

getting empowerment in the sectors like education, politics, the work force and even more power within their own households, there is a need to work at the grass root level to empower them especially in rural areas. Women empowerment can only be achieved through the provision of adequate and functional education to the women folk. This is crucial because no matter how rich or vast a nation is, without an effective, efficient, adequate and functional education for all its citizens (men and women) education which is relevant to its immediate needs, goals and objectives, such a nation would find it difficult to stand on its own. The brand of education being advocated is that type of education in which is embedded the spirit of self realization and all that are needed for the country's overall development like mass literacy, economic empowerment etc. The need for women education is also informed by the fact that purposeful occupational achievement and satisfaction is ensured by deep self-awareness and understanding which can only be achieved through the provision of effective and functional education and guidance & counseling. This, has been noted is likely to guarantee women empowerment with its root based on women struggle to improve their status. The empowerment suggested is such that entails the process of challenging power relations and of gaining wider control over source of power. This, however, cannot be achieved without the provision of reasonable access to formal and functional education to the women folk. This is based on the premise that education has been adjudged to be a viable instrument of change in the positive direction.

Provision of formal and functional education is needed for the women because:

- It would empower them to know for their rights to education, health, food clothing etc.
- It would empower them to fight against every form of discrimination against their folk, assert themselves about their right to equal treatment with their men counterpart as bonafide citizens of this nation.
- It would enable the women take decisions and accept responsibilities for taking such decisions concerning themselves.
- It would give economic power to the women and there by enable them to contribute their quota to the economic growth of the nation.
- It would empower the women scientifically through exposure to science and technological education for the challenges of the present technological age and information computer technology break through unfolding worldwide.
- It would help women to reduce maternal and infant mortality through improved nutrition, improved child rearing practice, health care and prevention against killer diseases.
- It would avail women with the opportunity of participating keenly in the world of sophisticated politics and governance as enlightened citizens.

Education will empower women to come forward and contribute towards the development and prosperity of the country. Economic empowerment So long as women remain backward and economically dependent on men, the helpless condition of them cannot be changed. Economic empowerment and independence will only come through proper education and employment of women. Improved life: Education helps a woman to live a good life. Her identity as an individual would never get lost. She can read and learn about her rights. Her rights would not get trodden down. The life or condition of women would improve a lot, if we take a broad outlook in the field of female education. Improved health: Educated girls and women are aware of the importance of health and hygiene. Through health education, they are empowered to lead a healthy life-style. Educated mothers can take better care of both herself and her baby. Dignity and honor: Educated women are now looked upon with dignity and honor. They become a source of inspiration for millions of young girls who make them their role-models. Educated women are more informed of their rights for justice. It would eventually lead to decline in instances of violence and injustice against women such as dowry, forced-prostitution, child-marriage, female feticide, etc. Choice to choose a profession of her choice: Educated women can prove be highly successful in the fields of life. A girl-child should get equal opportunity for education, so that, she can plan to become a successful doctors, engineers, nurses, air-hostesses, cook, or choose a profession

of her choice. Women education is a pre-requisite to alleviate poverty. Women need to take equal burden of the massive task of eliminating poverty. This would demand massive contribution from educated women. There cannot be many social and economic changes unless girls and women are given their rights for education.

Methodology:

Systematic and comparative analysis of scientific literature, a case study. Methodology used in the paper is philosophical and analytical. Secondary sources like books, journals and newspaper articles both print and online have been made use of in the study

Objectives:

- To know the Role of Education in women empowerment



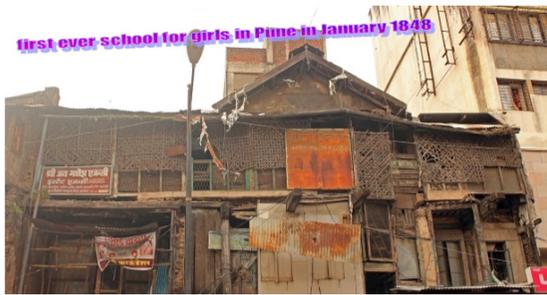
Savitribai Phule, Social Reformer

Women education in India (Historical background)

