

Women's empowerment is the key to development

"I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and beheld that service was joy." – Rabindranath Tagore, Nobel Laureate for literature, 1913

Dear Editor,

Raman Kumar describes the plight of migrant Bihari workers in his Editorial under a title, "Migrant in my own country." in October issue of the Journal. There under a subtitle, "Bidesia: Migration in the folklore of Bihar & the Mahatma Gandhi's Champaran Satyagrah," he refers to wait of a woman whose husband does not return back from Calcutta (Kolkata), one of the initial industrial hubs of the British colony and the capital city of Bengal.^[1]

However, what needs to be realized is that Kolkata was a leading business hub in South East Asia region much before the arrival of the British ships on Indian shores in early 17th Century. In fact, the British came here initially just to do business with us. Weavers of the Subah of Bengal (which then included provinces of modern-day Bengal and Bihar) manufactured such a high-quality muslin, satin, and other textiles that these finished products were world famous, in great demand across the globe and the Europeans made a profit by their trade.^[2,3] The English East India Company was incorporated by royal charter on 31 Dec 1600 and then acted as part trade—organization and part nation state and reaped vast profits from Asia and paid rich dividends to its shareholders. Therefore, to state that the British founded industrial hub here, is an incomplete point. On the contrary, to increase their profits, these businessmen cum army holders subdued, looted, torn apart fabric of the native society, polity and economy in such a way that still we visualize its scars on the geography and psyche of the world.

Moreover, the editorial refers to Mahatma Gandhi. Here we need to realize that Mahatma used to vouch for women empowerment.^[4] But nowadays we are lagging behind in this indicator.^[5] At the beginning of the last decade, United Nations Development Program released inequality adjusted Human Development Index for Indian States. Here State of Bihar does not fare well.^[6] There are several reports in various academic journals that lockdown has had a detrimental effect more for women workforce. As most of them work under informal sector, they are hit the hardest by economic downfall. The author

correctly states that Bihar has been cradle of our civilization. But it's the woman who nurtures the human species at it's the most vulnerable and the most formative times. Therefore, by leaving them behind, we can't progress much. Providing them education, skills, jobs, dignity, and opportunities is key to our development.

All the societies have their own strengths and weaknesses. And there is no readymade formula to solve those challenges. Therefore, every generation of individuals has to look around and then fix what ails the system. In this spacetime of our era, social inequality, marginalization of certain groups, denials of genuine rights to a section of society and widening gap between the rich and the poor is what is the most visible feature during this pandemic. All the efforts should be made to reach out to those excluded sections.

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Letter to Editor

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We accessed all the webpages at the time of submission of this Letter to the Editor.

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