

Role of Education in Women Empowerment – A Study on Indian Context

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ABSTRACT:

Swami Vivekananda once said: “education your women first and leave them to themselves; then they will tell you what reforms are necessary for them”. Educating women can play a very important role in overall development of a country and it can change the position of women in patriarchal society. It is said that education and knowledge is the key to any obstacle. Education can modify the behavior in every aspect. It gives the understanding of good and evil, change the prospect of looking into a matter in every angle.

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I. INTRODUCTION:

Education is considered to be an important step toward women empowerment as it allows them to handle the challenges to uplift their position in society. Education allows a woman to become strong not only mentally but physically as well which can achieve by giving her knowledge about how to maintain a good physical health, which also benefits her mental health. In each and every field of life like teaching, nursing care, Social work, medicine, Women proved to be better than men. Women is a great contributor towards the economic, educational, family, spiritual moral and aesthetic growth. Education and literacy empower women. To encourage the education of women and to eradicate gender bias in providing knowledge and education to them government has established schools, colleges and universities for women in every state.

Education is believed to be one of the basic requirements and according to our constitution it is a fundamental right for the citizens of any nation. Education helps in reducing the level of inequality as it provides people the ability to understand their rights and become independent. Women is in need of this as they tackled discrimination in every field.

In order to make India into a developed country educating society and more importantly women are in need. In Indian society's awareness, equality and growth can be achieved only through the development of women and by supporting them. It is high time to change the traditional thinking of society for women and think differently. An overall development of women is essential to make India a fully- developed country. As our women socially, politically and economically strong, they should be paid equal wages as men for the same work. Many constitutional amendments and reformation tend to some changes in the life and role of women in the society. If we look into the history of Indian women, they have suffered a lot more ups and downs. But in the Vedic age women had the same status as that of man and had a powerful position in the society. They received equal status like men in politics and economic arena. They too enjoyed the equality and right over the ancestral property also. Women had a high position in the Vedic period but the condition of women gradually changed after that.

In the Indian society woman plays varied roles as of teacher, wife, mother, homemaker and now-a-days co-bread winner and administrator etc. As a developing country, India depends a lot on its vast potential of human resources. If these resources are properly enhanced and utilized, the country will definitely progress efficiently, effectively & rapidly. Women builds up the most important part of the human resources of the nation and they contribute a lot in constructing up a strong and powerful Nation. But their contribution will bring more effects when they are properly educated and are able to eradicate the myths governing their lives, which have kept them in a state of backwardness and underdeveloped. Women build up an important segment of the society and perform various important roles in the family and society. Education of women is essential as it help them to indulge themselves in the developing process and to also prepare themselves for participation in other development process from which they as well as the society will get benefit as a whole.

So, when education of women is considered to be an important indicator of the development of the country, the women should be given education through various agencies of education.

The only way a society can achieve an economic growth and development is to just through education but especially education among the women's citizens. But it's unfortunate to see that still large women folk of our country are literate, backward, weak and exploited. Education also reduces inequalities and act as a means of improving their status within the family. Only if women contribute to the best of her capacity and ability then India can become a developed nation which is possible when she is educated, empowered and supported in the society. Not only feminist but male figures should also contribute to uplift the position of women in society and should help in bring a visible change regarding women of India.

II. ROLE OF EDUCATION IN EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

In 1990, the world declaration on Education of All stated that the most priority factor is to ensure availability and to improve the quality of education of girls and women and to eliminate every obstacle that poses threat to their active participation. Education put forward new opportunity and choice for women. It is the way to overcome any oppressive customs and traditions that have restricted girls and women for any development and hence degraded their status in their families and in their societies. Beyond being the basic human right, the education of women is also most critical factor in reducing fertility levels and infant mortality.

Education improves the thinking, mind, thoughts, imagination, power, and principle in various fields which help in easy to survival and to achieve knowledge through education .Empowerment of women brings equal status to women, opportunity and freedom to develop her. Women become self-sufficient in every aspect. They become self-dependent and she does not depend on her father, husband ,son or brother. Equal rights to women in socially, politically, culturally, gender, religiously manner help to fight away any hurdle they face in day to day life. Education allow them to take decision according to their choice .Education teach them that how to differentiate what is wrong and right .Education help them to stand strong them on their own feet.

