

Women Education: As a Stepping Stone for Women Empowerment**Ms. Rajni Goel****Asst. prof. of Economics****Govt. College Chhachhrauli (Yamuna nagar)****ABSTRACT:**

Education is the key factor for women empowerment, prosperity, development and welfare. Discrimination of women from womb to tomb is well known. There is continued inequality and susceptibility of women in all sectors- Economic, Education, Social, Political, Health Care, Nutrition, Right and Legal etc. women exploited in all spheres of life, they need to be empowered in all walk of life. Women's empowerment and economic development are closely related: in one direction, development alone can play a major role in driving down inequality between men and women; in the other direction, empowering women may benefit development. Women's empowerment is very essential for the development of society. Empowerment means individuals acquiring the power to think and act freely, exercises choice and fulfill their potential as full and equal members of society.

Education is milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to responds to the challenges, to meet their traditional role and change their life. So that we can't neglect the importance of education in reference to women empowerment India is balanced to becoming superpower, a developed country by 2020. The growth of women's education in rural areas is very slow. This obviously means that still large womenfolk of our country are illiterate, the weak, backward and exploited." Education of women is the most powerful tool of change of position in society. Education also brings a reduction in inequalities and functions as a means of improving their status within the family.

Keywords: Education, women Empowerment, development, Inequality

INTRODUCTION “If you educate a man you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family. Women empowered means mother India empowered”.

PT. JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

Women constitute almost half the human race. Education has been recognized as an essential agent of social change and development in any society of any country. Education is considered as a potent instrument through which processes modernization and social change come to existence. Education exposes people to new thoughts and ideas and provides necessary skills. Hence to think pleasant development without educating women is impossible. More over it has been rightly said that to educate a woman is to educate the whole family. Therefore, the emphasis with regard to women education should be to provide her multiple roles as citizens, housewives, mother, and contributor to family income, builders of new society and builder of the nation. But the hegemonic masculine ideology made them suffer a lot as they were denied equal opportunities in different parts of the world. The rise of feminist ideas has, however, led to the tremendous improvement of women's condition throughout the world in recent times. Access to education has been one of the most pressing demands of these women's rights movements. Women education in India has also been a major concern of both the government and civil society as educated women can play a very important role in the development of the country. India is balanced to emerge as one of the most developed nations by 2020, more literate, knowledgeable and economically at the forefront. No doubt, women will play a vital role in contributing to the country's development. Women power is crucial to the economic growth of any country. In India this is yet to meet the requirements despite reforms. Little has been achieved in the area of women empowerment, but for this to happen, this sector must experience a chain of reforms. Though India could well become one of the largest economies in the world, it is being slowed down due to a lack of women's participation.

There are always a number of elements in the society which are deprived of their basic rights in every society, state and nation, but these elements lack in the awareness of their rights. If We enlist such elements from the society, and then women would top this list. In fact, women are the most important factor of every society. Even though everybody is aware of this fact, yet Nobody is ready to accept this fact. As a result, the importance which used to be given to Women is declining in today's society. As a consequence of this growing tendency of underestimating women such as to make them occupy a secondary position in society and to deprive them of their basic rights, the need for empowering women was felt.

Today we enjoy the benefits of being citizens of a free nation, but we really need to think Whether each of the citizens of our country is really free or enjoying freedom, in the true sense of the term. If we consider our country, each Indian citizen is given certain basic rights. The Constitution of our nation doesn't discriminate between men and women, but our society has deprived women of certain basic rights, which were bestowed upon them by our Constitution. Due to such current situation, it was needed to make women free from all the shackles and to empower them as well.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN EDUCATION:

The history of Indian women can be divided in to three periods i.e. Ancient, Medieval and Modern. The East India Company established its rule over India since 1757, which call modern period. During this period education of men was modernized and institutions were opened to promote this but nothing was done to promote women education. Another significant feature of the 19th century was the attempt made by social reformers to educate Indian girls. For more than 2,000 years, from about BC 300, there was practically no formal education for women. Only a few women of the upper castes and classes were given some education at home. In 1858, the British government took upon itself the direct responsibility of the command. But in spite of this, they did not pay any attention towards the education of women of this country. In 1904, Annie Besant established Central Hindu Girls" School at Benaras and Prof. Karue established SNDT Women's University at Poona for the promotion of women education.

