

Empowerment of WOMEN through Education

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Abstract:

In India, Women are systematically discriminated on the basis of their work and descent for centuries. They experience violence, discrimination and social exclusion on a daily basis.

As girls feel discouraged to enter educational institutions, we see the lowest literacy rate among girls compared to the total population. The only way women can escape the vicious cycle of poverty, and oppression is through education. Through education more women can know their basic human rights and they can then raise their voice against abuse and exploitation. As women they lack the means and the opportunity to defend them at home or to make their problems known outside rural India. Though situations are changing there is still lot to be done in this direction to empower women.

The situation of women in India needs special attention. They are one of the largest social group anywhere in the world and make up formidable per cent of the world's total population. There are traditional taboos for women. Women are discriminated against men even among higher castes due to many reasons. Men are dominant even in all communities. They need financial independence which is possible through employment and this is possible only through education. Let's first see the statistical details and then see what could be done to improve the situation.

Let me discuss the reasons for empowerment, low education among women as compared to the men in the same communities and give suggestions for improving the same in this paper.

Key words: education, exploitation, human rights, opportunity, manusmrithi ,atrocities...

Women education in India: statistics call for policy intervention. According to the statistics released by the latest census of 2011, India's female literacy rate is 65.46 percent, significantly lower than the world average of 79.7 percent.

In India, Presently Tripura has the highest literacy rate in india, 94.65 percent. According to the 2011 census ,literacy level was 93.91 percent in kerala and 91.58 percent in Mizoram ,among the most literate states in the country. The national literacy rate, according to the 2011 census, was 74.04 percent

As one of the most populous countries in the world, India has abundant human resource, one of the critical factors that act as harbinger of prosperity. So much so that the world thinks, India has the potential to become the human resource capital of the world.

In the coming two decades, India may have one of the youngest and largest working-age population in the world. In fact, about a million youth may enter the Indian labour market every month, the World Bank statistics reveal.

However, the multilateral agency sounds a caution: The prevailing gender roles and discriminating women may have a crippling impact. It identifies female labour force participation in the market at 31.2 percent and more than 50 million young women in India neither study nor write.

The Right to Education (RTE) Act, introduced in 2009 making elementary education free and compulsory in the country, has been a shot in the arm for many. Nevertheless, statistics reveal the dismal gap between states-while states like Kerala paint a rosy picture of women education in India with 92.07 percent female literacy, relatively backward states such as Bihar with 51.5 percent female literacy rate highlight the importance of sustained campaign in favour of women's education in India.

In India, it is popularly said that a woman is either someone's daughter, sister, wife, or mother indicating the various stages of her life. Besides, it also points at the absence of female agency in fact, it is an idea that is often considered foreign and 'imported, diluting its importance in leading a healthy life.

Performing the normative gender roles defined by the society is one of the key hurdles in women's education in India. In most of the families, especially in the north India, sons are preferred over daughters. While female foeticide and infanticide may have reduced, daughters face discrimination in availing the facilities that facilitate a better life.

Suitability of women's education in India is measured at the parlance of how comfortably it complements the 'must-do'-household chores, childbearing and rearing, etc.

An anecdote from sudha Murthy spells her difficult journey at an engineering college full of jeering male counterparts and a want of ladies room. Another anecdote from Pepsi CEO Indira Nooyi recalls how her mother admonished her for not bringing milk for her children on the day Ms. Nooyi was named the president of the beverage major.

How much control do Indian women have over different aspects of their lives. Not much, according to the Indian Human Development Survey(IHDS),Conducted by the university of Maryland and the National council of Applied Economic Research in 2004-2005 and 2011-2012.Only 4.99% of women in India had sole Control over Choosing their husbands ,While 79.8% of women needed permission to visit a health Centre, according to the 2012 IHDS survey, showing little change since the IHDS Survey in 2005,When 5 Percent reported having sole control over choosing their husband, and 74.2 percent reported needing permission to visit a health centre.

A large gender gap emerges which was highlighted in the 2011 census that showed the male literacy rate to be 82.14% while for females it lags behind at 65.46%.Although getting the girl child to enroll in primary schools seems to be most problematic ,once enrolled, girl children are more likely to continue their primary education. At the secondary level of education, girls tend to drop out more than boys ,again posing a challenge to retain the girl child for secondary education. In our so-called "modern India", estimates show that for every100 girls in rural India only a single one reaches class12 and almost 40% of girls leave school even before reaching the fifth standard and more than 15% children in schools can't read a simple story in Hindi, our national language.

