



PROMOTING WOMEN EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The position of the women in society throughout the world is shaped by cultural beliefs, rituals, folklores, traditions and social organizations. The status of women is mostly described from the ascribed one not from achieved one. Women are still struggling to have their own identity and individual status. Our Indian Constitution is firmly grounded in the principles of liberty, fraternity, equality and justice. It emphasizes freedom for all and contains a number of provisions for the empowerment of women. Women's right to equality and non-discrimination are guaranteed under the constitution. India has reaffirmed its commitment to women by ratifying the United Nations Conventions. Development in India and its states has not been equitable and men and women have benefited differently from development and progress, be it in the economic or on the political front. On the political, economic, educational and social front, women have lagged behind not because they are not capable but because they have been denied opportunities even to survive. Before Independence large expansion of the education of girls was brought about between 1870-71 and 1881-82. The Indian education commission of 1882 remarked, "Female education is still in an extremely backward condition and needs to be fostered in every legitimate way". In colonial times various commissions (Calcutta university commission of 1917, Sargent Report, 1944) favored the policies for women but in an independent Indian the policies and programmes were directed towards enhancing the status of the women by bringing them in the ambit of compulsory education. This paper focusses on the educational policies in higher education directed towards women development in colonial India and in Independent India.

KEYWORDS

Women education in Modern India, post-independence period.

INTRODUCTION

Special mention may be made of one section of the under privileged who have suffered disabilities from times immemorial. It is not known when women were first relegated to an inferior position in human society. Almost all ancient civilizations denied them rights of citizenship. There were no doubt some brilliant exceptions, but by and large women were subordinate to men in all historical societies (Chopra, 1973, 720). Past history reveals that in the Vedic period, women had social status and prestige. They had the right to education. They used to devote their whole life to the pursuit of knowledge and self-realization. However their social honour and prestige declined in the middle age especially during the muslim rule. Education was imparted to the women of royal families and privileged classes in their own homes.

WOMEN EDUCATION IN MODERN INDIA

Till the eighteenth century, India was having its strongly established indigenous education system; having three distinct traditions of advanced scholarship in the Hindu gurukulas, the Buddhist viharas, and the Quranic madarasas, before the British set up a network of schools to impart western education in English medium. The first such college to impart western education was founded in 1818 at Serampore near Calcutta. Over the next forty years, many such colleges were established in different parts of the country at Agra, Bombay, Madras, Nagpur, Patna, Calcutta, and Nagapattinam. In 1857, three federal examining universities on the pattern of London University were set up at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. The existing 27 colleges were affiliated to these three universities. Later, more universities were established. In 1882 Panjab University Lahore was established under the stewardship of Dr Leitner and the inhabitants of Lahore. Women's university in India was established in Mumbai in 1916, named S.N.D.T. Women's university. It was founded by Dr. D.K. Karve for the noble cause of education of women. In 1921, five Women graduated from this university. The credit for women education in modern times goes to missionaries, during colonial time reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy, Annie Besant, Sorojini Naidu and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar made endless efforts to regain the status of women in the society. These reformers

removed terrible social evils, like sati pratha, child marriage and polygamy. They also struggled for widow remarriage and particularly for women education. First effort was made in 1818 and later on David Hare opened girls school at Calcutta. In 1849, J.E. Drinkwater Bethune established a secular girls school in Calcutta. His effort may be regarded as marking the real beginning of women's education in modern India. Wood's dispatch of 1854 stated that the importance of female education in India cannot be over-rated; and we have observed with pleasure the evidence which is now afforded of an increased desire on the part of the natives of India to give a good education to their daughters. By this means a far greater proportional impulse is imparted to the educational and the moral tone of the people than by education of men the women's education could not show improvement till 1870. The reason may be attributed to various reasons such as the system of purdah and child marriage, indifference of parents to their daughters education, distrust in the Western system of education, financial pressure on the middle classes, lack of women teachers and girls schools, absence of suitable curriculum for girls and lack of material considerations which form a contributing factor in boys education.

A large expansion of the education of girls was brought about between 1870-71 and 1881-82. An event of very great significance of the period was the visit of the great English social reformer, Miss Mary Carpenter, to India. Her contribution in this field was to suggest that training colleges for women teachers should be established and that trained primary teachers should be employed in girls schools in order to increase their utility and effectiveness. The encouragement she provided for the employment and training of women teachers gave a great stimulus to the education of the girls. It also opened a very useful career to several women who were in need of some remunerative vocation to give a meaning and purpose to their lives. By 1882, the secondary education of the women only made a humble beginning and women were just about to enter the threshold of higher education. In fact, the first woman to get the degree of an Indian University were two students of Bethune's school who graduated from the Calcutta University in 1883 (Gupta, 2000, 110-111).