It is very important to know the historical background, if we are to make a study of status of women in India. It is not easy to find answers for questions like when did women start losing their status or who was responsible for this situation. The position that women occupied in the medieval and later the colonial period is of utmost importance. Women were never put on high pedestal in the Shastras. Today, the women in India are not behind men in any 28 respect. They have excelled in every field, be it in education, governance, politics, science, judiciary, sports and in almost all other fields. There are big names of Indian women like Indira Gandhi, Sarojini Naidu, Sucheta Kriplani and many others who have made their names in the history because of their education and wisdom. However, not much is available in the history about Savitribai Phule, a woman who kept the foundation for women education in India. She was the first woman who started the first ever school in India exclusively for girls at a time when nobody could dare to even think about educating a girl. In fact, every educated woman in the society owes a debt to her. She was born in a poor family in Naigaon, district Satara in Maharashtra On January 3, 1831.

Her father was a farmer. At the age of nine, she was married to Jyotiba Phule, a great social reformer. At that time, the Hindu society was male-dominated who treated the women as their slaves who had to strictly follow the instructions of the male members of the family. After her marriage with Jyotiba Phule, she was inspired to read and teach by her husband. She was taught by him and sent for training in teaching at Mitchell's school in Pune where she performed very well and remained successful. Then she opened a first ever school for girls in Pune in January 1848 with admission of nine girls of different castes on the opening day and became the first woman teacher of India. She opened two more schools for girls with full support of her husband and in 1851, there were about 150 girls studying in these schools. She even inspired an eleven year old girl 'Mukta' of her school to write an essay on Dalit emancipation which is considered as the cornerstone of dalit literature. She was moved by the plight of dalits who were forced to live a misera-

ble life in the caste-ridden society. She thought that only the education could bring some improvement in their life. She opened another school for Dalits in her village Naigaon in 1852.



The orthodox society could not tolerate these revolutionary and daring steps taken to educate the women and the dalits which were against the rigid Hindu traditions of those days. They started harassing her. She was insulted, abused, and threatened. Mud and cow dung was thrown upon her but she faced all this courageously and continued with her endeavor. The dalits were not allowed to drink water from the wells and ponds which were mostly meant for the upper class people and many times they remained thirsty. They dug a well in their house in 1868 for the dalits which was also a challenge for the upper caste society. The government honored them in 1852 for their efforts in the field of education. They opened two more schools for girls and one school exclusively for the dalit children. She was also a good poet of Marathi and English. In one of her poems, she writes about the importance of education in the following words.

**“All gets lost without knowledge,
We become animals without wisdom”**

In 1891 she was infected with the plague and died on March 10, 1897 as a result of the same. We salute her work on girl education & women empowerment

Present Position of Women Education in India In spite of the forceful intervention by a bastion of female privilege, feminist critics, constitutional guarantees, protecting laws and sincere efforts by the state governments and central government through various schemes and programmes over the last 62 years and above all, the United Nation’s enormous pressure with regard to the uplift of the plight of women in terms education is still in the state of an enigma in India for several reasons. The 2011 Census report indicates that literacy among women as only 65.46 percent it is virtually disheartening to observe that the literacy rate of women India is even much lower to national average i.e. 74.04. The growth of women’s education in rural areas is very slow. This obviously means that still large womenfolk of our country are illiterate, the weak, backward and exploited. Moreover education is also not available to all equally. Gender inequality is reinforced in education which is proved by the fact that the literacy rate for the wom

