



EDUCATIONAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN INDIA: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

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“There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of woman is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing.”

----Swami Vivekananda

Abstract

For the progress of the human society, education for both men and women is equally important. The lack of education among women invites several problems like high level of mortality, poor nutrition and health, low earning potential, high infertility and less autonomy in the family. The Government has taken many positive steps to tide over the problems arisen in the field of women education. But still, the issue persists even after seven decades of independence. The present paper seeks to find out the status of women education in India, setbacks to the same, and also the possible way-outs. Secondary data-base and qualitative approach have been used for the analysis. The analyses may be helpful to the teachers, researchers, social workers, and above all, to the policy-makers.

Key Words: *Women education, problem, mortality, poor nutrition and health, policy-makers.*



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Introduction

The most important instrument for human resource development is education; and real human progress depends upon the level and quality of women education. It has been rightly said, “If you educate a boy, you educate one individual, if you educate one girl, you educate the whole family...” Many research studies have shown that wherever there is lack of education among women, there they have very high level of fertility and mortality, and low level of nutritional status and earning potential; not only that they enjoy very little autonomy within the household also. They have a much lower literacy than men. Even now, their enrolment rate in schools and colleges is not at par with boys in all areas of the country. Actually, in the patriarchal setting, women have fewer facilities. Furthermore, some conservative attitude towards women is a setback to their education. Even the educated women also are not placed properly in all the service sectors. Traditional, cultural and religious norms hinder the

progress of women in the country to some extent. Educational empowerment is the only way-out to tide over the problem. Even economic and political empowerment of them may not be so effective without educational empowerment.

Related Studies

The following related studies were consulted to prepare the base for the present study----

Agnihotri and Konnur (2010) assert that Self-Help Groups (SHG) have been instrumental in empowerment by enabling women to work together in collective agency. This is the process wherein women gain greater share of control over material, intellectual and financial resources and take part decision-making at home and other fields—social, economic, political, cultural and educational. The schemes and incentives of both the state as well as Central Governments--- ‘ Stree Shakti’ Scheme, New ‘Swarnima’ Programme, ‘Santhwana’, ‘Karnataka Abhivrudhi Yojana’,etc. have been introduced to boost the SHGs.

Mazhar (2014) studies the obstacles in the financial skill development and various possible steps for developing the financial skill of women in India. It has been mentioned that though initiatives have been taken for women empowerment by providing vocational training, financial skill development of women has taken a back seat. It is further mentioned that the initiative of the Government of India for starting a Bharatiya Mahila Bank (Indian Women’s Bank) is a small step towards economic empowerment . The author justifies that for the above purpose financial skill of women is a must.

Gill (2014) investigated the attitude of Muslim girl students and their parents towards higher education. The sample consisted of 120 students of class XI and XII randomly selected, and their parents. Most of the responses indicated positive attitude. In case of difference of education of girls and boys parents (63%) and Students (93%) do not believe on this, but there is a wide difference in between them.

Khatun (2016) tries to trace the nature and degree of political empowerment of women through the Panchayat Raj Institution in the State of West Bengal. Both the primary and the secondary sources of materials were consulted for the micro level study. The author has provided micro level data base for the study. The paper reveals that increased political participation of women in village panchayats has changed at least the age old traditional values, customs and superstitions imposed on them; they now can move outside home, attend office and can take part in decision-making without the escort of their relatives. The reservation in PRIs plays a great role in this respect.

Rationale

Presently women constitute half of our population in the country: so their development should be a great concern for all. It can be said undoubtedly that the status of women in India has improved after independence. While in the first census in post-independent India the literacy rate of women was 7.43%, in the latest census it crossed 65 %. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment (1992) reserving 1/3 of seats for women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions was really a milestone in the political empowerment of them; and this was supposed to improve the social and economic conditions of the women in India. Again, the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act (2001) was another milestone in the growth of education, especially for women. The schemes like Mahila Samakshya Program (1988), Indira Mahila Yojana (1995), National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (2003), Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (2004) contributed a lot to the growth of women education in India. Despite all these, all the problems relating to the education of Indian women have not been uprooted till now, especially the problems of rural women. Hence, the need for analysing the issue crops up even in the 2nd decade of the 21st century. And the need for educational empowerment of women has become the call of the day.

Objectives

The present studies were conducted with the following objectives-----

- I. To know the educational status of women in India.
- II. To study the obstacles in the way of their education.
- III. To find out the ways of their educational empowerment.

