



Gandhiji's Ideas on education and its need to women towards empowerment

Dr. M. Ramana, Reader in Economics, Maharajah's College (Autonomous),
Vizianagaram - 535 002.

Abstract: Gandhiji offers many valuable insights on education. Educators can benefit greatly by studying his formulations of the true goal of education as liberation : providing a means for service to meet the needs of others, for liberation from all forms of servitude and domination, and for one's ethical and spiritual liberation. Gandhiji presents challenging insightful formulations of basic and new education with regard to character building as the goal of education, the centrality of work and productive manual labour, the focus on real needs and simple living, the development of nonviolent relations, and a holistic approach that involves the integrated training of body, mind, and spirit.

Key words: ethical, spiritual, liberation

Introduction

Gandhiji was against all inequality in any walk of life, political, economic or social. He held that inequality ultimately led to exploitation, which for him was violence. Also, he held that all work socially useful is of equal worth, whether that of a scavenger, a doctor, a lawyer, a merchant or a minister. Hence work should get, if not equal, at least equitable remuneration. In his Ashram, all the inmates, engaged in physical or intellectual work, were treated as equals and everyone was provided with facilities, according to his or her needs. Gandhiji made no distinction between men and women.

Gandhiji view on Education

Gandhiji wrote extensively about education. His writings include hundreds of pages of critiques of the evils and deficiencies of British and other modern educational models and his proposals for positive alternative approaches. Throughout his adult life,

he was involved in innovative and sometimes controversial educational experiments, and he learned from their successes and failures. His many experiments and reflections finally led to his Wardha Scheme of Education, formulated at the educational conference held on October 22-23, 1937, in Wardha, and this became known as the Nai Talim or New Education of Gandhiji. The most emphasized part of this New Education was Gandhiji's Basic Education, which focused on the eight years of elementary education. The New Education was an essential component of Gandhiji's famous constructive programme, which presented his positive moral and spiritual vision for a new independent India.

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"If you educate a man, you educate a person but if you educate a woman, you educate a nation", said Mahatma Gandhi.

"Educate your women first and leave them to themselves : then they will tell you what reforms are necessary for them" Swami Vivekananda.

Women constitute almost half of the population in the world. But the hegemonic masculine ideology made them suffer a lot as they were denied equal opportunities in different parts of the world. The rise of feminist ideas has, however, led to the tremendous improvement 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 rights 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 poised to emerge as one of the most developed nations by 2020, more literate, knowledgeable and economically at the forefront. No doubt, 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. Little has been achieved in the area of women empowerment, but for this 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.

Importance of Women Education in India

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 can provide better guidance to all their children. Moreover educated women can also help in the reduction of infant mortality rate and growth of the population.

Women Empowerment through Education

Women Empowerment is a global issue and discussion on women political right are at the fore front of many formal and informal campaigns worldwide. The concept of Women Empowerment was introduced at the international women conference at NAIROBI in 1985. Education is milestone of Women Empowerment because it enables them to responds to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life. So that we can't neglect the importance of education in reference to Women Empowerment



India is poised to becoming superpower, a developed country by 2020. The year 2020 is fast approaching; it is just 4 year away. This can become reality only when the women of this nation became empowerment. India presently account for the largest number of illiterates in the world. Literacy rate in India have risen sharply from 18.3 % in 1951 to 74.04% in 2011 in which enrolment of women in education have also risen sharply 7% to 65.46% within the framework of a democratic polity, our laws, development policies, plan and programmes have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres. From the fifth five year plan (1974-78) onwards has been a marked shift in approach to women's issues from welfare to development. In recent years, the empowerment of women has been recognized as the central issue in determining the status of women. The National Commission of Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the right and legal entitlements of women. The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) to the constitution of India have provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision making at the local level.

Barriers of women Education : In Indian families especially rural areas, girl children play the role of second mother by shouldering the responsibilities of household work such as looking after the sibling fetching water, collecting wood, cleaning and cooking etc., and discourage girl child to go school.

The second social evil is bonded labour system, which quite discouraging

phenomenon which stands as barrier for girl's education for the underprivileged families of washer man and agricultural labour.

The lower enrolment of girl in schools is one of the foundational factors which stand as stumbling block for women education. The incidence and prevalence of dropouts among girls especially in rural, tribal and slum areas seem to be quite high.

In India, the school environment for girls is not really interesting and encouraging. The methods of teaching are mostly outdated, rigid and uninteresting. There are many schools with poor basic facilities such as drinking water, latrine and toilet facilities, no good infrastructure and no experienced teachers especially female teachers preferable for any parents for safety of their girl children.

According to the UN sources, India is the most child labour populous nation in the globe with more than 50 million child labourers worked in carpet making, domestic works, beedi works, glass bangles, construction etc. In most of their industries girl children are preferred for high productivity and low cost. In many poverty stricken families, children especially girls are considered as economic assets as they bring income for livelihood as well to save from economic crisis due to death or incapacity of parents.

Dowry system and other social practices act as main causes of the neglect of the girl child and discrimination against girl child. In many families especially poor and downtrodden think that if their daughters are educated more, they have



to accumulate more assets and properties to provide as dowry in large proportion at the time of marriage, so prefer rather to either stop their children with average education and so on but never higher education. The high population growth rate, rapid urbanization, migration etc., also attribute immensely for the poor literacy level of women and girls in India.

Suggestions

- 1) Creating community awareness for girls education at all levels.
- 2) Strengthening adult literacy programs and freeing the illiterate women from their home management occupations are necessary to attain the objective of functional literacy.
- 3) To bring about an attitudinal change in the society towards girls and their education.
- 4) Special women fellowship and training programs may be started to cater the special needs of the women folk and they can be motivated to join these programmes.
- 5) Organizing career campaigns in schools and educational centres to make the girls aware about the education and career opportunities.
- 6) Improvement in the infrastructure like availability of water, sanitation and toilets in schools should be done on priority basis.
- 7) The effective and cognitive efforts of parents are necessary for ensuring girls education so efforts must be done to change the mindset and attitude of parents towards girl's education.
- 8) Eliminating all forms of discrimination in employment especially to eliminate wage differentials between men and women. Introduce Satellite Schools for remote hamlets.

Conclusion: According to the Report of the Government of India, "Empowerment means moving from a weak position to execute a power". 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 encourage the education of women at all levels and for dilution of gender bias in providing knowledge and education, established schools, colleges and universities even exclusively for women in the state. To bring more girls, especially from marginalized families of BPL, in mainstream education, the government is providing a package of concession in the form of providing free books, uniforms, boarding and lodging, clothing for the hostilities midday meals, scholarships, free cycles and so on. From the above facts and experiences it may be concluded that what was preached by Gandhi is relevant even today towards women's education. It plays a vital role and it leads to their emancipation and empowerment.

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