

Issues and Impacts of Education in Women Empowerment

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Abstract

“Educate your women first and leave them to themselves: then they will tell you what reforms are necessary for them” Swami Vivekananda

Women Empowerment is a process of developing & enabling ability or potential in women so that they can think logically, rationally, act independently, exercise their choice, control their lives, reducing atrocities, discrimination and exploitation towards them. Education is considered as a milestone for women empowerment and psycho-social development which enables them to respond to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and changed their lives. According to 2011 census Literacy Rate, female literacy level is 65.46% against male literacy more than 80%. This paper attempts to find the Issue and impact of education on women empowerment, challenges and issues faced during the process. It's a call for a broad educational programme and holistic approach to ensure the desired results.

Keyword: *Women, Empowerment, Education, development, Social*

Introduction

Women empowerment is a global issue and it was raised at the International Women Conference T NAROIBI in 1985. Women empowerment is the process of providing rights, powers, opportunities and responsibilities to women so that they are able to develop their potential, think, and act freely at par with men equally in society, It is the expansion of women's ability and freedom to exercise full control over their action. Empowerment of women is essentially the process of upliftment of social, economic and political status of women and it involves the building up of a society wherein women can live without the fear oppression, exploitation and discrimination that go with being a woman in a traditionally male-dominated society. Although women constitute half of the population and an active agent of social change, yet they are still being oppressed and suffered from fewer rights and lower social status. The widespread discrimination and exploitation upon women evoke the need of empowerment of women and education can be used as an effective instrument for achieving it.

There is always an existence of a number of elements in the society which are underprivileged of their basic rights in every society, state and nation, but these elements lack in the awareness of their rights. Our nation doesn't discriminate between men and women, but our society has deprived women of their certain basic rights, which were bestowed upon them by the Constitution. Women empowerment irrespective of cast, creed, religion and gender is a constitutional mandate, a basic human right and a decisive force of national development. Due to

such current situation, it was much needed to make women free from all the manacles and to empower them as well. “Empowerment means moving from a weak position to execute a power. Role of Education in Achieving Women Empowerment: In spite of constitutional guarantees, legislative provisions, judiciary mandate and administrative efforts, the women empowerment in Women Empowerment through Education in India is still lacking in certain areas. Mere enactment of laws and chalking out of schemes are not so much effective for empowering women. Therefore, education is the one of the vital instrument for empowering women. The National Curriculum Framework of Women pointed out, “Education of women is an important key to improving health, nutrition and education in the family and also empowering them to participate in decision making”. Moreover education enables women not only to acquire knowledge but also help them to achieve economic security, self-confidence, vocational and technical skills and guidance, good health and safety, courage and inner-strength to face challenges in every spheres of life and enable them to play equal role as men in nation-building. Education can be used as a tool for reduction of inequalities and gender bias so that women can move from weak position to execute their power or capabilities in society. The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women,2001 stated, “Equal access to education for women and girls will be ensured, special measures will be taken to eliminate discrimination, universalize education, eradicate illiteracy and create gender sensitive educational system, increase enrolment and retention rates of girls and improve the quality of education to facilitate lifelong learning as well as development of vocational or technical skills of women.

Objectives of the Study

- To identify barriers and know the need of education in women empowerment.
- To assess contemporary scenario of women empowerment in India.
- To know constitutional provisions and Government efforts for women empowerment.

Methods

The present study is based on the secondary data. Secondary data has been collected from magazines, internet, books, annual reports, and records from selected Department.

Analysis

Need of education in women empowerment.

