Enhancing Women Education in 21st Century in India: an Intense Women Empowerment and Gender Equality

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ABSTRACT

Great educationist Swami Vivekananda said, "There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved; it is not possible for a bird to fly on one wing." Women can play a significant role in family as well as in society for the development of nation. Education is considered as a milestone for women empowerment. According to the Government reports, women's rights, gender discriminations are encountering some barriers till 21st century. Even beyond the literacy rate, as per the Global Gender Gap Index 2020, this present paper reveals the relevant adversity that Indian women are still undergoing. But the holistic education and optimism of the new schemes and policies introduced by the Government ensures the desirable and diversified outcomes in future for women.

KEY WORDS: WOMEN EDUCATION , WOMEN EMPOWERMENT , GENDER EQUALITY, GENDER GAP, NEW EDUCATION POLICY 2020.

INTRODUCTION

With the slogan of "Women Empowerment" the question arises in our mind that " Why do women feel that they are discriminated ?" "Why do we need to discuss about women empowerment?" So first we have to understand what is Empowerment?

Empowerment is a multi dimensional process which explains the identity, authority , responsibility and power of an individual or group to make choices and transforms those choices into outcomes. Women empowerment refers to the emancipation of women from all the spheres like economical, political, social, gender-based discrimination. After a historical analysis, it proves that in Vedic Period women had equal status along with men than the downward position in the Medieval Period. But during

the British Period, women's place again gets promoted with equal rights by so many social reformers.

In India we can see that even in 21st century, there are high level of gender inequalities where women are poorly treated by their family members and ill treated by the outsiders. Still large section of women of our country are illiterate, weak and exploited by the society. Now the question has arisen that "Are women really strong?" "Has their long term struggle ended?" Though we cannot deny that our "patriarchal" society is to some extent responsible for the upliftment of women's position in the society, but both the genders have been suffering from disadvantages due to the inequality in our nation. If we critically focus on male dominating issues we can see that it will not bring any kind of progression in a nation and also restrain various kind of creative thoughts.

Women empowerment implies to the creation of an environment where women can be capable of taking their own decisions for their personal benefits as well as for the society. Education is the key factor which leads to the enlightenment in every one's life. "Education is the first step for Empowerment - Malala". Education is an important powerful tool which reduces inequality and also controls population. Education enables women to face

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so many challenges. Education can bring changes in the position of women in their family and in the outer world because when women are educated and empowered, they can guide their children, family members, society indeed. Empowerment of women brings equal rights, status, opportunity and freedom to their personal benefits as well as for the society. Empowering women are self dependent and they enhancing their position in the power of structure of the society (Dr.Madana V. 2014). RituAjvani in her article (31st March,201'9) was reported that education is milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to riposte to challenges, to resist their traditional role and change their life.

Purpose of the Study: Now-a-days India's new infrastructure is based on education, health, technology as well as policies. By providing right education to women, it ensures gender quality and women empowerment. It could bring other desirable outcomes in the society. In this considerable situation, researcher has been conducted of this present study.

Table 1. Literacy Rate in India

YEAR	PERSONS	MALE	FEMALE
1901	5.30	9.80	0.70
1911	5.90	10.60	1.10
1921	7.20	12.20	1.80
1931	9.50	15.60	2.90
1941	16.10	24.90	7.30
1951	16.70	24.90	7.30
1961	24.00	34.40	13.00
1971	29.50	39.50	18.70
1981	36.20	46.90	24.80
1991	52.10	63.90	39.20
2001	65.38	76.00	54.00
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46

Source Census of India (2011)

Table 2. State wise female literacy percentage in India as 2011 census

Sl no.	State Name	Female lit. rate	Sl.no	State Name	Female lit. rate	Sl.no	State Name	Female lit. rate
1	Andhra Pradesh	59.7%	11	Jammu & Kashmir	58.05%	21	Orissa	64.4%
2	Arunachal	59.6%	12	Jharkhand	56.2%	22	Punjab	71.3%
3	Assam	67.3%	13	Karnataka	68.1%	23	Rajasthan	52.7%
4	Bihar	53.3%	14	Kerala	92.05%	24	Sikkim	76.9%
5	Chhattishgarh	60.6%	15	Madhya Pradesh	60.0%	25	Tamil Nadu	73.9%
6	Delhi	80.90%	16	Maharashtra	75.5%	26	Tripura	83.1%
7	Goa	81.85%	17	Manipur	73.2%	27	Uttar Pradesh	59.3
8	Gujrat	70.75%	18	Meghalaya	73.8%	28	Uttarkhand	70.7%
9	Haryana	66.8%	19	Mizoram	89.4%	29	West Bengal	71.2%
10	Himachal Pradesh	76.65%	20	Nagaland	76.4%			

Table 3. Union Territory Female literacy percentage in India as 2011 Census

Sl. no	Name of the Union Territory	Female Literacy
1	Andaman & Nicobar Island	81.80%
2	Chandigarh	81.40%
3	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	65.90%
4	Daman & Diu	79.60%
5	Lakshadweep	88.20%
6	Pondicherry	81.20%

Objective of the Study

1. To study the role of education in women empowerment.
2. To study the role of education in gender equality.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is descriptive and analytical in nature. The study is based on the collection of data from secondary sources like various published and unpublished books, records, research journals, magazines, news paper articles, different websites.

Status of Education and Women Empowerment: Women Empowerment itself elaborates the access to education, political rights, social rights, economic rights, judicial strength, freedom and decision making power and the other rights that taken as equal for women.

PanditJawahral Nehru – “When women move forward, the family moves, the villages moves and the nation moves.”

