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WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION



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Short Profile

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ABSTRACT:

Generally empowerment is considered as the development of skills to make a person to take self-decision. It broadly refers to the expansion of freedom of choice and action to shape one's life. For women's empowerment emphasizes the importance of increasing their power and taking control over decision and issues

that shapes their life. Women's empowerment addresses power and relationship in society intertwined with gender, race, class, ethnicity, age culture and history. Power is identified 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. It is often said that when women move forward, the family moves, the village moves, and the nation moves. As a mother is considered as the first teacher of her children, it is very essential that she is educated, while underlying the importance of women's education Jawaharlal Nehru said, "Education of boys is education of one person, but education of girl is the education of the entire family."

To achieve the objective of women's empowerment the Govt. of India has made some constitutional provision specially for women and Higher Educational authorities like MHRD, UGC and other agencies has also taken some initiatives such as National Commission for women, Reservation in local self Government, Scholarship scheme for higher education of single girl child etc. which will be discussed in this article.

KEYWORDS

Women Empowerment, Self-reliant, Freedom of– Choice, Gender equality, Constitutional provision.

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INTRODUCTION :

“If you educate a man you educate an individual, however, if u educate a women you educate the whole family women empowered means mother India empowered” – PT. JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

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 evil society as educated women can play a very important role in the development of the country.

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 NAROIBI in 1985. Education is milestone of women 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 7 year away. This can became reality only when the women of this nation become 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 lows, development policies, plans and programmes have aimed at women’s advancement in difference spheres. From the 5th five year plan (1974-78) onwards has been a marked shift in the approach to women 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 Panchayat and Municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision making at the local level.

OBJECTIVES:

- 1.To create an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential.
- 2.To have positive thinking on the ability to make change and to exercise assertiveness in collective decision making.
- 3.To give equal access to women to health care, quality education at all levels, career and vocational guidance employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety social security and public office etc.

DISCUSSION:

Women play a very prominent role in the social, cultural political and economic aspects of a

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nation. In ancient times women were always encouraged to receive education in India but from medieval period particularly, they were forced to stay behind 'Durdha' Evil social practices like child marriages, 'Sati', posed as serious obstacles to women education and development. It must be remembered that a changing society and a developing economy can't make any headway if women are not educated.

Importance of Women Education:

The provision of opportunities to women for receiving formal and non-formal education is called women education. The Indian constitution lays great emphasis on the education of women and equality of status between men and women regarding all aspects of life and considers any form of discrimination as serious offence. It is still not being realized that there is definite connection between education, good motherhood and efficient house management. It is here that a change is required if our democratic values and practices are not to remain a mere pretence people should be motivated to educate the girls if our social problems are to be solved. The role of women outside home is becoming an important and even essential feature of our present day reality.

Some points are given as below which stress the importance of women education:

- ▲ Women education is needed to produce an educated family.
- ▲ An educated mother understands the importance of small family norms.
- ▲ It helps them to become economically productive and self-reliant.
- ▲ Women education contributes to women empowerment. An educated woman has better decision making power and this helps her to participate actively in social, cultural political and economic activities.
- ▲ Educated women understand the importance of health and hygiene better and therefore produce healthy family.
- ▲ Educated women are needed to work equally with men to produce a progressive and prosperous country etc.

LITERACY PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN:

Literacy is an important indicator of the Socio-economic development of a society. For the purpose of census, a person who can both write and read with understanding in any of the languages is considered to be literate in India. According to the census of India 2011, the literacy rate has shown an improvement of 9 percent than that of census 2001. Indeed the literacy rate of India as a whole is 74.04 percent with male literacy rate 82.14 percent and female literacy rate at 65.46%. The literacy rate of Assam is 73.18%, with male literacy rate of 78.18% and female literacy rate of 67.27%. In 2001, the literacy rate in India was 64.84% with male literacy at 75.26% and female literacy at 54.2% and that of Assam was 63.25% with male literacy rate at 71.28% and female literacy rate at 54.61%.

