



TOWARDS EQUALITY : MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES ON WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Edited by

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Role of Education in Women Empowerment

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Abstract :

Education plays a critical role in women's economic empowerment. Education is considered the most important tool for empowering women in society. It is not only limited to develop the personality of an individual but also plays an important role in economic, social and cultural development. Women Empowerment is a global issue. Education is the milestone of women empowerment, because it enables them to respond to the challenges; to confront their traditional role and change their life. Hence, we cannot neglect the importance of education in reference to Women Empowerment.

Keywords : Education, Empowerment, Women

Introduction

The concept of women empowerment was introduced at the international Women Conference at NAROIBI in 1985. Women empowerment is a global issue and discussion on women political right are at the fore front of many formal and informal campaigns worldwide. Education is regarded as important milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to face the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life. Women are an important section of our society. Education as a means of empowerment of women can bring about a positive attitudinal change. Education is considered the most important tool for empowering women in society. 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. Education of women is the most powerful tool of change their position in the society. Still large women folk of our country are illiterate, backward, weak and exploited. Education also reduces inequalities and functions as a means of improving their status within the family. Empowerment and capacity

building provides women as avenue to acquire practical information and learning for their improved livelihoods. The constitutional directive to provide free and compulsory education for all children upto the age of 14 years has remained unfulfilled till now. Education experts admit that this failure is mainly due to the slow progress of education among girls. Literacy and educational levels are increasing for Indian Women still there is gap between male and female literacy rate which can be seen in the following table:

Table – 1: Literacy Rate in India

Year	Persons	Male	Female
1901	5.3	9.8	0.7
1911	5.9	10.6	1.1
1921	7.2	12.2	1.8
1931	9.5	15.6	2.9
1941	16.1	24.9	7.3
1951	16.7	24.9	7.3
1961	24.0	34.4	13.0
1971	29.5	39.5	18.7
1981	36.2	46.9	24.8
1991	52.1	63.9	39.2
2001	65.38	76.0	54.0
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46

Source: Census of India (2011)

On observing the above table, it is clear that at no point could the literacy rate of women match that of men. As a result, even after 75 years of independence, women occupy a secondary position in our social hierarchy. Inspire of being aware of her position women can't transfer the situation, due to lack of education. Therefore, women's empowerment can't be affected unless we persuade the importance of women's education.

Women play an imperative role in making a nation progressive and guide it towards development. They are essential possessions of a lively humanity required for national improvement. So, to see a bright future of women in our country, giving education to them must be a pre-occupation. Empowerment means moving from a weak position to execute a power. The education of women is the most powerful tool to change the position of 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 established schools, colleges and universities, even exclusively for women in the state. The education develops the idea of participation in government, panchayats, public matters etc for elimination of gender discrimination. Women empowerment refers to strengthening the social, economic and educational powers of women. Women empowerment is the empowerment of women which helps them to take their own decision by breaking all personal limitations of the society and family. Women education in India plays a very important role in the overall development of the country.

Education is the master key to unlock the door to women empowerment at the grass root levels. As per the 2011 census, the female literacy rate in India is 65.46 in contrast with the male literacy rate of over 80%. We have a long way to go to bridge the gap just in the context of literacy rate and even that is not enough to enhance productivity or obtain high paying jobs, but is essential for women to pursue higher education. There are several reasons on role of education in women empowerment in India.

- **Education Liberates :** Education liberate the mind and opens it up to places, people and possibilities we would have never thought of otherwise. Whether studying language, history, science or literature, we are gaining knowledge and educating ourself about the world, about nature, people, nations and the world works. Therefore, an educated women is liberated woman.
- **Education offers independence:** As education opens up the doors to a new enlightened world, it enables women to make their own life choices about anything and everything whether it is lifestyle, career, sexuality, life partner, food etc. Education is the key to

understanding the difference between right and wrong, standing up against oppression and gender discrimination and making correct choices in life. Education allows women to ignore moronic societal dikates and live life on their own terms.

- **Educating Social Evils** : Education galvanizes women to take a stand against social evils which plague the society. An intellectual and enlightened woman will actively participate in the fight against dowry, sexual harassment, objectification, misogyny and patriarchy.
- **Financial Independence** : Education has enabled women to go beyond generic professions. Today, women are becoming models, actors, architects engineers, journalists, lawyers, managers CEO's, scientists joining the army and police forces and even running the entire nation. There is no profession left which can be said is the sole domain of man. The 21st century's liberated and emancipated woman is breaking the glass ceiling and finding her own place in society. The educated women is no longer dependent on a man to provide her food and shelter.

Quoting one of 20th century's greatest educators, Dr. James Emmanuel Kwegyir Aggrey (1875-1927), "educate a man and you will educate one person, educate a woman and you will educate a whole family." An educated, liberal independent and professionally successful woman can shape generation. Only a society that educates and empowers its women can be become an advanced society. Education is a woman's birth right.

In conclusion, education is a milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to respond to challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life.

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