Education will help women to defense against crime, social devil, sexual harassment, marital rape and mental stress of society etc. When women are qualified enough with skills then they are helpful for family to earn money and hence are able to develop the economy status of family and also for nation. Women can also help to get rid of problems like India's high maternal mortality rate, high rates of gender violence and other crime against women child sex abuse, female feticide, implement family planning and other schemes etc. Education helps to enhances the life of women and to grow upward. To make women accessible to vocational, technical and professional education at all levels, breaking gender stereotypes is important for a country.

III. NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION (1986):

National Policy on Education -1986, placed Infront that the education is important for women empowerment, Educational institution has been instructed to take up effective action programs for further women's development.

Provision of education opportunities to women has been considered an important step since independence which promotes national development and functions the democratic order properly.

To look forward for the equalization of women's opportunities following 10 aspects are taken into consideration.

1. Access to Education and Quality Learning:

(a) Water, fuel and fodder: In rural areas and villages' women and girl children are given the responsibility of collecting water, fuels and fodder for their family. And so, they are unable to attend the school and educate themselves. Therefore, it is necessary to make these basic requirements easily available to the residents of these areas.

(b) ECCE (Early childhood care & education): This impacted on the approach in the learning at schools should be strengthened. The girl children of age 0-6 should be prepared for the school. Older girls should be relieved from family responsibility to attend school. It is also necessary to allow the women teachers to attend school regularly. Primary schools should be provided with 300 students and should be inter-linked with other primary schools. Middle school should be provided with 500 students. Government should also make the formal school less rigid. The educational complex and the village educational committees will be in the best to involve in organizing school at local level. Girls engaged in labor work should be given financial incentives like scholarship, free uniform, text books etc. to make them able to attend the school. Better transport facilities should be provided for girls. More number of girls 'schools should be opened with residential facility at minimum cost. There should be more opportunities for the women to pursue higher studies besides traditional courses like medicine, veterinary science, engineering, law etc. by providing hostel facilities and scholarships, free text books and relaxation of age limit etc. Regional disparities are observed at every level like state, districts and blocks levels which needs to be considered.

2. Content of Educational and Gender Bias:

The N.C.E.R.T women 'cell is reason behind the component of core-curriculum relating to women's equality. This is done by increasing visibility of women in history, epics etc. and to provide the basic legal information including the protective laws regarding women and make them aware of the fundamental rights. The N.C.E.R.T., S.C.E.R.T and other publishers should be reviewed so that they eliminate the invisibility of women and the gender stereotype, hidden curriculum etc. and for proper incorporation of women in teaching of all subjects.

3. Vocational Education for Women:

Options for scientific and technical professional courses are not easily available to the women. Therefore, courses should be diversified for women of our society. For encouraging access to technical or crafts the training institutions should increase stipend, fellowships and a system of placement be made available. There should be at least one woman's polytechnic in each district.

4. Training of Teachers and Other Personnel:

The N.C.E.R.T (National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration), U.G.C, etc. initiated teachers training programmers. It includes sensitivity to women's problem, decentralization of curriculum planning and implementation.

5. Research and Development in Women's Studies:

Research can be major contributing step in incorporating women's issues at all stages of education and to create a valuable input in all areas of development and training of teachers.

6. Representation of Women in Educational Hierarchy:

Women should be appointed at a different level of education. There should be promotion in educational administration and departmental promotion committees.

7. Empowerment of Women:

More programmes like Mahila Samakhyas should be developed. Programmes and efforts should be made towards universalization of women's education along with looking forward to their economic independence for women. Women health issues like reproductive health should be considered for empowerment of women.

8. Resources:

for proper implementation of various women education programme, it requires a significant increase in allocation of resources in plan and non-plan sectors.

9. Management:

The national education system is important for empowerment of women. It will be led through well-designed curriculum, text book training, orientation of teachers and administrators and active involvement of educational institutions. Major focus should be given on women's participation in vocation, technical and professional at different levels.

IV. IMPORTANCE OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION FOR WOMEN:

Formal education is considered to be an institutional activity.

The non-formal education is basic necessity and should be applied to increase the interest and necessary awareness in women to bring them out of their small world where they have been denied all their rights. Non-formal education is one of the pathways through which women can reach and get themselves equipped with skills that will empower them to initiate and support their own development. It will also provide them opportunities to share their experience, ideas and feelings and a venue where they can have independency and enjoy themselves.