As in the rest of our country, in Assam also, there is a wide gap between the literacy rates of the two sexes as it also exists between the enrolment of girls and boys at all levels of education. Right from primacy to the university level we find that the number of girl students is considerably lower than the

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number of boy students. According to the Article 45 of the constitution universal compulsory and free education up to the age of 14 is to be provided to all but it is unfortunately true of our society that children are sent to school not according to their intelligence or aptitude but according to their sex. Such attitudes need to be changed without further delay if 100% enrolment of primary school going children is to be achieved. Although the disparity between the enrolment of boys and girls has been lessening in the urban areas, the gap between their enrolments is still very wide in the rural areas. The reasons for this are both economic and social.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:

“Empowerment of women” can be explained as a process of their awareness of capacity building resulting in greater participation, effective decision making power greater control over material assets, intellectual resources and even ideology. It also means greater access to knowledge greater ability to plan women’s lives, greater control over circumstances that influence their lives and freedom from the shackles of blind beliefs and superstitions. In this regard the concept of women empowerment is being increasingly realized by now.

Women’s condition and position have now become critical to the ‘human rights based approaches’ to development of the society. In the developing and under developed countries particularly, women have not been treated equal to men in many ways. They don’t own property no freedom to choose their work or job and most importantly, no decision making power. However, since the seventies there has been a shift regarding the well being of women and children. It was welfare during the seventies, to development during the eighties and to empowerment during the nineties.

Globalization has presented new challenges for the realization of the goal of women’s equality. There is an urgent need for reframing policies for access to employment and quality of employment. The international women’s conference of 1985 defined ‘Women Empowerment’ as a retribution of socio-economic power and control of resources in favour of women. The Cairo Conference in 1994 organized by UN on population and development called attention to women’s empowerment as a central focus. The 1995 UNDP Report was devoted to women empowerment.

Governmental efforts for achieving quality, life, equality of opportunities and social justice in relation to women:

The constitution not only grants equality to women but also empowers the state to adopt measures in favour of women for centralizing 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. Some of the constitutional provisions to better the conditions of women particularly are:

- 1.Equality before law for women (Art-14)
- 2.The state shall not to discriminate against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them {Art-15(i)}
- 3.Special provision in favour of women and children (Art- 15-3)
- 4.The state to direct its policy towards securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate measure of livelihood (Art-39(a) and equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Art-39 (d).
- 5.The state to make provision for securing just and human conditions of work and for maternity relief

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(Art- 42).

6.The state to raise the level of nutrition and standard of living of its people (Art- 47).

7.Beside these, Art-51 (A), (e) renounces practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

Some Special Initiatives for Women:

1.National Commission for women in January, 1992: The Govt. of India set up this statutory body with a specific aim to study and monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and legal safeguards provided for women; review the existing legislation to suggest amendments wherever necessary.

2.Reservation for women in local self Govt.: The 73rd and 74th constitutional Amendment Acts passed by Parliament ensure one third of the total seats for women in all elected offices in local bodies whether in rural areas or urban areas.

3.The National Plan of Action for Girl Child: The plan of Action is to ensure survival, protection and development of the girl child with the ultimate objective of building up a better future for the girl child.

4.National Policy on the Empowerment of Women, 2011: The Development of women and child Development prepared a “National Policy for Empowerment of women” in 2001 the goal of this policy is to bring about the advancement development and empowerment of women.

Women in India now participate fully in different areas such as education, sports, politics, media, art and culture, service sector, science and technology etc. Indira Gandhi who served as Prime Minister of India for an aggregate period of 15 years is the world’s longest serving women P.M.

The status of women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennia from equal status with men in ancient times through the low points of the medieval period, to the promotion of equal rights by many reformers, the history of women in India has been eventful. In modern India, women have held high offices in India including that of the Prime Minister, President Speaker of Lok Sabha and leader of opposition. As of 2011 the speaker of Lok Sabha and leader of opposition were women.

But in spite of all these measures women in India are still deprived of protection, safety and security in political, economic, social and cultural aspects. They continue to face atrocities such as rape, acid throwing, dowry killings and the forced prostitution of young girls. The status of urban women has shown some improvement but the conditions are still the same for the most women. The reserved seats in the Panchayats and Municipalities often go unoccupied or are taken up by male candidates because women rarely contest for these seats. Domestic violence and female foeticide and infanticide occur in many societies. Women belonging to the scheduled castes and tribes and Minority classes don’t have easy access to education, health care and other productive resources. Therefore they remain largely marginalized, poor and socially isolated.