Census Year	Crude literacy rate			Change in Percent points		
	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1901	5.35	9.83	0.60	-	-	-
1911	5.92	10.56	1.05	0.57	0.73	0.45
1921	7.16	12.21	1.81	1.24	1.65	0.76
1931	9.5	15.59	2.93	2.34	3.38	1.12
1941	16.1	24.9	7.30	6.6	9.31	4.37
1951	16.67	24.95	7.93	0.57	0.05	0.63
1961	24.02	34.44	12.95	7.35	9.49	5.02
1971	29.45	39.45	18.69	5.43	5.01	5.74
1981	36.23	46.89	24.82	6.78	7.44	6.13
1991	42.84	52.74	32.17	6.61	5.85	7.35
2001	54.51	63.24	45.15	11.67	10.5	12.98
2011	64.32	71.22	56.99	9.81	7.98	11.84

en is only 65.46% against 82.14% of men as per 2011 Census.

Barriers and Problems against Women Education

The educational, economic, political and social backwardness of women makes them the largest group hindering the process

of social change. It is inevitable that when this ‘backward’ group has the major responsibility of bringing up future generations the advancement of society cannot be rapid or take any significant form of development. In the report of the committee appointed by the National Council for Women’s Education it was emphatically stated that what was needed to convert the equality of women from de jure to de facto status was widespread education for girls and women and a re education of men and women to accept new and scientific attitudes towards each other and to themselves. A changing society and a developing economy cannot make any headway if education, which is one of the important agents affecting the norms of morality and culture, remains in the hands of traditionalists who subscribe to a fragmented view of the country’s and the world’s heritage. The differences between the positions of men and women in the society will not lessen; leave alone disappear, as long as there are differences between the education levels of men and women. Inadequate education or no education is the most important factor contributing to the backwardness of our masses, especially women. The low literacy among women brings down the national literacy. This gap which exists between the literacy rates of the two sexes also exists between the enrolment of girls and boys at all levels of education. Right from the primary school to the university, we find that the number of girl students is considerably lower than boys. According to Article 45 of the Constitution, universal compulsory and free education until the age of 14 was to be achieved by the year 1960. Looking at the present condition of primary education in villages, it is doubtful whether we can achieve 100% enrolment of girls. It is unfortunately true of our society that children are sent to school not according to their intelligence or aptitude but according to their sex. The reasons for not sending girls to school are both economic and social. In rural areas, girls are required to help in household work. The resources of the rural poor are so limited that they do not have anything to spare for children’s education. If resources are available, it is the boy who is sent to school first. Parents also do not see the value of educating especially a daughter who would get married and remain a housewife. Since they cannot see any direct relationship between education and economic betterment, they have very little motivation to send their children to school. It is still not being realized that there is definite connection between education, good motherhood and efficient house management.

The management of millions of households and the upbringing of millions of children is thus in the hands of illiterate women. It is here that a change is required if our democratic and socialistic intensions are not to remain a mere pretence. People can be motivated to have their children educated only if educational system is directly linked with economic and social development. The plight of women, in terms of education is further compounded by the negative attitude of parents toward female education. Some parents are usually reluctant to send their girl child for formal education especially to higher levels like their male counterpart. Another problem closely related to this is the reluctance to acquire western education and misunderstanding on the part of the girls themselves about the values of the acquisition of formal education. In education, equity means equal access to good schooling. Restricted access to education by women in this country is profoundly rooted in history, religion, culture, the psychology of self, law, political institution and social attitudes which interact in several ways to limit women’s access to formal education when compared with their male counterparts. It has been observed that Indian women are lagging behind their counterparts in developed and some developing nations due to the late start in educating them. This is caused by our traditions and culture which are hostile to women. This tradition reduces them to kitchen manageresses and producers of babies. Thus, their education ideally, is expected to end in kitchen a condition which ironically is detested by many parents thereby discouraging their investment in girl-child education. Other problems against women education include the familiar problems like lack of funds, inadequate facilities, inadequate manpower, sexual harassment, conflicting societal role expectations, government policies and lack of political will power to implement the entire educational programme. The inferiority complex observable in Indian women can be attributed to the influence of environmental manipulation. Through the traditional socialization process of the typical society, women are

made to accept negative self-fulfilling prophecy, stereotyping and stigmatization that they are members of a weaker sex. At present, the forces which combine to hamper women education and development in India could be viewed broadly to include denial of access to education, early marriage, confinement to solitary living, subjugation by culture to accept choices forced on them, discrimination and harassment at work, political disenfranchisement from elective and political appointment and exposure to cruel mourning rites upon the death of their husband.

