



Women Empowerment and Education in Indian Perspective

Jhili Meher

M.A, M.Phil (Education)

Former Guest Faculty,

Gangadhar Meher University, Sambalpur

Email- missjhilimeher@gmail.com

Abstract

Empowerment is a process based on pulling someone while one is in down condition and gives them that power in which one will be able to “fight for right”, raised voice and strengthen. This specially need for those who are weaker, downtrodden and under privilege. So far as women are concerned in our country they are the most oppressed people, so “women empowerment” is emerged and it is the need of the hour. As country’s development is solely depending upon its citizen, both women and men, equality maintenance is necessary. In our country women lags behind the men, so women empowerment is sine qua non. If we overview history regarding position of women from ancient to till today, we will find the deterioration in the position of women till British rule, after words it was some extent manageable and in 21st century it is so fair. One thing we ever mark that with the increasing of education, the position of women became stronger. It is education which eradicates social, regional and gender gap and establishes a classless, casteless and genderless society in which women enjoy equal position as like men in each field may be professional, personal or social. So this paper seek to describe about women empowerment, explain necessary condition for women empowerment and especially crucial role of education for empowering women.

Keywords- empowerment, oppressed, position, education, deterioration, gender gap.

Introduction

Gender is artificial, social it may be changed but sex is natural. No man have power to change it, although science have reached its top still no control over sex when a new born baby coming to this world. There is no distinction in between giving birth to a baby boy or a baby girl. Same pain, same suffer whether the baby is girl or boy, but one thing we can’t understand why are we doing disparities?

Why are we neglecting baby girl as compare to baby boy? Why we are providing much more scope to baby boy as compare to baby girl? Because of our societal norms, principles, custom and tradition a very hellish notion filled in the mind of peoples which resulted in “Gender”. That gender divided people into two group, feminine gender and masculine gender and also prescribed different norms, ethics, and regulation as per gender. So far as feminine gender is concerned they are the people who suffered a lot as per societal norms, regulations and ethics. The feminine gender so called girls and women are considered as weaker section, “Abala Durbala” though they have equal capacity like masculine gender (men and boys). Female have no scope to enact, to react, to refuse, to revert. Feminine gender lags behind masculinity. Gap is seen in between them which lead men as in higher level and female in low. Gradually women were being tortured, dominated and humiliated by men.

Progress of a nation solely lies on its peoples and their attitude. Almost fifty percent’s of the population are women and girls, we can’t ignore them as they are part and parcel, and their development is sine qua non. Development of country lies not in well status people rather on marginalized, oppressed and down trodden. As a result the very term “women empowerment” was emerged. Empowerment is nothing but raising the standard of the women so they will be in every sphere as like men in the society. It’s the only way to bring equality throughout the entire nation irrespective of sex, where pleased and sympathy life of women becomes converted into sophisticated life and they will live with proper dignity, respect and honour. So women empowerment is essential to bring drastic changes in position of women in society. In such activity role of education is inevitable, as education play a remarkable role in empowering women in the society. It’s education which brings awareness about women empowerment, its needs, importance, and how far it is necessary for development of country by educating the masses. Education also directly helps the women to create self-confidence and became self-dependable.

What is empowerment?

The word Empower comes from the old French prefix ‘Em’ which means ‘in, or into’ and the power means ‘ability, strength, might’. So empower is a word used to describe as an act of giving someone more confidence or control, making them feel strong and powerful.

Empowering is the process of providing freedom and power to someone to do something what he/she wants to do, in which the person becoming more stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one’s life and claim for own rights. It also means that people having power to access their own life, enable to think freely, endow the power of behaving without fear; managing a situation independently, deputized to take action, make decision for the sake of himself/herself. Empowering generate a trust in individual to become a good performer and a gainer instead of loser. Empowerment creates self-confidence, self-reliance and self-less for which an individual work with a great courage and used their expertise and intellects that latent inside. Empowering an individual is to attain knowledge, understanding and skill to acknowledge their current status, curiosity for change their respective position

then take initiative to bring drastic changes in their lives and also induce an individual to represent their interest in a responsible way, acting in their own authority.

What is women empowerment?

