

## EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN THROUGH EDUCATION-A HUMAN RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

The status of Women - Social, economic, political and the like - In India today is much higher than in ancient and medieval periods. Women today enjoy many more rights like social and legal and have greater freedom and voice, and participate more freely on public affairs. But it is also true that they are still discriminated, harassed, humiliated, dominated and even exploited- National and international efforts in the form of conventions, commissions and instruments were Launched for me cause of Human Rights of Women, Social reforms and social thinkers believe that in a nation like India giving education to women in as large as possible can prove to he a panacea for many of problems of women. Accordingly, much attention is paid to the education of women after independence and the literacy level is increased steadily. In spite of several positive trends women are still subjected to Human Rights Violations, especially their Rights to Education. "The human rights help to women empowerment, such as the human right to equality between men and women and to equal partnership in the family and society. Realization of this human rights depends on eliminating gender based stereotypes in education which denied women opportunities for full and equal partnership and the rights to work receive wages that contribute to an adequate standard of living which strengthen the women participate in shaping decisions and policies affecting one's community, at local national and international levels.

"You can tell the condition of nation by looking at the status of its women"

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## Introduction:

The United Nations Report expresses the position of women hailing from South Asian countries as: Women constitute half the world's population, perform nearly two-thirds of its working hours, receive one tenth of the world's income and own less than one hundred deaths of the world property". So far as equality of sexes is concerned, women come second in legal rights. Very few women enjoy equal rights with men, in spheres of marriage and family, employment and general sexual equality. In patriarchal society her role is limited to be a wife and a mother.

The status of Women - Social, economic, political and the like - In India today is much higher than in ancient and medieval periods. Women today enjoy many more rights - like social -legal and have greater freedom and voice, and participate more freely on public affairs. But it is also true that they are still discriminated, harassed, humiliated, dominated and even exploited.

National and international efforts in the form of conventions, commissions and instruments were launched for the cause of Human Rights of Women. A number of studies were also attempted. But studies from Human Rights Perspective are limited. But unfortunately, despite the assurance of gender equality with in the Indian constitution the situation of women, as pointed out by the committee on the status of women in 1974 and later in other documents and more recently by the reports of the National Commission for Women (NCW), is far from satisfaction. In fact, a cycle of gender violence can be seen from prenatal stage to old age and death where women are concerned, sex selective abortions, sex preference for male child and female infanticide, child marriage and child prostitute. Sexual abuse and harassment in the work place and outside is gradually increasing. Forced prostitution, rape, marriage and dowry related abuse of widows, etc., are all well documented added to deprivation of basic facilities to women and their very right to life is also denied. According to World Health Organisation (WHO) report girls in many developing countries receive less health care too, They are also victims of harmful practices rooted in culture an tradition. Therefore, violence against women needs to be situated within the discourse on human rights so that a normative frame work is available for accountability both by the governments and the societies.

## Empowerment

Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social or economic strength of individuals and communities. It often involves the empowered develops confidence in these own capacities.

## Barriers to development of women

There are several approaches to the understanding of barriers of Women's development. Some of these approaches are purely economic while some are social and a few are institutional. A great majority of women in India do not own any property and therefore depend on their labour for livelihood. But women's access to income from their own labour is limited and the access to income from their own labour is limited by two sets of barriers. The first set of barriers limits the access of women to human resource development. While the second of factors discriminates against women in work and employment. The first set of factors determine the employability of women as well as their productivity, the second set of factors affect wage benefits of women.

Scientific and economic progress depends on education which is a matter for whole of mankind, for men and women alike and not free one of the two sexes only. It is truth worth remembering it is often happens that the human personality of the individual is crushed by the economic machine. Instead of this machine being harnessed to serve the development of humanity, it is man who servers it.

## The Problem of female education

Social reforms and social thinkers believe that in a nation like India, giving education to women in as large as possible can prove to be a panacea for many of problems of women. Accordingly, much attention is paid to the education of women after independence and the literacy level is gradually increased. In spite of several positive trends women are still subjected to Human Rights Violations especially their Right to Education.

## Women access to Education and Training

On 7th November, 1967 the United Nations adopted the Declaration of the Elimination of discrimination against women. Article 3 stipulates:

"All appropriate measures shall be taken to educate public opinion and to direct national aspirations towards the eradication of prejudice and the abolition of customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority of. women".

Education contributes in large not only to the elimination of the idea that women are inferior but also to the elimination of the inferiority of their actual status. Over the past centuries this fact has been realized by many women, and the government.

Women do not enjoy all the educational opportunities they should have and often they do not have any access such opportunities in may part of the world they are given less education than men and the majority of illiterates are women.

Women have the right to education. But to what kind of an education? So modern technological and scientific know-how remains in many cases the privilege of men. The force of habit and prejudice the lack of information the innumerable difficulties the women encounter in the exercise of some occupations and in the discharge of their domestic duties-all these things tend to limit the opportunities of girls and women.

In developing countries the combination of national policy and social pressure educates fewer than boys. Parents in many developing countries still give preference to boy's education and fail to appreciate the value of education for girls. Instead, they see the value of education may damage their daughter's marriage prospects. Consequently few girls continue up to secondary education. Even at primary level, female enrolment is lower than that for males. At secondary level the differences widen. This forces women into insecure and low-paying employment. Not only there is a direct correlation between health status and level and low-paying employment. And also women's economic in security affects their access to health and nutritional care.

