PAPER PRESENTATION

**Theme**: EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN : RECENT TRENDS & CHALLENGES

**Sub-Theme**: The Importance of Education in Women Empowerment

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Education is the most powerful tool to empower women. The words of Swami Vivekananda enlightens us on the importance of education. He remarks “We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded and by which one can stand on one’s own feet”

Education contributes to the all-round development of an individual. It is the manifestation of the perfection that is already in the individuals. As Mahatma Gandhi asserts “Education is the all-round drawing of the best in child and man in body mind and spirit.

Education and women empowerment go hand in hand. In the present society women are still suffering from the vicious grips of social, economic, political, caste and gender based discrimination. They are threatened by various evils like dowry, eve teasing, rape, female infanticide, cyber-crimes etc. Emancipation of women from various problems is the need of the hour. Education liberates women from false beliefs and irrational customs, equips them with necessary skills and knowledge to secure employment, helps to attain financial stability, motivates them to fight against oppression and social injustice, helps to develop self-confidence and promotes the status of women in the society. Education also helps to promote science and technology and reform the world. Nelson Mandela has rightly said “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”

Educational empowerment leads to political empowerment too. When women are educated they can courageously express their opinions in the legislature and involve in the framing of laws and policies which will benefit women and thus contribute to the development of the nation.

Awareness programmes should be conducted by schools and colleges widely across the country to promote gender equality, to eradicate false notions such as male child preferability and strive for 100% retention of girl children in schools. Through education let us all strive to achieve women empowerment.
Impediments to Education which hinder women empowerment across the globe

1) Early marriage: Too often marriage is seen as a higher priority than education. Some parents feel that girl child is burden to the family while some parents have trepidation about the security of girl child in the present society. So they opt for early marriages which helps them to transfer their responsibilities of the girl child to her husband and in-laws. Due to early marriages women are uneducated and have fewer educational skills and are more likely to live in poverty.

2) Child domestic labour: Parents do not consider girls as earning members of their family as after marriage they have to leave their parents’ home. So their education is just considered as a wastage of money as well as time. On the contrary educating a boy is considered a sound investment. So girls often are made to stay at home and look after the younger siblings and complete the entire household work while parents are away for work.

3) Lack of easy accessibility in rural areas: Parents do not prefer to send their girls to school if these are located at a far distance from the village or home. They cannot bear the expenses of travel due to poverty and some parents do not allow their daughters to walk long distances to schools as the routes could be dangerous. In some parts of the world armed forces target lonely girls and subject them to sexual harassment abduction intimidation and sexual violence.

4) Poverty: More than 1/3 of the population in India is living below poverty line. Hence parents often take their children to work in fields and earn a living. In some parts of Nigeria due to sickness and malnutrition children are unable to go to school.

5) Poor Sanitation: Due to lack of separate toilets for girls, adolescent girls who are menstruating encounter problems such as lack of privacy, unavailability of sanitary disposal facilities and water shortages. In sub Saharan Africa several girls are facing such problems.

6) Lack of adequate facilities in schools: Some schools lack even the basic facilities such as enough rooms to accommodate all the students, furniture, toilets, etc. Hence girls are discouraged. Lack of facilities leads to low quality teaching. Lack of a laboratory facilities and modern teaching trends in high schools deprives students of practical knowledge understanding and reduces their ability to compete with children from corporate schools. Hence such students are unable to secure seats in reputed institutions such as IITs, IIM etc.

7) Dearth of female teachers: Presence of female teachers provides a girl friendly environment and girls feel free to express their problems to them as they are more understanding, compassionate and empathetic towards them. Lack of female teachers makes a school a daunting experience for girls.

8) Living in War zones: In some parts of the world there are constant wars and conflicts with heavy risks to lives. When lives are at stake who will send their children to school
under such circumstances? UNICEF estimates the 48.5 million children worldwide are missing schools. Lack of education is leading to ignorance and more strife. Attacks on girl schools especially is discouraging parents from sending their daughters to school.

9) Natural disasters: Natural disasters like floods, Tsunamis, earthquakes and disease outbreak renders people homeless and totally devastated. Girls lose their valuable time at school as the families have to rehabilitate and recoup themselves. Loss of earnings, utensils, furniture, etc. destroys them utterly and they are no longer able to afford to send their daughters to school.

10) Negative attitude of parents: In some religions and traditional practices there are several limitations and restrictions on girls. Girls are not allowed to pursue higher studies, not allowed to move freely simply because they are girls. Parents feel that they are respecting age old cultural norms by imposing restrictions on girls. Boys on the other hand do not face such discrimination.

