

Saraswati

There was a time when a woman worked in the fields. She worked alongside the men of her family, sowing, harvesting, carrying and doing the work that was necessary to keep the household going. It was simply what a woman did.

The Industrial Revolution changed the nature of work and women entered factories and mills, working long hours and earning wages. Their labour now had a monetary value. A woman was not only contributing to the household; she became an earning member.

Then came Education, girls went to school and college. They got degrees, entered professions and started earning their own money. This is, without doubt, progress. Education has opened doors that remained closed to generations of women.

But perhaps there is a question we do not ask often enough.

Why do we educate women?



Is Education Empowerment?

work. She has attended meetings, met deadlines, solved problems and earned a salary. She comes home and the second part of her day begins. Dinner has to be prepared, the house has to be managed, the children need attention, the clothes need to be washed and the elderly parents need care. Her husband may also have worked through the day, but somehow the responsibilities waiting at home still seem to carry her name.

No one may say that she is less important. In fact, everyone may proudly say,

“She is a working woman.”

Is it because we finally recognised that a woman has the same capacity to learn, think, question and create as a man?

Or

Is it because an educated woman could get a better job, earn a better salary and become another source of income for the family?

If education was meant to empower her, then perhaps we should ask what happened after she got the degree.

Consider a woman working as an IT Professional, who has spent the day at

She was taught math at School. She knows how much she earns every month. ***But does she know***

- what her family owns?
- Where is the family's money invested?
- Does she understand insurance, taxation, retirement planning, property, loans or investments?
- Does she know what she is legally entitled to?

And, more importantly,

does she feel confident enough to make an important financial decision on her own, without first turning to her father, husband or brother?

Now, imagine a young man living and working in London, who marries an educated girl from India. She leaves behind her familiar world, moves to London after the wedding and, in time, finds a job of her own.

She is happy. She is earning. She has built a little world of her own in a new country.

Then comes the end of the month. The salary has come in. They sit across the dining table, plates still in front of them, the evening quiet around them. Her phone shows the credit. She looks at it for a moment, perhaps with a small sense of satisfaction — she has earned this. He looks at it too.

Then the conversation turns to money. How much should be invested. How much should be kept aside. Where it should go. The decisions have already been made. The money she worked for has already found its purpose.

She asks how much he earns. Where his money goes. What he has invested and what he plans for their future.

There is no clear answer.

His earnings remain his own, while hers are openly discussed, divided and planned. And somewhere between the two, what was meant to be an equal partnership in marriage has quietly changed.

She earns. She brings it home. And someone else decides where it goes.

The is a question we do not ask often enough –

Is Education Empowerment?

And this is where Saraswati makes us pause.
SARASWATI –

the goddess of knowledge, learning and wisdom -

A WOMAN

Men worship a woman, bow before her and seek her blessings. Is Saraswati worthy of prayers only when she is a goddess?

Saraswati is the daughter who has studied, the sister who has grown alongside us, the wife who has built a career and the mother who has spent a lifetime learning, managing and making decisions for the family - the woman sitting across the dining table. Perhaps that is where the contradiction becomes difficult to ignore.

***Ideologically,
the feminine
is
worshipped.
But, in
reality, the
feminine is
often
expected to
yield.***

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