
EDUCATION- A TOOL FOR EMPOWERING WOMEN IN INDIAN SOCIETY

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Abstract: “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 of the population in the world but they are denied equal opportunities in different parts of the world. In recent time rise of feminist ideas has led to the tremendous improvement of women's condition throughout the world. The most pressing demand of the women's rights movements is the access to education in the present time. Educated women can play a very important role in the development of the country. Women gradually lost the right of education in India which they had in the Vedic period. However, in the British period there was revival of interest in women's education in India. During this period, various socio religious movements led by eminent persons like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar emphasized on women's education in India. Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, Periyar and Baba Saheb Ambedkar took initiative to make education available to the women of India. Undoubtedly, women play a vital role in contributing to the economic growth of any country and India is poised to emerge as one of the most developed nations by 2020, more literate, knowledgeable and economically at the forefront. In India has been achieved in the area of women empowerment and it is high time to work to empower the women with the education. Though India could well become one of the largest economies in the world, it is being hindered due to a lack of women's participation. This paper attempt to identify that education is a tool that can be helpful in empowering women in Indian society, today where we look for India to be counted in the developing countries

Introduction: *It is impossible to think about the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is impossible for a bird to fly on only one wing.* — Swami Vivekananda Traditionally, an Indian woman had four fold status-role sequences as a daughter, wife, housewife (homemaker), and mother. The status and role of women traditionally well defined and almost fixed in the society, is now experiencing far-reaching changes. Women's equality in terms of education, employment, and power is still an individual rather than a universal achievement. The majority of Indian women are still content to accept an inferior status. When India got its independence, the participation of women nationalists was widely acknowledged and when the Indian Constitution was formulated, it granted equal rights to women, considering them legal citizens of the country and as an equal to men in terms of freedom and opportunity. Indian women, who fought as equals with men in the nationalist struggle, were not given that free public space anymore. Gradually with the passing of time the male dominance suppressed the women and they reduced to being second class citizens. Even though the constitution guarantees free primary schooling to everyone up to 14 years of age (Indian Parliament), very few females attend school, only about 39 percent of all women in India actually attend primary schools. The national female literacy rate was an alarmingly low 8.6%. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for girls was 24.8% at primary level and 4.6% at the upper primary level (in the 11-14 years age group). There existed insoluble social and cultural barriers to education of women and access to organized schooling. There are several

reasons why families choose not to educate their daughters. Parents believe that they will be not be benefitted with the educated girl as they will not get nothing in return, and the other that the females have the responsibility of the housework. So even though education does not financially burden the family, it costs them the time she spends at school when she could be doing chores. Women sprawling inequalities persisted in their access to education, health care, physical and financial resources and opportunities in political, social and cultural spheres. The statics says that the 1.4 billion people all over the world who are living below \$1 a day, about 70% are women and girls. The women account for around two-thirds of the world's working hours and earn only 10% of the world's income? The women produce half of the world's food and own only 1% of its land? And of the 900 million adults worldwide who cannot read or write, about two thirds are women. To simply put, women and girls are the most potentially capable untapped resource on the face of the earth and this is the reason for which women empowerment is the need of an hour. Empowerment in its literal context means to give power or warrant power. When we use the term women empowerment it means to create means and provide channels through which women can practice equal rights as men and to make them confident enough to claim their rights, such as:

- Freely live their life with a sense of self-worth, respect and dignity.
- Have complete control of their life, both within and outside of their home and workplace
- To make their own choices and decision have equal rights to participate in social, religious and

- public activities
- Have equal social status in the society
- Have equal rights for social and economic justice
- Determine financial and economic choices
- Get equal opportunity for education
- Get equal employment opportunity without any gender bias
- Get safe and comfortable working environment

