



Role of education in women empowerment

Ruqia Mohi-ud-Din

Lecturer Education, Gandhi Memorial College, Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, India

Abstract

It is possible, reading standard histories, to forget half the population of the country. The explorers were men, the land holders and merchant's men, the political leader's men, the military figures men. The very in visibility of women, the overlooking of women, is a sign of their submerged status" (Howard zinn) Women constitute an integral part of the social structure of the world. Without women the world becomes unfeasible. The contribution of women towards world, society and humanity is great. Women constitute almost half of the total human resources (population) of world. But the hegemonic masculine ideology made them suffer a lot as they were denied equal opportunities in different parts of the world. Since the ancient times the voice of women has not been commensurate to their numerical strength and their socio, economic roles in the society have always been depressed. The rise of feminist ideas has however, led to the tremendous improvement of woman's condition throughout the world in recent times. Access to education has been one of the most pressing demands of these women rights movements. Women education In India has also been a major area of concern for both the government and civil society and some statistics have changed since independence, many ground realities have not Gender gap still persists in almost all aspects of women education. The focus of this paper is on the empowerment of women with the help of education particularly after independence.

Keywords: education, empowerment, women, literacy

Introduction

Objectives of study

1. To study the impact of education on empowerment of women.
2. To study role of Indian constitution in empowerment of women.
3. To know about different commissions & committees on women education.
4. To provide suggestion for women empowerment.

Methodology

The present study is based on the collection of data from secondary source. Secondary data is obtained from various published and unpublished records, books and magazines and journals

Women empowerment

Women empowerment means emancipation of women from the vicious grips of social, economical, political, caste and gender-based discrimination. It means granting women the freedom to make life choices. Women empowerment does not mean 'deifying women' rather it means replacing patriarchy with parity. In this regard, there are various facets of women empowerment, such as given hereunder:—

Human Rights or Individual Rights: A woman is a being with senses, imagination and thoughts; she should be able to express them freely. Individual empowerment means to have the self-confidence to articulate and assert the power to negotiate and decide.

a) Social women empowerment: - A critical aspect of social

empowerment of women is the promotion of gender equality. Gender equality implies a society in which women and men enjoy the same opportunities, outcomes, rights and obligations in all spheres of life.

- b) Educational women empowerment:**-It means empowering women with the knowledge, skills, and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process. It means making women aware of their rights and developing a confidence to claim them.
- c) Economic and occupational empowerment:**- it implies a better quality of material life through sustainable livelihoods owned and managed by women. It means reducing their financial dependence on their male counterparts by making them a significant part of the human resource.
- d) Legal Women Empowerment:**-It suggests the provision of an effective legal structure which is supportive of women empowerment. It means addressing the gaps between what the law prescribes and what actually occurs.
- e) Political Women Empowerment:**-It means the existence of a political system favoring the participation in and control by the women of the political decision-making process and in governance.

Role of education

Women play a prominent role in the cultural, economic, political, religious & social life of a country. Today, women are not what they used to be some years ago; they have now made their presence felt in every sphere of life. Women have ultimately discarded their homely image and are now making

meaningful contribution to the progress of the nation 21st century saw women to be leaders in industry, in government and in many organizations world over.

However the concept of women empowerment is a matter of controversy even now. Women Empowerment is a process of enabling women to have access and make productive contribution to their economic independence, political participation and social development. Empowerment is acquiring knowledge & awareness which enable them to move towards life with greater dignity & self-assurance. In fact an empowered woman is a nation’s strength. The UNO had declared the year 1975 as a women year & the decade 1975-1985 as women’s decade on an international level. If enabled economists and social scientists to unveil many issues related to women. So various students were conducted and made a consensus that so long as women remain depressed and exploited, no nation can enjoy freedom & justice. It is found that when half of the population is denied the opportunities for utilizing their full potential, the economic parameter like growth development & welfare remains undefined. So various steps were taken to find out ways through which women can empowered.

“The question of the education of children cannot be solved unless efforts are made simultaneously to solve the women’s education and I have no hesitation in saying that as long as we don’t have real mother-teachers who can successfully impart true education to our children they will remain uneducated even though they may be going to schools”

Gandhi-ji.

“Women are human beings and have as much right to full development as men have. The position of women in any society is a true index of its cultural & spiritual level”

Dr. Radhakrishnan.

History of women education-pre independence period

The position enjoyed by women in the Rig- Vedic period deteriorated in the later Vedic civilization. Women were denied the right to education and widow remarriage. They were denied the right to inheritance and ownership of property. Many social evils like child marriage and dowry system surfaced and started to engulf women. During Gupta period, the status of women immensely deteriorated. Dowry became an institution and Sati Pratha became prominent.