The Indian education commission of 1882 remarked that the Female education is still in an extremely backward condition and needs to be fostered in every legitimate way. Hence it recommended that public funds of all kinds-local, municipal and provincial-should be chargeable in an equitable proportion for the support of girls schools as well as for boys schools". It recommended that it should receive a larger share of public funds. In 1916, the first Medical College, Lady Hardinge College, Delhi, was established for girls (Gupta, 2000, 26).

The policy of government of India was to follow the recommendation of Indian Education Commission for the promotion of women's education. In Bengal and Punjab, separate standards were prescribed for girls, simpler than those of boys. Scholarships were offered to girls in Madras, Bengal, N-W provinces, Punjab and Central provinces. The progress, though slow, was steady at all stages of educational development. "By the end of the 19th century there were 12 colleges, 467 secondary schools and 5,628 primary schools for girls with a total enrolment of 444,470 students in the whole of India. The government of India's resolution on educational policy 1904 expressed dissatisfaction with the condition of women's education. In 1911, the Government of India on the basis of the recommendations asked the local governments to submit a ten-year programme for the expansion of girl's education, improvement of facilities for the training of the teachers and the amelioration of the conditions of service of the school-mistress and members of the inspecting staff.

The Sikh conference could not afford to ignore female education, fully conversant with the fact that no community can make progress if their women are uneducated. According to the Census report of the year 1911, after every 100 women only 1 was educated (Walia, 1975, 209).

The Calcutta university Commission 1917-1919 made some recommendations for the expansion of women's education: "Government should start purdah schools for those girls whose parents want to educate them up to the age of 15 to 16 years. A special board of women's education be created in Calcutta university; should organize special courses for women education and should offer them special facilities for teachers training and medical education. The post-graduate classes should be opened for women and that education should be introduced as one of the subjects for degree. Training for the licentiate in training diploma and for bachelor of training degree was to be given in women's colleges under the direction of the university department of education. "The Calcutta University Commission formulated two principles in its report regarding female education; the modification of curriculum to suit the needs of different classes, and the utilization of the advice of the ladies in formulating a suitable scheme of instruction (Gupta, 2000, 115) ".

The resolution of Government of India, Oct. 1, 1919 reiterated the policy on women's education in the words that the education of the girls needs more financial fostering than that of boys; primarily, education must mainly be free, scholarships and studentships must be given more lavishly; grants-in-aids must be calculated more generously, and the greater expensiveness of secondary education has to be practically recognized. In 1925 National Council of Women was established. In Delhi, the Lady Irwin College for educational research, home science and the training of teachers was set up with the aim of remodeling girls education on lines more suited to Indian life, traditions and ideals. Hartog committee 1929 stressed the need for prescribing a curriculum that would suit exactly the requirements of women and for appointing a large number of women teachers and inspectresses on adequate salaries. Kher Committee 1938-39 also known as basic education committee emphasized the need for training in cookery, laundry, needle-work, home-crafts, care of children and first aid.

POST INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

Dr. Radhakrishnan recommended for provision of necessary facilities in the co-education colleges, expansion of educational

opportunities for girls, establishment of right status for girls, provision of some kinds of special education for girls and provision for equal remuneration in case of female teachers as males.

After the introduction of Indian Constitution Article 45 states: the state shall make an endeavour to provide free, compulsory, universal primary education for the age group of 6-14. Article 16 imposed non-discrimination on the ground of sex in public employment and Article 15(3) empowered the state to make special provisions for the welfare and development of women and children, Article 42 deals with the provisions to be made by the state for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief (De, 2012, 24).

National Committee for Women education (Durgabhai Deshmukh Committee, 1958-1959) was to look specifically into the question of women education. It recommended for the establishment of National Council for the Education of girls and women, joint advisor for women education should be appointed in central administration, appointment of a female joint director in every state vesting the responsibility of women education, allocation of more funds for women education, appointment of female teachers in girls schools, equal curriculum for boys and girls in the primary stage and diversified curriculum in the secondary stage, provision for girls hostels, text books and clothes for the girls of economically weaker sections of the society. In 1962 Hansa Mehta committee was appointed under the chairmanship of Smti Hansa Mehta. It recommended for co-education at primary stage and expansion of educational facilities, appointment of female teachers along with male teachers in secondary schools and colleges, and commission recommended for home science and vocational courses for boys and girls. In 1963 National Council for Women Education appointed Bhaktavatsalam committee under the chairmanship of Shri M. Bhaktavatsalam, the then Chief Minister of Madras. Its major recommendations were the establishment of private organisation for women education along with the cooperation of public, hostel facilities for the girls, Books, clothes at free of cost for the girls, appointment of teachers in hilly and remote areas with additional remuneration, free and compulsory women education up to a certain stage etc and a functional curriculum should be developed for the launch of adult education programs.