11) Dowry System: Dowry system is preventing young aspiring girls from pursuing higher studies. As parents have to search for a bride who is more qualified in terms of education, they are limiting the education of girls to undergraduate courses. Searching for a higher qualified bride would entail offering more dowry. So parents who cannot afford are deliberately restricting their girls from going to higher studies.

12) Domestic violence: Women suffering from domestic violence are emotionally perturbed and physically and mentally devastated. Lack of support from husband and in laws discourages them from pursuing studies after marriage.

13) Eve teasing & Acid Attacks: Girls have resorted to suicide on account of eve teasing and ragging in schools and colleges. Hence parents dread to send their girls to co-education colleges. Very often we read in the newspapers about incidents of acid attacks occurring when girls refuse to reciprocate to the overtures of boys.

14) Malnutrition: In some parts of the world due to poverty and malnutrition children are physically very weak. They suffer from nutrition deficiencies and hence due to sickness and weakness their attendance in schools is very low.

Lack of education causes many issues such as

1. Gender inequality
2. Poor health or nutrition deficiency
3. Lack of awareness about beneficial Govt. Schemes due to illiteracy.
4. Lack of skilled labour.
5. Less productivity
6. Lack of opportunity
7. Less development
8. Lack of culture
9. Lack of self confidence
10. Lack of self-reliance
11. Lack of courage to fight against false beliefs and customs that suppress development of women.
12. Ignorance of social political and legal rights of woman.
13. Ignorance of recent developments in the country.

LITERACY RATE IN INDIA:

India is rising up to the occasion and is achieving considerable progress in the educational field. The main focus of our country is education for all. We have risen from a meagre 12% literacy rate in 1947 to 74.04% in 2011 which is commendable but still not sufficient.

There is a considerable disparity in literacy rates of males and females in India. As per 2011 census literacy rate for men was 82.14% whereas for women it was 65.46. There is disparity even among states. In Kerala female literacy is 92% as per 2011 census whereas Rajasthan, Bihar and U.P. have lowest rates of female literacy i.e. 52.7%, 53.3% and 59.3% respectively.

The child gender ratio is 918 girls for every 1000 boys which is alarming. The government of India has already realized these disparities and is taking various steps to equalize them. As Rajiv Gandhi has said “Education must be a great equalizer in our society. It must be the tool to level the differences that our various social systems have created over the past thousands of years”.

INITIATIVES TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT TO ACHIEVE WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION

1) Beti Bachao Beti Padho (Save the daughter, educate the daughter): This scheme helps to fight against abortion and female infanticide. It was launched on January 22nd 2015 by Sri. Narendra Modi our Prime Minister. Its main aims are 1) to prevent female infanticide 2) To ensure security of the Girl child. 3) To give quality education to the Girl child. Sex selective abortion or female foeticide had declined the female ratio drastically (i.e 918 girls for 1000 boys). The sex of the child is known during ultra sound testing and so women are resorting to abortion when they know that a girl is being born. So the government has adopted certain strategies to rectify the skewed ratios. The strategies followed are
1) campaigning through social media about the importance of the girl child. 2) Making the revelation of sex during scanning a punishable offence.

2) **SUKANYA SAMRIDDHI SCHEME**: This scheme helps parents to raise fund for the girl child. The amount saved will help in educating the girl child and performing her marriage in future. This was launched on 22\textsuperscript{nd} January 2015 by government of India.

3) **SWACHCH BHARATH MISSION**: This mission was launched to construct toilets, clean infrastructure, roads and streets. This was launched on October 2\textsuperscript{nd} 2014 and its main aim is to make India open defecation free by October 2\textsuperscript{nd} 2019. The construction of toilets has considerably reduced the dropout rate of girls in schools and colleges.

4) **NATIONAL MISSION FOR EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN** launched on International Women’s day 2010 to strengthen the overall process that promotes all round development of women.

   It includes:

   a) **Swadhar Greh Scheme**: This scheme helps to rehabilitate women who are rendered homeless due to violence, crime, family discord, mental stress and social ostracism.

   b) **Ujjawala**: A scheme for prevention of trafficking and rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration.

   c) **Sabra**: It improves adolescent girls. It promotes awareness about health, hygiene helps to mainstream out of school adolescent girls into formal or non-formal education

   d) **Scheme for providing free sanitary pads in rural areas**: The ministry of health and family welfare has launched the scheme for promotion of menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls in the age groups 10 – 19 years in rural areas in 2010. The objectives are to increase access to and use of quality sanitary napkins in rural areas and ensure safe disposal in an environment friendly manner.

5) **SSA – Sarva Siksha Abhiyan** is an Indian Govt. Programme aimed at universalization of elementary education i.e. providing free compulsory education up to 14 years.

