

“EDUCATION-A CHANNEL FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT”

¹Dr. K. V. Padmavathi Major, ²Dr. P. M. Celine Rose

¹HOD, Department of Home Science, Ch.S.D.St.Theresa's College for Women (Autonomous)

²HOD, Department of Physical Education, Ch.S.D.St.Theresa's College for Women (Autonomous)

ABSTRACT

Education is an important tool for women empowerment as it enables them to respond to the various challenges of life. Education plays a vital role in the all-round development of women. Women's educational achievements have positive effects on the family and society. It is an essential means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate in the progress of society. It means making women aware of their rights and thereby developing the confidence to claim those rights. Grant of equal opportunities to women may result in sustainable development. Education is a powerful tool of social transformation. Greater access for women to education must be ensured through right educational system from preschool age onwards. It creates opportunities to bring out their potential and hidden talents, thereby enabling them to excel in all walks of life. Hence, focus towards education and development of Women should be prioritized.

INTRODUCTION

Every child has a right to equal educational opportunities. Miserably in some countries, girl-child education is neglected due to cultural attitude. Women are seen only as pertinent in the kitchen and for procreation. Women constitute almost half of the population in the world. Women education in India has also been a major preoccupation of both the government and civil society as educated women can play a very important role in the development of the country. India is poised to emerge as one of the most developed Nations by 2020. Undoubtedly, women will play a vital role in contributing to the Country's development. Women power is crucial to the economic growth of any country. In India this is yet to meet the requirements despite reforms. Though India could well become one of the largest economies in the world, it is being hindered due to lack of women's participation. History has confirmed that *“If you educate a man, you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate a Nation”*. Educating a woman brings about self-respect, confidence and promotes active participation in society. Women need to be more involved in decision making processes of educational policy.

IMPORTANCE

The concept of women empowerment was introduced at the **International Women's Conference at NAIROBI in 1985**. Education is one of the tools of women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, to brazen out their traditional role and change their life. Education increases women's self-confidence as it enables them to find better jobs and they can work shoulder to shoulder with men. They can engage in public debate and make demands on government for health care, social security and other benefits. Specifically education empowers women to make choices that improve their children's

health, well-being, and chances of survival from increasing mortality rates. Education helps to reduce malnutrition. Furthermore, education empowers women to make choices that can improve their welfare, including marrying beyond childhood and for family planning. Crucially, education creates awareness and claims of their rights when in need and also boost up their self-possession. It takes collective effort of the government and society in creating equal opportunities for education, and increasing the enrolment of the girl-child into schools. This in itself reduces poverty. An educated woman will play a better role in guiding her children through life's journey. Gender equality in access to education and participation has been achieved in most countries. Of course there are still a few countries which are lagging behind but in general, women are even out performing men - if access and participation are the benchmarks. Education certainly has a transformation role in achieving sustainable communities, nations and world at large. Equal educational opportunities are human rights that should be available for every child irrespective of their gender.

Education has been recognized as an essential agent of social change and development in any society and any country. It is considered as a potent instrument through which processes of modernization and social change come into existence. Education exposes people to new thoughts and ideas and provides necessary skills. Moreover it is rightly said that to educate the woman is to educate the whole family. In the modern world, there are no domains of work that women haven't dealt into. Words such as chairman and camera man have been rephrased as chairperson and camera person, to accommodate women. India is poised to emerge as one of the most developed nations by 2020, more literate, knowledgeable and economically at the forefront. Undoubtedly, if women are given opportunities they will play a vital role in contributing to the Country's development. Though in India, after experiencing a chain of reforms few milestones has been achieved in the area of women empowerment, it needs to focus on giant strides for the same to witness a better India.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Although in the Vedic period women had access to education in India, they had gradually lost this right. 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 Vidya sagar emphasized on women's education in India. Mahatma Gandhi, Jyotiba Phule, Periyar and Baba Saheb Ambedkar were leaders in India that took various initiatives to make education available to the women. However women's education got stimulus after the country got independence in 1947 and the government has taken various measures to provide education to all Indian women. As a result women's literacy rate has grown over the decades and the growth of female literacy has in fact been higher than that of male literacy rate.

LITERACY RATE

According to Census of India (2011) during the pre-Independence time, literacy rate for women had a very poor spurt in comparison to literacy rate of men. This is witnessed from the fact that literacy rate of women has risen from 0.7 % to 7.3 % where as the literacy rate of men has risen from 9.8 % to 24.9 % during these four decades. During the post-independence period literacy rates have shown a substantial increase in general. However the literacy rate of male has almost tripled over the period e.g. 25% in 1951 and 76 % in 2001. Surprisingly the female literacy rate has increased at a faster pace than the male literacy during 1981 - 2001. The growth is almost 6 times e.g. 7.9 % in 1951 and 54 % in 2001. From this analysis one can

understand that still the female literacy rate is wadding behind male literacy rate. The rate of school drop outs is also found to be comparatively higher in case of women. Higher illiteracy rate of women is undoubtedly attributing for women dependence on men and to play a subordinate role. The lack of education is the root cause for women's exploitation and negligence. While in 1971 only 22% of Indian women were literate, by the end of 2001 54.16% female were literate. The growth of female literacy rate is 14.87% as compared to 11.72 % of that of male literacy rate. Women education in India plays a very important role in the overall development of the country. It not only helps in the development of half of the human resources, but in improving the quality of life at home and outside. Educated women not only tend to promote education of their girl children, but also provide better guidance to all their children. Moreover educated women can also help in the decrease of infant mortality rate and increase in the rate of population. Only literacy can help women to understand the Indian's constitutional and legislative provisions that are made to strengthen them. Thus promoting education among women is of great importance in empowering them to accomplish their goals in par with men in different spheres of life. Education is the key factor for women empowerment, prosperity, development and welfare. Discrimination of women from womb to tomb is well known. There is continued inequality and vulnerability of women in all sectors and women oppressed in all spheres of life, they need to be empowered in all walk of life. In order to fight against the socially constructed gender biases, women need to overcome the system that requires more strength. Such strength comes from the process of empowerment and empowerment will come only from the education. Women empowerment is the basic need for rural development. Education brings diversified developmental changes in the society. Empowered women face, respond and overcome the social challenges respectably. Education helps the women to cross over the darkness of illiteracy and to reach the light of the brighter world. Through Education a women acquires knowledge to respond the challenges of their life and to raise their voice against exploitation, dowry system, early marriage and gender inequality. Presently, Women empowerment is becoming a global issue which is a positive approach.