Necessity of Education in Women Empowerment: Women empowerment is a tool of development not only of women but also of whole families and thereby a nation.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said, “To awaken the people, it is women who must be awoken; once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves.” Education empowers women more effectively which would help to abolish gender inequality, develop their potentials, increase social and economic return, improve the quality of life, produce educated and healthy children and reduce fertility and mortality rates. Education is key to empowering women’s participation in decision making in democracy, dynamic transformation of society and shaping the destiny of future generations. Swami Vivekananda said “There is no chance for the

welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved.” It is education which can do so by empowering women. In spite of constitutional guarantees, enactment of laws, efforts by the government through various schemes and programmes and U.N.O.’s directives, the equal status of women in India is not still achieved up to the desired goals after 68 years of Independence. Hence education can be used as powerful tool to help the women to understand the constitutional directives and legislative provisions for reducing women’s exploitation and negligence upon them, to reduce the gender gap in literacy levels, to create awareness about the existing social problems and to fight for fulfilment of the basic amenities and welfare of the community. Education helps to enable women to exercise their rights equally with men and to participate in national development. “Education is the milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life.” The target of becoming India superpower by 2020 will be achieved only when the women will be empowered through education. The National Policy of Education (1986) has emphasized the need of women education for their effective participation in social and economic activities. The NPE, 1986 has stated, “Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. The National Educational system will play a positive domineering role in the empowerment of women.

“The National Policy of Empowerment of Women (1990) has emphasized on education for–

- Creating an environment to enable women to realize their full potential,
- Providing all human rights and fundamental freedom to women on equal basis with men
- Participation of women in decision-making in every spheres of life,
- Equal access to health care, quality education, guidance, employment, remuneration and
- Social security, Elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girl children.

Barriers of women empowerment

The main obstacles that hinder the path of women empowerment in India may be summed up as follows:

1. Gender discrimination.
2. Lack of proper educational programme.
3. Female infanticide.
4. Atrocities on women.
5. Child marriage and dowry system.
6. Financial constraints.
7. Patriarchal order and the subordinate status of women.
8. Lack of health care and safety.
9. Professional inequality, particularly workplace harassment.
10. Inequality in sharing the burden of house hold work.

It is to be noted that the gender inequality is related to social and economic structure, traditional attitude towards women, economic insecurity and negligence of men and lack of sincere efforts of all concerned.

Women Empowerment in Contemporary Scenario

Women empowerment and gender equality in India is an alarming issue. Some problems such as dowry, domestic violence, sex selective abortion, female infanticide are still prevalent. As per the 2011 Census, women are subject to disadvantages as compared to men in terms of literacy rates, labour participation rates and earnings. The Census, 2011 reveals that the total literate population is 74.04% comprising 65.46% females and 82.14% males. As per report of UNDP, 2013 on Human Development Indicators, women constitute 48% of the population in world of which 29% is national work force and 26% women have access to format credit. It is witnessed that in software industry women enjoy equal wages and roles with men, but in other sectors women are mostly ill paid. The percentage of IPC crimes committed against women has increased during the last 5 years from 9.25 in the year 2009 to 11.2% during the year 2013. A women is raped once in every 10 minutes. Women perform about 2/3 of total hours, get 1/10th of the world's income and own less than 1/100th of the world resources. Women occupied only 10% seats in World Parliament and 6% seats in National Cabinet. India is ranked as the 135th country in the World in imparting free and compulsory education between the age group of 6 to 14 years (Right to Education, 2010). Some of these are as follows: Equality before law for all persons (Article-14) nutrition and other opportunities.

"Hence some practical steps should be taken as follows:

- Diverse categories of educational institutions should be established solely for women.
- Conventional malicious norms and practices, such as child marriage, child labour, dowry system, child prostitution, polygamy and female feticides should be strictly banned by enforcing laws and creating public awareness.
- The government should provide a package of educational grants, such as, concessions in the— form of providing free books, uniform, mid-day meals, scholarships, cycles , computers etc for enrolment for more girls and reducing the drop out students, especially from marginalized families of BPL.
- Adult and continuing education, social education, home schooling etc. can be used as a tool— of basic change in the status of women which would help to develop women entrepreneurial skills and create job opportunities. In rural areas mobile library, distance education through media, non-formal schools may be provided for life-long education and empowerment of women.
- Technical and vocational education should be provided particularly to the rural women, such— as tailoring and weaving, mushroom farming, bee keeping, fruit pulping etc, for improving their vocational efficiency so that they can be self- appointed and self-supportive. The government will have to offer financial support and teach them how they can earn money by starting business activities.
- The efforts of Govt. and N.G.O.'s will be co-ordinated with regard to implementation of— schemes and programmes for empowerment of women. Better facilities of health care, sanitation and medication should be provided to women. The judiciary should look after the molestation cases with special care and transparency.

