

Role of Education in the Empowerment of Women in India

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Abstract

Women education in India has a major preoccupation of both the government and civil society as educated women can play a very important role in the development of the country. 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 and India poised to becoming superpower in recent years. Education of women is the most powerful tool to change the position in society. Women education in India has been a need of the hour, as education is a foundation stone for the empowerment of woman. . Education also brings a reduction in inequalities and functions as a means of improving their status within the family and develops the concept of participation.

Keywords: Education, preoccupation, milestone, empowerment, participation

Introduction

Empowerment can be viewed as means of creating a social environment in which one can make decisions and make choices either individually or collectively for social transformation. The empowerment strengthens the innate ability by way of acquiring knowledge, power and experience (Hashemi Schuler and Riley, 1996). Empowerment is the process of enabling or authorizing individual to think, take action and control work in an autonomous way. It is the process by which one can gain control over one's destiny and the circumstances of one's lives. 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, but 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. . Empowering women has become the focus of considerable discussion and attention all over the world. 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. The inequalities between men and women and discrimination against women are an age-old issue all over the world. Thus women quest for equality with man is a universal phenomenon. Women should equal with men in matters of education, employment, inheritance, marriage, and politics etc. Their quest for equality has given birth to the formation of many women's associations and launching of movements. 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. Empowerment allows individuals to reach their full potential, to improve their political and social participation, and to believe in their own capabilities.

Importance of women education

"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 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.¹ 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.² Education means modification of behaviour in every aspect, such as mentality, outlook, attitude etc. 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. **Obstacles:** Gender discrimination still persists in India and lot more needs to be done in the field of women's education in India. The gap in the male-female literacy rate is just a simple indicator. While the male literary rate is more than 82.14% and the female literacy rate is just 65.46%. (b). the women were consider only house wife and better to be live in the house.

Women empowerment through education

Women empowerment is the pivotal part in any society, state or country. It is a woman who plays a dominant role in the basic life of a child. Women are an important section of our society. Education as means of empowerment of women can bring about a positive attitudinal change. It is therefore, crucial for the socio-economic and political progress of India. The Constitution of India empowers the state to adopt affirmative measures for prompting ways and means to empower women. Education significantly makes difference in the lives of women.³ 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. 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 we can't neglect the importance of education in reference to women empowerment. To see the development in women education India is supposed to upcoming super power of the world in recent years. The increasing change in women education, the empowerment of women has been recognised as the central issue in determining the status of women.⁴ for becoming super power we have mostly to concentrate upon the women's education. By which it will force on women's empowerment. As per united national development fund for women (UNIFEM) the term women's empowerment means:

- Acquiring knowledge and understanding of gender relations and the ways in which these relations may be changed.
- Developing a sense of self-worth, a belief in one's ability to secure desired changes and the right to control one's life.
- Gaining the ability to generate choices exercise bargaining power.
- Developing the ability to organize and influence the direction of social change, to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

Thus, empowerment means a psychological sense of personal control or influence and a concern with actual social influence, political power and legal rights. It is a multi level construct referring to individuals, organizations and community. It is an international, ongoing process centred in the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring and group participation, through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to the control over this resources.⁵

Let's see the difference in the literacy rate between men and women in given table are as under

Literacy rate in India

| Year | Persons | Males | Females |
|------|---------|-------|---------|
| 1901 | 5.3 | 9.8 | 0.7 |
| 1911 | 5.9 | 10.6 | 1.1 |
| 1921 | 7.2 | 12.2 | 1.8 |
| 1931 | 9.5 | 15.6 | 2.9 |
| 1941 | 16.1 | 24.9 | 7.3 |
| 1951 | 16.7 | 24.9 | 7.3 |
| 1981 | 36.2 | 46.9 | 24.8 |
| 1991 | 52.1 | 63.9 | 39.2 |
| 2001 | 62.38 | 76.0 | 54.0 |
| 2011 | 74. | 82.1 | 65.46 |