The differences between the positions of men and women in the society will not lessen; leave alone disappear, as long as there are differences between the education levels of men and women. We must realize that going to school is one thing; on the quality of education that one gets is another. Within government schools-overcrowded classrooms, absent teacher, unsanitary conditions are common complaints and can cause parents to decide that it is not worth their child going to school. A 2010 report conducted by the national council for teacher education estimated that an additional 1.2 million teachers were needed to fulfill the RTE act requirements and merely 5% of government schools complied with all the basic standards and infrastructure set by the act. Moreover 40% of classrooms had more than 30 students and over 60% didn't have any electricity and over 21% of the teachers were not professionally trained .Although much work has been done to improve the state of education in India ,we are still a long way off from attaining standards comparable even to other developing nations.

India is ranked 105 amongst 128 countries in its Education for All Development Index. There is much work to be done to enhance education in India; Particular attention is warranted to women's access to education. An attempt has to be made to remove the social, psychological and structural barriers ,for the participation of the majority of women in education.

Free and compulsory education to all children between the ages of 6 and 14 is a fundamental right of citizens under the 86th Amendment to the constitution of India. Yet, the state of education of women in India is far from 'free' or as totalizing and encompassing as the right appears to guarantee. Although the government, through its various initiatives such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (aimed at providing primary education especially to girl children from disadvantaged rural areas), attempt to improve the education of women, the barrier to educating women is not always monetary and within the purview of the state. Post independence there has been a concerted attempt to improve literacy levels of the population in India. Many schemes have been introduced to increase the access, expand coverage and improve the quality of education. Amongst them the universalisation of elementary education, incentive for retention and non-formal education for adults are not worthy for their scope and intent. Special attention has been given to the education of women in all of the schemes. However, despite the varied attempts of the government and various NGOs operating in the field of education the statistics for women's education leaves a lot to be desired.

According to 2008 government report, education statistics indicate that the number of girls per 100 boys is around 80% for classes up to the VIII and a little over 70% for secondary /higher education that covers classes up to XII. Secondary education generally covers children in the age group of 14-18 years, which is roughly 88.5 million people according to the 2001 census. However, enrollment figures show that only 31 million of these are attending school (census 2001). Of those attending, it appears that attracting and retaining girl children for secondary education is more difficult compared with primary education as well as attracting and retaining boys at the same level of education.

As of 2009, India has 20 central universities, 217 state universities, 106 deemed universities, 5 institutions established and functioning under the state Act, and various institutes which are of national importance, such as the IITs, IIMs and universities such as JNU. Other institutions include 16000 colleges, including 1800 exclusive women's colleges, functioning under various universities and institutions (Government Report, 2009). Despite these exceptional numbers and acknowledged quality of many institutions, it is surprising that women record a lower presence across most institutions of higher education. Significant male-female disparities exist in the enrollment of women in higher education. Gender disparity in enrollment ratio is also because of visible differences in rural areas.

Inadequate school facilities can sometimes serve as a deterrent for the girl child's participation in formal schooling. A report by the International Programs Centre for the U.S. Department of Commerce (Velkoff, 1998) lists the chief barriers to women's education in India as inadequate sanitary facilities, shortage of female teachers and gender bias in curriculum. A BBC news report by Kaushik Basu (2004) notes that a study of 188 government-run primary schools found that 59% of the schools had no drinking water and 89% had no toilets. Another report in the Times of India (2005) cites a 2003/2004 data by National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration that reported only 3.5% of primary schools in Bihar and Chhattisgarh had toilets for girls. In Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh, the rates were 12-16%. Lack of toilets can be particularly detrimental to girl's school attendance, where the only option of attending to nature's call out in the open can pose both a physical as well as a psychological barrier.

