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EDUCATION OF WOMEN: EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract

Education plays a vital role in the women Empowerment in this global era. Empowerment refers to enabling people to take charge of their own lives. For women, empowerment emphasizes the importance of increasing their power and taking control over decisions and issues that shape their lives. Women's empowerment addresses power and relationships in society intertwined with gender, class, race, ethnicity, age, culture and history. Power is identified with equity and equality for women and men in access to resources, participation in decision-making and control over distribution of resources and benefits. Gender equality is addressed at these different levels with the aim of increasing equality between men and women, and achieving women's empowerment. In a completely fair society, there would be no gap between men and women, in categories that are not based on gender opportunities and access to resources would be the same for both men and women. There has been a growing realization among the world community that without the active participation of women side by side along with men, the goals of national development would remain a dream. This article discusses importance of women empowerment through education with Constitutional provisions in the Indian context.

Keywords: Education, Women Empowerment, Constitutional Provision and Literacy.

Introduction

“Sit idle no more. Go get education”

-----Savitribai Phule

Women constitute almost half of the population of the world. Education for women is the best way to improve the health, nutrition and economic status of a household that constitutes a micro unit of a nation economy. Women play an important role in shaping the ethical and social values of the society as the individual, at family level as well as at the larger social level. Society is incomplete without women education and women empowerment educational for all (EFA) was launched in 2002 by the Government of India after its 86th constitutional Amendment made education from age 6-14 the fundamental right of every Indian child.

In this content, it can be argued that lack of Women education can be an independent to the country economic development. In India, women achieve far less education that of men. As per the census report 2011, the literacy rate of women is 65.46 percent and that of men is 82.14 percent. There has been a sincere effort to improve the education attainment of Women by both government and voluntary organizations. The changes in the politics and infrastructural supports on primary, secondary and higher education reflect the initiatives the government of India towards Women education. Women population constituted half of the percentage in India, but the hegemonic masculine ideology made them suffer a lot as they were divided equal opportunities in different parts of the world. The rise of feminist ideas has, however, led to the tremendous important of women's condition throughout the world in recent times.

Access to education has been one of the most pressing demands of these women's right movements. 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 posed to emerge as one of the most developed nations in the near future, more literate, knowledgeable and economically at the forefront. Women 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. Little has been achieved in the area of women empowerment but for this to happen, this sector must experience a chain of reforms. Though India could well become one of the largest economies in the world, it is being hindered due to a lack of women's participation.

Women Education: Need of the hour

Women and Men are just like two eyes of society. They are equal in importance and they should work together in life. Any one is not superior or inferior to other. From ancient times, though currently in majority of rural areas of Indian women are treated well, but with the orthodoxy they are cut off from the main stream of social life. The rural society did not respect them and give them the due position. They have to suffer and work inside the houses. They are completely depended on Men and today the above ideas are changed a lot because of Women will get Education. Women empowerment can only be achieved through the provision of adequate and functional education to the Women folk. This is crucial because no matter how rich or Vast a nation is, without an effective,



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efficient, adequate and functional education for all, its citizens (Men and Women) education which is relevant to its immediate needs, goals and objectives, such a nation would find it difficult to stand on its own.

The brand of education being advocated is that type of education in which embedded the spirit of self-realization and all the that are needed for the country’s overall development like mass literacy, economic empowerment etc. The Need for women education also informed by the fact that purposeful occupational achievement and satisfaction is ensured by deep self-awareness and understanding which can only be achieved through the provision of effective and functional education and guidance and counseling. This has been noted is likely to guarantee women empowerment with its root based on women struggle to improve their status. The empowerment suggested is such that entails the process of challenging power relations and of gaining wider control over source of power. This however, can’t be achieved without the provision of reasonable access to formal and functional education to the women folk. This is based on the premise that education has been adjudged to be a viable instrument of change in the positive direction.

Women Education: Importance

Education teaches a woman what she should be an educated lady is always able to share his sorrows. There is saying in English the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world . The woman acts as a great mother for example Jeeja Bai mother of Shivaji wished to make Shivaji a great man as well as the mother exercises a very great influence over the lives of her children and also, she is able to mould their thoughts, character and personality. Hence it is very necessary that women should be educated. An education is most important to the girl than boy. Therefore, True education will help to her parents husband, family and also society. Consequently, Women Education develops Knowledge society. So, women empowerment is the most important to the knowledge Society or Global Society. Napoleon was asked, what the great need of France was he answered Nation’s progress is impossible without trained and educated mothers If the women of my country are not educated, about half of the people will be ignorant . If we want to make democracy successful, women must be educated. They are the real builder of happy home.

Women Empowerment: Constitutional Provisions in India

The Constitution of India provides equal opportunities through articles for Women Empowerment. Women empowerment depends on Education. The Indian Constitution of India not only grants equality to women but also empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women for neutralizing the cumulative socio economic, education and political disadvantages faced by them. Fundamental Rights, among others, ensure equality before the law and equal protection of law; prohibits discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth and guarantee equality of opportunity to all citizens in matters relating to employment.