After independence In addition to the measures to uplift the status of women in India initiated by Britishers, many vigorous steps (legal, social, economic and political) have been taken by Government of India after independence by removing the hurdles put in their way by traditional past. The efforts of the social reformers and their movements launched in the pre-independence period also bore fruits. The Indian National Movement also led to the release of Indian women. The leaders of the national movement realized that the liberation of the country from the bondage of imperialism was impossible without the active participation of women who constituted half of the population of the country.

Indian government introduced some committee's and commissions for the development of women education in India, i.e. Radhakrishnan Commission or University education Commission (1948), Smt.Durgabai Deshmukh committee (1959), Smt. Hansa Mehta Committee (1962), M. Bhaktvatsalam Committee to look into the causes of Public Support particularly in Rural Area for girls Education and to public Corporation, Kothari Commission (1964-64), Resolution on the National policy on education (1968), Report of the Committee on the status of women in India(1974),Challenge of Education (1985),

National policy on Education(1986), Programme of Action(1986), and (1992) etc. On the other hand, to develop the primary education and to achieve the aim of universalisation of primary education up to age level 6-14 years, some schemes or programmes like, OBB, DPEP, SSA, NLM, National Program of Nutritional Support of Primary Education (NPNSPE) or (Mid-Day Meals), RTE Act 2009 and Knowledge Commission etc. were introduced to achieve the national goal i.e. hundred percent literacy. Despite these government efforts to the education, still women are lagging behind than men. Women of India generally remained uneducated. As a result of ignorance, women become victims of man dominated society.

IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN EDUCATION IN INDIA

Women education in India plays a very important role in the overall development of the country. It not only helps in the development of half of the human resources, but in improving the quality of life at home and outside. Educated women not only tend to promote education of their girl children, but also can provide better guidance to all their children. Moreover educated women can also help in the reduction of infant mortality rate and growth of the population.

If it is said that education is the key to all problems, then it won't be improper. Thinkers have given a number of definitions of education but out of these definitions, the most important definition is that which was put forth by M. Phule. According to M. Phule, "Education is that which demonstrates the difference between what is good and what is evil". If we consider the above definition, we come to know that whatever revolutions that have taken place in our history, education is at the base of them. It is through education that one realizes what is good and what is bad, what is proper and what is not (just and unjust etc.). It is education which gives a vent/ voice to injustice.

Women's empowerment is not limited only for the Indian society. If we consider the global aspect in this regard, we see that women are being given equal treatment in developed Nations. In fact, if we take a retrospect of history, we come to know that women have always been given secondary position in society, but the difference between men and women created by the Nature is but natural. It is education through which we realize this fact. When American women realized this; they opposed this injustice which was meted out to them by way of a huge movement, through which they asked for equal rights. For eradicating this injustice, the UNO (United Nations' Organization) framed a Convention / Charter which is called 'The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women' (CEDAW), which further led to the formation of Women's Commission.

Taking an account of this background, we come to know that women's empowerment has now become a topic of global discussion. Seeing all the aspects of this discussion, we will realize that education is the only means for empowerment of women. Therefore, literacy should spread amongst women. The literacy rate amongst the women in the post- Independent Era is not as per the expectations. We, as a nation, dream of becoming a Super Power by 2020. For becoming a Super Power, each element of our society/ nation should contribute in the nation building process. But women, who are a major factor of this society, aren't literate then we can't expect to become a Super Power. Therefore, it is urgent for us to know the importance of women's education, which would, in turn, give an impetus to the process of women's empowerment.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION

Women Empowerment is a global issue and discussion on women political right are at the fore front of many formal and informal campaigns worldwide. The concept of women empowerment was introduced at the international women conference at NAROIBI in 1985. Within the framework of a democratic polity, our laws, development policies, plan and programmes have aimed at women's advancement in difference spheres. From the fifth five year plan (1974 – 78) onwards has been a marked shift in the approach to women's issues from welfare to development.

Education is milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to responds to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life. So that we can't neglect the importance of education in reference to women empowerment. India is balanced to becoming superpower, a developed country by 2020. The year 2020 is fast approaching; it is just 13 year away. This can became reality only when the women of this nation became empowerment. India presently account for the largest number no of illiterates in the world. Literacy rate in India have risen sharply from 18.3% in 1951 to 82.4% in 2011 in which enrolment of women in education have also risen sharply 7% to 65.46%.

