

EDUCATION AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT– STILL A MIRAGE

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ABSTRACT

India is democratic country whose population at this time is almost 1.27 billion, out of which about 614.4 million are women. At earlier times they were getting equal status with men but during different periods they had been facing a lot of problems. Many a times they were treated as slave but from the earlier period of 21st century their status has been changed gradually. After English period it was felt that fifty percent of the population which is women can contribute a lot in the development of the countries. Today we have seen that women occupy very strong position socially, economically and politically. But they are not free from discrimination and harassment of the society. So, there is urgent need to provide equal status to women by adopting right kind of policies to uplift their downtrodden position in the society.

KEYWORDS -- Women Empowerment, Status, Society, Power

INTRODUCTION

Women bear almost all responsibility for meeting basic needs of the family, yet are systematically denied the resources, information and freedom of action they need to fulfill this responsibility.

Within the framework of a democratic polity, our laws, development policies, plans and programmes have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres. From the fifth five year plan (1974-78) onwards has been a marked shift in the approach to women's issue from welfare to development. The National commission for women was set-up by an act of parliament in 1990 to the safeguard. The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) to the constitution of India have provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision making at local levels (Patanjali, 2005).

For centuries, women were expected to work at home and their husbands assumed the responsibility of bread winners. They have been treated as weak, obedient, shy, timid partner of men and thereby have enjoyed an inferior status in society but modern age is the age of democracy. In India, all men and women who have attained a particular age of 18 years are termed as adults. In democratic states, every citizen who has attained 18 years of age has the right to vote irrespective of his caste, sex, religion, colour and creed.

The spread of education has brought women from the subordinate position to an equal level with men. The spread of education, increased cost of living, changed norms of measuring, one's status in terms of income and change in one's attitude have induced and compelled many middle class women to actively engage in work and earn money (Rao, 2000).

Women in India consistently lag behind the men in terms of access to education, health care, jobs etc. apart from the economic and social inequality, women in India are victims of heinous crimes such as, dowry deaths, rape, molestation and immoral trafficking.

EMPOWERMENT

The word 'Empowerment' has been widely used but very little efforts have been made so far to define it. Long before, this term became very popular and women began to speak about gaining a control over their life and getting a right to participate in the decisions. Which impact upon them in their day to day affairs in community in government issues and also in international development policies? But now the "Word" has entered the vocabulary of development and this "Development" means "Women Empowerment".

A workshop of pacific women, which was titled "Women Development and Empowerment", was held at Kaulalumpur in 1987 which Griffen defined "Empowerment" as adding to women's power as under:

- Power means having control or gaining still further control.
- Having a right to express ideas and also being listened to,
- Able to effect social choices and decisions which have an effect on the whole society,
- Having a right to be recognized and equally respected all citizens with a contribution to make,
- It means to be able to make a contribution to all levels of society and it does not mean merely home power, but also that women's contribution be recognized and valued.
- Being able to define and create from a women's perspective.

In short, Empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building to greater decision making power and control resulting in transformative action.

EMPOWERMENT IS 'M' POWERMENT:

There are three 'M' for empowerment- Money Power, Mind Power and Muscle Power.

Money Power: This can be translated into financial independence, employment. Gender curricula can be developed at all levels of educational system in order to address. Sex stereotyping is as one of the cause of gender discrimination.

Mind Power: This symbolizes strong psyche independent decision making, freedom of thoughts, conviction and taking responsibility of one's decision. Women – friendly personnel policies can be drawn up to encourage women to participate effectively in the developmental process.

Muscle Power: Here is translate as physical strength. They should learn self-defense mechanism like- judo, karate etc. participation in sports activities increase physical and mental strength. They must have confident body language, which keeps attackers at a bay (Shembkar, 2005).

The **Women's Empowerment Principles** were launched on **9 March 2010** in celebration of International Women's Day at a day-long conference in New York for business, civil society, Government academia and the UN to explore the application of the Principles in

various contexts. In brief, the Principles are:

- Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality.
- Treat all women and men fairly at work – respect and support human rights and non discrimination.
- Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers.
- Promote education, training and professional development for women.
- Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women.
- Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy.
- Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality.

MISERABLE CONDITION OF WOMEN IN THE COUNTRY

The Indian constitution grants women equal rights with men, but in most Indian families, a daughter is viewed as a liability, and she is conditioned to believe that she is inferior and subordinate to men. Many governments turn a blind eye towards the increasing problems with the discrimination and violence against women. From a global perspective, India accounts for 19 percent of all lives births and 27 percent of all maternal deaths. Females receive less health care than males. Many women die in child birth of easily prevented complications. Abuse violence and discrimination against women are widely tolerated and systematic. Families are far less likely to educate girls than boys. Women work longer hours and their work is more arduous than men's, yet their work is unrecognized, While women are guaranteed equality under the constitution, legal protection has little effect in the face of prevailing patriarchal traditions. Legal loopholes are used to deny women inheritance rights.

EDUCATION: MEANS FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

The status of women's education is not merely an issue for pedagogic or academic discussion but sociological problems. Parallel universe exists for men and women. This clearly projects the subsisting gender inequality. The women and men still live in different gender inequality. The women and men still live in different worlds with different access, opportunities, incentives, rewards and legal protection with a small percentage of women getting to higher education and still pursuing professional courses, the wider and large area of literacy among women still a major challenge. According to these suggestions the state and central government made their effort through their policies and plans to accelerate and uplift women's education in India. Kothari commission (1964-66) stressed the need of special attention towards women education. National policy on education (1968) stressed need of women education. It recommended that the education of girls should receive due emphasis not only on the ground of social justice, but also because it accelerate social transformation. The National committee on status of women (1974) studied the different aspects of the status of women and stressed to the need of making special efforts to strengthen education among girls. And girls in the 21st century should thought to have:

(a) Freedom of Speech (b) Freedom from Fear (c) Freedom to Vote (d) Freedom to Choice

(e) Freedom from Torture (f) Freedom in Religion (g) Freedom from Enslavement

Thus the following parameters should be emphasized through education:

- Developing ability to think critically.
- Providing the economic independence.
- Building a positive self- image and self- confidence.
- Building up group cohesion and fostering decision-making and action.
- Ensuring equal participation in the process of bringing about social change.

STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING WOMEN EDUCATION

- ❖ Provide equal educational opportunities to all.
- ❖ Targeting the out of school girls.
- ❖ Improve the quality of Government and Private schools.
- ❖ Recruitment of female teachers in rural and urban schools.
- ❖ Revise curricula according to the vocational need.
- ❖ Provide incentives, scholarship and free higher education to women.
- ❖ Ensuring safety both for girls and boys.
- ❖ Special educational programs for adults.
- ❖ Formulate new policies and plan for education.
- ❖ Equal right of education in each sphere.
- ❖ Opening new schools.
- ❖ Granting concession.
- ❖ Part time, night schools for working women.
- ❖ Required infrastructure for girls.
- ❖ Simplified and modified courses.
- ❖ Special rural development program for rural girls.
- ❖ Inculcating a sense of social awareness and a spirit of service to society.

CONCLUSION:

Knowledge breaks the shackles of ignorance and makes a man capable of standing on a global platform. Education helps in securing a place in the society. Equal access to education for women and girls should be ensured. Special measures are needed to eliminate discrimination, universalize education, eradicate illiteracy, create a 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 occupation.

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