



## Education as the prime tool of women Empowerment

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**Abstract:** Education is one of the most important tools of Women Empowerment as only the educated women can play a very crucial role in the socio-economic development of our country as well as becoming informed citizens, parents and family members. The progress of women's education in rural are very slow implying that still large women folk of our country are illiterate, weak, backward and exploited. Therefore, educating the women is the most powerful instrument that can bring change of position of women in society bringing reduction in inequalities and function as a means of improving their status within the family. Education implies not only gaining knowledge but also transforming that knowledge into application through vocational training and skill development.

**Keywords:** inequalities, women folk, Education

### Introduction

Education is considered as a basic requirement and fundamental rights for the citizens of any country. It is a powerful instrument for removing inequality as it can give people the ability to become independent. Women are playing very dominant role in day to day society. They have constituted 50% of the total population. They are creator of our society. Our society cannot progress without the development of women folk. During the ancient period they are regarded as Durga, Parvati, Kali and Saraswati. But today women are facing a lot of challenges. Women, who come across discrimination in many spheres, have a particular need for this. Education is regarded as the most important aspect of Women Empowerment and Development because it enables them to face the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life style. Education of Women is the most effective tool of change their position in

the society. Still now huge amount of women of our country are illiterate, backward, weak and exploited. They are tortured and neglected, they are not getting any due respect and honor in the society. They are playing the secondary role. They are living within the four walls of house. Their prime duties in the society are only cooking and maintenance of children. Education reduces the differences and function as a means of improving their status within the family. Education is the mirror of society. Empowerment and Capacity Building provides women an avenue to acquire practical information and ideas for their improved livelihoods. India can become the developed Nation only if Women contribute to the best of her capacity and ability which is possible when she is educated and empowered. Background of the study-Education is an end itself as well as a means for raising other desirable ends. Empowerment is a multi-dimensional process which enables the individuals to realize their full identity



and powers in all the spheres of life. Empowerment of women brings equal status to women, opportunity and freedom to develop her which also means equipping women to be economically independent and personally self reliant. Providing them with quality Education is the fundamental way to empower women which make them scientific, logical, open-minded and self-respecting and ensure greater autonomy in making decisions or free themselves from shackles, imposed on them by custom, belief and practices in the society. Without such virtues being developed among women, empowerment has no meaning.

**Objectives of the study** -There are certain objectives of the subject are given below,

- To study the impact of education on empowerment of women.
- To analyze the challenges and changes from education on women empowerment.

**Methodology of the subject-** The present study is based on the collection of data from secondary sources. Secondary data is also collected from published and unpublished records, books, journals and magazines etc

#### **Conceptual and Operational Frame-work-**

Education is one of the most important tools of Women Empowerment as only the educated women can play a very crucial role in the socio-economic development of our country as well as becoming informed citizens, parents and family members. The progress of women's education in rural are very slow implying that still large women folk of our country are illiterate, weak, backward and exploited. Therefore,

educating the women is the most powerful instrument that can bring change of position of women in society bringing reduction in inequalities and function as a means of improving their status within the family. Education implies not only gaining knowledge but also transforming that knowledge into application through vocational training and skill development. Gender Gap Index, 2013(GGI) measures the gap between men and women in four fundamental categories-economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival and lastly political empowerment. India's rank among the lowest 101 in 135 countries, below countries like china ,Srilanka and Bangladesh. The status of women in India and gender discrimination in all aspects of life education, economic activity and empowerment. Education is the basis for the full promotion and improvement of the status of women. The great economist and noble prize winner Dr. Amartya sen makes a compelling case for the nation that societies needs to see women less as passive recipient of help, and more as dynamic promoters of social transformation, suggesting that the education, employment and ownership rights of women have powerful influence on their ability to control their environment and contributes to economic development (Sen 1999). The great philosopher like Swami Vivekanand, Rabindra Nath Tagore and father of nation Mahatma Gandhi, they have given too much emphasis upon women education and development. Literacy and educational levels are increasing for Indian .women still there is gap between male and female. Literacy rate which can be seen in the following table.



Table : -1 literacy rate for women

YEAR	PERSONS	MALE	FEMALE
1901	5.3	9.8	0.7
1911	5.9	10.6	1.1
1921	7.2	12.2	1.8
1931	9.5	15.6	2.9
1941	16.1	24.9	7.3
1951	16.7	24.9	7.3
1961	24.0	34.4	13.0
1971	29.5	39.5	18.7
1981	36.2	46.9	24.8
1991	52.1	63.9	39.2
2001	65.38	76.0	54.0
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46

Source-Census of India (2011)

As table 1 shows the pre independence time literacy rate for women had a very poor stream in comparison to literacy rate of men. This can be witnessed from the fact that literacy rate of women has raisin from 0.7% to 7.3 while the literacy rate of men has raisin from 9.8% to 24.9 during four decades. The literacy rate of male has almost tripled over the period e.g. 25% in 1951 and 76% in 2001. The government has undertaken various schemes to increase literacy rate of female. Surprisingly, the female literacy rate has increased at faster rate than the male literacy during the decade 1981-2001. The growth is almost 6 times e.g. 7.9% in 1951 and 54% in 2001. From this analysis we can simply understand that only half of the women population are literates are wadding behind three fourth of the literate male population.