Women empowerment refers to the activities taken for raised the status of women in the society through education, awareness, literacy, and training. It is that inevitable processes in which women are enable to acknowledge their current position in the society as compare to men, they realized their situation and need instant changes, do it in action, finally their status will be raised to equal as men. Because of that, the country, society, community, laws must provide support and special privilege to empower women's. Basically in under developed countries, the society is patriarchal in nature where male person dominate the female in each and every aspect. When a new born baby girl is coming to this world she is under of her father, then passing some years she became responsibility of her brother, then after marriage under the dominance of her husband and in old age under the care and boundary of her son. There is also differences when a baby boy and a baby girl born, that birth of baby boy brings joy and happiness for all, sweets are distributed and many more things done but in case of baby girl not at all. So far as the religion is concerned, the position of Muslim women's is worse than the Hindu women, Hindu women's position is not good than Christian and Persian women's. Gender discrimination, gender disparities, sex differences create so many hurdles in the way of progress of women. Whether people aware or not it's a doubt that "if the worldly life will be a chariot then the male and female are the two wheels". Just imagine if one wheel remain lag behind what will be the consequence. It is said that "if we educates a man then we only educates an individual, but if we educates a women then we educates entire family". In Indian society there is a social taboo that if the husband of women died she will force to be leading a widow life but in male cases no such provision. Women were considered as ABALA, DURBALA and weaker than male, no opportunities to participate in any Eva as like as men. Traditional philosopher J.J.Rousseau also commented that "Men are born for work and women for serve". That means women only remain within four wall of the house and give company to husband for leading household life, not much than that. The famous Odia poet and writer "Fakir Mohan Senapati" clearly reflected the then societal practices in his famous story "RABATI" that how "Rabati" had suffered in order to afford education and finally she was blamed and got death. Many stories, incidents and circumstances depict that how women are suffered, abused and maltreated from ancient time to till today some extent. They have no right to express themselves, speak for her own sake, and raise voice for their uplifting.

If we give freedom and independence to women to do what they want to do, exactly in which field they have interest, should not impose any restriction for them to act and enact in social, economic, political, educational field and to encourage them to acquire a place for them as like men, then women will be empowered. Whether job opportunity or taking leadership, may be for social reformation or personal trouble, let be given them freedom to face with a matching shoulder with men, irrespective of

negativity boost her self-esteem, aware them about their ability what they can do if they take interest, raise a supporting hand for a ray of hope, then women's will be empowered. If women are not getting empower then in spite of our independency of country we are not independent. Once Father of the Nation M.K Gandhi said that-"the day a woman can walk freely on the roads at night, that day we can say that India has achieved independence". So in today's era empowerment has gained momentum. There are some ways through which we can empower women which are as follows:

1. Place women as a leader that leads to access them every sphere of human existence and develop an idea of decision making.
2. Delegates power to women as men which increase management quality of women both insight and outside home.
3. Increasing job opportunity for women so they will come out from home and earn and became self-reliant.
4. Equal pay for equal work provision irrespective of sex to eliminate inequality among labours.
5. Organized entrepreneur skill development program for women to develop vocational skill which leads to employment
6. Constitutional provisions which are meant for empowering women in India in its constitution under certain article should be work properly in field.

Status of women from ancient to modern India-

Mahatma Gandhi states,-"Women are more fitted than men to exploration and take bolder action in non-violence. Women are the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacity. If the nonviolence is the law of our being, the future is with women". Since ages, status of women has witnessed various ups and downs. Status refers to a position of an individual with respect to rights, duties, involvement, achievements, occupation, viewpoints etc. Status of women in India from very beginning period (ancient time) to till today is constantly fluctuating. Women's status during early Vedic period was so good as compare to Later Vedic age, their position was better in British period as compare to Muslim and Mughal period, again their position after independence and in 21 century is best than the old age.

Status of women in early Vedic Period

Although Manusmriti gave some restrictions for women in early Vedic period, the position of woman was praiseworthy. Women were enjoyed equal status with men. Both boys and girls were educated. Women had their freedom to choose their life partner. After marriage, life was not changed remarkably; rather women were treated as affectionately in their in-laws house as in father home. So far as right to property is concerned, women had also right to get share of his parental properties. In case if

a family had no son then the daughter will be the owner of property, even if the widowed daughter had also share in property. In that era there was no purdah system, sati system, no untouchability, no caste system, no child marriage prevailed. The women were also enjoyed religious rights including writing and enchanting mantras, assisted their husband for religious sacrifices. APALA, BISWABARA, GARGY, MAITRY, etc. were the women scholars in that time.