6) **RMSA – Rashtriya Madhamika Siksha Abhiyan** helps to improve quality of education imparted at secondary level by making all secondary schools confirm to prescribed norms, to achieve universal access to secondary level education by 2017 and achieve universal retention of students by 2020.

7) **Bangaru Thalli Scheme** is Welfare scheme for girls launched by Govt. Of Andhra Pradesh. The scheme supports the family of a girl from her birth till her graduation. The prime goal is to enhance the status of the girl child. In the above scheme the state government gives 2500 to every pregnant women who delivers a girl child, 1500 up to 5 years, 2000 up to 5th standard, 2500 up to eighth standard, 3000 up to X standard, 3500 for intermediate, 3000 during her graduation, 50,000 on completion of Intermediate or inter
discontinued and 1 Lakh if degree in completed. Thus financial support is given at every stage.

8) **Girl Child protection Scheme** : Girls get Rs. 20000 after completion of 20 years for settling in life. To get this incentive girl child should remain unmarried up to 18 yrs.

9) **RUSA : Rashtriya Ucchatar Shiksha Abhiyan** It is a centrally sponsored scheme launched in 2013. Its main aims are 1) To provide funding to state higher educational institutions. 2) To upgrade autonomous colleges to Universities. 3) To construct new Model Degree colleges. 4) To conduct faculty improvement programmes

10) **Samagra Shiksha Scheme** : Was launched by the Union Ministry of HRD on May 24, 2018. This scheme helps to improve the quality of education at school level in India. It will incorporate digital technology and skill development in school education system. An annual grant of five thousand to twenty thousand rupees will be provided for improvement of libraries in schools under this program.

11) **National Nutrition Mission** : It was launched on March 8, 2018. The main objectives of this scheme to provide nutritional support to children, adolescent girls and women.

12) **Badikosta Bicycle Scheme in A.P.** : Distribution of free bicycles to girl students.

13) **NTR Vidyonnati Scheme** for civil services coaching for ST students.

14) **Nirudyoga Bruthi Scheme** for unemployed youth who have completed graduation.

**FUTURE PLANS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:**

1) To open an exclusive Toll-free helpline 181 for women in distress.

2) To set up Kanya sakthi teams in all junior and Degree colleges in the state.

3) To launch mobile App by name Abhayam and appoint a police officer of Inspector General rank exclusively for women’s security.

4) To set up SHE teams to prevent eve teasing and harassment of women.

**NEW TRENDS IN LEARNING WHICH ARE EMPOWERING WOMEN.**

1) **ICT in education curricula for school system.** ICT in education curricula for students teachers and teacher educators has been developed at the national level and being implemented across the country.

2) **E-Pathshala** : It has been developed by NCERT for showcasing and disseminating all educational resources including text books, audio, video periodicals and a variety of other print and non-print materials. So far 3444 audios, videos, e books are available on the portal and mobile app.

3) **National Repository of open educational Resources.** It is an initiative to bring together all digital and digitizable resources across all stages of school education.
4) **SWAYAM**: The study webs of Active Learning for young aspiring minds. It is an integrated platform for online courses using information and communication technology covering school from 9th to 12th to post graduate level. It covers all higher education subjects. It can be accessed on swayam.gov.in. SWAYAM also offers MOOCS ie. Massive open online courses in collaboration with National Institute of Open Schooling. Online Courses help girl students who are unable to attend formal schools and colleges.

5) **Swayam Prabha** – A programme for utilization of satellite communication technologies for transmission of educational e contents through 32 National Channels.

6) **National Digital Library**: The NDL is a project to develop a framework of virtual reservoir of learning resources. More than 153 lakh digital books are available through NIC. It can be accessed on ndl.gov.in

7) **Virtual class room teaching**: It is an online learning environment that allows teachers and students to communicate interact collaborate and explain ideas.

8) **JKC – Jawahar Knowledge Centre** – The Govt. Of A.P. initiated JKC in Degree colleges to help students learn and practice employability skills. Students from poor and marginalized section of the society are availing this opportunity. It is helping girl students to realize their potential and aim high in life. Job fairs and campus recruitment drives are conducted to facilitate the placement of girls trained in JKC. This is a splendid platform to empower girl students.

Sustainable development can be achieved only when we remove gender bias, enhance the social status of girl child, help women to make their own decisions, mould them into emotionally, economically and politically strong individuals and channelize the capabilities of women for nation building. So let us all join hands to achieve women empowerment. At this juncture let us recapitulate the words of Swami Vivekananda who says “Arise, awake and do not stop until the goal is reached”