

Sharma, Nirmala (ed.) Women and Education: Issues and Approaches. Alpha Publications, New Delhi, 2006.

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Abstract: From the advent of the human species, with or without schools, one keeps on taking education in some or the other way. It is the basic necessity for humans to be educated. Women education in particular is crucial for the sustenance of the society. Truly as emphasized by Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, "Education of a boy is the education of one person, but education of a girl is the education of the entire family". "There cannot be educated people without educated women. If school education had to be limited to men or to women, that opportunity should be given to women, for then it would most surely be passed on to the next generation". The English saying "The hand that rocks the cradle is the power that rules the world" is very appropriate from the point of view of women education. If one wants to have an educated generation, one must take care of women and educate them properly. They can bring about renaissance in the country.

Index Terms: Women, Education, Empowerment

This book looks at the issues of women education which is of paramount importance as to educate a woman means to educate a family, society and nation as a whole. The focus of the planners in India shifted towards women education after the International Women's year of 1975. There has been an increase in scientific knowledge and technology in the recent century and the activities of the people have grown. But in this process women are still backward due to lack of education. It was during post-independence era that women to a large extent were ignored; with the result a considerable majority of the women particularly from rural areas continue to be either illiterate or semi-illiterate. It means women are not given due opportunities in order to enable them to take the benefits of modern technology. After independence various laws were enacted to ensure equality, social justice and fraternity enshrined in the preamble of the Constitution. Various awareness programmes of social-welfare and development are required for women for their improvement. Policies to extend educational opportunities (both formal and non-formal) to women have failed to bridge the knowledge gap between men and women which was emphasized as the main task by the National Committee on Women's Education in 1958. So it is recognized that without education women cannot make themselves liberated out of their problems and unless women are developed in a country the nation cannot develop as a whole with men alone. After independence many programmes for women have been planned and also implemented such as "Functional literacy for women", in 'Integrated child development services programme' under Ministry of Social Welfare and Education, 'Rural Functional literacy programme' in National Adult Education Programme' under Ministry of Education and Culture, 'Condensed Courses for women' launched by the Central Social Welfare Board, 'Special programme for women' under Ministry of Education and Culture, etc. All the programmes were launched with an aim and objective to educate women making them more conscious of the rights and responsibilities. Further it was to assist women to form their own groups for learning and productive activity and strengthening their participation in the developmental process.

Studies have revealed that 'Women carry two-thirds of the total work load in the country and receive not more than 10 per cent of the total wages, out of which they probably do not get 1 per cent for their own use'. There is low participation of girls in education among disadvantaged sections of the population revealing the fact that girls from very early age begin to take care of their younger siblings and to house-hold work to relieve their parents to go out for work. Early marriage and frequent pregnancy affect the enrollment rates of girls in education. As boys are regarded as belonging to the world of work, their education is encouraged. Due to our cultural and social heritage parents are often reluctant to send their daughters in co-education, especially from middle level and above. The lack of separate institutions for girls inhibits their participation in education. The lack of women teachers and instructress similarly hinders the progress and do not suit girls in rural areas as they are required for work either at home or in fields at the same time; hence their low participation in school education. The unattractive school environment, especially in mixed schools, lack of physical facilities for sitting in class and discriminating attitudes of teachers towards girls, etc. also adversely affect the participation of girls in education. Schools located at a distance from the home, especially in rural areas, lack of transport facilities or hostel facilities also inhibits the participation of girls in education.

Women are not free from male domination. The remedial measures to promote women's education to come out of their problems requires establishment of separate girls schools whenever there is a demand for them. More women teachers should be employed and special facilities should be provided to attract them especially to the rural areas. Time schedule of the schools should be made flexible so that girls can attend classes when they are free from domestic chores. Special

campaigns should be launched to change people's attitude in favour of girl's education. For improving the status and to bring women into the mainstream women needs economic independence. Not to be a burden on anyone can give women immense self-confidence. She needs to have an access to medical and health facilities. Social evils like child marriage, child labour, dowry etc. which stand in the way of women's development should be removed. The attitude of women themselves has to be shaped to creative and positive thinking. Employment strategy for women should be viewed as a package comprising employment opportunities, legal safeguards, training support and social services, awareness generation and mobilization. Those strategies must aim to create new avenues for employment, upgrade their existing employment conditions as well as productivity make them a more articulate and conscious workforce and assure them better status and recognition as workers. The employment potential for women is likely to grow very slowly in the organized sector. There is considerable scope for employment in the agricultural and service sectors. Diversification in agriculture and in the other major sectors of rural employment offers enormous potential for employment. Horticulture, commercial vegetable growing, food processing, fisheries and poultry, agro-industry offer ample opportunities to rural women. Unemployed young women could be trained in extension work for importing the necessary skills in these activities. Besides, a variety of new occupations could be created for women workers in the areas of agro-based industry weaving, textile printing, readymade garments, production of stationary and preparation of indigenous herbal medicines and packaging etc. A systematic human resource development strategy focused on women is essential. Recently the focus of planning has shifted from equipping women for their traditional roles of housewives and mothers to recognize their worth as producers, making a major contribution to family and national income. Efforts have been made over the past three decades of planned development to enroll more girls in school and encourage them to stay in schools, to continue their education as long as possible, and to provide non-formal educational opportunities for women.

Women have often been considered a weaker section of Indian society. However, in the past few decades much attention is paid towards women's problems. The aims and objectives of education are realized with the help of various formal and informal agencies of education. Indian family is still the most important institution in the life of the child and his early education. Within the family, education of a child takes place right from the time of his birth and continues so long as he lives within the family. The family has to help in the education of the child by providing him with such experiences as will enable him to acquire his social status and learn the various social roles. The government of India has taken steps to invest in the development of the IT sector and expanding the country's pool of the skilled IT employees. The government is also concerned about bringing access to IT services and employment opportunities to all levels of Indian society. As most Indian women lack literacy and basic education, most advanced or specialized IT education is out of the reach of poorer women and only realistic for those middle class women and elite who can afford it in some form. The Ministry of Education has informal and formal education programmes for women and girls working in collaboration with non-government institutions. The Department of Women and Child Development is devoted to 'formulating plans, policies and programmes, enacting/ amending legislation, guiding and coordinating the efforts of both governmental and non-governmental organizations working in the field of Women and Child Development'. The department also implements programmes in the areas of welfare and support services, training for employment and income generation, awareness generation and gender sensitization. The Departments activities to create working women hostels and crèches may address the mobility constraints that prevent women from working in IT. As the largest democracy in the world, India has a huge array of non-government organizations active in education and women's issues. There have been numerous experiments in India devoted to addressing the digital divide, particularly because of the high-profile domestic IT industry juxtaposed to the extremely poor and uneducated population. However, only a few are starting to specifically target women.

References

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