



Education as a tool of Women Empowerment

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the place of education as a catalyst for women empowerment in India. In spite of all the laudable goals and objectives of education, Indian women still suffer a lot of constraints and inhibitions which militate against their personal and national development. Women are the component of our society but still they have hindrances in getting their rights. Women should be empowered with their rights of education, health, security, jobs, skills, decision making authority, better living standard, and respect. It is precisely these questions that this essay will attempt to throw some light upon. Here the researcher analyzing the concept, women empowerment by incorporating all divergent views with sufficient logical reasoning. It also explains the problems faced and the possibilities ahead in achieving women empowerment through education.

KEYWORDS

Women Empowerment, Literacy

Introduction

The subject of empowerment of women has becoming a burning issue all over the world including India since last few decades. In India Empowering women is one of the most crucial concerns of the Millennium Development Goals . One of the national priorities and goals of the Human Resource Development Strategic Plan outlined by the Social Sector of the Ministry of Economic Development. In India the vision of the development of women, upgrading the status of women and facilitating their integration into the total social development. Women's empowerment is a process whereby women become able to organize themselves to increase their own self-reliance, to assert their independent right to make choices and to control resources which will assist in challenging and eliminating their own subordination" (Keller and Mbewewe, 1991). Women should be empowered with their rights of education, health, security, jobs, skills, decision making authority, better living standard, and respect. Women must raise voice for their rights and they should be self confident. Empowering women is essential for the development of the economy.

Human development encompasses elements that contribute critical issues of gender and development. The dignity and culture of a society can be detected from the status of women in that society. According to Rameshwari Pandya (2008) Empowerment has become the key solution to many social problems. Empowerment of women is empowerment of family/ household and in turn development of a nation of a country. Empowerment of women leads to benefit not only to the individual woman and to women groups, but also to the families and community as a whole through collective action for development.(2008, p.5)Women education in India has also been a major preoccupation of both the government and civil society as educated women can play a very important role in the development of the country.

Women empowerment means emancipation of women from the inhuman grips of social, economical, political, caste and gender-based discrimination. It means granting women the freedom to make life choices. Women empowerment does not mean 'deifying women' rather it means replacing patriarchy with parity. Education is milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life. 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." Education of women 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 fam-

ily. The given chart shows the unequal literacy rate among the women of rural and urban areas.

3.1: Literacy Rates in Post Independent India

Year	Rural			Urban			Combined		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
1951	4.87	19.07	12.1	22.33	45.6	34.59	8.86	27.15	18.32
1961	10.1	34.3	22.5	40.5	66	54.4	15.35	40.4	28.31
1971	15.5	48.6	27.9	48.8	68.8	60.2	21.97	45.96	34.45
1981	21.7	49.6	36	56.3	76.7	67.2	29.76	56.38	43.57
1991	30.17	56.96	36	64.05	81.09	67.2	39.21	64.13	52.21
2001	46.7	71.4	59.4	73.2	86.7	80.1	53.67	75.26	64.81
2011	58.75	78.57	67.8	79.92	89.67	84.1	65.46	82.14	74.04
% Increase in 2011 over 2001	26%	10%	14%	9%	3%	5%	22%	8%	14%

Source: Census of India, Office of Registrar General, India.

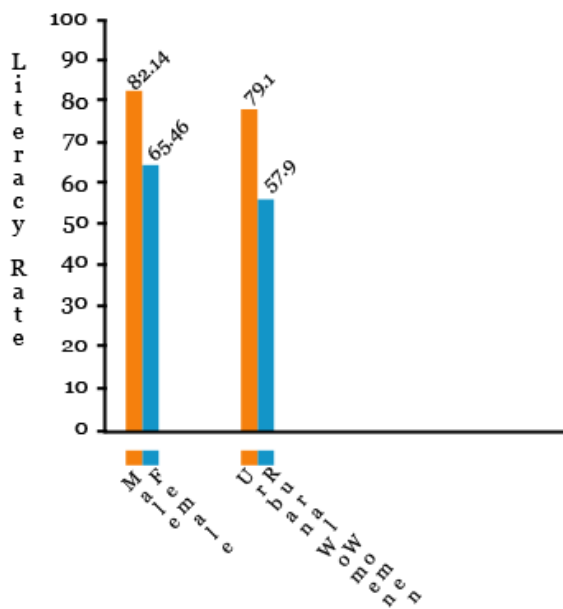
For 1951, the population male , female and persons refers to effective literacy rates and the break up of Rural, Urban and male- female components are crude literacy rates.

Notes:

- Literacy rates for 1951, 1961 and 1971 relate to population aged 5 years and above whereas literacy rates for 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011 relate to the population aged 7 years and above.
- The 1981 literacy rates exclude Assam where the 1981 Census could not be conducted.
- The 1991 literacy rates exclude Jammu & Kashmir where the 1991 Census could not be conducted due to disturbed conditions.
- The 2001 and 2011 literacy rates exclude Mao Maram, Paomata and Purul Sub-divisions of Senapat district of Manipur.

While the country has grown from leaps and bounds since its independence where education is concerned, the gap between women and men is severe. While 82.14% of adult men are educated, only 65.46% of adult women are known to be literate in India. Not only is an illiterate women at the mercy of her husband or father, she also does not know that this is not the way of life for women across the world. Additionally, the norms of culture that state that the man of the family is the be-all and end-all of family decisions is slowly spoiling the society of the country.

Literacy Facts of Women in India



*Literacy rates relate to the population aged 7 years & above

Data Source: Census of India 2011

Eradicating this gap and educating women about their real place in the world is a step that will largely set this entire movement rolling down the hill to crash and break the wall of intolerance, negligence and exploitation.

CONCLUSION

According to the Country Report of the Government of India, "Empowerment means moving from a weak position to execute a power." Education of women in the education of women 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 midday meals, scholarships, free circles and so on. Empowering women socially, economically, educationally politically and legally is going to be a Herculean task. It is not going to be easy to change the culture of disregard for women which is so deep-rooted in Indian society. But it does not mean that it is implausible. Only revolutions bring changes in a day, but reforms take their time. This one in particular will take its time as well. The idea of women empowerment might sound hard by the yard, but by the inch, it is just a cinch. All we need is a concentrated effort focused in the right direction that would rest only with the liberation of women from all forms of evil. There are several challenges that are currently plaguing the issues of women's rights in India. A few of these challenges are presented below. While a lot of these are redundant and quite basic issues faced across the country, these are contributory causes to the overarching status of women in India. Targeting these issues will directly benefit the empowerment of women in India. All we need is a concentrated effort focused in the right direction that would rest only with the liberation of women from all forms of evil.

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