Status of women in post -vedic period

During post-Vedic period, the position of women was worse. With the advent of Aryan people, the society was divided into four classes: Brahmans, Kshatriya, Vaishyas and Shudras. Because of caste system, untouchability seen in the society, superior inferior feelings were created, child marriage, sati system, dowry system were seen. Widow Remarriage was prohibited and polygamy marriages prevailed. In that period women's were bound to remain within four walls of the houses, no right for taking education as well as choosing partner for marriage. She was lived and behaved as per her husband instruction. Women had also no right on parental property, even widow women also, only brother- less daughters got some share. In their in-laws houses they were suffering a lots but they had no right to speak before men. "Men are for work and women for served"- solely implemented in that time. Women position was no longer better than Shudras people of then society. Broadly we may speak that women's position at that time was declined.

Status of women's in Muslim period-

During the period of sultanate and Mughal the condition of women's was so pathetic as Muslim male person were more dominating in nature. The emergence of purdah system creates more restriction on women's. Muslims were considering women and girls as sexual enjoyment. The Mughal soldiers and courtiers kidnapped the girls, because of that fear Muslim parents married their daughters in teenage, as a result child marriage was seen in the society. JUHARA custom was seen in which the daughters and wives of the soldier's and king of the lost empire burnt themselves for fear of touching men. As Muslims were materialistic in nature, they gave costly ornaments, gifts, clothes and money also to their daughter at the time of marriage which leads to severe dowry system. Because of that dowry system people who couldn't afford to give dowry, they treated as burden while a girl child was born. Again in-laws houses because of dowry system violence against women were seen in where women were suffered a lot. Though Mughal rule brought so many changes for the goodness of country, it couldn't touch the women. The condition of women's remained unchanged and became exploited by male person in the society.

Status of women in British period-

Status and position of women during British period got remarkable changes. As the British people were the educated people, they tried to eradicate evil custom, bad practices and social taboos from the society. Socio-religious reformation movement introduced by British Government brought

significant changes in the society. Some Indian were also joined their hands in this social work. Person like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Dayananda Saraswati, Iswar Chandra Vidya Sagar, Annie Besant and many patriotic personality of India came forward to create a neat and cleaned society where all the evil practices like Sati system, child marriage, Purdha system, untouchability, blind belief, and superstition were killed and women got a good position so as compare to Muslim period. It was the strong law passed in British India by the then viceroy Lord William Bentinck to abolish Sati and female infanticide. Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar came forward for upliftment of widows; as a result British Government passed an act for widow remarriage in 1856. Till polygamy marriage, preference for a male child was prevailed. Widow who is not practiced sati system after her husband death lead a sorrow and painful life. Again they had no right to attend any fortune activity like marriage. In spite of several steps taken by both British government and Indian socio-religious reformers, the position of women was not materialized in expected way.

Status of women after independence-

Because of emergence of new constitution for free India so many provision were made for the upliftment of the women. The constitution under its various articles and laws provided some legal facilities that some extent reduce the hell condition of women and girls, as the constitution was made for established welfare as well as progress of India after independence. The most important articles were Articles 14, 15 and 16. According to Article 14 “all are equal before law irrespective of sex”. Article 15 states, “prohibition of discrimination on ground of religion, caste, race, sex or place of birth”. Article 16 states that “Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment”. Besides these articles some important legislation like Special Marriage Act of 1954, Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961, Indian Divorce Act of 1969, Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act of 1971 were passed in Indian constitution for the welfare of the women and girls. In spite of all such provisions, women and girls were not got benefited. It was remains only in documents; actually it was not implemented in society accurately. Right to education act also guaranteed by article 21(A) of Indian constitution for free and compulsory education for all up to 6-14 year of age, but in rural and grassroots level it was not materialized, as parents not agreed to send their daughter to school. Child marriage, sati system, sex determination of fetus and termination was until seen in society. Till women were dominated by men in society. In the year 1992, one third seat in local self-government was reserved for women in India. In the field of government job also, the different states provisioned for women post in different percentages, like in Kerala it is 55%, in Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh it is 32%, in Odisha it is 33%. The PNDT Act (Prenatal Diagnostic Technique) was enacted on 20 September, 1994 with the intension to prohibit prenatal diagnostic techniques for sex determination of fetus leads to female foeticide. But still people do it in fear of birth of girl child. Although dowry system was banned by law, people used to give dowry while married to their daughter. There was a system seen in society that ‘women are supposed to eat after men; they get to eat whatever is left’. That’s leads to malnutrition, may

