

# WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA THROUGH EDUCATION AND ITS IMPACT ON SOCIETY

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**ABSTRACT:** *Education is important aspect of every human being and it is critical part of empowerment for women. This is not only because education forms an entry point for many opportunities but also because women with good educational achievements will have positive ripple effects within her family and across generations and society in general. Based on the analysis of existing research, in woman empowerment based on education, this paper explores how various factors like poverty, gender inequality and social culture affect woman's education and how to empower women by addressing these complex factors through education.*

**Key words:** *empowerment, women, education, poverty, gender inequality*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence. As Dr. B. R Ambedkar said, "It is the education which is the right weapon to cut the social slavery and it is the education which will enlighten the downtrodden masses to come up and gain social status, economic betterment and political freedom". Empowerment means progressing from imposed powerlessness to a position of power. At the beginning of nineteenth century, a regular system of girl's education was practically unknown in most parts of India and education of girl was discouraged. Historically, society believed a woman's place was in her home, caring for her husband and children, as opposed to the workplace. It was regarded as being against the injunctions of the Hindu scriptures and there was a wide-spread belief that the education of girls leads to their widowhood [1]. In Neera Desai's words, "Ideologically woman was considered a completely inferior species, inferior to male having no significance, no personality, socially she was kept in a state of utter subjection denied any right, suppressed and oppressed. The patriarchic joint family, custom of polygamy the purdah, the property structures, early marriage, self-immolation of the women (Sati) or a state of permanent widowhood, all these contributed to the smothering of free development of the women"[2]. As early as 1914 Dr. Anniebesent drew the attention of politicians to the statistics on female illiteracy, child widows and terrible death toll of women, as problems that needed urgent solution. In spite of the progress made in hundred years since then, these problems continue to hunt our society[3].

Arrival of British and English education opened the floodgates of western ideas. The social reformers and the British government strongly advocated for girl's education. The wave of reform was initiated by notable social reformers Raja Rammohan Roy followed by Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and P.C. Banerjee etc. Finally Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. B R Ambedkar. Educational institutions were opened for women and a small but significant portion of Indian women were educated. The repercussions of the woman's education upon the structure of the family, marriage system, freedom of woman were tremendous. A gradual loosening of traditional knot restraining the liberty of women stated up and is further accelerated in 20th century. Post-independence era resulted in enactment of various legislations to improve the condition of women, providing higher education and empowering women. This resulted in entry of women in various professions and politics which were meant for men in early decade. The socioeconomic status, education and parental encouragement during college life play a significant role in deciding what a woman aspires in life and society.

## 2. THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study explores how various factors like poverty, gender inequality and social culture and geopolitical background affect woman's education and how women can get empowered in this Indian complex environment is subject of interest.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The most of the work is carried out with secondary data collection, which is already published or available in public domain and analysis of this database which published in the form of reports, thesis and review articles published in various journals.

## 4. DISCRIMINATION OF WOMEN

It is found that the discrimination towards women and girl in India is not just because of gender inequality. But it takes place at the intersection of gender and other factors such as household wealth, wide cross-cultural variation in the social rules and geographic location[4]. Girls from the poorest households experience greater disparities in terms of access to education. Women and girls experience multiple and intersecting inequalities. Structural barriers in the economic, social, political and environmental spheres produce and reinforce these inequalities. Obstacles to women's economic and political empowerment, and violence against women and girls, are barriers to sustainable development and the achievement of human rights, gender equality, justice and peace[5]. It is found that in India by custom, women are still denied the right to own land or inherit property, do job and no significant role in decision-making in family or workplace. Also it is found that women's socio-economic contributions are unrecognized.

## 5. KEY FINDINGS

- It seems that the women from Urban area and Higher social status and social back ground have developed independent thinking ability and as well as very expressive in their opinion
- Educated women feel that they should be part of the decision making process and should be consulted on par with men.
- Economic and social benefits of educating a girl are more than educating a boy[5]
- Poverty and social status has strong influence in accessing education for girls[6].
- Harassment in society and workplace is found to have a profound effect upon educational outcome of a girl.
- Even though girls outperform the boys at school, traditional mind set of families prevent them from translating educational success into carrier success, which needs higher education.
- Decreasing number of girls taking higher education and number of girls taking science subjects is less as compare to boys in rural areas.
- To bring more girl children, especially from marginalized BPL families, into mainstream education, govt. is providing scholarships, mid-day meal, and free education along with scholarships.
- Percentage of girls from rural background going to school is less as compare to urban girls and this gap is more in higher education.
- No significant role in decision-making in family even in choosing their life partner or workplace.
- Women's socio-economic contributions are unrecognized or sidelined by dominant male society.

## 6. SOLUTIONS INCLUDING ROLE OF GOVERNMENT AND INSTITUTIONS.

- Providing free access to school is a very effective way of addressing gender inequalities in education and establishing more schools in rural areas
- Policy for educational institutions on how to empower women and girls must include:
  - a) Faculty and supporting staff should have awareness of impact of gender roles and stereotypes on student's self-confidence and personality
  - b) Higher education institutions should design curriculum that aid and impact women's academic carrier options
- Policies from govt. to increase economic prospect of different regions should include women and girl education.
- Steps must be taken to ensure a significant role of women in decision-making at all levels.
- Women's socio-economic contributions are must be recognized and appreciated at every stage.
- Providing equal opportunities for women in all fields, gives confidence to lift themselves from poverty and secure their lives.
- Reservation policy for women must be implemented in all the fields.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

Society is in a continuous process of evolution. It will take several decades for these imbalances to be rectified. Education to women is the most powerful instrument of changing their position in the society. It also brings about reduction in inequalities and also acts as means to improve their status within family. Investing in women's and girl's education is one of the most effective ways to reduce poverty and it leads to empowerment of women. Education is much more than reading and writing. It is an investment countries make for their futures, a crucial factor in reducing poverty and achieving sustainable development.

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