

ROLE OF EDUCATION IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Women are important part of the society and they constitute half of the population of the world. For the development of any Nation, it is important to empower each member of the society. Therefore, women empowerment is an important subject of discussion these days. Education makes the value of each resident since it makes each individual ready to know about his/her privileges and obligations. Education additionally plays a significant part to empower the women. The educated women are more dynamic and cognizant than the individuals who are uneducated. In India, a few numbers of women have been able to establish their potentialities. Government has taken many steps to educate the women in India. In this paper, role of education in women empowerment has been explained.

Keywords: Role of Education, Women Empowerment

Introduction

Women are the indispensable part of a society. One approach to know the state of a nation is to examine the status of its women. The societal situation of the women of a country represents the social spirit of the age. Yet, to make a deduction about the circumstance of females is confounded and troublesome issue. There are consistently various components in the society which are deprived of their essential rights in each society, state and country, however these components need the familiarity with their privileges or rights. If we enlist such components from the society, then women would be on the top of this list. In fact, women are the most important factor of every society (Bhat, 2015). In this society, women need to gain same amount of power that men have. Accordingly, the significance which used to be given to women is declining in the present society. Women are more exposed to problems in various aspects because of gendered social structure. The truth of the matter is clear that women are among the vulnerable segment of the society. Throughout the world, only 10% world income and 1% property is owned by women. In the Indian society, women status as an equal member has been imperceptibly recognized. However the significant gender disparity against women is still a dominant factor in hindering women empowerment. Government of India has made many legislative and executive measures regarding gender issue but still, women are confronting a wide range of discriminations. The major reason is the patriarchal mindset, cultural and traditional structures and norms of Indian society consistently holding their old grounds still

when the necessities of women and society are changed drastically. As an outcome of this developing inclination of belittling women, for example, to cause them to possess an auxiliary situation in the society and to deny them of their fundamental rights, the requirement for empowering women was felt (Zafar, 2016).

Women Empowerment

According to Oxford Dictionary the word empowerment means the action of empowering or the state of being empowered and it was first used in 1849. Since then, the term 'empowerment' is used across a wide range of disciplines and each brings different interpretations. Empowerment as process can be viewed as a way of creating a socially healthy environment in which one can make decisions and make choices, either individually or collectively for social change (Singh, Sinha & Agrawal, 2018). Empowerment can be viewed as means of establishing a social environment in which one can make decisions and make choices either individually or collectively for social transformation. Empowerment strengthens the innate ability by acquiring knowledge, power and experiences (Hashemi, Schuler & Riley, 1996). Empowerment is the process of enabling or authorizing an individual to think, take actions and control work in an autonomous way. It is the process by which an individual can gain control over one's own destiny and the circumstances of one's own lives. Empowerment is a process which includes:

- Equal access to the opportunities for using society's resources.
- Prohibition of gender disparity
- Freedom from violence
- Economic independence
- Participation in all decision making bodies.
- Freedom of choice in all the matters relating to an individual's own life.

Empowerment is self-governance, self-sufficiency and self-maintenance (Meera & Jumana, 2015). Education is the only tool which can empower women of the society. Women constitute a significant section of the society and perform multiple roles. Education is fundamental for them to prepare themselves for participation in development process from which they, as well as society, will be benefitted. An educated mother enhances the literacy skill of the family, provides better hygiene, increases the financial status imparting vocational education, conquers disadvantages, discrimination and fight against exploitation. So it is rightly said that if you educate a man, you educate an individual and if you educate a women you educate a family (African Proverb). So education plays very important role in empowerment of women in Indian Society. Women constitute approximately half of the population of the nation the growth and development of the nation depends upon all the members of the society. Therefore it is very important to empower the women of the country. Empowered women can take any decision

based on her experiences, abilities and choices. The concept of women empowerment was first introduced in 1985 at international women conference at Nairobi. Education is a significant tool for women empowerment because it enables women to respond to the challenges, take decisions, confront their problems and change their lives. So we can't ignore the significance of education for women empowerment (Bhat, 2015). According to United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), women empowerment includes

- Acquiring knowledge and understanding of gender relations and the ways in which these relations may be changed.
- Developing the sense of self-worth, a the right to control one's life and belief in one's ability to secure desired changes.
- Gaining the ability to generate choices exercise bargaining power.
- Developing the ability to organize and influence the direction of social change, to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

Thus, empowerment implies a psychological sense of personal control or influence and a concern with real social influence, political power and legal rights. It is a multi-level construct referring to individuals, organizations and communities. It is a global, continuous process focused in the local community, involving mutual respect, caring, critical reflection, and group participation, through which individuals lacking an equivalent share of valued resources acquire greater access to the control over these resources. The women empowerment is the most discussed subject of today's time. Women are more empowered to determine their lives and job opportunities to understand their full potential. To fight against socially created gender discrimination, she has to swim against the system where it needs more strength. Such strength which comes during the process of empowerment and empowerment will come from the education (Basheer, 2018). Women empowerment is a process of enabling women to have access and make productive contributions to their economic independence, political participation and social development.

Factors affecting women empowerment:

Since ancient times, women are dealing with issues like discrimination, gender issues, inequalities, etc. Their oppression is persistent and widespread and its solutions are complicated. Many prophets of women's liberation have come and gone, but discrimination against women and infringement of human values still persists. Gender issue is basically one that affects women directly or indirectly. In other words, any social evil executed at the expense of women, any law or custom that reinforces and institutionalises women's substandard status in society, or any event or series of events that influence the large number of women can be viewed as a gender issue. Other obstacles in the path of women empowerment are Dowry, Compulsion to work at

home, Sex Trafficking, Abuse, Social Discrimination, Inadequate School Facilities, Sexual harassment at workplace, Gender Based Inequality, Illiteracy, Infanticide, Sex Selective Abortion, poor health and Child marriage. Women are deprived of Decision making power, Access to Education, Freedom of movement, Access to Employment, and Exposure to media (Gajjar, 2017).