Women Empowerment- As per the oxford English Dictionary (1994) Empowerment is the process of 'Bestowing power upon or to invest some one legally or formally with power'. It is also described as an 'enabling process'. Oxford Dictionary (1962: 26). Thus, empowerment

facilitates change and enables a person to gain control over his/her life through raising awareness, taking action and working so as fully actualize his/her inherent potentials. Empowerment of women will enable a greater degree of self confidence, a sense of independence and capability to resist discrimination imposed by the male dominated society. Empowerment means to make powerful or to equip with the power to face the challenges of life to overcome the disabilities, handicaps and inequalities. Empowerment is an active multidimensional process which should enable women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres in life. It would consist in providing greater access to knowledge and resources, greater autonomy in decision making, greater ability to plan their lives, greater control over the circumstances that influence their lives and freedom from shackles imposed on them by customs, belief and practice.

Women Empowerment and achieving gender equality is essential for our society to ensure the sustainable



development of the country. Many scholars have argued that sustainable development is impossible without gender equality and women's empowerment. Sustainable development accepts environmental protection, social and economic development and without women's empowerment, women would not feel equally important to the process of development as men.

Women empowerment as a process of redistribution of social power and controls of resources in favor of women was introduced at the Third International women' Conference at Nairobi in 1985. Women empowerment is a dynamic but a constant phenomenon which in the initial phase aims at women's liberalizations, freedom and equality and latter has a long range goal focusing on full realization of their human rights and fundamental freedoms so as to ensure that they participate, full and equally in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life.

As per the 2011 census of India, women constitute 48.49 of the country's populations and about 90% Of the informal sector. They are often invisible in the development scenario. It is said that between the rhetoric of women's empowerment and the reality of decreasing fund allocation for schemes related women's health, education etc. lies the story of women's development of India.

Denial of access and opportunities to rightful place, possession and position to women begins from home and extends beyond to schools and other institutions of learning and work. Differences in avenues to growth and development thus, become issues. The issues become areas

of concern, not just for women, but for the entire society.

Significance and Need for women empowerment- women Empowerment enables to acquire knowledge, skills and techniques which will help them in their personal and social will help them in their personal and social growth as well as foster in their sensitivity towards problems in the society. Special efforts are acquired to be taken for education, health and employment of women. Economic empowerment is essential for improvement of female sex ratio but economic empowerment is possible only when women are educated.

Lack of education is the root cause for women exploitation and discrimination. Only through education and literacy can help women to understand to the India's constitutional and Legislative provisions that are made to strengthen them. Education is "potential affirming and performance conforming "when women educated, they will be able to contribute to nation building. A few women they have proved their efficiency in national and international level, but there is still room for improvement if more women are educated. Perhaps with increase in women holding the mantle in a male dominated political areas, the socio, economic, political state of affairs of the whole world will definitely improved. Gender Equality is what women desire. Empowerment becomes the means of achieving it with dignity. Indian women are regarded as the symbol of love and Shakti, which means power, but what is power without social justice? Empowerment calls for critical intervention by governments too. Intervention needs neatly designed approaches with assigned role for women



executed systematically. Women empowerment and development are correlated conceptually and methodologically. Thus promoting education among women is of great importance in empowering them to accomplishing their goals in par with men in different spheres of life, nurturing and sustaining a culture on unity, equity and dignity. Culture and knowledge value-addition makes the case for social, emancipation, political nurturing and economic empowerment that much stronger. Education makes women economically and socially sound which source of other all types of women empowerment i.e. social, psychological, technological, political, it enables them to overcome obstacles.

Obstacles and challenges to women empowerment- There are certain obstacles and challenges to women empowerment, these are as follows

- ❖ Violence- violence is the most important factor which opposes women's empowerment and growth. Physical, emotional, mental, torture and agony are deep rooted in the society from ancient times which are to some extent responsible for decline in female sex ratio
- ❖ Family Restrictions- illiterate guardians especially in rural areas they are not willing to send their children's to educational institutions.
- ❖ Gender Inequality- women empowerment is not only limited to economic independence of women. Gender equality is essential for women empowerment and development.
- ❖ Lack of Education- lack of education is another prime obstacle to women empowerment. It is true that majority of women are not literate in comparison to male especially in rural areas.

❖ Early Marriages- Early marriages results in dropouts from schools and college. Lack of awareness on female education is also one of its causes.

❖ Lack of Mindset- is another important challenge to women's empowerment. It is the duty of every conscious male citizens to give proper respect and honors to women.

❖ Women's own perception of themselves and on their empowerment must be changed. They should also strive to change their image as weak, dependent, passive and try to become independent, active, strong and determined human beings.

