

# Women Empowerment (An Awakening) - Social and Spiritual Perspective

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**Abstract:** *A women empowerment is important. Present time we are growing in all site, but not all aspect of Human beings / women situation. We have to change our thinking pattern, social aspects and as an educated person, wellbeing human being always keeps mind these things that what about another right – Socially ..... Spiritually? Social aspects help in living and spiritual aspects make us good man. Through following such path of life there is no place of discrimination. Our inner soul always says we are making for each other.*

**Keywords:** Women, awakening, freedom, spirituality

## 1. An awakening

The journey of thousand miles begins with a single step.  
**TaoTe Ching**

The dictionary defines an “awakening” as a recognition, realization, or coming into in awareness of something our current situation call upon us, whoever we are, to awaken so our highest human potential. If we awaken and live life with spiritual values, we will experience that we are all members of one human family irrespective of gender, rare or creed. The dangerous consequences of our present perception and priorities demand that we awaken as a matter of extreme urgency.

Throughout history, exceptional people have reminded us of humanity’s essentially noble and loving nature. Whether Buddha, Lord Mahavir, the Prophets of Judaism, or Jesus; whether Guru Nanak and the Gurus of his line or the Sufis and the prophets of Islam, whether Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Nelson Mandela, or other beacons of the highest human behavior – indeed any of the myriad exemplars of a spiritualized humanity – such people have illumined the human beings essential loving nature. Their lives inspire us to liberate ourselves, like them, from self – interest and cruelty. They invite us by their example to awaken to our noble potential and build, step by step, a spiritualized, positive world our daughters need us to awaken. They need us to react to this present outrage of confusion and wrong thinking. They need us to rethink our social norms and traditions. They need our courage, commitment and clarity and most importantly our love; they need us to treat them as equals to their brothers.

Let us pledge to be catalysts of change. Let us pledge to live awakened and enlightened human beings and nurture, cherish and empower the women in our own sake as well. As we instinctively know all living beings are intricately interconnected. There can be no act of cruelty that does not ultimately reflect back to us and like wise the effect of every act of kindness and compassion ripples back to us.

If we could find it in our hearts to treat our daughters as equal to our sons, the universe would shower its blessings on us. And our daughters would return that love many times over. This attitude of love and acceptance has the power to

transform both us and our society. Who is responsible for the suffering of our women? And what is the solution? Why do women hurt women?

Although the impression given is that women are oppressed by men, this is not always the case. As people are quick to point out there are many cases where women are the instigators or perpetrators. Why do women, who have themselves faced inequality and oppression, turn around and hurt other women? Let us examine several scenarios which we see occurring the lives of women every day.

Why does a poor, uneducated woman willingly choose to eliminate her fourth daughter? Perhaps because all her other “choices” have been taken away from her; her husband refuses to take contraception and does not allow her to either; she cannot afford to bring up another child; she cannot afford another dowry; she has “had it” – had enough with the incessant cycle of childbirth; nursing and rearing over which she has no control; she is physically exhausted after years of bearing the double burden of working outside the home and taking care of her family. In her mind, an abortion is the only choice she has.

Choice in the absence of autonomy is no choice at all. Why does a wealthy, educated women, choose to abort her daughter? Unfortunately, neither wealth nor-education necessarily equate with high self – esteem. Perhaps this women has been brain washed from childhood to accept the “reality” that sons are necessary to carry on the family line and inherit the wealth perhaps this women does not have the self – esteem required to resist pressure from her husband and his family to “keep trying till we have a son”.

Young women are not born with high self-esteem. Self-respect, self-confidence and self-esteem are precious gifts which her parents and society have the power to either give to her or withhold from her.

Why does some mother-in-law oppress their daughters-in-law?

One example of a young women are 31 years; ever since the birth of her daughter, her mother-in-law hasn’t stopped be rating her, pointing out that all her husband’s cousins have sons. The mother-in-law insists that to perpetuate the family

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name, she to must have a son. “She tells me to have an abortion if I conceive a girl” she says. Her husband agrees with his – mother. What does she herself want? “I don’t know”.

Women hurt women for the same reason that prisoners exploit other prisoners, and beggar children bully other beggar children on the street. It is our human nature that if we are needy and can do anything to get a little more – an extra roti, a few rupees, a little more status, power or leisure – we will do it within a family, if all the women are economically and socially dependent on the same male – whether the head of the house hold is a father, a brother or a son – and they all have to compete with each other for security, recognition, attention and love, this situation may naturally make them into each other enemies.