cause death. Likewise so many customs were being practices in that time in which women were secluded.

Status of women in 21st century-

Despite of societal norms, social control and restriction imposed on women, now in 21st century they have become powerful, joined their shoulder with men and stepped towards development. Now we can't find any field where women are not in there. Every sphere of human existence like Medical, Engineering, Law, Teaching, Sports, Research, space activity, Politics, women have landed. Dropout rate in education also reduced. Child labor is also prohibited strictly by government. In order to strengthen Article 21(A), another act in 2009 emerged which is known as "Right to Education Act, 2009", which aims to provide free and compulsory education to all with in the age group of 6-14 years. Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006 in order to protect girls child, National Policy for Empowerment of Women 2001 deal with any violence against women at any level, may be societal or domestic, dealt with a view to eliminate its incidence. National mission for Empowerment of Women was lunched by Government of India on International Women's Day in 2010 for strengthening women and all-round development of them. As people are getting education they are now not supporting old societal norms and principles. Now, society is going to be open, where everyone has equal position irrespective of sex, class and caste. So in conclusion we may say that though slow but steady progress occurred in women empowerment. Now, so many educational schemes are working in order to strengthen women and girls, like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan,(SSA), Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, Rastriya Madhyamik Shiksha Sbhiyan(RMSA), by which social-regional and gender gap may be vanished.

Role of education in women empowerment-

Education play catalyst role in bringing social changes. The progress of human civilization from stone age to space age is nothing but the blessing of education. While discussing function of education, its area covers as function of education towards individual, towards society and towards nation. That means education not only does for society and nation but also for individual all round personality development, irrespective of male and female. For society, this bring many changes in its practices, custom, belief, and social system as well as conserve, preserve, and transmit its culture and cultural heritage that leads to strengthen each member of society of both gender. For nation education play a significant role in progress and development of the nation by providing idea about good leadership and citizenship, administration, understanding rights and duties, constitution and its laws. So it is the immense effect of education that leads to gradual improvement in the status of women. If now women participating in each fields, it's because of education. It is education by which women are raising voice against violence, enable to get her rights, and became self-dependable. So we cannot ignore the effect of education. Education creates national integration as well as international understanding that's facilitating the feeling of nationality and international understanding which not only limit the person in their

respective country rather dwelling a sense of international communication, international peace and international cooperation. Now the whole world is like a “Global village” where every country has its due share throughout the whole world. Because of education “Globalization” has been emerged, each country has freedom to interact in economic sphere, and women are actively as well as grandly participating in all activities. So education is a milestone of the women empowerment, enable women to respond to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life. Education of women can bring changes in attribute of family, society and nation. The difference between educated and uneducated women is just living and death. Education make her to-

- Guide her children, family, society and nation and enable to search happy life in this problematic world.
- Fulfill her aspiration in accordance with his capacity, eligibility and level of strength physically or mentally.
- Became self-reliance and self-less by giving professional and vocational skills that leads to women employment.
- Express freely, raise voice without fear .
- enable to get a job as like as men and to lead a family.
- Enable her to become socialist to bring social changes, politician to administer the country, educationist for contribution and philosopher to give new outlook.
- Understand gender disparities, gender socialization and gender stereotypes and take appropriate steps to change it in course of time.
- Enable them to understand their rights and duties as a citizen of a country.

