



Women's education: Pathway to equality and progress

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Abstract

Men and women together form the foundation of every family, and women, in particular, play a central and crucial role. They also hold an important place in society and deserve respect and recognition. However, the reality is very different. Women often face discrimination, are considered inferior, and are denied respect and dignity. In a male-dominated society, they are frequently treated unfairly and sometimes even viewed as objects to be used and discarded.

This paper focuses on women's education, which is truly the need of the hour. Women must be encouraged to move ahead in life with confidence and without fear.

Keywords: Women, education, constitution, empowerment, equality, freedom

Introduction

Traditionally, women have been expected to be good wives and mothers, but not necessarily educated individuals. They have long been considered part of the underprivileged section of society. Although the Constitution grants equal rights to everyone, women—despite being a vital part of society—continue to face discrimination. In today's so-called modern world, they are often exploited even more and are still placed in a secondary position.

As citizens of a free India, everyone should enjoy equal rights in all aspects of life. But do all individuals truly receive equal opportunities and freedoms? This is a question we must seriously ask ourselves. In the present situation, it is essential to free women from restrictive norms and work toward empowering them. Women's status is shaped largely by traditions, beliefs, culture, social norms, and various taboos. Their identity is often determined by ascribed status rather than their achievements. Even today, women struggle daily for dignity, respect, and a sense of identity.

Education is crucial for improving women's position in society and for empowering them intellectually. The education of women in India has been a major concern for both government and civil society, as educated women can significantly contribute to social, economic, political, and legal development. Education helps remove inequalities and reduces the disparities that exist within society.

Need Of Women Education

Women education is one of the greatest need in today scenario. Education of women is also one of the burning issue in this globalised era and discussed on various platforms. Educated women plays a significant role in the development of the nation and in the society. Women education is the vital role to contribute for national progress and a good indicator of development.

Education is the milestone in the women's empowerment as it builds a new confidence in them. Education is one of the most critical areas of empowerment for women as both the Cairo and Beijing conferences affirmed. Education is one of the fundamental right which should be provided to all human beings. The importance of women's education can't be neglected. It act as a lay in their development. During in early times also according to Vedas, woman should have

opportunity to attain knowledge. Today women constitute almost half of the population from total population and this half population had full right on education.

Education plays a key role in women's empowerment because it gives them confidence and strengthens their abilities. Both the Cairo and Beijing conferences recognized education as one of the most important areas for empowering women. As a fundamental right, education must be available to every human being. The significance of women's education cannot be ignored, as it forms the foundation for their growth and progress.

Even in ancient times, the Vedas emphasized that women should have the opportunity to gain knowledge. Today, women make up nearly half of the total population, and this half has an equal and undeniable right to education.

Education plays a key role in women's empowerment because it gives them confidence and strengthens their abilities. As recognised by major international forums (like the Cairo and Beijing conferences), education is one of the most important tools for empowering women. Education is a fundamental right — it must be available to every human being. The importance of women's education cannot be ignored, because it provides the foundation for their growth and progress.

Even in ancient times, for example according to the Vedas, women were meant to have the opportunity to learn and gain knowledge. Today, women make up nearly half of India's population — and this half has an equal and undeniable right to education. In fact, girls already form about 48% of the total school-going population in India.

Moreover, in higher education the gap is narrowing. According to recent national data, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for women in higher education is 28.5%, just slightly higher than the 28.3% for men. Over the past decade, female enrolment in higher education has grown substantially, reflecting improving access and changing societal attitudes.

These numbers show that when women are given access to education, many take the opportunity — reinforcing that education is indeed the cornerstone for empowering women socially, economically, and intellectually.

The slow but steady progress of women's education in the Pre-Independence period should be analysed after taking

into account some of the socio-economic factors such as prevalence of Purdah system, Child marriage, sati, subjugation after marriage and absence of divorce system, enforced asceticism for widows, system of devadasis, Female enforced asceticism for widows, different types of mental and physical harassments on women and many more cruel social evils that was prevailing in the society which hampers the dignity and respect of women in society. Actually all these evils made women to suffer a lot and having no choice of her own life. After independence, with the efforts of government and many others non-governmental agencies helped in raising the status of women, and women education has sought good improvement, but yet to reach to the literacy level of men. Present century women are going to get equal rights and credits in the all the fields like, political, social, economic, legal etc. The Indian society has established a number of institutions for the educational development of women and girls.

