

## **Girl Education for Empowerment - A Leap**

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### **ABSTRACT**

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 had however, led to the tremendous improvement of women's condition throughout the world in recent times. We need to put a special focus on empowering women and girls, because we believe they hold the key to long-lasting social change in communities. Empowering women must be a united approach, a cause that requires continued attention and stewardship by all. We need to augment our efforts for empowering women and enhance their progress. It is our moral, social and constitutional responsibility to ensure their progress by providing them with equal rights and opportunities. Access to education of women has been one of the most pressing demands of the present times. Women education in India has also been a major preoccupation of both the government and civil society as educated women can play a very important role in the development of the country. An educated woman through her smartness, grace and elegance can conquer the whole world. In all spheres of life whether for controlling growth, spread of literacy or improving quality of life for vast masses, women have crucial role to play. However, women can be expected to play this role when they become conscious of their strength and are not deliberately marginalized by male domination. In this context, education has an important role to play to empower women and to create awakening in women to achieve their potential as the prime movers of change in society.

**Key Words :** Education, Empowerment, Women

### **INTRODUCTION**

Economic growth and development is taking place at a rapid pace since the middle of last century. Technological advances and globalization have played a major role in propelling this advancement. One section of the global population has greatly benefited through this development. Communities at the other end of the socio-economic ladder have not benefitted very much and a widening gap is being created between the "haves" and the "have-nots". This has been a matter of great concern for international agencies, some world leaders and civil society organization. Some of the negative fallout of this development has been the oppression of weaker sections of society, especially women.

Woman is an active agent of social change and

constitute half of the population of the world. Yet she is still being oppressed and exploited. Empowerment of women is essentially the process of upliftment of social, economic and political status of women and it involves the building up of a society wherein woman can live without the fear of oppression, exploitation and discrimination in a traditionally male-dominated society. The widespread discrimination and exploitation upon women evoke the need of empowerment of women and education can be used as an effective instrument for achieving it (Sahni, 2015; Avasthi and Srivastava, 2001).

#### **Objectives of the study:**

1. To identify the importance of education for achieving women empowerment.
2. To assess the present scenario of women

empowerment in India.

3. To create awareness among women about empowerment.

4. To identify the impediments of women empowerment.

5. To offer suggestions for women empowerment through education.

Education is regarded as an important milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to face the challenges to confront their traditional role and change their life. Education of women is the most powerful tool of change in the society. Still a large womenfolk of our country are illiterate, backward, weak and exploited. Education reduces inequalities and functions as a means of improving their status within the family. Empowerment and capacity building provides women an avenue to acquire practical information and learning for their improved livelihoods. India can become a developed nation only if women contribute to the best of her capacity and ability which is possible when she is educated and empowered.

When woman in the society has the freedom to think, share her feelings, opine for something, plan and execute her independent decisions, that time it can be said that a woman in real terms is empowered. In other words, when a woman has the ability to control her own fertility, plan for her family and when her reproductive rights including her right to decide the number of children and to make decisions regarding her reproduction free of discrimination, coercion and violence are promoted and protected, it reflects equality in society. Then only it is said that women are empowered in true sense.

### **Schemes for education of girls and women by Government of India**

The government of India has undertaken different schemes for the education of girls and upliftment of women. Some of these may be noted as under:

The SSA was launched in accordance to the Eighty-Sixth constitutional Amendment for VEE. It serves as an umbrella scheme for directly and indirectly beneficial to the girl-child. Rastriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) 1992-93, Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY) 1993, Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY) 1995, Support to Training and Employment Programme for women (STEP), Creches, Day-care centre for the children of working and ailing mothers, National Mission for empowerment of women, Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS). Rajiv Gandhi

Scheme for Employment of Adolescence Girls (RGSEAG) 2010, Women's Development Corporation Scheme (WDCS), Indira Priyadarshini Yojana are some major schemes initiated by the government of India in the recent times. The present government has launched the programmes of "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" aims at tackling the low child sex ratio. The first year of new Millenium (2001) was declared as "Women Empowerment Year". It is necessary to supplement government efforts by NGO's for facilitating girl education and women empowerment. Yet India has not achieved the expected goals, hence comprehensive program for girls' education and women empowerment is still demanding.

### **Impediments to women education:**

India is the world's largest democracy where billions of people live and of course almost half of these are women. So how does women education effect India's development. If girls are not educated families suffer too. Educated mothers use their knowledge to improve the health of their children and other family members. Their knowledge about health risk protects their families against illness. Child mortality rate is much higher where mothers lack education than in families where mothers are educated. Girls Education is emerging as one of the top priorities of Indian society. "Educating girls is not an option, it is a necessity". We as a nation want to eliminate gender disparities in education (Agarwal, 2001; Gupta, 2003).