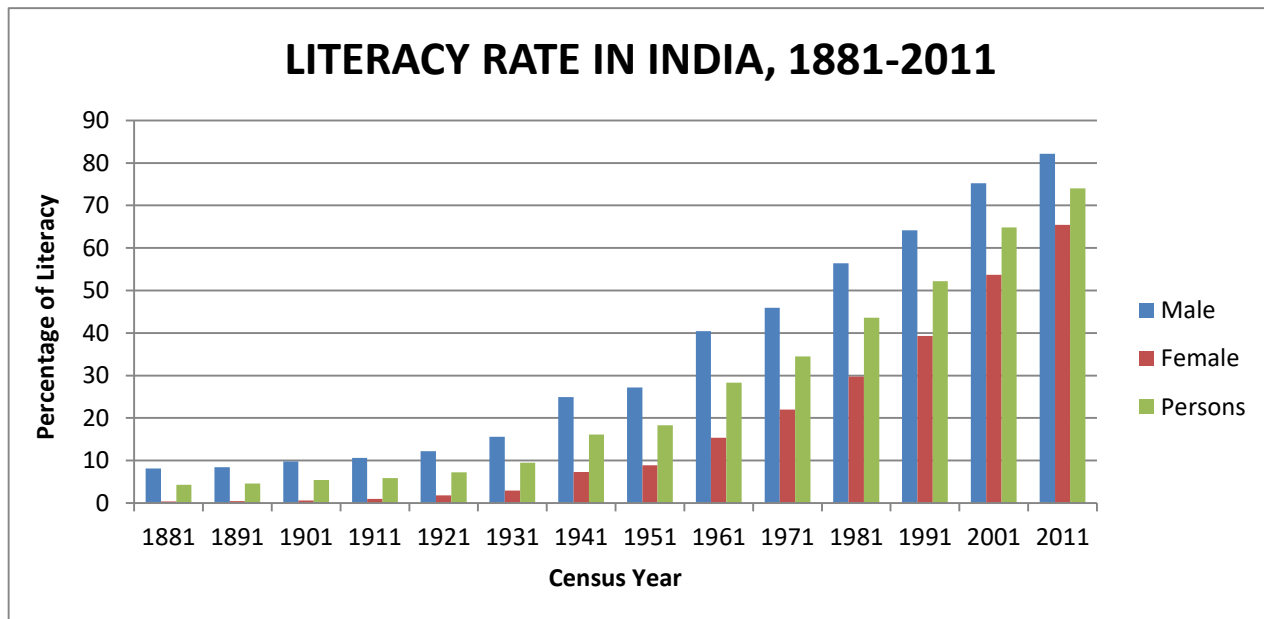
If we go through the census report of government of India where we will find details literacy rate of person with male and female in each decade, which indicating increasing literacy rate in India from before independence to after freedom to till last 2011. Below the table no-1 and bar diagram indicating literacy rate of persons both male and female.

Table-1: Literacy Rate in India, 1881-2011

Census Year	Male	Female	Persons
1881	8.1	0.35	4.32
1891	8.44	0.42	4.62
1901	9.8	0.6	5.4
1911	10.6	1	5.9
1921	12.2	1.8	7.2
1931	15.6	2.9	9.5
1941	24.9	7.3	16.1
1951	27.16	8.86	18.33
1961	40.4	15.35	28.3
1971	45.96	21.97	34.45
1981	56.38	29.76	43.57

1991	64.13	39.29	52.21
2001	75.26	53.67	64.83
2011	82.14	65.46	74.04

Source:
Census
of India



Above table no-1 and bar diagram indicating how women literacy rate become increasing from very beginning period to till last census. Here one thing we can say that the increasing rate of women and girls literacy raised them for empower and progress. So role of education for women empowerment is inevitable.

Conclusion

Women empowerment is a burning issue which seen in almost all developing country like India. Though women are empowered in now 21st century till it is not full-fledged. Till some parochial minded not supporting it as their mind set is based on patriarchy. More awareness, more consignment should be needed for clear mindset, as they don't know as "women wakeup country will develop". To strengthen "women empowerment" awareness of women empowerment should be created that women can do anything that men can do. More education should be provided to people from top level to grassroots level. Girls school, women's college, women's university should be opened, where not only general education but also technical, professional course should be provided, that will develop certain skills with education among women and, exclusively for realizes their latent talent and intelligence with variety of vocational skills which leads them to become self-dependence and self-supporting. Last but not the least every men should have honor for women as his mother is a women from whom he himself taken birth.

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