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.⁶

Importance of Women participation

Women's participation may be used both for support by an agency and as a control device by the law-makers. Participation may be direct or indirect, formal or informal; it may be political, social or administrative in nature. Women's participation in Panchayat Raj institutions may take many forms. It refers to all those activities which show the women's involvement in the processes and administration, that is, participation in policy formulation and programme planning, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes meant for development target groups.⁷ Indian women have been associated with politics since the pre-independence period. They were part of the freedom movement both as volunteers and leaders. On independence, Article 15 of the Indian Constitution guaranteed equality to women under the law. Though the Indian Constitution guarantees equal rights to all citizens, women are still marginally represented in the Indian political arena. The fact is that in the hands of women are having lack of power at the centre and state level. It is sad state of affairs that about half of

India's population has only 10 per cent representation in the Lok Sabha. In the current Rajya Sabha, there are 21 women out of a total of 233 MPs, which amounts to only nine per cent which is even lower than that in the Lok Sabha. At the societal level male dominance in Parliament, bureaucracy, judiciary, Army, police all point towards gender inequality, notwithstanding the fact that it is often argued that women's political leadership would bring about a more cooperative and less conflict-prone world. Lack of political and economic powers add to the subservient and unequal position of women.⁸ After Independence, in spite of having our own constitution, India was not able to achieve morals like fairness, equality and social justice. The condition of women didn't improve even having a woman prime minister for few numbers of years. Women's representation in politics all over the world began to assume importance from mid 1970s when United Nations (UN) declared 1975 as the 'International Women's Year'. This was followed by the UN's decade for Women from 1976-1985 and the theme was "Equality, Development and Peace". Women's participation in politics remained quite inconsequential in India even today but some sort of improvement took place by the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment acts which gave boost to the status of women at the political level by giving opportunity to women in the process of decision-making.⁹ The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) to the constitution of India have provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of panchayats and Municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision making at the local level.¹⁰

Educational equality

Another area in which women's equality has shown a major improvement as a result of adult literacy programs is the area of enrolment of boys and girls in schools. As a result of higher participation of women in literacy campaigns, the gender gap in literacy levels is gradually getting reduced. Even more significant is the fact that disparity in enrolment of boys and girls in neo-literate households is much lowered compared to the non-literate householders.¹¹ The world has achieved equality in primary education between girls and boys. But few countries have achieved that target at all levels of education. The political participation of women keeps increasing. In January 2014, in 46 countries more than 30% of members of parliament in at least one chamber were women. In many countries, gender inequality persists and women continue to face discrimination in access to education, work and economic assets, and participation in government.¹² Women and girls face barriers and disadvantages in every sector in which we work. Around the world 62 million girls are not in school. Globally, 1 in 3 women will experience gender-based violence in her lifetime. In the developing world, 1 in 7 girls is married before her 15th birthday, with some child brides as young as 8 or 9. Each year more than 287,000 women, 99 percent of them in developing countries, die from pregnancy and childbirth-related complications. While women make up more than 40 percent of the agriculture labour force only 3 to 20 percent are landholders. In Africa, women-owned enterprises make up as little as 10 percent of all businesses. In South Asia, that number is only 3 percent. And despite representing half the global population, women compromise less than 20 percent of the world's legislators. Putting women and girls on equal footing with men and boys have the power to transform every sector in which we work.¹³ The gender equality and women's empowerment isn't a part of development but at the core of development. To get rid of this we have to make some educational awareness programmes on gender equality and women empowerment for cementing our commitment to supporting women and girls.

Conclusion

Women play an imperative role in making a nation progressive and guide it towards development. They are essential possessions of a lively humanity required for national improvement, so if we have to see a bright future of women in our country, giving education to them must be a pre-occupation Empowerment means moving from a weak position to execute a power. The education of women is the most powerful tool to change the position of society. Education also brings a reduction in inequalities and functions as a means of improving their status within the family. To encourage the education of women at all levels and for dilution of gender bias in providing knowledge and education, established schools, colleges and universities even exclusively for women in the state. The education develops the idea of participation in government, panchayats, public matters etc for elimination of gender discrimination.

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