Role of Education in Women Empowerment:

Education is important for everyone but it is especially significant for girls and women. Because education liberates women from the clutches of inequalities. Education is a force to reduce gender inequalities and access to mobility, share in decision making and contribution to national development. Education enhances women’s economic productivity in the farm and non-farm sectors. In a study of the

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productivity of men and women farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa, the gain in productivity from education was found to be higher for women than men. Studies on the determinates of way earnings have found the marginal effect of education to be about as large for women as for men once labour force participation, work experience, and sector of employment have been taken into account. But discriminatory employment practices against women have limited their work opportunity and have reduced the earnings they can expect to gain from education. Entry barriers against women, exploited or implicate, in certain occupations serve as obstacles to education. Some of the barriers begin even at the primary school level with teachers and textbooks projecting attitudes that discourage performance of girls, or promoting stereotypes of girls are not being as capable as boys in learning technical subjects or mathematics. Some begin at the post primary education level with gender specific admissions policies in certain areas of study. A few more research evidences would be put forth to Angus education as a means of women empowerment.

In the home, women's education has a greater effect on family welfare than means education. It helps them to get access to information about proper health care hygiene and nutrition. Educated women can plan their family better and reduce infant mortality rate. These results show that an added year of education for a mother is associated with a reduction of between 5 and 10% in child mortality.

Education helps women to strengthen the legal systems aimed at elimination of all forms of discrimination against them. Educated women always stress on the education of their children particularly daughters. Through education they can realize their full potential. A study of female students enrolled in the public education system in Cairo found that differences in measures of their self-confidence were associated with the education of the mother.

There are many prejudices against women in our country. Illiterate women are the worst sufferers because of such beliefs and prejudices. Education helps them to overcome such oppression and develops their ability to learn skills to improve individual as well as group power. This is social empowerment.

Education makes women politically empowered. Till now women don't participate equally with men in political decisions education helps them to become aware about the political processes and the importance of direct participation in the elections. The planning and implementation of development programmes both at local and national levels help them to become politically active.

Women education strengthens a democracy. Educated women understand their civil rights and duties better. They develop a clear vision to remove the obstacles that come in the way of their emancipation and empowerment. This will definitely help to enhance self-respected and self confidence in them.

Education of women is particularly important in the rural areas of our country as they are more exploited. If only all the women are well educated can our dream of a emancipated India turn into a reality.

Education empowers women in two ways – Directly and indirectly. Directly it can be observed in enhanced productivity wider empowerment opportunities and life time earnings. There are several studies which show the relationship between education and earnings, higher the education of higher will be the earnings (Hector Correo Rober Solo and et.al, 1949) Higher the earnings higher will be the women empowerment Independent income is important to women's self-esteem and can be essential to family survival. The post literacy campaign conducted in Tamil Nadu for women neoliterates discovered that they the literacy skills had helped them to become autonomous learners developed

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organizational experiences for better participation in the development process (National Literacy Mission, 1995).

Indirectly, education among women is widely known to have a strong depressant effect on child bearing. Literate women tend to marry later than illiterate women. They tend to be more knowledge about family planning and therefore more likely to seek and accept the family planning services. This keeps the population under control and the economic development process in accelerated. Researches conducted by United Nations Decade for Women show the links between such factors as status, literacy education, decision making power and fertility. According to World Bank studies, for every year of schooling a woman receives, her fertility rate is reduced by 10% (World Resources 1994-95, P. 52).

Education of women leads to their empowerment. Since it removes some of the obstacles to economic and social development. Knowledge increases the power of reasoning and the ability to analyze and relate facts and events in their proper sequence, to draw inferences and to apply the conclusions to given or new situations education of women also enhances the access to modern ideas and social change.

CONCLUSION:

“Let the women experience the great unfolding power of human beings who when they are given the opportunity and freedom to analyse their situation to take corrective action will always come up with most realistic solution. It is time we took women seriously, put them first and let them act” (Nyani, 1989).

According to the country report of the Govt. 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 of women benefits individuals, families and communities. By educating women, a country can reduce poverty, gender inequality, improve productivity, ease population pressure and offer its children a better future. Empowerment through education brings active participation to contribution towards national development and empowers them to know that women contribute 36% of the GNP exclusive of their services as mothers and household managers in India. So 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 girl specially from marginalized families of BPL, in mainstream education, the Govt. is providing a package of concessions in the form of providing free books, uniform, boarding and lodging, clothing for the hostilities, mid-day-meals, scholarship free cycles and so-on.

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