Article 21A: The state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the state may, by law, determine (86th Amendment Act. 2002)

Article 41: Right to work, to education and to public assistance in certain cases. The state shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, and in other cases of undeserved want.

Article 45: Provision for free and compulsory education for children The State shall Endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years.

Article 46: Promotion of educational and economic interests of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other weaker sections The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

Article 51A (k):who is a parent or guardian to provide opportunities for education to his child or, as the case may be, ward between the age of six to fourteen years. (86th Amendment Act. 2002)

Article 15(5):In article 15 of the constitution, after clause (4), the following clause shall be inserted, namely: (5) Nothing in this article ore in sub-clause (g) of clause (1) of article 19 shall prevent the State from making any special provision, by law, of the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Casts or the Scheduled Tribes in so far as such special provisions relate to their admission to educational institutions, whether aided or unaided by the State, other than the minority educational institutions referred to in clause (1) of article 30 .

Equality

Article 14:Equality before law The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.

Article 15: Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.



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Article 17:Abolition of Untouchability; Untouchability is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden the enforcement of any disability arising out of Untouchability shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.

Article 29:Prohibition of employment of children in factories, etc. No child below the age of fourteen years shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or engaged in any other hazardous employment provided that nothing in this sub clause shall authorize the detention of any person beyond the maximum period prescribed by any law made by Parliament under sub clause (b) of clause (7); or such person is detained in accordance with the provisions of any law made by Parliament under sub clauses (a) & (b) of clause (7).

Gender and vulnerable group; Article 39:certain principles of policy to be followed by the State: The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing

- (a) That the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means to livelihood;
- (b) That the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to sub-serve the common good;
- (c) That the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment;
- (d) That there is equal pay for equal work for both men and women;
- (e) that the health and strength of workers, men and women, and the tender age of children are not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their age or strength;
- (f) That children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment.

Empowerment

Empowerment is the expansion of assets and capabilities of women to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives. Since poverty is multidimensional, women need a range of assets and capabilities at the individual level (such as health, education, and housing) and at the collective level (such as the ability to organize and mobilize to take collective action to solve their problems). Empowering women requires the removal of formal and informal institutional barriers that prevent them from taking action to improve their well-being individually or collectively - and limit their choices. The key formal institutions include the laws, rules, and regulations upheld by states, markets, civil society, and international agencies; informal institutions include norms of social solidarity, sharing, social exclusion, and corruption, among others. Women must find ways to empower themselves to fight imbalance in society, and to participate equally in the ongoing process of development. When women feel they can operate in society on the same terms as men, then we can call women empowered. Nobel Prize winner Prof. Amartya Sen, emphasized during his trip to India, that unless women are empowered, issues like health, literacy, and population will remain unsolved problems of the developing countries in this part of the subcontinent. Empowerment of women is attempted to address two important issues:

- Reducing gender inequalities (discrimination)
- Building equality in nation's development (enhancing women's participation).

Several ways have been devised to overcome the gender inequalities and to empower women. The following are some of the ways (means) to empower women:

- ❖ Capacity building
- ❖ Development of income generating skills
- ❖ Education
- ❖ Employment opportunities,
- ❖ Enhancing state of women,
- ❖ Legislations,
- ❖ Reducing gender inequalities through change in attitudes etc

Empowerment refers to enabling people to take charge of their own lives. For women, empowerment emphasizes the importance of increasing their power and taking control over decisions and issues that shape their lives. Women's empowerment addresses power and relationships in society intertwined with gender, class, race, ethnicity, age, culture and history. Power is identified with equity and equality for women and men in access to resources, participation in decision-making and control over distribution of resources and benefits. Gender equality is addressed at these different levels with the aim of increasing equality between men and women, and achieving women's empowerment. Access to resources refers to both the means and the right to obtain services, products or commodities. Gender gaps in access to resources and services are a major obstacle to women's development. The process of empowerment includes mobilizing women to eliminate these gaps. A cornerstone of gender equality is women's equal participation in decision-making.



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Conclusion

India is one of the world's fastest growing economies, with women mainly from the middle class increasingly entering the workforce. Urban centers like Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore and Hyderabad have seen an influx of young women from semi-urban and rural parts of the country, living alone and redefining them. However, the story of Economic Empowerment for women is not a singular narrative; rather it is located in a complex set of caste, class, religious, and ethnic identities. Educating women supports or enables the exercise of their rights and obligations. The right to avail credit or own land is diminished by not being able to read or understand contracts, or perform simple arithmetic. The right to vote is meaningless unless women can inform themselves of the issues of the day and protect themselves through due process of law. Violence against women in the home or on the streets have been associated not just with poverty but also with illiteracy, which prevents women from asserting their rights. To empower women literally speaking, is to give power to women. 'Power' here does not mean a mode of domination over others, but a sense of internal strength and confidence to face life, the right to determine one's choices in life, the ability to influence the social processes that affects one's life, an influence in the direction of social change, a share in decision making and capacity building to contribute towards national development.

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