Raju (2008, 79); In India, it was the Kothari Commission, which more than three decades earlier in 1964-66, had emphasized explicitly on equal educational opportunities for women and had also suggested effective steps to achieve it. Subsequent Five Year Plans and various committees including the National Perspective Plan (1988-2000) have stressed the need for greater participation of women in higher education. These efforts have resulted in increase in women accessing higher education from 25.7 lakh in 1993-04 to 42.6 lakh in 1999-2000 to 54.06 lakh in 2004-05. The corresponding figures for men are 51 lakh, 69 lakh and 81 lakh. In absolute terms women continue to lag behind men, but because of accelerated growth rate in women's enrolment, the gap between men and women is narrowing. For example, the growth rate of women students in higher education between 1993-04 to 2004-05 has been 7.72% as compared to 4.73% for men. The census-adjusted figures for two rounds, i.e., 1993-94 and 1999-2000 (the corresponding census years 1991 and 2001), although slightly higher show similar trend, i.e., 8.77% for women and 5.22 % for men respectively.

Fernandez (n.d.) referred to Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All (2000), "education has to be affordable to all. This dimension of accessibility is subject to the differential wording of article 13 (2) in relation to primary, secondary and higher education: whereas primary education shall be available 'free to all', States Parties are required to progressively introduce free secondary and higher education."

University Grants Commission (2011, 83) Enhancing Participation of Women (a) Schemes for capacity building for women

administrators, Post-doctoral Fellowships for women, women hostels, facilities and infrastructure for women, scheme for single girl child should be expanded and strengthened during the 12th Five Year Plan. (b) In order to attract more girl students from the states, where the rural or urban Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for girls in higher education is more than 5 per cent lower than the male GER, a new scheme of Women's Higher Education Stipend (Mahila Uchha Shiksha Britti) may be introduced. This stipend may be awarded to girl students from rural and/or urban areas, as the case may be, who score higher than a certain grade in earlier public examination and having family income less than a certain specified level. The stipend should be in addition to the tuition fee waiver.

Eleventh five year plan (2007-2012, 184) Women are significant contributors to the growing economy and children are assets of the future. Almost 50% of our population today comprises women while 42% is under the age of 18. For growth to be truly inclusive, we have to ensure their protection, wellbeing, development, empowerment and participation. The vision of the Eleventh Five Year Plan is to end the multifaceted exclusions and discriminations faced by women and children; to ensure that every woman and child in the country is able to develop her full potential and share the benefits of economic growth and prosperity.

Eleventh five year plan (2007-2012, 192) Globalization has put a premium on skills and higher levels of education, which are often out of reach of women in the unorganized sector. A key issue in the Eleventh Plan is to enable these women to secure higher level and better paid jobs through vocational training and skill development. Women need technology support, credit facilities, and marketing support to take up entrepreneurial activities in new and emerging trades.

University Grants Commission (2011) started with the part Time Research Associate-ships for Women (now renamed as Post Doctoral Fellowships for Women) This scheme was started in the year 1998 with the intention to provide opportunities to unemployed women with Ph.D. degrees, and with an aptitude for research, but unable to pursue the research work on regular basis due to personal or domestic circumstances. Women with Ph.D. degrees and having talent and competence for independent research work, may be take up research in any field of Humanities and Social Sciences, including Languages and Engineering & Technology. The duration of the scheme is for 5 years.

CONCLUSION

However good were the recommendations, it failed to bridge the gap between women's equality, their participation in national development and the pattern and thrust of education. Article 45 of the Indian Constitution stated, that within 10 years from the date of the introduction of the Constitution, free, compulsory elementary education will have to be provided to the children of the age group 6-14. After many years this aim of the constitution was not achieved. Then National Education Policy 1986 fixed the target date for universalization of elementary education for the age group 6-14 and removal of illiteracy in the age group 15-35 by AD 2000. Other valuable recommendations of 1986 policy were:- education will be used as an agent to change the status of women. National Education system will play a positive, intervention role in the empowerment of women. It will foster and establish new values in the society through redesigned curriculum, text book, the training and orientation of teachers etc., women studies will be promoted as a part of various academic courses, women illiteracy will be removed by encouraging their enrolment in the formal educational system, and major emphasis will be given on women participation in vocational, technical and professional courses without any discrimination on the grounds of sex. For Primary education the Government had to pass Right to Education (RTE-2009), but on the same lines something needed to be done in the field of higher education also. UGC had initiated the policies such as Post Graduate Indira Gandhi Scholarship for Single Girl Child, D. S. Kothari

Postdoctoral Fellowship, Maulana Azad fellowships for minority students; but of all the initiatives by the UGC something more to be done in the rural areas to orient the students about the benefits of the schemes. Due to the backwardness of the rural youth especially women they are not able to apply for such schemes of the government as these are time bound and there is a last date to apply for it. In the modern era of information and communication technology, some informative talks to be recorded and relayed by the Ministry of Human Resource Development on Doordarshan and some major channels. In the Government colleges also some talks should be arranged by the affiliating authorities life universities and regulatory bodies so that the talented and intelligent students can be tracked and appropriate measures for their guidance can be taken.

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