During the British Raj, many social reformers such as Raja Rammohun Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Jyotirao Phule started agitations for the empowerment of women. Their efforts led to the abolition of Sati and formulation of the Widow Remarriage Act. Later, stalwarts like Mahatma Gandhi and Pt. Nehru advocated women rights. As a result of their concentrated efforts, the status of women in social, economic and political life began to elevate in the Indian society. Thus we see that the Education which was monopolized by the socially privileged class of the society in the ancient and medieval period and by economically strong sections of the society during the British period was for the first time opened to all without discrimination of caste, creed, or color when India got independence in 1947, so the women education also got fillip after independence.

Table 1: Women and Girls Literacy rates in pre-independence period.

Year	Percentage of literacy	Primary school	Middle school	Sec school	University & college	Others	total
1881-1882	0.2	124491	*	2054	6	5151	2066
1901-1902	0.7	345397	34386	103309	264	2812	393168
1921-1922	1.8	1198550	92466	36698	1529	11599	1340842
1946-1947	6.0	3475165	321508	280772	23207	56090	4156742

Source: Quinquennial report-ministry of education & culture From the above table it is clear that enrollment of girls in primary schools moved up from about 12lakhs in 1921-1922 to nearly 35lakhs in 1946-1947 and enrollment in secondary schools increased from about 37thousand in 1921-1922 to a record of 2lakhs 81 thousand. But significant progress occurred in higher education where the enrollment of girls increased from merely 1529 in 1921-1922 to as high as 23,207 in 1947 In spite of all this expansion, the enrollment of girls was only 2.4 percent of their population

Role of Indian Constitution in Empowering Women:

In the post-independence India, the constitution framers and policy makes envisioned the importance of women education they wanted to preserve the rich legacy that India had inherited in terms of participation of women at different levels of education. The article 14 of the constitution granted equal rights to each citizen of India and the equal opportunity in political economic & social sphere. Article 15 prohibits discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste and gender. Article 15(3) made a special provision enabling the state to make affirmative discriminations in favor of women. Article 16 provides equal opportunities in the matter of public appointments for all Article 29 and Article 30 protect the interests of minorities to establish & administer educational institutions. Article 39(a) further mentions that the state shall direct its policy towards securing all citizens, men & women, the right to means of livelihood while Article39(c)

ensures equal pay for equal work. Article 42 directs the state to make provision for ensuring just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief. Article 15(a) imposes a fundamental duty on every citizen to respect women and remove every such tradition which goes for dishonor of women. To make this de-jure equality into de-facto one, many policies and programs where put into action’s from time to time, besides enacting/enforcing special legislations, in favor of women. Apart from these articles the Indian government has passed various legislation to safeguard constitutional rights to women. These legislative measures include the Hindu marriage act 1955, the Hindu succession act 1956, Dowry prohibition act 1961, medical termination of pregnancy act 1971, Equal remuneration act 1976, Child marriage restraint act 1976, immoral trafficking act 1986, and final prenatal diagnostic technique and prevention of measure act 1994 etc. Government has also taken various welfare measures from

time to time to empower women. They are the support to training for employment programme 1987, Mahila Samridhi Yojana 1993, the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh 1923, Indra Mahila yojana 1995, Kanya Vidiya Dhan Yojana started by U.P government in 2004, Kasturba Gandhi educational plan 1997, Development of women and children in Rural areas to provide credit and employment opportunities to women (DAWRA plan) 1997, Balika Smaridhi Yojana 1997 for the girls child. On 12th July 2001, the Mahila Samridhi Yojana and Indira Mahila Yojana have been merged into the integrated self-help group program i.e. ‘swayam siddha’ to benefit 100,000 women through micro-credit programmes & some 2,000 other projects all with unimpeachable good intentions.

Commissions and Committees on Women’s Education.

After independence the first major commission on education was the university education commission (1948-1949). This commissions devoted a full chapter to women’s education. But the most important development in the field of women’s education after independence was the setting up of a national

committee for women’s education in 1958 under the chairpersonship of smt. Durgabai Desmukh.

The union ministry of education setup the national council for women’s education in 1959. Most of the state governments have also established state councils for women’s education smt Hensa Mehta committee was appointed in 1961 by the National council for women’s education to examine the problem of curricula for girls at all stages of education. Another committee was appointed by the council in May 1965 with Shri M.Bhakta Vastalam as the chairman to look into the causes of public support particularly in rural areas for girl’s education and to enlist public corporation
The education commission (1964-1966) also made valuable recommendations regarding women’s education in India. The national committee (1974) studied various aspects of the status of women and their education. More recently the Nation, policy on education (1986) (Modified policy 1992) recommended in clearer terms free education for girls up to the secondary school stage.

