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***ROUF AHMAD BHAT**

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IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION IN EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN INDIA

***ROUF AHMAD BHAT**

**Research Scholar School of Studies in Political science Vikram University, Ujjain-M.P (India)*

ABSTRACT

Women education is an essential need to change their status in the society. Educated women can play a very important role in the society for socio-economic development. Education eliminates inequalities and disparities as the means of recovering their status within and out of their families. It is the key factor for women empowerment, prosperity, development and welfare. Education provides more strength to women. Such strength comes from the process of empowerment and empowerment will come from the education. Education plays a significant role in women empowerment inequality and vulnerability of women in the society in India. This paper is an effort to capture the emerging picture with respect to women's education in India.

KEYWORDS: *Women education, empowerment, opportunities.*

INTRODUCTION

Women play a very important role in the progress of a family, society and country. In order to make democracy successful in the country women education is necessary together with the men. Educated women are the real source of happiness in the family. Education is one of the milestones for women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life-style (Bhat, 2015).

Education is considered as a basic requirement and a fundamental right for the citizens of any nation. It is a powerful tool for reducing inequality as it can give people the ability to become independent. Women, who com

Across discrimination in many spheres, have a particular need for this. Women Empowerment is a global issue and discussion on women political right are at the fore front of many formal and informal campaigns worldwide. The concept of women empowerment was introduced at the international women conference at NAROIBI in 1985.

Education is regarded as an important milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to face the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life. Education of women is the most powerful tool of change their position in the society. Still large womenfolk of our country are illiterate, backward, weak, and exploited. Education also reduces inequalities and functions as a means of improving their status within the family. Empowerment and capacity building provides women an avenue to acquire practical information and learning for their improved livelihoods. India can become a developed nation only if women contribute to the best of her capacity and ability which is possible when she is educated and empowered.

WOMEN EDUCATION IN INDIA

After Independence, women were liberated from the custom of in-house traditions. Higher education came into practice as the constitution framed the Right to Education. Article 45 of the Indian constitution talks about compulsory education for children. The new India surpassed the myth and stereotype of what is preferable and non-preferable to women.

Today, what we know about women's education is entirely different from the early stages. Women have already modified gender roles and eradicated some strong wrong beliefs from the minds of people. But now, women have started working towards achieving goals and being independent to make any situation favouring their interests. The holistic approach towards the working environment makes them dazzle even in the lame light.¹

As per the 2011 Census, India's total literacy rate is 74%, and the women literacy rate is 65.46%, which is greater than the female literacy in 2001, i.e.54.16%. The female literacy rate from 1991-2001 increased by 14.87%, whereas the male literacy rate rose by 11.72%. The increase of female literacy rate was 3.15% more compared to the male literacy rate.²

Below is the percentage of female literacy rate in different census years.

¹ core.ac.uk › download › pdf

² <https://www.getmyuni.com/articles/women-education-in-india>

Census Year Female (Per Cent) Total Population (Per Cent)

1951	8.9	18.3
1961	15.4	28.3
1971	22	34.5
1981	29.8	43.6
1991	39.8	52.2
2001	53.7	64.8
2011	64.6	74

Female Literacy Rate in India

BARRIERS OF WOMEN EDUCATION

After witnessing India's rapidly deteriorating sex ratio (2011: 918 girls for 1,000 boys), the government initiated the 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' programme in 2014. The program aims to provide survival, safety, and education to the girl child. Through acknowledging the importance of girl child academic and extracurricular achievements, the program believes that this inclusiveness can fight female foeticide.

However, there are many challenges to girl child education that the ministries of Women and Child Development, Health and Family Welfare, and Human Resource Development need to address in with the involvement of civil society.

1. Civic bodies support

Long terms programmes for girl child education involve on-ground, constant civic body support, through local governance in districts with poor girl child education. Poor girl child education is a symptom of poor local administration. To address this, civil society workers working on girl child empowerment issues like female foeticide, education, and welfare services must regularly meet, consult, and chart out action plans with Divisional Commissioner and other representatives. These programmes must be supported by local police, members of legislative assembly, and other influential people.

2. Changing administration

After intensive dialogue, civil society and local officials are able to develop knowledge and insight sharing relationships at the local governance level. Then, due to official reasons, local officers are transferred quickly, causing officials and NGO workers to must develop new relationships. Newly appointed officials need time to be educated and apprised of the needs of NGOs, and the girl children in their respective districts.

3. Safety of NGO workers

Women officials face hostile work conditions in India's poorer regions, such as unwanted advances and harassment. This is the very mind-set that they are attempting to end – that women cannot be empowered. This societal structure arises due to decades of patriarchal thinking and regressive local governance. Volunteers visiting to counsel young girls and communities face these challenges regularly.

4. Obsession with marriage

Among large swathes of India's population, there is a longstanding obsession with having girls married as early as possible – preferably to people in their own castes and sects. Women are, therefore 'destined' only to be subservient housewives. As they are considered 'someone else's wealth', it is only logical for many to consider female foeticide. Therefore, women's education promotion must involve parents, brothers and all Indians to promote a woman's autonomy an independent decision making. Both men and women, in all roles, must be education that women are equals, in every arena.