Major Government Schemes for Women Education

Shiksha Sahayog Yojana – This scheme provides scholarships to students whose parents are living below or marginally above poverty line & who are covered under Janashree Bima Yojana. Already 3,20,253 people are recorded as beneficiaries under this scheme (till 2006).



Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan – The Scheme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is a national flagship program & is being implemented in all districts of India. The aim of this scheme is to provide useful and relevant elementary education for all children in the age group of 6-14 years by 2010. The scheme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan was launched in 2001. 50,000+ students are studying at 399 centers at different locations.

Saakshar Bharat – The main objective of Saakshar Bharat is to further promote and strengthen Adult Education, especially of women, by extending educational options. To implement this scheme, 1.70 lacs Lok Shiksha Kendras (Adult Education Centers) are established in Panchayat grams of the districts covered under the Scheme. The benefit of Saakshar Bharat Yojna can be availed by contacting Lok Shiksha Kendras in various regions.

Kanya Saaksharta Protsahan Yojna – Objective of this scheme is to reduce the dropout rate & to increase the interest of Tribal Girl Students to continue their study. Rs. 500 is given to those girls who continue study in class VI, Rs. 1000 to girls who get admission in IX & Rs. 2000 to girls who get admission in XI.

Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Yojna– This program is especially for promoting girls education. There are 3500 Kasturba Balika Vidyalaya in which 3.6 lac girls are studying. These schools also have hostel facility for girls of 5th to 8th class.

- Educational Provisions in Centrally Sponsored Schemes in School Education (CSS)
- Operation Black Board
- Teacher Education
- Education Guarantee Scheme & Alternative and Innovative Education (EGS & AIE)
- Mid-day Meal Scheme
- Shiksha Karmi
- Mahila Samakhya
- District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)
- National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGL)
- Lok Jumbish
- Janshala Programme
- Padhe Bitiya Badhe Bitiya
- Ladali Scheme Major Schemes for Secondary Education
- Access and Equity
- Quality Improvement in Schools (QIS)
- ICT in Schools
- Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC)
- Vocationalisation of Education



Conclusion:

According to the Country Report of the Government of India, education of girls is the most powerful tool of change of position in 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. To bring more girls, especially from marginalized families of BPL, in mainstream education, the government is providing a package of concessions in the form of providing free books, uniform, boarding and lodging, clothing for the hostilities mid-day meals, scholarships, free circles and so on. Education for All (EFA) programme and other many educational programmes are providing various facilities to enhance the education for women, so these programmes are very helpful to improving the girl's education in India. In addition to that from Jan 2015 will witness the change in lives of countless girl child and women. The pet project launched by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi "Beti bachao beti Padhao" (BBBP) Yojana (save daughter, educate daughter) to save and empower the girl child is making waves all over the nation. This major inter-ministerial initiative of the Government of India bringing together Ministries, institutions and civil societies, though not a drastic change yet, the results are positive on the scheme. The scheme will have focussed intervention and multi-section action in almost 100 districts with low Child Sex Ratio (CSR) Until the middle of nineteenth century, girls and women were educated only for traditional household works. Now, the society is witnessing changes in the role-status of women. There is greater emphasis on education girls and women in the same way as we educate boys and men. The modern day parents want to fulfill the aspiration of their children without gender parity. The educated women should insist on exercising their civil, social, political and economic rights. This will help improve the overall condition of women in the society. We can hope for better days while all women of our country will be enlightened and educated.

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