MEASURES TO ADDRESS VARIOUS CONCERNS

Women education in India has been a major concern of both the government and civil society as educated women can play an important role in the development of the country. Education is milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, to deal with their traditional role and change their life. India is on the edge of becoming superpower, a developed country by 2020. Education of women is the most powerful tool of change of position in society. Education also brings a reduction in inequalities and functions as a means of improving their status within the family. The first step for fighting poverty is education. Women should be given the same opportunity as everyone else. By educating women in the society, it would lead to growth and bring them at the forefront of the system. Empowerment means accepting and allowing people (women) who are on the outside of the decision-making process. This puts a strong emphasis on participation in political structures and, in the economic sphere, on the ability to obtain an income that enables participation in economic decision-making. Empowerment is the process of creating power in individual's lives, society, and in their communities. Women are empowered when they are able to access the educational opportunities without any limitations and restrictions. Economic empowerment increases women's access to formal government programs, mobility outside the home and economic independence. Strengthening women's access to employment, property inheritance and land rights is another way of economic empowerment of women. This would allow them better means of asset accumulation. Empowerment in the workplace can positively affect job satisfaction and performance. Micro finance institutions aim to empower women in their community by giving them access to loans that have low interest rates. Political empowerment supports creating policies that would best support gender equality and agency

for women in both the public and private spheres. Despite significant improvements in recent decades, education is not universally available and gender inequalities persist in many countries. Specific efforts to be made to address the lower participation and learning achievement of girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education.

INTERNET AS A TOOL OF EMPOWERMENT

Of late the growing access of the web has allowed women to empower themselves by using various tools on the Internet. Women have begun to use social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter with the introduction of the World Wide Web. Through online activism, women are able to empower themselves by voicing their problems of equality rights. In recent years, blogging has also become a powerful tool for the educational empowerment of women. Through easy accessibility and affordability of e-learning, women can now study from the comfort zone of their homes. Many times, the internet is very useful as source of empowerment for women through its creation, dispersion, and utilization of hash tags on social media. By empowering themselves educationally through new technologies like e-learning, women are also learning new skills that will come in handy in today's advancing globalized world.

WOMAN'S STATUS IN INDIA - THE CHANGING SCENARIO

In earlier times women were involved just as kitchen and house keeper. During those days women were suppressed by many problems like Child marriage, Dowry, Sati, Death during early child birth. **In 1995 International Year for Women was declared and observed all over the world.** Now-a- days in 21st century women began to get educated and take part in social and political field. In our freedom struggle women also took part as men did. Now, women are not within four wall boundaries, they are self motivated and moving towards progress. In our modern India, Women have adorned different high offices like Prime Minister, President and Speaker of Lok Sabha. In our Indian sub-continent women are playing a very significant role as entrepreneurs too. They get transformed from home makers to Nation makers. This is because of education that ignites the spark of empowerment in them. Education is a key factor for women empowerment, prosperity, development and welfare. The status of women in a complex society like India is not uniform. The dynamics of the future call for knowledge leadership. India today can boost of a large educated manpower, which is crucial for the socio-economic growth of any nation. Education also brings a reduction in inequalities and functions as a means of improving their status within the family. Many world leaders and scholars have argued that sustainable development is possible with gender equality and further the country could not be just, and social change wouldn't occur. Therefore, scholars agree that women's empowerment plays a huge role and is one of the significant contributions of development.

SUMMARY

Empowerment means moving from a weak position to execute power. Education of a girl is very essential for a nation. Education of women is the most powerful tool of change of position in society. Education also brings a reduction in inequalities and functions as a means of improving their status within the family. To bring more girls, especially from marginalized families of BPL, in mainstream of education, the government is providing a package of concessions in the form of free books, uniform, boarding and lodging, clothing for the hostilities, midday meals, scholarships, free cycles and so on. An educated woman is respected by all. She has the ability to draw the attention of people, make them to listen to her views and follow her. Development of our country or society mostly depends on the empowerment of women. Man and Woman are like two wheels of a cart. If both the wheels are positioned with equal strength then only the possibility of movement of the cart will be smoother and faster to reach the destiny safe. Therefore any Nation that

gives equal opportunities to women in all walks of life will move towards development smoother and faster. Hence ignore ignoring women and proceed to empower women to live in a healthy society and world at large.

REFERENCES

1. Rao, R.K. (2001). Women and Education, Kalpaz Publications, Delhi.
2. Government of India, Census of India 2011.
3. Sharma, P. (2013). Education and Women Empowerment in India, Retrieved from www.ijbar.impactfactor.org.
4. Gupta N.L. (2003) Women's Education Through Ages, Concept Publication Co, New Delhi.
5. Agarwal S.P. (2001), Women's Education in India(1995-98)Present Status, Perspective, Plan, Statistical Indicators with Global View, Vol. III Concept Publications Co, New Delhi.

**“If you educate a man you educate an individual,
If you educate a woman you educate the whole family -
Empowered Women Empower the Nation”**