Since decades women rights have been violated in many forms. This is something which is global, in one form or the other women rights have been violated in almost all nations. From the right to vote to the right to education, women should have an equal say in everything. Women empowerment means marginalizing power in women and girls so that they can play a significant role in the society. After being suppressed in a patriarchal world for so long, women just need a little help to raise their voices against oppression, female feticide, rapes, dowry, gender equality and more. According to United Nations World's Women 2010 Trends and Statistics, "two thirds of the 774 million adult illiterates worldwide are women – the same proportion for the past 20 years and across most regions." Empowerment of Women would result in better and more developed society. When women contribute equally along with men for the benefit of society, the world would surely become a better place to live. Increased awareness and education has inspired women to come out of the four walls of the home. The modern women are inclined towards the social issues, and trying hard to improve the social status of women at large. Traditionally Indian women exist because of the family and for the family. Educated women are capable of bringing socio-economic changes. The constitution of almost all democratic countries, including India, guarantees equal rights to both men and women. By educating women, economy of the country increases. It has been seen from the last few decades that involvement of educated women in various activities helps the country to move towards economic and social development. Today, the modern women are now fiercely ambitious and are proving their potential not only on the home front, but also in their respective professions. Women are coming up in all spheres of life. A nation's progress and prosperity can be judged by the way it treats its women folk. There is a slow and steady awareness regarding giving the women their dues, and not mistreating them, seeing them as objects of possession. Despite progress, the very fact that women, along with being achievers, also are expected to fulfill their roles as wives or mothers, prioritizing home against anything else. Women in India slowly started recognizing their true potential. They have started questioning the rules laid down for her by the society, as a result, broken the barriers and earned a

respectable position in the world.. There is no arena, which remains unconquered by Indian women. Today Indian women have excelled in each and every field from social work to visiting space station.

When a man gets educated, only the man learns. When a woman gets educated the entire generation learns". This point of view has not changed much. There is still a large section of women who are uneducated, and married off before the age of 18. Families are required to supply a chaste daughter to the family of her future husband. Also very few women are actually employed in good-paying jobs, and hence parents don't see the point of spending money on girls' education. Statistics say that close to 245 million Indian women lack the basic capability to read and write, which is a large number. Only 13.9% women are employed in the urban sector, and 29% in the domestic and agriculture sector, where too a majority of women are exploited by the men. The sex ratio of India shows that the Indian society is still prejudiced against female, and a lot is yet to be achieved in this context. Across much of the world, either by law or custom, women are still denied the right to own land or inherit property, obtain access to credit, attend school, earn income and progress in their profession free from job discrimination. Education is an essential means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to fully participate in the development process. Education is important for everyone, but it is a critical area of empowerment for girls and women. This is not only because education is an entry point to opportunity but also because a woman's educational achievements have positive ripple effects within the family and across generations. Women's education got a fillip after the country got independence in 1947 and the government has taken various measures to provide education to all Indian women. Dropout rates for girls have fallen by 16.5% between the year 2000 and 2005. Programs like 'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan' and 'Saakshar Bharat Mission for Female Literacy' has helped increase the literacy rates from less than 10 percent to more than 50% today. To bring more girls, especially from marginalized families of below poverty line in mainstream education, the government is providing a package of concessions in the form of providing free books, uniform, boarding and lodging, clothing for the hostilities midday meals, scholarships, free circles and so on. As a result women's literacy rate has grown over the six decades and the growth of female literacy has in fact been higher than that of male literacy rate. Literacy rate in India have risen sharply from 18.3% in 1951 to 74.04% in 2011 in which enrolment of women in education have also risen sharply 7% to 65.46% in comparison to male rate 82.14%. Within the framework of a democratic polity,

our laws, development policies, plan and programmes have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres. Education is a milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to respond 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 poised to become a superpower, a developed country by 2020. The year 2020 is fast approaching; it is just 7 years away. Thus, if on one hand women are climbing the ladder of success, on the other hand she is miserably suffering the

violence inflicted on her by her own family members. As compared to the past, women in modern times have achieved a lot but in reality they have to still travel a long way. Women may have left the secured domains of their home, but a harsh, cruel, exploitative world awaits them, where women have to prove their talent against the world who see women as merely vassals of producing children. The Indian woman has to make her way through all the socialized prejudices against her, and the men yet have to allow and accept the women to be equal participants in the country's way forward.

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