Table 1. Literacy rate in India

<u>Year</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>females</u>
<u>1911</u>	<u>5.9</u>	<u>1.1</u>
<u>1921</u>	<u>7.2</u>	<u>1.8</u>
<u>1931</u>	<u>9.5</u>	<u>2.9</u>
<u>1941</u>	<u>16.1</u>	<u>7.3</u>
<u>1951</u>	<u>16.7</u>	<u>7.3</u>
<u>1961</u>	<u>24.0</u>	<u>13.0</u>
<u>1971</u>	<u>29.5</u>	<u>18.7</u>
<u>1981</u>	<u>36.2</u>	<u>24.8</u>
<u>1991</u>	<u>52.1</u>	<u>39.2</u>
<u>2001</u>	<u>65.38</u>	<u>54.16</u>
2011	74.4	65.46

Source: census of India 2011

On observing the above table, we come to know that at no point could the literacy rate of women match that of men. As a result, even after 65 years of independence, women occupy a secondary position in our social hierarchy. Inspire of being aware of her position, women can't transform the situation due to lack of education. Therefore, women's empowerment can't be effected unless we persuade the importance of women's education.

There are always a number of elements in the society which are deprived of their basic rights in every society, state and nation, but these elements lack in the awareness of their rights. If we enlist such elements from the society, then women would top this list. In fact, women are the most important factor of every society. Even though everybody is aware of this fact, yet nobody is ready to accept this fact. As a result, the importance which used to be given to women is declining in today's society.

Impact of education on women empowerment

Education as means of empowerment of women can bring about a positive drastic change. It is therefore, crucial for the socio-economic and political progress of India. The Constitution of India empowers the state to adopt positive measures for prompting ways and means to empower women. Education significantly makes difference in the lives of women. These can be direct or indirect Few are being mentioned here.

a) Improved Economic Growth

Education increases the economic, social and political opportunities available to women. It leads to direct economic benefits in the form of higher lifetime earnings for women. The society and community also benefit from the higher productivity of its labour force. Besides improving human capital and increasing economic growth, female education also reduces the fertility rate. The lowering in the number of dependants is referred to as the “demographic gift”.

Keeping women illiterate clearly retards economic growth. Societies that do not invest in girls’ education pay a price for it in terms of slower growth and reduced incomes. Investments in female education start a virtuous cycle that leads to improved levels of income, growth and gender equality. Inequality in education is like a distortionary tax that misallocates resources, thereby reducing economic growth.

b) Lower Population Growth

Education increases women’s knowledge about controlling fertility and access to family planning services and often encourages them to delay the age at which they marry. They also have more control over household resources and greater involvement in reproductive decisions. Women with more than a primary schooling had a smaller gender bias in sending children to school than women with less than primary schooling.

C) Improved health

With respect to women’s health and well-being, education gives women the knowledge to demand and seek proper health care. Thus, it is evident from different studies that there is a negative correlation between female education and maternal mortality and a positive correlation between female education on one hand and women’s life expectancy and family health on the other hand. Education here refers not just to getting education but to the level of education which is found to be more important; only at secondary or higher levels of schooling does education have a significant beneficial effect on women’s health.

D) Decision making power

Concerning political empowerment, no doubt that educated women are better informed about their legal rights and how to exercise them and thus are more politically active and can participate equally in societal and political decision-making processes. Women’s levels of education determines their chances of becoming leaders and politicians.

E) Reduces violence against women

Besides, education enhances women's well-being. It reduces violence against them, gives them a more autonomy in shaping their lives, improves their status within the family and gives them a greater voice in household decisions, including financial decisions, Economic participation, economic opportunity, political empowerment, educational attainment and health and well-being.

Conclusion

Taking an overview of all the above aspects, we come to know that the revolution is Very much needed, accepting at the same time that its speed may be less than the desired speed. For giving this process a force, education is very important. Hence, if women's empowerment is to be effected, it can be carried out only through the medium of education. Hence, it is of foremost importance to raise the level of education amongst women.

REFERENCES

- ☐ Govt. of India, census of India 2011,
- Education and women empowerment in India, M. Suguna," international journal of multidisciplinary research"
- Impact of education on women empowerment in India, Dr. S.Saravanakumar Mr. M.Pallanisamy" international journal of social sciences and interdisciplinary research.vol2 (11), nov 2013, issn 22773630.
- Women empowerment, Jitendra Shinde, Asst. Prof , Deptt of Education, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada.
- A second look at the role education plays in women empowerment(International Research on women)
- Women empowerment: Participation and decision making; Marilee, K.
- Women empowerment through sustainable Micro finance: Rethinking best practice; Mayoux,I.
- R.K.Rao (2001) Women and Education, Kalpaz Publications, Delhi.