Besides, brain – washing and social conditioning are very powerful forces. In a patriarchal society woman are victims of tremendous social pressure to toe the line. In the days of sati, who was if who shaped a girl’s thinking from childhood to accept the “reality” that to become a sati was her ultimate destiny? It was her own mother. Who dressed the young widow as a bride and led her to the funeral pyre to be burnt alive with her husband? It was the women around her, and they did it knowing that one day this could be their own destiny. Women hurt women because they have been conditioned to accept their own inferiority from their very infancy. This is what makes patriarchy work –gaining a woman’s – complicity in her own inequality.

When a bird has been kept in a cage from its infancy and then many years later the cage door is opened, what are the chances the bird will take the opportunity to fly? She may hop out, but then will hop back into her comfort zone, even if that means being imprisoned all her life. For such a bird, the prospect of soaring is not liberating; it is frightening.

This is exactly how we have crippled so many of our women perhaps instead of judging them; we can find it in our hearts to have compassion for them, or at the very least, understanding. For they are victims of the system as much the women they victimize.

## 2. Responsible for these Crises

When we hear about the great injustices perpetrated on women, perhaps our first reaction is to apportion blame. Who is responsible, we want to know? What are the law enforcement agencies doing? The answer to the question – who is responsible? – is not what we might expect.

To begin with; there are very few women in law enforcement. Moreover, law enforcement – the police force and the judiciary – consists of people who are drawn from society; they have the same beliefs as the rest of us. There have been numerous occasions when a policeman has turned away a hapless woman who has come to file a complaint – about dowry torture, telling her kindly that a women’s place is with her husband; telling her she should try to reconcile her differences with him.

One study conducted to assess the attitudes of judge towards violence against women found that a very large percentage of judges believed that there were certain occasions when it was justifiable for a husband to slap his wife/ that the preservation of the family should be a women’s primary concern even if she faces violence; that “provocative” clothes are an invitation to sexual assault; and that dowry has an inherent cultural value. These beliefs are deep – rooted in our society.

Law enforcement blames parents for the dowry system; when parents themselves give and take dowry freely, they say, it is very hard to – enforce the law.

And law enforcement blames both parents and doctors for the crisis caused by sex – selection if it is not easy to enforce the law, they say, when the decision to abort a girl is freely made by her parents and the doctor is a closed room in a medical clinic.

Doctors, in turn blame the parents who come to them with the request, many doctors believe they are fulfilling a social need they believe that if they did not perform the abortion the parents would get it done from some other doctor anyway; and they believe that the life of the girl; if she were allowed to live would be miserable. Many doctors believe they are being merciful to both the parents and the unborn daughter by fulfilling the parents’ wish to abort her.

Parents turn around and blame society. They say societal norms, traditions and pressures have put them in such an untenable situation that they have no option but to get rid of their daughters.

When we come to full circle? The answer to the question – who is responsible? Is not pleasant, we, the society - are responsible. When we point one finger, there are three pointing back to us. We are the parents, neighbours, doctors, policemen and judges who must change our – values. We are the teachers who must teach our children about equality between the sexes. We are the politicians and administrators – who must implement the laws. We are the members of the media who must raise public awareness and bring about change. We are all responsible.

### Solution:

Since we are all part of problem, we must all be part of the solution. The solution lies in the choices we make – as individuals and as a society. Human beings have a God – given gift, a quality called ‘Vivek’, or discrimination; the ability to distinguish right action from wrong. Let us use this sense of discrimination to choose right action. Let us choose to be contented, compassionate, law abiding and loving human beings.

To make moral choices, we may have to forsake some of our traditions, undoubtedly, this will not be easy. Our traditions and beliefs are so deep – rooted, we tend to carry them with us even when we immigrate to a different country. Today female feticide is prevalent in the Indian community in western countries like – the USA, Canada and the UK. And NRI Indians who come back to India to find brides command the highest rates in the dowry market.

**Social Aspect**

**Illiteracy:** Illiteracy is a major problem today. Even after defining a literate – person to be anyone who can just sign his or her own name or write a simple sentence, according to the last census. Data shows the gender gap. Women considered to be literate have just a primary school education or less.

Our county offers “free and compulsory education for girls until the age of fourteen” and much progress has been made in this area. The difficult issue is keeping girls in school. Sometimes girls are withdrawn from school to fulfill family responsibilities; fetching water, collecting fuel, wood and fodder, caring for siblings, cooking and cleaning. Girls tend to perform more chores than boys. So the benefit of keeping a daughter at home is greater. There is also the perception that educating a daughter will not benefit her parents. In addition, parents worry that if a daughter gets too educated it will be more difficult to find a match for her, because her husband will have to be better educated than her. Often girls are not allowed to attend school to protect their honour. Some parents are reluctant to allow their daughters to be taught by male teachers or to attend schools that are not separated by gender. The distance from home to school is also seen as a risk to a girl’s safety.