5. Accountability of officials

The success of girl child education reforms will need measurable accountability from civic administration. For example, as per the 'Beti Padhao' programme, the Divisional Commissioners will be assessed for their ability in showing a 10-point increase in the child sex ratio. This and other accountability measures must be enforced.³

THE NECESSITY OF WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN INDIA

For more than 2,000 years, from about BC 300, there was practically no education for women in India. Only a few women of the upper castes and upper classes were given some education at home. But, even here, there was tremendous social resistance.

³ https://www.savethechildren.in/education/five-barriers-in-the-way-of-girls-education-in-india/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIweWL_dua9wIV5JNmAh3VNwd6EAMYAiAAEgKh_D_BwE

Literacy of women at that time was looked upon as a disgrace. The notion of providing education to female children never entered into the minds of parents. A superstitious feeling was alleged to exist in the majority of the Hindu families that a girl taught to read and write will soon become a widow after marriage.

According to the report of the National Committee on Women's Education (1959), 'It cannot be denied that the general picture of the education of women was the most unsatisfactory and women received practically no formal instruction whatever, except for the little domestic instruction that was available to the daughter of the upper class families.'

It was the American mission which first started a school for girls in Bombay (now Mumbai) in 1824. According to the figures available, by 1829 within five years as many as 400 girls were enrolled in this school. Then, in the first decade of the 19th century, with the efforts of the missionaries as well as the Indian voluntary organizations, some girls' primary schools, particularly in Bombay, Bengal and Madras states, started.

The government also took the responsibility to promote primary education in general and that of the girls in particular. However, government efforts could not go a long way due to the Indian War of Independence of 1857.

After the war municipal committees and other local bodies were encouraged to open primary schools. In the year 1870, training colleges for women were established for the first time and women were trained to become teachers in girls' schools. As a result of all these efforts, great progress was made in girl's education in the last quarter of the 19th century.⁴

However, in spite of these, there was a great gap between the education of men and women. It was estimated that for every 1,000 boys at schools, the number of girls was only 46. At the beginning of the 19th century there was hardly any literate woman in the country excepting a few in the aristocratic houses. It astonishes that by the end of the century hundreds of thousands of girls were enrolled in the newly opened institutions all over the country.

Though girls and women have made much educational gains in recent years, but still have a long way to go before their historic educational disadvantage is eradicated. The education system of India, like many other social institutions, has long been discriminatory towards the women. In 1916 SNDT Women University in Bombay became the first institution of higher learning to admit female students.

⁴ files.eric.ed.gov › fulltext

It had a number of high schools and colleges affiliated to it. In the beginning, it was (and is still) believed that women should aspire to become good wives and mothers, not intellectuals, doctors, lawyers etc. Women used to wash men's clothing, cared for their rooms and served them meals. They were forbidden to speak in public (these practices are more or less still continuing).

The proportion of women students has increased steadily after independence and mostly in the last decade. The literacy rate of women has gone up from 8.86 per cent in 1951 to 29.75 per cent in 1981, 39.29 per cent in 1991 to 54.16 per cent in 2001.⁵

IMPORTANCE OF GIRLS EDUCATION FOR INDIA'S DEVELOPMENT

The importance of girls' education is paramount. The long-term benefits of girl education can help a society grow holistically and lead to true women empowerment which can have far-reaching impacts. We need to make collective efforts to ensure that girls get the required opportunities to learn.

Gone are the times when people used to think that it was unnecessary to send girls to school. In the current times, women are competing with men in all spheres of life. Today, people not only understand the importance of quality education, but also send their daughters to school. It's an undeniable truth that girls' education can bring about a phenomenal change in the society.

However, things remain unchanged in several rural parts of India, where people still don't send their daughters to schools due to cultural and financial reasons. While some people think that girls should know nothing apart from household chores, others simply can't afford to give their daughters proper education.

There are several advantages of educating girls. Educated girls grow up to become educated women who can play an important role in the development of society. Let's look into some other advantages of sending girls to school.

1. Education not only empowers a grown up girl, but also makes her economically independent. Economic independence makes a woman feel confident about herself and gives her a sense of accomplishment. Empowerment of girls and women also forms a strong base in the fight against the issue of gender-inequality.

⁵ <https://www.google.co.in/url?esrc=s&q=&rct=j&sa=U&url=https://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/essay/the-necessity-of-womens-education-in-india-essay/31368&ved=2ahUKEwj48MfVnaL3AhV373MBHQX8DcsQFnoECAQQAg&usg=AOvVaw0TWSSRUKAB3wWN90JwLQMk>

2. An educated woman is capable of sharing the burden of men in the different walks of life. In this age of economic crisis, it's hard for the middle class to make both ends meet. Working women can add to the total income of their husbands and can earn a living for herself and her family.⁶
3. Educated girls can not only improve their own lives, but can also brighten the future of the country by giving their children a good upbringing. Education leads to freedom of thought and broadens a woman's outlook. This also makes her aware of her responsibilities and duties.

CONCLUSION

Women play an imperative role in making a nation progressive and guide it towards development. They are essential possessions of a lively humanity required for national improvement, so if we have to see a bright future of women in our country, giving education to them must be a pre-occupation Empowerment means moving from a weak position to execute a power. The education of women is the most powerful tool to change the position of society. Education also brings a reduction in inequalities and functions as a means of improving their status within the family. To encourage the education of women at all levels and for dilution of gender bias in providing knowledge and education, established schools, colleges and universities even exclusively for women in the state. The education develops the idea of participation in government, panchayats, public matters etc for elimination of gender discrimination.

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