The root cause of the less empowerment of women in India is the lack of education. The lack of education leads to the obliviousness and exploitation of the women because they have almost no cognizance about their legal rights and duties. They are deprived and exploited by the community, society and even by their families. In each and every society, Education is a key factor for the women empowerment.

Role of education for women empowerment:

As per Human Development Report (1993), a person's initial phase in learning and information building is education. It is considered as fundamental marker for estimation of human development. Human development is related to economic and standards of living, so there are different challenges faced by Indian society such as income inequality and poverty etc. There is a broad relationship between growth, poverty, and human development (Zafar, 2017). In India, various policies and programmes were started to enhance women empowerment. In this context, National Education Policy (NPE) was established in 1986, which was again revised in 1992, for the development of education and eradication of illiteracy. Further, 5th five year plan (1974-78) has been an obvious move in the attitude to the problems of women from wellbeing to progress. For education for women empowerment, various programmes were also started which are- Mahila Samakhya program (1987), the act of parliament (1990) setup a national commission for women, District Primary Education Program (DPEP) 1994, Education for all (the Sarva Shiksha Abhyian SSA) introduced in 2001-02, the National Umbrella Program that is directing the universalization of basic education a community-oriented approach, and the 12th Plan was establishing more Women Universities. Also 86th constitutional amendment declared 2001 as women empowerment year. The census 2011 shows that the literacy rate of women in India is only 64%, i.e. below the average which is 74%. Lack of education is the root cause of women's exploitation and ignorance. Only education can help women to know about the rights and duties given in the Indian constitution. The only way women empowerment can be achieved just through education. There are several reasons which are as follows:

(a) Education helps to choose a career and gets financial independence: Education enables the women to choose her vocation like medicines, teaching, engineering, literature, filming, architecture, business, etc. Today's intellectually liberated and emancipated woman is also earning her own keep. Now she doesn't have to depend on a man to give her a house, food,

clothing and shelter. She can earn her own money and buy her own house and feed herself. Today, women are leading good lives than men, they are no longer forced to play second fiddle to males who treat them, in many cases, like doormats.

(b) Education helps in liberating mind: Education liberates the mind. Whether an individual is studying the sciences, history, literature, languages or social sciences, individual is gaining knowledge. He/she is educating himself/herself about the world, about how nature, people and nation work. Books which educate open up our minds to places, people and possibilities we'd never have thought of otherwise. Therefore, an educated woman will also be a liberated woman.

(c) Education helps in removing barriers: Education enables us to remove all barriers like religious, societal, linguistic, cultural, political, gender and geographical. An educated woman will not discriminate others on the basis of these barriers. She will treat everyone the same, and work with them. She might also chose a husband neglecting such barriers, and can bring families from different backgrounds together. This can form a nice way of fostering both national and international integration. Education helps women to live a decent life as a person in the society and furthermore assists with comprehension about their privileges in the society. However, they are able to get a quick and easy legal battle against the major types of violence against women such as dowry, forced prostitution, female feticide, child marriage etc.

(d) Education cultivates Freedom: Most youthful, educated women of today are making their own being. They know about their independence over their lives. They live life on their own terms. They live how they need to, they also chose their life-partners and just about everything else.

(e) Education allows the privilege of choice: As education opens up new worlds to women, it will enable them to make their own choices, in everything- whether it be lifestyle, career, life-partner, sexuality, food etc. Education will teach them to discriminate between wrong and right, and make the correct choices in life. Plus it will also teach them to be independent, make their own choices and not bow down to anyone, or society's asinine norms.

(f) Education eradicates gender inequality: Education helps women to come forward with courage to the future and also will be able to wipe out gender inequality and injustice.

(g) Education sensitize about health and wellness: Education helps women to understand the importance of health and wellness of the body and helps them to lead a more healthy life.

(h) Education mobilizes: Education will stir ladies into battling against the social disasters which actually plague Indian culture. A mentally edified woman will effectively battle against

dowry, marital rape, rape in general, molestation and sexual harassment, and objectification of women. She will likewise battle sexism and man centric society.

(i) Educated women contribute to economy: Envision a country where women are qualified and are able to get jobs. The commitment to the workforce will improve the yield, and in this manner, the economy will be developed. This will contribute greatly to the advancement of any society, both culturally and economically, and also help its human development indicators. Women can help, through their work, dispose of issues like India's high maternal mortality rate, high rates of gender violence and other crimes against women, child sex abuse, female foeticide, implement family planning and other schemes etc.

Education is milestone of women empowerment because it empowers them to confront to the challenges to face their conventional role and change their life. Education plays an important role in women empowerment by making women enable in decision making, provides economic and political independence, infuses awareness about legal rights, promotes capabilities and provides social protection and political autonomy (Channawar, 2016).

Conclusion

Education is the only tool which can empower women of the society. Women constitute a significant section of the society and perform multiple roles. Education is fundamental for them to prepare themselves for participation in development process from which they, as well as society, will be benefitted. An educated mother enhances the literacy skill of the family, provides better hygiene, increases the financial status imparting vocational education, conquers disadvantages, discrimination and fight against exploitation. Women empowerment is a process of enabling women to have access and make productive contributions to their economic independence, political participation and social development.

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