Measures and Mechanism for the Empowerment of women – Initiatives and institutions:

According to Human Development Report (HDR), (1993) knowledge is people's first step in learning and building their quality. So knowledge is essential for any measurement of human development. In India, National policy on Education (NPE) was set up in 1986, for the improvement of Education and eradication of illiteracy and ignorance. The New Education Policy, 2020 has focused on quality education. The main objective of new education policy is to build a smart and global citizen of India. The New Education Policy focused on creativity and innovative thinking for the empowerment of women. The higher rate illiteracy of women is undoubtedly attributing for women to depend on men and to play a subordinate role within the framework of democratic polity, our legislation, development policies, plans and programs have aimed for advancement of women in different



spheres. From the Fifth Five year plan (1974 -1978) onwards has been marked shift in the approach to women's issues from welfare to development. The Mahila Samakhya Program (education for women empowerment) started in 1987 stressed especially on the socially excluded and the landless women. Now a days the Government of India has already started a new program like 'Beti Bachao and Beti Padhao' for women (to save girl child and building a knowledge to women) and there are so many schemes and programs are launched for women empowerment and development like Kanya Sukanya Yojna. This program is a unique example of creative collaboration of between the voluntary sector and the state. In recent years, the empowerment of women is considered as the central issues in the determining the status of women. The National Commission for women was set up by the Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. The National Policy on Education, 1986, revised in 1986, is the most important document on women's education and development. It emerged as a major breakthrough in addressing gender issues. In government policies, which projected that education can be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. The District Primary Education Program (DPEP) started in 1994 has a holistic approach to reducing gender and social disparities universalizing access, retention and achievement. Enrolment of girls has shown significant upward trends in DPEP districts as compared to non DPEP districts. The 86<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment made a free and compulsory education a Fundamental Rights for children in the 6-4 year's age group which increased the enrolment of girls in schools that is 64.1%in 1980-81 to

85.2%in 1999-2000. The government of India has declared 2001 as women's empowerment year. The National policy for empowerment of women has set some clear cut goals and objectives. The policy aims at upliftment, development and empowerment in socio, economic and politico-cultural aspects by creating in certain awareness on various issues like human rights ,fundamental freedom, providing access to health care, quality education to all levels, career building vocational guidance, employment equal remuneration, occupational opportunities, health safety, social security and public life etc. the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA - education for all which was launched in 2001-2002,is the national umbrella program that is the spearheading the universalisation of elementary education through community owned approach, with a specific focus on the provision of quality education. One of the challenges accepted during the 12<sup>th</sup> plan was established more women's universities. Inequality in education is a global issue. The highest level of inequality in education was in South Asia (42%), the Arab states (41%) and Sub-Sahara Africa (37%). There has been limited progress in reducing disparities in education, except in Europe and Central Asia (Human Development Report -2014).

#### Suggestions:

- ❖ Awareness of daughter's education is essential. It is said that 'educated mothers educate family which results in educated population of a nation which builds strong nation.
- ❖ Removal of gender inequality.
- ❖ Change over attitude and approach towards women based on sex determination.





- ❖ Full stop early child marriage.
- ❖ Inculcate in women the confidence that change is possible, if women work collectively.
- ❖ Women should actively participate in the socio political activities. 50% of seats should reserve for women in all the governments.
- ❖ Eliminating all forms of discrimination in employment especially to eliminate wage differentials between men and women.
- ❖ Encourage and ensure socio-economic participation of women in local and International forum.
- ❖ Education of women is a pre-condition for fighting against oppression.
- ❖ Introduced satellite schools for remote hamlets.
- ❖ Encourage participation of women in income generating activities. Proper implementation of schemes provided by the government should be done by respective agencies.
- ❖ Education of women is a pre-condition for fighting against oppression.
- ❖ Increase ICT tools and the use of internet for the study and the research of women.
- ❖ Increasing real representation of women in political bodies and governance institutions in order to move from being objects of legislations' to initiators.
- ❖ Physical education and training should be given to women for self protection.

Conclusion- In spite of all the challenges and obstacles, we may ignore the importance of education for women empowerment. The evils of poverty, unemployment, inequality and injustice cannot be removed by men alone. Equal and active participation of women is

obligatory. Unless women are educated they will not be able to understand about their rights and their importance. Empowerment of women aims at striving towards acquiring highest literacy level and education, better health care for women and their children, equal ownership of productive resources, increased participation in economic and commercial sectors, awareness of their rights, improved standard of living and to achieve self reliance, self confidence and self respect among women. Recently, the NDA government has launched 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao'scheme which aims at making girls independent both socially as well as financially and which will help in generating awareness and improving the efficiency o delivery of welfare services meant for women. Such scheme should be implemented nationwide to bring to desired changes. What should never be forgotten that women like men need to be proactive in the process of lifelong teaming. That is true empowerment,' from women for development' the time has come to shift to' women in development 'with the co-operation of men through group engagement and management. That will indeed be a 'quality' change for equality. While being attracted by modernization and globalization we must be confident to say no to marginalization. Our mind set and approach should be change towards women. Lastly we can say that education is the most important pillar for women empowerment and development.

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