

Women Empowerment through Education

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Abstract

Women empowerment can be defined in simple words that it is making women powerful so that they can take their own decisions regarding their lives and well-being in the family and society. It is empowering women to make them able to get their real rights in the society. Empowerment means moving from powerlessness to a position of power. Education is an essential means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence, which is necessary to full participation of the women in the development process. It is to bring equality in the society for both male and female in all areas. Women empowerment is very necessary to make the bright future of the family, society and country. Women need fresh and more capable environment so that they can take their own right decisions in every area whether for themselves, family, society or country. In order to make the country fully developed country, women empowerment is an essential tool to get the goal of development. The First Prime Minister of India, Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru in one of his speech has rightly said, "If you educate a man you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family. Women empowered means mother India empowered". This paper attempts to examine the Role of education in empowerment of women and Importance of women education in India with a view to gaining an insight into its impact on the economic empowerment and social empowerment.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Education, Economic and Social Empowerment

Introduction

India is a very famous country known for its cultural heritage, traditions, civilization, religion and geographical features from the ancient time. On the other hand, it is also popular as a male dominating society. Women are given first priority in India, however on the other hand they are badly treated in the family and society. Their role is limited only for the household chores or understanding the responsibility of home and family members. They were kept totally unaware of their rights and own development.

Women constitute half population of the country, so in order to make this country a fully powerful country, women empowerment is very necessary. It is empowering women to understand their rights to be independent in every area for their proper growth and development. Women give birth to the baby means future of the nation, so only they can better involve in making the bright future of the nation through the proper growth and development of the children. Women need to be empowered instead of treating as a helpless victim of male dominance.

History of Women Education in India

Although in the Vedic period women had access to education in India, they had gradually lost this right. However, in the British period there was revival of interest in women's education in India. During this period, various socio religious movements led by eminent persons like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar emphasized on women's education in India. Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, Periyar and Baba Saheb Ambedkar were leaders of the lower castes in India who took various initiatives to make education available to the women of India. However women's education got a fillip after the country got independence in 1947 and the government has taken various measures to provide education to all Indian women. As a result women's literacy rate has grown over the six decades and the growth of female literacy has in fact been higher than that of

male literacy rate. While in 2001 only 54.16% of Indian women were literate, by the end of 2011 65.46% female were literate. The growth of female literacy rate is 11.30% as compared to 6.29 % of that of male literacy rate.

Why Need of Women Empowerment in India?

As we all know that India is a male dominated country where males are dominated in every area and females are forced to be responsible for only family care and live in the home including other many restrictions. Almost 50% of the population in India is covered by the female only so the full development of the country depends on the half population means women, who are not empowered and still restricted by many social taboos. In such condition, we cannot say that our Country would be a developed Country in the future without empowering its half population means women. If we want to make our country a developed Country, first of all it is very necessary to empower women by the efforts of men, Government, laws and women too.

The most famous saying said by the Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is *“To awaken the people, it is the women who must be awakened. Once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves”*. In India, to empower the women, first it needs to kill all the demons killing women's rights and values in the society such as dowry system, illiteracy, sexual harassment, inequality, female infanticide, and domestic violence against women, rape, prostitution, illegal trafficking and other issues. Gender discrimination in the nation brings cultural, social, economic and educational differences which push country back. The most effective remedy to kill such devils is making women empowered by ensuring the Right to Equality mentioned in the Constitution of India.

Giving priority to the gender equality facilitates women empowerment all over the country. To get the high level goal of women empowerment, it should be promoted from the childhood in each and every family. It needs women to be strong physically, mentally and socially. Since the better education can be started at home from childhood, the upliftment of women needs healthy family to bring a holistic development of the nation. Still in many backward areas, there is a trend of early marriage and childbirth because of the poverty, insecurity and illiteracy of the parents. In order to empower women, various steps have been taken by the government to prevent violence, social separation, Child marriage, gender discrimination and abuse against women.

The need of women empowerment arose because of the gender discrimination and male domination in the Indian society since ancient time. Women are being suppressed by their family members and society for many reasons. They have been targeted for many types of violence and discriminatory practices by the male members in the family and society in India and other countries as well. Wrong and old practices for the women in the society from ancient time have taken the form of well-developed customs and traditions. There is a tradition of worshipping many female goddesses in India including giving honour to the women forms in the society like mother, sister, daughter, wife and other female relatives or friends. But, it does not mean that only respecting or honouring women can fulfil the need of development in the country. It needs the empowerment of the rest half population of the country in every walk of life.