According to the definition provided by the United Nations, “Women’s Empowerment” has five components-

- Women’s sense of self-choice .
- Right to have and to determine choices.
- Right to have access to the opportunities and resources.
- Right to have power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home.
- Ability to influence the direction of social change.

Present age is based on “Knowledge Century Era”- and knowledge is an asset to the progress. Although education doesn’t imply only to gaining knowledge but also transforming it through the proper application for betterment and development. Literacy rate is increasing for Indian women but still there is a gap between the male and female which can be seen in the following tables.

From the Table -1 It is shown that the literacy rate of women in 1901 was 0.7% and in 2011 it is 65.46%. It has increased from 0.7% to 7.30% whereas men has risen from 9.8% to 24.90%.

In Table -2 it is shown that Kerala has the highest literacy rate of 92.05% as first and Mizoram as second of 84.4% and Tripura as third of 83.1% among all the states according to 2011 report.

In Table -3 it is shown that Union Territory has the highest rate of literacy as in Lakshadweep of 88.2% according to the 2011 report. In the above tables it shows that the overall female literacy has increased by 11.46% yet it is 16.68% less than male literacy rate in 2011. The Government of India has taken the initiatives in various welfare schemes and policies for Women Education and Women Empowerment. Some of these are - Swayamsidha Program (2001), Swadgarbh (2002), Support to training and Employment Programme for Women (2003), Kishori Shakti Yojana (2006), Pradhan Mantri Mantri Vandana (2010), Rajiv Gandhi Scheme For Empowerment Adolescence Girl Child (2011), Kanyasreepokalo (West Bengal- 2013),

National Mission For Empowerment of Women (2011), Beti Padhao Beti Bachao Scheme (2015), Women Helpline Scheme (2015), Sukanya Samridhi Yojana (2015), Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (2016), Mahila e-Haas (2016), Pradhan Mantri Mahila Shakti Kendra Scheme (2017), Maternity Benefit Program (2017), e-Samvad Portal (2018), Nari Web Portal (2018), She Box Portal (2018), New National Policy has been implemented by the Central Government (2020). If we overcome the low rate of literacy on Women, then we can make the concept of women in positive sense as she is strong, active and independent. With the help of “Education”, an awareness can be transformed among the young generation about “Women Empowerment”.

Education and Gender Equality: Gender inequalities are still deep rooted in every society where women are segregated by the male dominating society. Equal participation in all areas of “Sustainable Development” goals on addressing to the gender quality and empower to all women and girls. International Women’s Day on 8th March 2020: The theme according to the United Nations, Women, is “I Am Generation Equality : Realizing Women’s Right.” The main aimed focus is on the Gender Quality. According to the World Economic Forum’s Global Gap Index (GGI) 2020- the gap between men and women are in four categories -political empowerment, economical participation and opportunity, health and survival, Educational attainment. Over the index the highest score is 1 (equality) and lowest score is 0 (inequality).

In the field of Educational Attainment, the India has ranked 112th among the 153 countries in 2020 whereas India’s position was relatively higher at 98th rank in 2006 Report. So India has declined its position on the basis of gender gap. And it clearly shows that the status of women in India and gender discrimination exists in all around four aspects. If the gender discrimination will be abolished in the society by providing proper education to women it would be helpful for women to access to their legal rights. Although Indian constitution has already mentioned so many Articles regarding gender equality. There are some of these -

Article no.	Provision
14	Equality before law for women
15(i)	The state not discriminate against any citizen on ground only religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.
15 (3)	The state to make any special provision in favour of women and children
16	Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state.
39(a)	Equally the rights to and adequate means of livelihood
39(b)	Equal pay for equal work for both men and women

The constitutional mandate, the state has enacted through the various legislation to ensure equal right, counter the discriminations and to provide support service from atrocities specially to women. Some acts of special provision to safeguard women are-

An “Educated” women can remove gender inequality from the society and prevent herself from such sexual harassment, domestic violence, child marriage and so many issues.

Suggestion for upliftment of Indian Women-

Year	Act
1954	The Family Act, The Special Marriage
1961	The Maternity Benefit Act, Dowry Prohibition Act
1976	The Equal Remuneration Act
2005	The Protection of Child Marriage Act
2006	The prohibition of Child Marriage Act

- Through providing some parental motivational campaigns, it will reduce gender biasness in family and encourage them to take care of girls' education.
- Imparting amenities including toilet facilities, residential school for girls will ensure women education.
- To promote gender sensitivity through the curriculum and co-curricular activity.
- Provide counsellors in educational institutions.
- Encourage and ensure in participation of women in all the sectors collectively.
- Arranging community awareness programme by the different NGO's and voluntary organisations.
- Mass Media has an important role to play to ensure women's rights.
- To promote women education through different schemes taken by the state and central government to be properly implemented.
- Encourage positive attitude towards use ICT in education in a right manner to the women in study and in the field of research.

CONCLUSION

From the above discussion it is clearly understandable that women even in 21st century in India are still facing some obstacles in the field of education and in others areas. Although various schemes are taken by state and central government to ensure Women Empowerment. NEP-2020 policy has been accepted by the central government after 34 years to form new structures in education. The policy addresses to the diverse needs of women education. Hopefully the female literacy rate will increase day by day and we will possess a glorious

picture of pride in women like SavitriPhaiPhule (1st women teacher), Mother Teresa, the biggest name in history (as social reformer), Indira Gandhi (1st Prime Minister in India), Kalpana Chawla (1st women to go space), Arundhuti Bhattacharya (1st women become chairperson of State Bank of India), Kiran Bedi (1st women IPS officers), Medha Patkar (social reformer), Mary Kom as a strong fighter and many more with their outstanding achievements.

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