

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN EMPOWERING WOMEN

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Abstract: Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual political, social and economic strength of the individuals of the communities. Today education has empowered women. It has empowered them to be a spiritual person, to take a lead in the political field and to be a social reformer bringing social change. Empowerment has led them to greater confidence and ability to control the factors that affect their life. It has given them the courage to fight against injustice, violence and exploitation.

The government of India and U.N.O have launched out with different measures to empower women. The third MDG (Millennium Development Goals) is centered towards promoting gender equality and empowering women. The ministry of women and child development works for the holistic development of women and children. National commission for women was set up exclusively to help women through constitution. All these measures help the women to become driving force where ever she is.

Introduction:

Meaning of Empowerment:

“Empowerment as the ability to direct and control one’s own life”

“Self- empowerment means that women gain autonomy and able to set their own agenda and fully involved in the economic, political and social decision –making process”

“Empowerment is an active process, power has to be acquired. Once acquired it needs to be exercised, sustained and preserved.”

“Empowerment is a multidimensional process which should enable individuals or a group of individuals to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life.”

Women’s Empowerment: If women are empowered they become powerful. They gain their self- esteem and self- confidence. There is a wide awareness about job opportunities and get connected to people who can provide jobs and knowledge about self –help groups to start their own enterprise. When the women home workers are empowered they move from silence to articulation, from invisibility to recognition and from isolation to organization. Empowerment means building aspirations, hopes and expectations. Thus empowerment keeps the women going. Empowerment means giving the women the capacity to give themselves power, even if only psychologically. Empowerment means giving the women the means enabling the women to avail of vital resources and services. Women’s greatest resources are themselves, their personal capacities including their self-image. To be empowered women must learn to accept them as capable. Women empowerment refers to strengthening the social, economic and educational powers of women. It refers to an environment where there is no gender bias and have equal rights in community, society and workplaces.

The importance of Women empowerment today: Under employed and unemployed: Women

population constitutes around 50% of the world population. A large number of women around the world are unemployed. The world economy suffers a lot because of the unequal opportunity for women at workplaces.

Equally competent and intelligent: Women are equally competent. Nowadays, women are even ahead of men in many socio- economic activities.

Talented: Women are as talented as men. The pursue of her higher studies will not only benefit her individually but to the whole world at large.

Overall development of Society: The main advantage of Women empowerment is that there will be an overall development of the society. The money that women earn not only help them and or their family, but it also help develop the society.

Economic benefits: Women empowerment also leads to more economic benefits not to the individuals but to the society as well. Women empowerment helps women to stand on their own legs, become independent.

Reduction in domestic violence: Women empowerment leads to decrease in domestic violence. Uneducated women are at higher risk for domestic violence than any educated women.

Reduction in corruption: Women empowerment helps women to get educated and know their rights and duties and hence can stop corruption.

Reduce poverty: Women empowerment also reduces poverty. Sometimes, the money earned by the male member of the family is not sufficient to meet the demands of the family. The added earnings of women help the family to come out of trap.

National Development; Women are increasingly participating in the national development process. They are making the nation proud by their outstanding performances almost every sphere including medical science, social service, engineering, etc.

The Role of education in empowering women: Sayed, Fatima H says Education empowers individual

economically and politically and promotes critical national thinking along with decision making skills. Education itself the major instruments for setting norms in the society. Empowerment means moving from enforced powerlessness to a position of power. Education is an essential means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self confidence necessary to fully participate in the development process. Sustainable development is only possible when women and men enjoy opportunities to reach their potential.

Goals of women education are:

- To develop self esteem and self-confidence.
- To have the ability to make their own decisions and negotiations.
- To raise women’s awareness of their civil right.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru once said “To awaken the people it is women who must be awakened: Once she is on the move, the family moves and the nation moves.” Education is the most powerful instrument for changing women’s position in society and investing in women’s and girl’s education is one of the most effective ways to reduce poverty. In the 19th century with the advent of the social reformers and their social reform movements like Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj, helped in the promotion of women’s education. The Education commission of 1882 further recommended the expansion of Girls Education. The millennium development Goals consistently promotes the empowerment of women, considering women’s education a critical component of development policy and planning.

The following table help us to understand the percentage of women’s literacy which is an indicator that still women have long way to go.

Indian States Ranking by Literacy Rate

| S.No | State | Literacy Rate (2011 Census) | Male Literacy Rate (2011 Census) | Female Literacy Rate (2011 Census) |
|------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 | Andaman & Nicobar Islands | 86.3% | 90.1% | 81.8% |
| 2 | Andhra Pradesh | 67.7% | 75.6% | 59.7% |
| 3 | Arunachal Pradesh | 67.0% | 73.7% | 59.6% |
| 4 | Assam | 73.2% | 78.8% | 67.3% |
| 5 | Bihar | 63.8% | 73.5% | 53.3% |
| 6 | Chandigarh | 86.4% | 90.5% | 81.4% |

The provisions made in favor of women in the Indian constitution: Lots of provisions have been introduced through constitution to ensure dignity and self respect to women at large.

1. Article 14:- Article 14 of constitution of India ensures equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India. This is a very important provision which provide equal legal protection to women against any women based crime.
2. Article 15:- Article 15 of constitution of India ensures that no one should create any sort of discrimination only on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth or any of them within the territory of India. At the time of independence there was lots of discrimination in India against women which gradually abolished after introduction of article 15.
3. Article 16:- Article 16 of constitution of India ensures equal employment opportunity to every citizen of India. A per article 16 there should not any discrimination in respect of employment opportunity under the state only on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, descent and place birth, residence or any of them. Presently they are holding responsible positions in Government.

4. Article 39:- Article 39 of constitution of India ensures the benefit of the directive principles of state policy to the women. Directives of state policy mean guiding principles for the framing of laws by the government at state level.
 5. Article 42:- Article 42 of constitution of India caste a duty on every employer to ensure just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief.
 6. Article 243:- article 243 of constitution of India ensures reservation of seats in gram panchayat for women. This opportunity of being a part of local arbitration process has improved the social conditions of women in village areas.
- So the measures taken by the Government in all the way help the women of India to get their rights as well as to ensure the rights. The legal rights ensured by the constitution help them to approach the courts whenever they are denied of their rights. When the rights of women are upheld they are empowered.

Conclusion:

Today Indian women have excelled in each and every field from social work to visiting space station. As a result she has started breaking barriers and earned a

respectable position in the world. In the field of actual administration Srimati.Vijayalakshmi Pandit played a vital role in the United Nations Assembly. The Modern Indian women like Arundhati Roy, Anita Desai, kiran Desai, Shobhaa De are making a history in the field of journalism. In the field of Politics from

Indira Gandhi to Sheila Dixit, Uma Bharathi. Jayalalitha, Vasundhara Raje and Mamata Baanerjee have made a historical epoch through their contribution to society. Let us help the women to get empowered and her empowerment will help the society to get free from all the clutches of social evils.

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