. or equivalent) and Rs. 20 lakh (for M.Sc. or equivalent) for a well-defined R&D project proposal for a period of three years that includes the fellowship of the applicant.
and cost of small equipments, contingencies, travel, consumables etc., while institutional overhead charges will be given extra. The eligibility criteria considered for this scheme is minimum of post graduate degree, equivalent to M.Sc. in Basic or Applied Sciences or B.Tech. or MBBS or other equivalent professional qualifications having age of 35 years at the time of submission of application. Women already employed are not eligible for this scheme. The amount of fellowship of such candidate will be Rs. 20,000/- PM. Or women scientists having a Ph.D. in basic sciences or M.Tech.or MD/MS, DM/ MCH in Medical Sciences from recognized Universities can apply upto the age of 50 years. The amount of fellowship for such candidates will be Rs. 35,000/-PM. There is age relaxation of 5 years for candidates belonging to SC/ST/OBC and physically challenged category. In this regard, attested copies of supporting will be required. Preference would be given to candidates having a break-in-career due to family reasons and also to Ph.D./equivalent degree candidates. M.Sc./ equivalent candidates may, however, be also considered who have a bright academic record and demonstrable research experience in the form of publications, dissertations, patents etc. there is no last date for applying to this fellowship as this scheme is open for all throughout the year. To apply for this scheme, one has to submit five copies of neatly typed application (in single space and on both sides of the paper) in particular format that could be attained from the official website of DST.

WOS-C scheme aims to train women having qualifications in science/ engineering / medicine or allied areas in the area of intellectual property rights (IPR) and their management for a period of one year. Government is interested in retaining the scientific talent of Indian women seeking scientific pursuits and keen to encourage women to work from their homes, enabling them to draw a good balance between professional and domestic demands. The scheme is being coordinated and implemented by Patent Facilitating Centre (PFC) of Technology Information, Forecasting and Assessment Council (TIFAC) on behalf of DST. The selection of the candidates is done by an all India level written test followed by a rigorous interview. Selected candidates will be given stipend for one year. Training will include one month of an intensive orientation programme on IPR followed by specialized workshops and hands-on-training in agencies engaged in practicing of IPR. The scholarship will be admissible for a period of one year and the amount of scholarship will be Rs. 12,500 per month for candidates having MSc/ B.Tech/MBBS/BPharma or equivalent qualification and Rs. 17,500 per month for PhD/ M.Tech/ MPharma/ M.V.Sc/ MS/MD or equivalent. The eligibility criteria considered for this scheme is minimum of M.Sc / Ph.D. in physical sciences, chemical sciences, life sciences or allied areas; or Bachelors or Masters degree holder in engineering, medicine, pharmaceutical science,
veterinary science or allied areas. A candidate should not be more than 50 years. Selection will be through an all India written examination and interview. The written test will be conducted in four cities namely, Chennai, New Delhi, Kolkata and Pune under the supervision of respective Coordination Centres. Similarly, interview of successful candidates in the written test will be held at these centres.

Post Doctoral Fellowship for women candidates

Fellowship by University Grant Commission (UGC) is to provide opportunity for advance studies to women under the scheme head of “Post Doctoral Fellowship for women candidates”, previously known as “part time research associateship for women”. This scheme focuses on accelerate talented instincts of women in advance studies and research especially to unemployed who want to excel further in their studies. The eligibility criteria for this scheme are women having Ph.D. degree in the relevant subject with publications, having age below 55 years for general and 60 years for reserved categories (SC/ST/OBC/PH/Minority communities) and academic qualification of 55% marks at UG level and 60% of marks at PG level for general/open category and 50% at UG level and 55% at PG level for reserved categories (SC/ST/OBC/PH/Minority communities). The tenure for the scholarship is for five years. The grant will be provided for different heads as mentioned: fellowship of Rs 25,000/- PM for two years and Rs 30,000/- PM after two years, contingency of Rs 50,000/- P.A., 10% of post doctoral fellowship to the host institute and Rs 2,000/- PM for the escort member in case of physically handicapped. The selection committee will scrutinize the work proposal submitted under this scheme. All such government women scholarships basically provide a platform to maximally utilize their skills, knowledge, and creativity towards science leading to a step ahead in fulfilling their dreams. Such schemes initiated by the government will motivate the women scientists to excel in their desired fields, thereby, helping in development of the country.

CONCLUSION

Rural women make significant contributions to household production, economy and food security. Along with drudgery, they also face problems related to health and energy efficiency at the household level. Science and its awareness is the key to the growth of any nation, as it improves the well-being of the population. Equal opportunities are essential for the economic growth of a country. Using scientific information to improve the lives of women will help unravel the vast amount of untapped potential as it equips them with a scientific outlook and logical thinking ability which would greatly influence the mindset of the society. Empowering rural women would ultimately lead to empowering the nation.

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