

THE COLONIAL LEGACY IN WOMEN EDUCATION IN INDIA: SPECIAL REFERENCE TO WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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ABSTRACT

On questions of women empowerment and education policy, a lot of serious and popular discussions in recent times have been published. Women empowerment is one of the most attractive topics for multidisciplinary approaches. In the year of 1985 the proposals of women empowerment had come to notice at NAIROBI International Women's Conference. Women empowerment and women education have got close relationships with each other. Nearly 165 million women over the age of 15 are illiterate. There was no debate that education is the most powerful tool for empowering women. Women's empowerment is not only an Indian issue, it is a global problem. On serious policy taken for women education it is pointed out that education for all is one of the major tasks being carried out by government's directives but we have the lowest female literacy rate in Asia. We cannot avoid the actual fact that different factors found to be responsible for the decrease in female literacy rate are social discrimination, gender inequality, occupation of girl child and economic exploitation.

KEYWORDS: *Women Empowerment, International Women's Conference. Primary Education, Higher Education, Technical Education*

INTRODUCTION

Women education in India in the pre-colonial era was a fully darker chapter. Most of the ancient values and systems had got a shape and phase of decline. In colonial Indian history thinking on women's education was a late night edition. English education for Indians was purpose rich activities. A contrast between colonial and post-independence India has come to focus by researchers.

Women from dominant caste and class were only allowed for Education in India. Traditionally, education was only for the privileged. This excluded most Indian women. Not only that, the privileged ones also had some limitations including strict seclusions and learning at home either from family or through tutors.

The men were the most favored for getting education in colonial India as they would create a labor force for the colonial ruler. Sir Charles Wood in his General Education Despatch of 1854 advocated for recognition of the increased demand for the education of native women. The despatch focused on an educational system including both genders.

WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN COLONIAL INDIA

The influences and attitudes which contributed to the making of modern India, that of female education was quite important. During the first half of the nineteenth century a few schools for female education were established due to the initiative of the missionaries and a few aristocratic families (History of Modern India, KC Chowdhury Page 424). Girl's school was established in Bombay in 1824. It was the first women's school in India. In 1881 it was felt by the Hunter Commission that female education was inevitable. Women were permitted for getting higher education only after 1875.

Women's empowerment and education. For women economic empowerment, education plays a vital role. It has been found by a number of studies that uneducated women have high level mortality due to poor dietary status and low potential for earning resulting in little independence in the household. The lack of education has a drastic effect on the health and well being of the kids. In India, infant mortality rate is negatively related to the mother's education label.

It was felt that for reformation, the enlightenment of education for women is required. Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar fought for a nation with the deluge of education. He opened 30 schools for girls in **Bengal** to promote the betterment of the feminine community. In fact, the Bengal Renaissance of Consciousness, Intellectuality and Cultural pursuits, was the pioneer for rebirth or Renaissance of the Consciousness of Women's Well-being among the usual dictatorial society.

If we deeply consider the education system during the late 19th century, it was observed that the British government was eager to prove their liberal, ethical and pro-modernity attitude on women's questions. The British censure the existing insignificance of Indian womanhood, and tried to initiate some feminist welfare activities to show their socio-cultural advancement and Western nobility. Thus the Indian society intentionally practiced

gender-equality. The conservative lawmakers of society sprouted hostility against the emergence of education for women. Such social hindrance caused problems for the reformers and the colonial government to fulfill their goal.

Slowly but steadily the educational avenues for women started spreading. Obviously this led to the evolution of the new generation of women of the 19th century of India. Which again resulted in the rise of Indian womanhood to freedom and assertion. Women started to raise their voice on contemporary affairs, write their arguments in instruments of expression, and even participated in politics.

PROBLEM OF WOMEN'S EDUCATION EXPANSION

High dropout rate is one of the important parts of lack of women education in India. In rural India, the rate of dropout in school education is very high. Social factors are another cause. Early marriage and social binding, girls are not allowed to go house and village because it is a social taboo. Health factors, economic factors, patriarchy and social perceptions are another important part of not investing in women's education. Son preference and violence against women's is yet another reason.

The barriers to women education in India even from the colonial era can be listed as :

1. Lack of Infrastructure and Facilities

Women's education in India does not offer proper infrastructural facilities for women students in the education system, such as, separate bathrooms and toilets in schools and colleges in some cases. Sometimes it takes a tense situation.

2. Perception of Women in Society

It is not debatable that one of the main barriers to female education in India is the perception of women in society. Traditionally, therefore, the perception of women in society is a strong barrier to female education in India.

3. Co-Education Problems

Availability of separate schools, college, university for girl is another problem

4. Child Marriage

Once upon a time there was no real remedy to prevent child marriage. But now days, though there are laws against child marriage, this is happening in some parts of the country.

5. Lack of Enthusiasm

In some cases we can see there is a lack of enthusiasm to promote women education in the country.

CONCLUSION

India has made substantial progress in achieving primary education with girls and boys participating equally in primary education in most regions. In rural India, the Right to Education Act and social workers' whole hearted cooperation for women's education has been playing an important role. In Indian economics experts orientation and the growing importance of small size enterprises create opportunities for women. In this connection women need the appropriate education and training. Without any controversy in addition the benefits of women education for women's empowerment are broadly recognised. Governments also need to make an extra effort to ensure clearly that education is more accessible to low income families and rural populations.

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