



WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION

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Abstract

Women education plays a vital role in the all-round development of a nation. Education is the most important mean for women empowerment that is why we should give much importance to women education. Education will enable women to live in the society with dignity. Almost half of the world population is women but unfortunately a vast number of women are still illiterate. They, if educated, can play important roles in social, political, economic, cultural and other spheres of life. Though now-a-days women are coming forward in these fields and giving important contributions, but yet the number is very few. Women are given much less recognition than what they deserve. Family as well as a society is built by joint contribution of man and women. Though women have so much contribution in the development of the society yet in many cases instead of recognition they get reproach, oppression and humiliation.

Keywords: Women education, Empowerment, Women Empowerment, Recognition and Spheres of Life

Introduction

Empowerment means giving freedom and opportunity to express one's personality and to live according to one's own choice. According to the international encyclopaedia (1999), power means having the capacity and the means to direct one's life towards desired social political, and economic goals and status. Women empowerment is still a big issue in many countries. The government of India has declared the year 2001 as 'the year of women empowerment'. Various steps have been taken by the government to include women in active politics. Though in countries like India women are coming in the front row and taking important roles in socio-economic and political fields, yet the number is not satisfying one. Number of women in policy making system is quite less than what it should be. But the scenario is totally deferent in developed countries. In those countries man and women ratio in the important fields are very close. Women empowerment in developing countries and third world is still a matter of much concern. Women should be empowered so that they can think freely and take decision for their own life. The empowerment enables a person to be self-reliant, self-dependent, by developing his confidence. So, empowerment is the freedom to work, right to change one's job, and live according to one's own terms and conditions.

Women Empowerment in Pre-independent India

A close study of Vedic society will reveal that women in those days used to get freedom in social life. They even had the opportunity for education in Brahminic culture thread ceremony was performed even for girls when they become eight years old. Some eminent women of that era are Rishika, Rithika, Sulova etc. In Vedic society women used to enjoy the freedom of choosing their life partner. Even the fathers of daughters could take dowry in that social system.

But with the change in social life women start losing their position gradually. In 'Manusmriti' women were considered dependent on man. According to 'Manusmriti' a woman in her childhood depends on her father, in her adulthood she depends on her husband and in her old age she depends on her children. A woman did not have any will of her own. In those days marriageable age of a girl used to be 10 to 12 years. In those days male child was considered as a blessing on the family on the other hand a daughter was looked down upon as a curse on the family. In this way women lose their position of honour and become totally dependent on the male members of the family.

In Buddhist culture, in the initial stage women did not have the right to education. Later at the initiative of Buddha's favourite disciple, Theri Dharmadina women started getting right to education. Some eminent women who were educated in Buddhist education are Baisali, Amrapali, Soma, Sujata etc.

In Islamic period women education was in its worst stage. The system of wearing burqas among Muslim women started in this period. The tradition of wearing veil among Hindu women also started in this period. Yet there were some educated women in the royal family, for instance, Babar's daughter Gulbadan Begum and Akbar's mother Hamida Banu were the educated women. Child marriage, widow burning system and so many inhuman traditions started in this period. In this period woman was considered as the property of man.

Present Situation

In India, even after 74 years of independence, we are far behind in our goal of women empowerment. In our society women are still considered not capable of doing anything other than domestic work. The number of professional women in our society is still very few. Many women in society are subject to domestic violence. Parents consider it is useless to spend money for the education of a girl child. A girl child is considered as the property of someone else. This type of thinking still prevails in the society. Women are still far behind from men in education, politics, finance, sports and other aspects of life. Women are often neglected by the male members of the family in this patriarchal society. Even in this age of a science and technology there still exists superstitious and backward systems like dowry system, polygamy, women trafficking, belief in witchcraft etc. A woman plays a vital role to keep a family integrated. Though a woman devotes her entire life for the wellbeing of her family yet she gets very little recognition for her devotion, hard work, and sacrifice. Rather she is humiliated and oppressed. According to a report of "Human Development in south Asia 2000" it is evident that many pregnant women are forced to go through diagnostic test to decide the gender of her unborn baby. Many of them who find out that they have zygote of a girl child through this technique are forced to go for an abortion. Thus, in spite of their unwillingness they are forced to commit the severe crime of infanticide.

Women's Empowerment

Women empowerment is necessary for the upliftment of women so that they can take decision for themselves in and outside their family life and the best mean for women empowerment is education. If women are educated, they will better understand their rights, responsibilities and duty in the society. Empowerment does not make women rival of man. In a balanced society male and female members contribute equally for its development. Women empowerment means giving them the right to live their life with dignity in the society. Through women empowerment women can be made aware of socio-economic life. Empowered women in collaboration with man can bring positive impact in the society keeping their own identity intact.

Empower through Education

Empower through education is a phrase that can have different meanings and interpretations depending on the context and perspective. Generally, it refers to the idea of giving people more control and influence over their own learning and development, as well as the social and economic outcomes of their education. Some possible ways to understand this phrase are –

(a) Empowerment as a liberatory idea, in which power is transferred in education from the traditionally powerful (such as governments, teachers, or dominant groups) to subsidiary groups within the educative process (such as students, parents, or marginalized communities). This can involve challenging existing structures and practices that limit or oppress people's potential, and creating more democratic and participatory spaces for learning and decision-making.

(b) Empowerment as a technique of governance, in which people are encouraged or required to take more responsibility for their own learning and development, as well as the consequences of their actions. This can involve promoting self-regulation, self-evaluation, and self-improvement among learners, teachers, and institutions, as well as aligning their goals and behaviours with the expectations and demands of the society or market.

(c) Empowerment as a model that works, in which schools, businesses, and communities collaborate to provide students with relevant and meaningful learning opportunities that, prepare them for real life. This can involve integrating career and life skills readiness programs into the curriculum, connecting students with mentors and employers in the local community, and exposing them to diverse and authentic experiences that build their confidence, skills, networks, and relationships.

Women's Empower through Education

Women's empower through education, generally, refers to the idea of giving women and girls more access and opportunities to quality education that can improve their lives and status in society. Some possible benefits of women's empower through education are –

(a) Women can make better health choices. Education can help women to learn about their health, nutrition, and sexual rights, and to protect themselves from diseases, unwanted pregnancies, and violence. Education can also reduce maternal and child mortality rates, and improves the health and well-being of families and communities.

(b) Women can exercise more agencies in their own lives. Education can help women to develop their self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-reliance, and to make informed decisions about their futures. Education can also enable women to challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes, and to pursue their own goals and values.

(c) Women can access better economic opportunities. Education can help women to acquire the skills and knowledge they need to enter the labour market, start their own businesses, or advance their careers. Education can also increase women's income, productivity, and bargaining power, and reduce their poverty and dependence.

(d) Women can participate more in public life. Education can help women to become more aware of their rights, responsibilities, and potential as citizens. Education can also enable women to engage more in political and social issues, such as democracy, governance, peace, and justice, and to have more voice and influence in decision-making processes.

(e) Women can empower other women and girls. Education can help women to become role models, mentors, and leaders for other women and girls in their families, communities, and societies. Education can also create a ripple effect of empowerment that can benefit generations to come.

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