

Women Empowerment: A necessity to promote education

Dr. Nainy Singh¹, Dr. Shubha Sharma²

¹Lecturer department of home science V.M.L.G (PG) College Ghaziabad, India

²Post-doctoral fellow department of home science V.M.L.G (PG) College Ghaziabad, India

Email - ¹naynisingh@gmail.com ²shubhasharma752@gmail.com

Abstract: According to Cambridge English Dictionary 'empowerment' means 'to authorize'. In the context of the people, they have to be authorized to have control over their own lives. When applied in the context of development of the particular segment of population, the women have to be 'empowered' to have control over their own lives to better their socio economic and political conditions. Thus, women empowerment can be interpreted as totally of empowerment including political, social, cultural and other dimensions of human life as also the physical, moral and intellectual. Women are victims of crime directed specially at them rape, kidnapping and abduction, dowry related crimes, molestation, sexual harassment, eve teasing etc. Around 40 percent of married women in India are victims of domestic violence. Women especially in rural areas possess the least proportion of these resources and are therefore dependent but surveys and data suggest that position of women in present Indian society is undergoing a dismal change. Education has dynamically motivated women to aspire for freedom, viz., social freedom, educational freedom, political freedom and freedom for career and earning. Education is a major instrument to direct the process of change and development towards desired goals. This empowerment will develop self-esteem, confidence, ability to make decision, participation in social change and encouraging economic development. In short, a holistic approach is needed which ensures their social, economic, political and cultural development. Awareness in the women as well as society should be created and their equal rights should be effectively implemented. Empowerment of women unlocks the door for modernization of any society.

Key Words: Women Empowerment, Intellectual Development, Spiritual Development, Social rights

1. INTRODUCTION:

It is evident that men and women are physically and biologically different from each other. But the degree and level of social equality of each gender, and their roles and status within a culture and nation depend upon the social systems of the culture and economy. The status of women and children all over the world has become a focus of national and international concern. Many studies on girl child have come up as today's girl child is tomorrow's women. Her physical, mental, emotional, intellectual and spiritual development will determine the quality of life of her family and generation to come. In this regard Kamla Bhasin has pointed out that the girl child in India is a young plant that gets neither light nor water. She is the flower that would have blossomed but could not bloom, half fed and half heartedly educated, she gets only half wages for her labour. The country got its freedom but she continues to be bonded (Kamla Bhasin, 1995). The ancient codifier of Hindu Law has explained the dependence of a female in our society in the following lines:

“Duteous girl obey her father, husband sways the duteous wife,
Son controls the widowed mother, never free is a women's life”

These above mentioned examples clearly show that the girl child in India leads a life of multi-abuse, multi neglect, multi-curse, unwanted, neglected, uncared and treated as an inferior being. She was having a second class status in the traditional male dominated socio economic-religious setup. Women have their political and social rights, rights against exploitation and discrimination and even rights of voting in elections; right to contest elections, right to hold offices etc. According to International conference on populations and development (ICPD 1994) there are five components of women's empowerment:

- Women's sense of self worth.
- Their right to determine choices.
- Their right to have access to opportunities and resources.
- Their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home.
- Their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social change to create a more just social and economic orders, nationally and internationally.

It is believed that a strong focus on the specific health needs of women, particularly in the areas of reproductive health, can enhance and accelerate overall development of the society. It is ironic that women often expected to take care of the community, while their own health needs are neglected. Socio-cultural attitudes and taboos in India normally inhibit women from expressing doubts and communicating with others any problems associated with their reproduction and sexuality. Unfortunately, in India, the government's health programmes do not address these issues effectively. Social norms and customs prevent women from being checked by male doctors. The majority of the nurses and paramedical staff are women and are not trained adequately to deal with a broad range of reproductive health problems or to have sufficient knowledge of available programmes that might address those issues. Surviving through a normal life course is a challenge for women with inadequate resources. Females usually receive less health care than males in India. Many women die during childbirth due to complications. This is because these dimensions are highly interdependent and the lack of adequate achievement in one leads to a lack in others and results in overall inadequacy or even of degradation of gender equality in the economy. The socio-cultural practice of women eating last in the family has eminent effect on her health especially if it a household in low economic status. Most direct effects of poor health and nutrition among women in Indian society are high mortality rates among young children and women of child bearing age. A women health and nutrition status influence her newborn's birth weight and chance of survival. Post neo-natal death is generally caused by infectious diseases. The incidence and severity of the most of this disease are affected by controllable factors such as immunization, health care and nutrition. Due to gender biased, these factors are not controlled equally for male and female children. Maternal mortality in India estimated at 437 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, result primarily from infection hemorrhage, obstructive labour, abortion and anemia. Women must have access to comprehensive, affordable and quality health care. A holistic approach to women's health which includes both nutrition and health services with special attention to the needs of women and the girl at all stages of the life cycle is another priority of the government. The reduction of infant mortality and maternal mortality, which are sensitive indicators of human development, is a major concern.