**Child Marriage:** Almost half (47%) of our daughter are married before the legal age of 18. There are many reasons cited for this; unmarried girls are unsafe; younger girls require less dowry; it is easier to find grooms for younger girls. In some regions, social pressure and old customs require girls to marry early and it is very difficult for any one parent to defy the system.

**Health:** Present time also women die in childbirth. Poor access to health – care is another reason; less than half of all births in the county are supervised by health care professionals. Indian women are often the last to eat in their homes and often unlikely to eat well or rest during pregnancy. Most of the pregnant women are anemic. Ill – health during pregnancy is compounded by illiteracy and ignorance, because a large percentage of pregnant women are extremely young teen agers. As a result, they give birth to low weight babies and tend not to know how to feed them. Malnutrition, anemic is a common problem under 5-year children.

**Financial dependence:** Majority of women work throughout their lives, in fact, many households would not survive without the income they bring in unfortunately however, much of a woman’s work is “Invisible” because it is not considered important by those around her and not recorded and acknowledged in the national workforce statistics. Women work unpaid work whole life, work is invisible. Because they work at home, even the activities that contribute towards a living are considered part of domestic work. In his book, development as freedom, Noble Laureate Dr. Amartya Sen expresses this point very clearly. Many women are not allowed to join the work force because it is perceived to diminish the family’s status in society. When women do work because the family needs the income,

they work both in the home and at a job outside the home, and their working hours are, in effect, double.

**Social Conditioning:** In our country, most woman are materially, financially and socially dependent on men, and society offers them few alternatives she is conditioned from childhood to be docile, obedient and domestic. She is excluded from decision making in every aspect of her life. Her objective in life is to cater to the comforts of the family as a dutiful daughter, a loving mother, an obedient daughter-in-law and a faithful, submissive wife. All these expectations are due to our tradition, customs and more reveal is required for this.

**Son Preference:** India is in large part, and has been for a long period of history, a patriarchal society. We have always favored our sons. Despite all the economic progress we have made, despite all the progressive education we have received, one thing has not changed; we have a deep-rooted tradition of son preference.

Sons are an asset in Indian society, sons are treated as asset. First, sons continue the family lineage. If a family has only daughters it implies for many people the end of the Vansh, the end of the family line. Also, unlike daughters, sons inherit and add to family wealth and property; this is crucial for those who have either property or a business to pass down and want to “keep it within the family”. Sons were a source of pride and strength; daughters were a source of vulnerability. The desire for sons is not restricted to men alone. A woman wants sons too, and not just for the reasons mentioned. In our society, a women’s status increases when she gives birth to a son; increases further when her sons reach marriageable age and increases even further when she becomes a mother-in-law.

**Daughters are A Liability and Dowry:** Daughters are considered to be a liability and often an unbearable burden. Traditionally, daughters are believed to be ‘Paraya Dhan’ – another’s wealth. Many parents believe they feed, clothe and educate daughters only to have that “Investment” completely taken over by the in-laws, because even if the girls is earning, her parents have no right to that earning. There is an oft-repeated saying that “bringing up a girl is like watering a neighbor’s garden”. Percepts the greatest challenge is that daughters are a huge financial burden, especially for the poor and middle classes, because of the clipping expense of marriage and dowry.

**The Spiritual Perspective:** We all know how invaluable women are to the natural order; we know their current condition and we have seen the social consequences of our actions towards them. The spiritual consequences of our actions, on the other hand are far more subtle. Saints and great vision arise of every religion; in every age have given us essentially the same unequivocal message again and again.

There has always been a balance in nature. This natural; God given balance in the universe comes from pairs of opposites complementing each other. Light and dark, day and night, young and old, aggressive and passive, masculine and feminine, man and woman all are important to this balance

and wellbeing of all creation. Human beings have both masculine and feminine characteristics, and men and women together contribute to a balance society.

Why did God make some of us men and others women?

Because a woman's love is one image of the love of God, and a man's love is another image of God's love. Both are created to love, but each in a different way. **Mother Teresa**

### 3. Conclusion

Human life is precious. Life cannot go smooth without men and women both are dependent to each other. Such dependency helps to other because at that time men and women are not 2 (two) they are more than 11 (eleven). Such precious, pious thought helps to live life co-operantly and well beings to each other and whole world.

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