There are a number of impediments that go against the way of women education and empowerment. In rural areas, girls play the role of second mother by shouldering the responsibilities of the household work such as looking after the sibling, fetching water, collecting wood, cleaning and cooking. All these chores discourage girl child to go to school. Bonded labour, dowry system and other social practices act as main courses of the neglect of the girl child. The lower enrolment of girls in schools is one of the foundational factors which stand as stumbling block for women education. In India, every year ten girls in the age group of 6-11 are still not enrolled in schools (Nayar, 2011).

Our school environment for girls is not really interesting and encouraging. The methodology is outdated, rigid and uninteresting. Many schools lag basic facilities such as drinking water, toilets, infrastructure and no experienced teachers. According to UN sources, India

is the most child labour populous nation in the globe with more than 50 million child labourers working in different factories and industries. In most of these industries girl children are preferred for high productivity and low cost.

### **Need and importance:**

Women education plays a very important role in the overall development of the county. 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 can also provide better guidance to their children. Moreover educated women can also help in the reduction of infant mortality rate and growth of the population.

Educated women can bring changes in family and society. It also helps in the removal of many social evils like Sati-pratha, early childhood marriage, dowry system etc. Economic poverty can be removed through education by providing various job avenues for her so that she can work hand in hand with man and give support to the family. Education promotes team work rather than making a woman individualistic. Education helps in the harmonious development by giving due weightage to various aspects of personality. Educated women expresses her feelings or thoughts in a more effective way. Educated women are a guiding light not only for her children but for the family, society and nation as well. Education gives women power to become strong physically, socially, economically and intellectually. Education encourages women especially the rural women to take advantage of various government schemes like SSA, OBB and TLP etc.

Education is the key factor for women empowerment, prosperity, development and welfare. Discrimination of women from womb to tomb is well known. There is continued inequality and vulnerability of women in all sectors. They need to be empowered in all walks of life. In order to fight against the socially constructed gender biases, women have to swim against the system that requires more strength. Such strength comes from the process of empowerment and empowerment will come from the education (Pandya *et al.*, 2015; Sharma, 1997 and Tripathi and Tiwari, 1999).

### **Findings:**

1. Educational qualification plays a significant role in women and if women's empowerment is to be effected,

it can be carried out only through the medium of education.

2. Among the various priorities of government regarding education, girl's education needs to be given foremost importance.

3. India's serious problem is empty stomach because one third of the world's hungry live in India. In this context, government of India needs to provide more outreach services to poor families in need of immunization, healthy food, clean water, clean toilets and learning environment for infants, toddlers and pre-school children.

4. Social justice, equality and just society can be ensured with the empowerment of woman.

5. The mortality rate in children of educated woman is very less than those of uneducated woman. Thus, education helps her to think and act prudently for herself, her kids and community at large.

### **Suggestions:**

The National Policy for the empowerment of women 2001 stated, "equal access to education for women and girls will be ensured, special measures will be taken to eliminate discrimination, universalize education, eradicate illiteracy and create gender sensitive educational system, increase enrolment and retention rates of girls and improve the quality of education to facilitate life-long learning as well as development of vocational or technical skills of women. Some practical steps should be taken as follows:

1. Different types of educational Institutions should be established exclusively for women all over India.

2. Adult and continuing education, social education, home schooling etc. can be used as a tool of basic change in the status of women. It would help to develop in women entrepreneurial skills and job-opportunities.

3. In rural areas, mobile library, distance education through media, non-formal schools should be provided for life-long education and empowerment of women.

4. Technical and vocational education should be provided particularly to the rural women for improving their vocational efficiency so that they can be self-appointed and self-supportive.

5. Government should provide financial support for the implementation of schemes and programmes for empowerment of women.

6. All social evils, norms and practices such as child-marriage, child-labour, dowry system, child prostitution, polygamy and female feticides should be

strictly banned by enforcing laws and creating public awareness.

**Conclusion:**

Empowerment is “enablement” by changing the person, changing structure, replacing or recreating conventional institutions. It transpires over time and usually, it is not instantaneous. As the women are educated, they are empowered and they move from silence to articulation, from invisibility to recognition and from isolation to organization. Education is the cornerstone of women empowerment which can be achieved through hearty and co-operative efforts of the government, NGO’s and also by eliminating the traditional attitude, norms and practices. The efforts of girl education and thereby empowering woman will go in vain unless the women are well-educated, self-supportive and independent in all spheres of life.

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