2. EDUCATION:

Education is considered one of the most important indicators to determine the status of women in the economy. A number of steps have been taken to promote women's education in India. The optimal strategy for equitable and socially useful education is one with a distinct orientation in favour of women's equality and empowerment (Banerjee 2005). The level of education and the status of women are positively associated with each other. Improvement of women's education and increasing their status not only ensures their basic rights but also brings economic and social development in the nation. India has one of the largest populations of non-school attending working girls (chahabra 2003). Although India's constitutions guarantees free primary school education for both boys and girls up to age 14, in reality that guarantee is not mirrored by practice. The failures to make that constitutional guarantee a reality has resulted in great gender disparity in literacy in both the urban and rural areas of India. In the Indian society, girls are socialized to identify with the family and the private sphere, but to be self confident in public life, it is necessary to learn skills and foster their self esteem. Thus, women often lack of self confidence and skills to raise with their voice in the 'public forum'. It results from their upbringing which mainly focuses on their role within the family. Formal education has played very significant role in bringing about social change and social mobility among women in India. In fact education has proved as a major avenue of upward social mobility among them.

Education is powerful instrument that can effectively change, shape and mould society in a positive directions. It offers new dimensions in the lifestyle of individuals and prepares them as self reliant and responsible members of society. Its importance has been underlined as under:

- Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee stated, " A knowledge bases society will enable us to leap frog in finding new and innovative way to meet the challenge of building a just and equitable social order and seeking urgent solutions.
- In the words of Herbert Spencer, "Education" is training for the completeness of life. It brings perfection to life which means the growth and development of personality. It qualifies a person to fulfill central economic, political and cultural functions and thereby improves the socio economic status of the people. It also helps to equalize the status of individuals who belong to different social status.

- Sri Aurobindo remarked, “the past is our foundation, the present our material, the future our aims and summit. Each must have its due and natural place in a national system of education.
- Mahatma Gandhi, therefore, remarked that, “Educating a boy is the education of an individual but educating a woman is the education of the whole family.” A women equipped with the power of knowledge can contribute a lot to the development of the country.

Therefore, it is clear that women education is a vital point to develop a nation. At the same time present education system cannot help to solve problems faced by the women in India, we must develop a value based education system which can aware the women of her duties and right. She will be allowed the full expression of her potential, so women can be dynamic partner in the building of new India. Today, school education consists of mostly imparting information which does not necessarily prepare them for living a healthy life.

Therefore, a definite attempt has to be made to give children the skills for healthy and happy thinking. This empowerment will develop self esteem, confidence, ability to make decision participation in social change and encouraging economic development.

4. CONCLUSION:

Women's are the wealth of India and they have contributed in almost every field and made country feel proud at every occasion. They are in front, leading the country, making mile stones and source of inspiration for many. However, another reality of Indian society is that there is systematic discrimination and neglect of women's in India, which could be in terms of inadequate nutrition, denial or limited access to education, health and property rights, child labour and domestic violence etc. The fear of sexual violence has been a powerful factor in restricting women's behavior and sense of freedom. Though the status of women in India, both historically and socially, has been one of the respect and reverence, but the hard truth is even today they are struggling for their own identity, shouting for diffusion of their voices and fighting for their own esteem. Every day women cross among the fears and fraught for individuality. Though education has been found an important factor for changing deep-rooted gender inequality in Indian society, the combined impact of education and employment is much more than that of education alone.

Women professional in India are facing a range of problems. Women have extensive workload with dual responsibility of profession and household and they have to balance household demands with those of their profession. They are exploited at various levels. They should be provided with proper wages and work at par with men so that their status can be elevated in society. There is urgent need to improve women's economic status because they are fundamental to the process of economic development of the country

To summarize, women should be made an integral part of the Indian economy. Women must be given the respect they are due and their status should be improved because that is a clear necessity for the sustainable economic development that Indian society and India's women both need and deserve. Women should change their attitudes themselves. They should be self-confident in their approach and positively come forward to participate in decision-making process. Women's are the wealth of India and they have contributed in almost every field and made country feel proud at every occasion. They are in front, leading the country, making mile stones and source of inspiration for many. In politics President Pratibha patil, Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar, UPA Chairperson Sonia Gandhi, Chief Minister of UP Mayawati and Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dixit, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamta Banarjee, Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara raje, bureaucracy Nirupama Roy, Shushma sawaraj, Shobna Narayan, Lata Mangeshkar, Rekha, Ekta Kapoor, Social activist Shabana azami, Vidhya Balan, Meera Nayar and many others, in sports Sania Mirza, Saina Nahwal, Mary Kom, Sakshi Malik, PV Sindhu are some of the names on top. Women's are also playing important role in national growth and economic development through corporate houses. They are not only working at grass root level but participating in decision making. Jyoti Naik, President of Iijjat papad, Kiran Mazumdar, Chairman and Managing Director of Biocon, Naina Lal Kidwai Deputy CEO of HSBC, Ranjana Kumar Chairman of NABARD, Ritu Kumar CEO of ECOLIFE, Priya Paul Chairman of Apeejay Park hotels, Indira Nooyi Chairperson & CEO of Pepsico, Chanda Kochhar CEO of ICICI, Roshani Nadar CEO of HCL are some of the pioneers in their respective field. At present women's are contributing and participating in every sphere, politics, business, education, science and technology, media, sports art and cultural etc. However this is the one face of coin and on the other side of coin is the hard truth of the Indian society.

Women's are not only entitled for survival but also to live life with dignity, grace and equal opportunities so that they can grow to their full potential. There is an urgent need to pay attention to the issues that concern this section of population. The focus should be on poverty reduction, gender justice, health, nutrition, sustained awareness of rights and redressed eradication of social evils etc. It is high time now that women should get a respectable and dignified position in the Indian society. As Swami Vivekananda rightly said that "The nation which doesn't respect women will never become great..." Programs to strengthen women development should be enforced and news adversely affecting their development should be censored and banned.

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