They are being made aware of their rights by showing them the realities and the laws that protect them. They are being trained to be strong enough in order to challenge structural and domestic violence and the double standard of morality and maintain a higher status in society. Programmes on gender discrimination and importance to eradicate it from the society enable them to value themselves as women and as individual as well. This is possible through various unconventional methods of educating the mass, in particular the women. Even when women do not work outside or take up higher responsibility in the society, education allows women to fulfill their duties better not only as citizens but also as parents. More women are aware and informed the more capable they will become in providing direction and guidance to their children and family.

CONCEPTUAL AND OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK:

Education is a valuable step of women empowerment as only the educated women can play a very significant role in the economic development of our country. The growth rate of women's education in rural areas is very slow in rate showing that still large women of our country are illiterate, are weak, backward and are exploited. Therefore, "educating the women" is the most powerful act that can bring change in the status of women in society and will also be helpful in reduction in inequalities and functions as a means of improving their status within the family and society as whole.

Education doesn't mean only gaining knowledge but also transforming that into skill which will be applicable through vocational training and skill development.

Amartya Sen had made an important case for the bringing out that societies need to see women less as someone who needs help, and more as an important contributor of social transformation, suggesting that the education, employment and ownership rights of women have a powerful influence on their ability to control their environment and contribute to economic development. Literacy and educational status are increasing for women in India but still there exist a visible gap between male and female literacy rate

INITIATIVES AND INSTITUTIONS:

According to the Human Development Report in 1993 the literacy is a person's first step in their development, learning and knowledge building. So, literacy rates are essential for any measurement of human development.

The National Policy on Education (NPE) was set up in India in 1986 for the development of education and eradication of illiteracy from the society. The higher rate of illiteracy of women is responsible for women to depend on men in day to day life. Within the framework of democratic polity, our legislation, development policies, plan and programmes have aimed for advancement of women in different spheres.

The National Policy on Education in 1986, which was again revised in 1992, is considered to be the most transparent policy on women's education. It has come out as a major act in considering gender issues in government policy, which stated that education, can be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women in any society.

The District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) which was initiated in 1994 has a contributing approach in reducing gender and social differences. Enrolment of girls has significantly increased under this.

The 86th Constitutional Amendment made free and compulsory education a fundamental right for all children in the 6-14 age groups which have increased the enrolment of girls in schools. The national policy of empowerment of women has come up with aims focused at upliftment, development and empowerment in socio-economic and politico-cultural aspects, by creating awareness on various issues human rights, fundamental freedom, and providing access to health care, quality education at all levels, health, safety, social security and public life etc. in relation to their empowerment.

V. SUGGESTIONS:

- Parents should be made aware that the daughter's education is essential. It is well said that "educated mothers educate family which results in educated population of a nation which builds strong nation".
- To pour in women the confidence that change is possible, if women work collectively for themselves without being dependent on others for it to happen.
- To encourage and enhance the socio-economic participation of women in local and international forums.
- To encourage participation of women in different income generating activities. And also, to make sure about proper implementation of schemes provided by the government should be done by respective agencies.
- There should be change in the approach towards women based on sex discrimination. Different activities should induce the feeling of self-dependence amongst women.
- Government should consider child bearing at young ages is prevented by preventing early marriages. More efforts should be made for removal of gender inequality.
- Women should encourage to actively participating in social and political moves. Fifty % seats should be reserved for women in all the governments from central to local level.
- Spread the message that education of women is a pre-condition for fighting against their oppression
- Awareness needs to be generated regarding the necessity of educating girls so as to prepare them to contribute effectively to the socio-economic development of the nation.
- Agencies should work on eliminating all forms of discrimination in employment specially to eliminate wage differentiation between men and women.
- A conscious strategic change is required in national in order to change the attitudes towards female education and to raise the social consciousness of the country, media and communication effort.
- The government of India should introduce satellite schools for remote areas.
- We should encourage ICT tools and the use of internet, for the study and research by women.
- Participation of women in political bodies and governance Institutions should enhanced more.

VI. CONCLUSIONS:

The drawbacks of society such as poverty, unemployment and inequality cannot be eradicated by man alone. Equal and active participation of women is important for this. Unless and until women are educated, they will not be able to understand about their rights and ways to empower themselves. Recently the ND Government has launched *Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao* scheme which tries to make girls independent both socially as well as financially and which will help in creating awareness and improving the efficiency of various welfare services meant for women. Such schemes should be implemented and should encourage nationwide to bring the desired changes. We should now shift our focus from “development for women” to “women in development”. That is where ‘quality’ change for equality and our country will witness a true women empowerment.

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