Table 2: Progress of women’s education Literacy rates after independence (1951 to 2011)

Census Year	Persons total	Males	Females	Male female group in literacy rates
1951	18.33	27.16	8.86	18.30
1961	28.30	40.40	15.75	25.05
1971	34.45	45.96	21.98	23.98
1981	43.37	56.38	29.76	26.62
1991	52.21	64.13	39.29	24.84
2001	65.38	75.85	54.16	21.69
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46	16.68

*Source:-*census of India 2011 (1981 literacy rates excludes Assam and 1991 census literacy rates excludes J&k)

From the above table it is obvious that during the present century particularly after independence India has made spectacular progress in promoting the interests of women’s. The literacy rate went up from 8.86 % in 1951 to 65.46 % in 2011. But there is still a wide gap in male & female literacy rates.

There are number of reasons which are responsible for this wide gap like illiterate parents, unsuitable curriculum, physical facilities, paucity of lady teachers and separate schools, wastage and stagnation etc. dropout adversely affects the internal efficiency of an educational system. About 80% girls dropped out by the time they reached class 8th.

Table 3: Dropout rates among girls and boys (1980-2000)

Year	Primary			Middle		
	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total
1980-1981	62.5	56.2	58.7	79.4	88.0	72.7
1990-1991	46.0	40.1	42.6	65.1	59.1	60.9
1999-2000	42.3	38.7	40.3	58.0	52.0	54.6
Decreases between 1980-1981 & 1999-2000	20.2	17.5	18.4	21.4	16.0	18.1

*Source:-*selected educational statics, department of education, GOI, New Delhi

The dropout of rates of girls at primary and upper-primary levels reduced from 70.9 and 85.0 respectively in 1960-1961 to 42.3 & 58.0 in 1999-2000. The rates are still higher than those of boys.

Participation of women in higher education is quite low. Even as late as in 1999-2000, just 3 percent of women in the concerned age group, participated in higher education.

Note: - figures within parenthesis indicate percentage to total.

Table 4: Enrollments of girls in Graduate /Post Graduate/ Professional Courses (1990-1991 to 1999-2000)

Level	1990-1991		1996-1997		1999-2000	
	Women	Total	Women	Total	Women	total
Graduate	1.14 (34.7)	3.29	1.82 (37.4)	4.87	2.66 (40.9)	6.51
Post graduate	0.12 (32.7)	0.35	0.17 (30.5)	0.54	0.22 (39.6)	0.55
PhD/DSc/DPhil	0.01 (26.2)	0.03	0.01 (29.2)	0.04	0.02 (35.4)	0.05
B.E/B.sc(end)/B.Arch.	0.03 (10.9)	0.24	0.05 (14.9)	0.33	0.08 (22.0)	0.36
M.B.B.S	0.03 (34.3)	0.08	0.04 (35.4)	0.12	0.05 (37.8)	0.14
Total	1.32 (33.0)	3.99	2.09 (35.3)	5.90	3.03 (39.8)	7.61

Source: - selected education statistics for respective year's department of education, ministry of HRD, GOI, New Delhi. Women's enrollment as a percentage of total enrollment constitutently showed an increasing trend from (1.32 million) 33.0 in 1990-1991 to (3 million) 39.8 in 1999.2000.

Conclusion

The post independent India ensures equality for women and men in every sphere of life and activity. Women in India have been given equality of opportunities in all matters relating to education employment & legal status. However, this is not truly indicative of the existing position of women in general in the country as yet. Though legally and constitutionally, all women have equal access to and right to venture in every walk of life, a vast majority of them are illustrate, uneducated and unemployed. Women still continue to live under stress and strain of male domination that manifests itself in the form of various kinds of hardships and indignities meted out to them. To ensure equality of states of our women we still have miles to go.

Suggestions

1. Awareness of Women essential. It is said that "educated mothers educate family which results in educated population of a nation which builds strong nation"
2. Encourage and ensure socio-economic participation of women in local and international forums.
3. Encourage participation of women in income generating activities. Proper implementation of schemes provided by the government should be done by respective agencies.
4. Change the approach towards women based on sex discrimination.
5. To induce the feeling of self-dependence amongst women.
6. Child bearing at young ages should be prevented by preventing early marriages.
7. Removal of gender inequality.
8. Women should actively participate in social and political moves. Fifty % seats should be reserved for women in all the governments
9. Spread the message that education of women is a pre-condition for fighting against their oppression
10. Awareness needs to be generated regarding the necessity of educating girls so as to prepare them to contribute effectively to the socio-economic development of the nation
11. Eliminating all forms of discrimination in employment especially to eliminate wage differentials between men and women
12. In order to change the attitudes towards female education and to raise the social consciousness of the country, a conscious strategic change is required in national media and communication effort
13. Introduce satellite schools for remote hamlets
14. Be cautious and patience in the knowledge journey: it is from knowledge creation/discovery (KD) to knowledge transfer (KT)
15. Encourage ICT tools and the use of internet, for the study and research by women.
16. Increasing real representation of women in political bodies and governance institutions in order to move from being objects of legislation to initiators of change

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