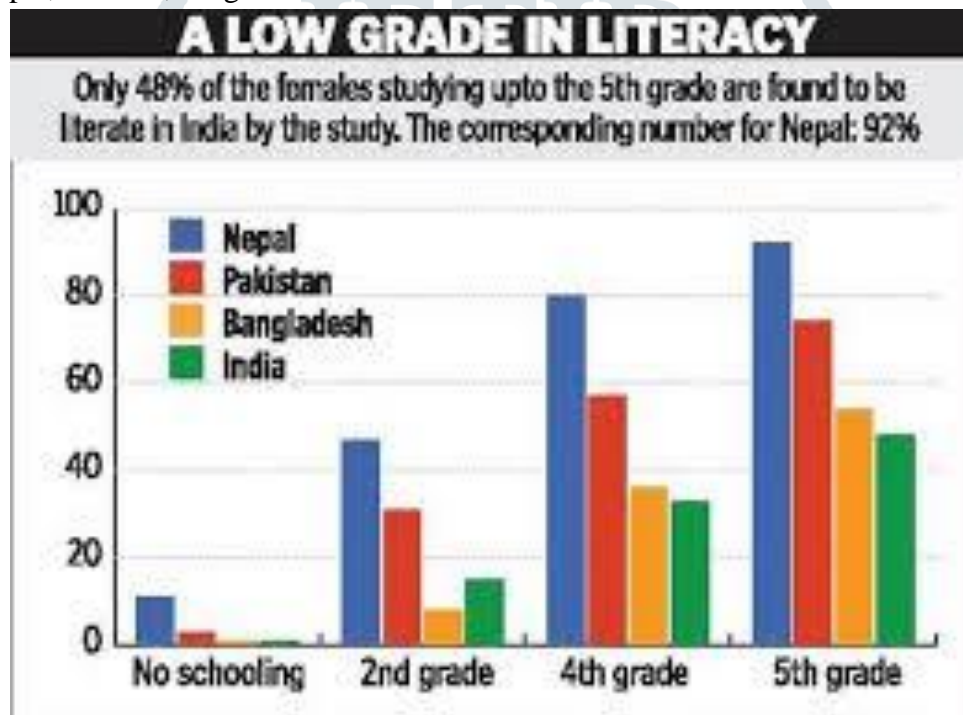
In institutions of higher learning, women are more inclined to enroll in courses traditionally considered more suitable for them such as arts education, but less in course related to science and technology.

Parental reluctance to educate girls is a huge factor inhibiting their access to education. There exist various factors that fuel the choices parents in Indian society make with regard to refusing limiting the education of the girl child.

A mind-set that views education for girls as unlikely to reap any returns ascribes to the view that investing in the education of the male child is like an investment as the son is likely to be responsible for caring for aging parents, and women with largely a reproductive role in society have little need for education and any gains from it are anyway likely to accrue to the homes they go to after marriage.

Economically poorer sections are often not in a position to send their children to school and are likely to invest in the male child than in the female child if they can for the above- mentioned reasons. The middle class often does not consider education for women an important means for preparing, them as individuals in their own right. Amongst The upper middle class ,where education of women may not be encumbered by economic constraints, discriminatory stances, such as women's education having lower economic utility or at best being a secondary wage earner, do exist and are pervasive in the attitudes and norms prevalent in women and girls receive far less education than men, due to prevailing social norms and sometimes fears of violence.

The education of women is depicted I the following picture clearly in comparison with the neighboring countries like Nepal,Pakistan,Bangladesh:



CONCLUSION;- In recent years, the focus of planning has shifted from equipping women for their traditional roles of housewives and mothers to recognizing their worth as producers and contributes to national income. Formal and non-formal education ,increased and sustained enrollment of girls in schools and higher education ,free and compulsory education up to the Age of fourteen have also been given overriding priority .with spread of education amongst women, much of the exploitation and oppression against them are likely disappear. Education has been felt to be the most effective weapon for changing the status of women and also for implementing social change.

For those women seeking work, finding a job proves to be much more difficult than for man. She is usually restricted by geographical limitations preferring a job closer home than else-where .she is also forced to compromise on emoluments, the earning differentials only increasing with age. If she does not consider her career as the primary focus of her earnings are merely supplementary to her husband's ,she is more than willing to settle for a lower pay.

In the post world war II period the united nations through its organ of the united nations educational scientific ,and cultural organization ,UNESCO ,has been conducting studies on country to country basis and has been directing the development of education, especially the women's education throughout the world. While UNESCO conducted surveys on women's education and its relationship with social development ,the government of India through its ministry of education has constituted committees to find out the status of Indian women.

There is a positive correlation between women's education and social development . In India the rural women , the tribal women and the working women all need education. The rate of literacy among women in India is low as compared to men.

Only education can give women employment and empowerment. So the education of women should be given more importance for their welfare.

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