Pre-Vedic to Mediaeval Women Education

In the ancient culture girls received education in Ashramas and Gurukuls with the boys; not only that, women enjoyed status and freedom equal to men. But later on, women education received low priority. Introduction of child marriage was a great impediment in the way of women education in India. Again, seclusion of women (purdah) was a big blow to women education in the country. Some religious people in the society had the control over education and they did not favour women education. And the society also took the nature of a patriarchal society.

Pre-Independent Women Education

The first boarding school for girls was set up in 1821 in Tirunelyeli. After the passing of 'Sati' Abolition Act (1829) at the advocacy of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, establishment of Bethune School in Calcutta (1849) was an inspiration to establish similar schools for girls in
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the whole country. Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Dayananda Saraswati, Govinda Ranade, Begum Rokeya did much to spread girls' education. The Wood's Despatch (1854) recorded 626 girls' schools. When the Indian Education Commission favoured female education in India, the Christian missionaries started spreading women education privately. Towards the beginning of the 20th century government grants to private girls' schools began to flow. Annie Besant set up Central Hindu Girls' School in Benaras (1904) and founded Women's Indian Association (1917) to expand primary education of girls in the country. National Council of Women was established in 1925. The Hartog Committee (1929) favoured women education in India. The Child Marriage Restraint Act (1929) was a positive step for girls' education. In 1947 literacy rate for women was 6%.

Post-Independent Women Education

The significant milestones that played vital role in the development of women education in India after independence were-----The University Education Commission (1949), Indian Constitution (1950), National Committee on Women's Education (1958), National Council for Women Education (1959), Hansa Meheta Committee (1961), Bhaktabatsalam Committee for Women Education (1963), Indian Education Commission (1966), National Policy on Education (1968), National Policy on Education (1986) and its POA (1992), National Commission for Women (1992), National Perspective Plan for Women's Education (1988-2000), National Commission for Women (2000), Sarva Shiksha Aviyani (2002), RTE Act (2009), etc. As per Census (2011), the literacy rate of women in India is 65.46%.

Obstacles to Women Education

The women education in India still faces many obstacles which may be enumerated as below-

- i) Insufficient girls' schools
- ii) Less number of female teachers
- iii) Lack of facilities in schools
- iv) Inadequate boarding facilities
- v) Lack of safety for girls
- vi) Malnutrition and poor health
- vii) Load of household works
- viii) Curriculum not favouring girls
- ix) Poor economic condition of parents
- x) Negative attitude of family towards girls' education
- xi) Illiteracy of parents

- xii) Cost of transportation to schools

Way-outs to the Obstacles

There are some elected women members in panchayats who only put their signature and all activities are done by their husbands. For this, true educational empowerment of women is a must, and the following measures may be effective-----

- i) Mass awareness about the importance of girls' education
- ii) Good teacher community relation
- iii) Effective role of mass-media
- iv) Positive role of NGOs and VOs
- v) Comprehensive govt. programmes
- vi) Recruitment of more female teachers
- vii) Local suiting of school timing
- viii) Financial assistance to the poor
- ix) Establishment of more number of girls' schools
- x) Boarding and other facilities
- xi) Strict administrative vigilance regarding girls' safety
- xii) Parents' education and awareness programme
- xiii) Gender equality awareness programme

Implication

The present study does bear some implications, especially when we are advancing towards observing the platinum jubilee year of our independence in 2022. The study is of course meaningful to the teachers, the students, and the scholars. It is also meaningful to the social-workers, and the different Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), and the various Volunteer Organizations (VOs). The policy-makers may find some relevant and significant clues as well from the study which will help to formulate some other programs and schemes in near future leading to the overcoming of the existing obstacles which hinder the education process of women education in our country. The study may also be an eye-opener to all who will be reading it with a positive outlook and the intention of uprooting the problem.

Conclusion

In the 21st century, women are playing different important roles in the family and the society at large. They are playing the roles of mother, wife, sister, daughter, and daughter-in-law in the family. They are working hard in the public and private offices, factories and hospitals. They are efficiently working as clerks, computer operators, nurses, doctors, engineers, *Copyright © 2017, Scholarly Research Journal for Humanity Science & English Language*

teachers, scientists, social workers and so on. But this is not the whole scenario; of course this has proved that they can do any good for the family and the society. There are so many women who are still in the darkness being devoid of education and their real rights. Only true education and a positive social outlook towards them with elimination of gender discrimination will make them really empowered, and then only the other means of empowering them will be meaningful. In the words of the father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi, “Woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in every minute detail in the activities of man and she has an equal right of freedom and liberty with him.” The Preamble of CEDAW (1981) maintains that “full and complete development of a country, the welfare of the world and the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields.” So empowerment of women through proper education is a must for our family, society and nation.

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