Education of women in the education of women is the most powerful tool of change of position in society. An educated person has the knowledge between right and wrong. Education also brings the reduction in different existing inequalities and other types of discrimination in the family and outside the family. Educated women not only tend to promote education of their girl children, but also can provide better guidance to all their children and their future. Moreover educated women can also help in the reduction of poverty and unemployment by supporting their families' thoroughly. Access to education has been one of the most pressing demand among the women's rights movements. Undoubtedly, educated women plays a vital role in contributing to the country's development. An educated women has the skills, information and self-confidence. An educated women can educate their children's also.

History of Education and Role of Social Reformers in Expanding Education

From ancient times up to the period before independence, women's educational status experienced many fluctuations. With the arrival of colonial reforms and the efforts of several intellectual leaders, greater attention began to be given to improving women's social and educational conditions. Many socio-religious reform movements, led by prominent figures such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Jyotiba Phule, Savitribai Phule, and others, played a crucial role in promoting women's education.

After India gained independence in 1947, women's education received a major boost, as the Government of India introduced several initiatives to make education accessible to all women. Although progress has been made, much still remains to be achieved. According to the 2011 Census, the male literacy rate is 82.14%, while the female literacy rate is only 65.46%. This clearly shows improvement, but also highlights the gaps that still need attention.

As it is mentioned above that progress in terms of women education in India plays a very important role in the overall development of the country. Women's education helps in improving the quality of life at home and outside.

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar quote that

“Without the education of women, there can be no true reform.”

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar quotes that

“I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved.”

These quotation by our social reformers seems quite correct, as educated woman had a lot of benefits. Educated mothers can provide better guidance to all their children. From all these above benefits, educated mothers can also help in the reduction of infant mortality rate. The importance of women's education is certainly great. As women holds a unique position in developing of human resources, and also in moulding the characters of their children. Therefore, the education of women is very necessary. Hence, Education hold an unique importance in an individual's life. Educated women are less likely to become victims of domestic abuse. Educated women also helps in reducing corruption.

Educational Advancement and Women's Well-Being

Apart from all these benefits and importance, education plays an vital role in the empowerment of women. Now-a-days woman empowerment is a global issue and discussed on various platform. The concept of women empowerment was introduced at the international women conference at NAROIBI in 1985. From different sources and evidences it is evident that education act as a milestone in the progress of women. Same in the case of empowerment also. Though education provides them skill, knowledge and confidence. Undoubtedly, literacy rate shows a great increment in terms of female. Within the framework of a democratic polity, our laws, different development policies, plans and several programmes have aim that women's advancement in different spheres. Several development are being made in their spheres. Empowerment of women has been recognized as the central issue in determining the status of women. The National Commission of women was setup by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the right and legal entitlements of women. Educated women are considered 'empowered'.

Education as a Fundamental Right

Education has been considered a fundamental nature for not only woman or man but for all those every individuals who render their contribution towards nation building. Significance of education and health, contribution of women in the political field, or as an educator in professional development are the different arenas where it is clear that if a woman will be educated then only she can participate in the different spheres, and she can help in the effective development of the nation. There are many reasons that why is it so important to literate a woman than a man, some are given below

1. It will reduce infant mortality.
2. It will improves socio-economic growth.
3. Education of women reduce child marriage.
4. Reduce population explosion.
5. Educated women will have less malnourished children.
6. Educated women will reduce domestic and sexual violence
7. Educated women will be more seen in political spheres.
8. Educated women will have less discrimination among the male and female children in the family.

Conclusion

These various reasons clearly show why it is essential to have more educated women in our society and nation. They

highlight the urgent need to spread awareness about women's education. Yet, many social evils continue to prevent girls from achieving their dreams. Countless young girls are still confined to household duties and pushed into early marriage. Although the country is progressing in many ways, our "betiyaan" are still left behind, especially in rural areas where the situation of the girl child remains most challenging.

Women's education is even more crucial today because of the unique struggles and barriers women continue to face. Education empowers an individual to gain social and economic mobility, enabling them to achieve dignity, status, and equal opportunities. It is undoubtedly a powerful tool for ensuring mobility, equality, and empowerment at both personal and societal levels.

Educating a girl is one of the most valuable investments a nation can make. It contributes to better child welfare, improved health outcomes, stronger communities, and long-term national development. Therefore, ensuring access to quality education for every girl is not just a social obligation but a foundational step toward building a just, prosperous, and progressive society.

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