If it is said that education is the key to all problems, then it won't be improper. Thinkers have given a number of definitions of education but out of these definitions, the most important definition is that which was put forth by M. Phule. According to M. Phule, "Education is that which demonstrates the difference between what is good and what is evil". If we consider the above definition, we come to know that whatever revolutions that have taken place in our history, education is at the base of them. It is through education that one realizes what is good and what is bad, what is proper and what is not (just and unjust etc.). If women are educated and empowered they will also be a source of Income for the family. This will not only raise the standard of living of the family but also the economic condition of the Country. After all the economic condition of a Country will grow if all the citizens are prosperous.

Objectives to be achieved through Women's Education

1. Instead of giving women a secondary position in society, they should be given equal status.
2. To change the approach towards women based on sex discrimination.
3. To induce the feeling of self-dependence amongst women.
4. To make women realize their own potential and to provide guidance to them for developing their potential.
5. To create opportunities for them so that they can prove themselves in society and social institutions.
6. To create certain roles for women in economic, political and social arena.

Education is an Entry Point to Opportunity

Education is a formal process of learning in which some people consciously teach while others adopt the social role of learner. Education plays a major role in everyone's life without education a person will not get far in life. Education prepares a person to adapt to new skills and value that will be very essential in today's society. Education brings the knowledge, Knowledge brings the power, Power brings the respect and respect brings the happiness. Education is also an instrument of livelihood. Education helps the women for earning their livelihood. Education prepares the students for future occupational positions. Education confers a status upon an individual. Education is related to one's position in the stratification structure in two ways. (1) An evaluation of one's status is partially decided by what kind of education one has received and (2) Many of the other important criteria of class position such as occupation, income and style of life are partially the result of the type and amount of education one has had.

Women Empowerment through Education

Women empowerment is a global issue and discussion on women's political rights are at the forefront of many formal and informal campaigns worldwide. Education is a milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges to confront their traditional role and change their life. India is poised to becoming a Superpower, a developed country by 2020.

The year 2020 is fast approaching; it is just 5 year away. This can become reality only when the women of this nation became empowered. 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 the 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. Education is a basic human right, and thus girls and boys all around the world should be entitled to this opportunity - consequently enforcing the ideology of gender equality. If a girl is educated statistics suggest that they will marry later and so on. It can therefore be concluded that by empowering women through education is a great advantage both to women and to society as a whole.

While the economic benefits of educating girls are similar to those of educating boys, recent findings suggest the social benefits are greater. Education is much more than reading and writing. It is an essential investment Countries make for their futures, a crucial factor in reducing poverty and achieving sustainable development. Women are significantly under-represented in decision making at all levels. 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.

Empowerment through Education is a Precious Right of Every Women

In the Indian society, there were many bad customs and ill practices viz. Sati pratha,, Dowry system, Sexual violence, Domestic violence, Parda pratha, Wife burning and Polygamy, Sexual harassment at workplace, child marriage, Devdasi Pratha etc. including other discriminatory practices. All such type of ill practices are because of Socio-political rights (right to work, right to education, right to decide for themselves, etc.) for the women were completely restricted by the male members of family. Some of the ill practices against women have been eliminated by the open minded and great Indian people who raise their voices for the discriminatory practices against women. Through the continuous efforts of the Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Britishers were forced to eliminate the ill practice of Sati paratha. Later, other famous social reformers of the India also had raised their voices and worked hard for the upliftment of women in Indian society.

In the recent years, various constitutional and legal rights have been implemented by the government of India in order to eliminate ill practices and gender discrimination against women.

However, in order to solve such a big issue, the continuous effort of everyone including women is required. Modern society is being more aware about the women rights which results in the increasing number of several self-help groups, NGOs, etc. working in this direction. Women are being more open minded and breaking the societal barriers in order to achieve their rights in all dimensions even after crimes are going side by side. Some of the acts passed by the Parliament are Equal Remuneration Act-1976, Dowry Prohibition Act-1961, Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act-1956, Medical termination of Pregnancy Act-1971, Maternity Benefit Act-1961, Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act-1987, Prohibition of Child Marriage Act-2006, Pre-Conception & Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act-1994, Sexual Harassment of Women at Work Place (Prevention, Protection and) Act-2013, etc in order to empower women with legal rights.

Conclusion

In order to really bring women empowerment in the Indian society, it needs to understand and eliminate the main cause of the ill practices against women which are patriarchal and male dominated system of the society. It needs to be open-minded and change the old mind set against women together with the constitutional and other legal provisions. 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, schools, colleges and Universities must be established even exclusively for women in the State. Government should provide maximum help including the scholarships, free boarding and lodgings, free books and uniforms etc. to bring more girls, especially from marginalized families of BPL in the mainstream education.

It is now time to fulfil the promise to create a world where every little girl from every corner of every continent can fulfil her potential without impediment and without prejudice. To make sure that nobody ever again will doubt for even an instant that a woman can be a top surgeon, or indeed a leader in any field that she might choose.

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