Constitutional Provisions and Government Efforts for Women Empowerment

Constitutional Provisions: The Indian Constitution has given provisions for empowering women and among them some are mentioned below:

- Equality before law for all persons (Article-14)
- Prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth (Article 15(1))
- Special provisions to be adopted by the State in favour of women and children (Article 15(3))
- Equality of opportunity for employment to any office under the State (Article 16), right to secure adequate means of livelihood for men and women equally (Article 39(a)).
- Equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Article 39(d)).
- Maternity relief (Article 42).
- Promotion of dignity of women (Article 51A©. viii. Reservation of not less than one third of total seats for women in direct election to local bodies (Articles 343(d) & 343(T)).

Government Efforts

The government has taken initiatives for women empowerment through enacting laws and implementing several schemes operated by different departments and ministries. The National Commission of Women was set up by an act of parliament in 1990 for safeguarding the constitutional right and legal provisions for women.

The reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women has been provided by the 73th and 74th Amendments (1993) to the Constitution which is needed for socio-political empowerment. The Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD) under the MHRD was established to implement various schemes relating to women advancement. The National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW)2010 has emphasized to facilitate the process of integrating all programmes for welfare and upliftment of women undertaken by the ministries and department. The National Resource Centre for Women acts as a national convergence centre for all programmes for women. The National Literacy Mission is being set up towards eradication of literacy in the age group of 15-35 years. The Functional Literacy for Audit Women (FLAW) was started in 1975-76 to provide illiterate adult women to gain functional skills and to awaken desired awareness for health, hygiene and children practices.

Government Schemes

The Government of India has undertaken different schemes for welfare upliftment and security of the women. Some of these may be noted here– RastriyaMahilaKosh” (RMK) 1992-93, MahilaSamridhiyojana (MSY) 1993, IndiraMahilaYojana” (IMY) 1995, SwaShakti Group, Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP), Creches/Day-care Centre for the Children of working and ailing mother, Hostels for working women, National Mission for Empowerment of Women, Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), Rajib Gandhi Scheme for Employment of Adolescence Girls (RGSEAG),2010, Women’s Development Corporation Scheme (WDCS), Working Women’s Forum, IndiraPriyadarshiniYojana, NGO’s Credit Schemes. The present Prime Minister Modi Government has launched the programmes of

Betibachao, betipadhao aims at tackling the low child sex ratio of 918 girls child in resources and savings of a family which is helpful to meet the expenses of higher education and marriage.

The first year of New Millennium (2001) was declared as “Women Empowerment Year”. It is necessary to supplement Government efforts by nongovernment organizations for facilitating women empowerment. Yet India has not achieved the expected goals, hence comprehensive programme for empowering women is still demanding.

Legislative Provisions

The Government of India has also enacted specific laws to safeguard the interests of women and uplift their status in society. Some of the notable legislations are as follows:

The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 which provides women the right to parental property. The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 which declares the taking of dowry an unlawful activity. Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 which provides the payment of equal remuneration with men for equal value of work. The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1983 which prohibits various types of crimes against women. The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986 which prohibits the vulgar presentation of women in the media. The protection of women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 protects women from domestic violence committed against them. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013.

These legal provisions would help women to gain socio-political empowerment. D. U.N.O. Directives: The third Millennium Development Goals (MDG) of the United Nations Development Program has directed to the Indian context– “Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education by no later than 2015”. The MDG Report 2009 pointed out, “Participation of women in empowerment and decision making remains far less than that of men, and the disparity is not likely to be eliminated by 2015”. However, the opportunity of women to labour market has marginally increased from 13% to 18% between 1990-91 and 2004-05.

Conclusion: To conclude the contemporary scenario, it may be said that education is the keystone of women empowerment which can be achieved only through dedicated and joint efforts from all fronts and also eliminating the traditional attitude, norms and practices through proper education and guidance. The efforts of women empowerment through Education government and social reformers will be futile unless the women are well educated, self-supportive and independent in all spheres of life.

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