The lack of multispectral approach to development planning in India has to a large extent, been responsible for the perpetuation of gross gender disparities in education, in association with severe cultural constraints on knowledge acquisition by women. This has seriously undermined human resource development for women in the country.

## Educating a woman means educating a family

A lot has been said and written since the 50 years of Indian Independence. Even the Indian parliament converted a special session to discuss what the members thought to be the issues most fundamental to the development of Indian society and economy. We know very well that the society cannot develop without the development of its womenfolk. The constitution of India enjoins upon every citizen the duty to "renounce any practice derogatory of the dignity of women". Our religious scriptures also accord due respect to women and assert that God lives where women are worshipped. In this way our Constitution legalizes what our scriptures prescribe as a social duty. The need to incorporate the injunction in to the Constitution of India arose due to the prevailing atmosphere in which the women were denied their place in society and subjected to humiliation, which reduced them to a position inferior to men. Mahatma Gandhi and host of other leaders connected with the freedom movement realized this and set out to liberate women in order to enlist their valued cooperation in the all-round advancement of India. Hence, the need to put women issues into the Constitution.

In true spirit the principle of the basic equality to sexes has never been put into practice. That cannot be possible without the development of women. Therefore, education of women is a must. Educate a man and you educate one person. Educate a woman and you educate the whole family. For this Government of India should make education for women free and compulsory. Women in India have covered a great distance in the last 50 years. They are coming up in all spheres of life. They are joining colleges, entering into all kinds of profession like engineering, medicine, teaching etc. If the provisions of the Indian constitution are observed in letter and spirit, the future of Indian women is quite bright. The time has come for adopting a revolutionary approach. With the introduction of 33 percent reservation for women, the nation can be lifted to heights of greatness and distinction. There is a great need for awakening of women socially. Without social amelioration, political rights have no value. There is a visible gap between the law as it stands and the law as it operates. The need is bridge the gap. It is one thing to declare and another to enforce. The potential of human rights law vis-a-vis women is worth addressing in India especially in view of the Indian Constitution, But the problem of enforcement should not be underestimated. The fact that women tend to suffer human rights abuses in a specific way has often been ignored.

## Women, Human Rights and Education

Every woman, man, youth and child has the human right: rights dependent upon education, training and information, and to other fundamental human realization of the human right to education, quality of access to all levels of education is crucial to empowering women and girls to participate in economic, social political life of their societies. Education unlocks a woman's potential, and is accompanied by improvements in health, nutrition, and well-being of women and their families,

Despite widespread agreement that all people have the fundamental human right to education, 100 million children, at least 60% of them girls do not have access to primary education. 960 million adults in the world are illiterate, and more than two-thirds of them are women. Women and girls continue to face discrimination at all levels of education, a fact which poses tremendous obstacles to their advancement.

## The Human Rights at Issue

Human Rights relating to education are set out in basic rights treaties and include:

- The human right to free and compulsory elementary education and to readily available forms of secondary and higher education,
- The Human right to freedom from discrimination based on sex or any other status in all areas and levels of education, including access to scholarships and fellowships, and to equal access to career development, continuing education and vocational training.
- The human right to information about health, nutrition, reproduction and family planning.

The human rights are help to women empower such as the human right to equality between men and women and to equal partnership in the family and society. Realization of this human rights depends on eliminating gender based stereotypes in education which deny women opportunities for full and equal partnership and the right to work that contribute to an adequate standard of living which strengthen the women to participate in shaping decisions and policies affecting one's community, at local, national and international levels

Empowerment of Women - A solution to gender discrimination

It is now widely believed that empowerment of women that is providing equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities to women, will go a long way in removing the existing gender discrimination. They are considered to be a weaker section of society. This state of affairs warrants appropriate plan of action to strengthen and support them. Empowerment of women is a positive step in this direction,

The 73rd Constitution Amendment act has made its effort to give some special power to women in all the three tiers of Panchayat Raj. The rationale behind this amendment was that the social and economic status of women could not be given some political power. They should be given their share in the decision taking process. The new Panchayat Raj is the part of the effort to empower women at least in village level, and administration.

In specific reference to Indian context (and which to some extent can be generalized to the South Asian countries) patriarchal structure of the society over centuries has gradually led to gender inequality. Women rights in this context have assumed exclusively. Further when women are not considered equal to the men in the social context the question of women rights arise. The women rights are the means by which a dignified living is ensured thereby safeguarding her privileges. Thus the basic fundamental rights of speech, freedom and decision-making are her basic rights as an individual and citizen. The right to education and employment are significant for women development and national development in the wider sense. The power and freedom to exercise these rights is women empowerment. Women rights and empowerment are acts independent of each other, The women empowerment can exercise. If her right in the socio-economic sphere of decision making is protected.

### **Critical Paradigms**

There are certain paradigms, which need to be examined from the point of view of women issues.

### **The Constitution Provisions and Policies**

The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Constitution of India (in the Preamble and fundamental rights) where by the constitution grants the equality to women. The national commission for women, which was set up in 1992 through an Act of Parliament to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women, is considered to be the apex body to ensure

rights and work towards the women empowerment. In terms of five years plans the fifth-year plan (1974-78) is considered to be very crucial from the point of view of women development.

The 73rd and 74th Amendment of Constitution of India in 1993 are land marks to ensure political empowerment of women. The Ninth Plan also recommends the adoption of National policy for the empowerment of Women alongwith a well-denied Gender Development Index from the monitoring and evaluation of women rights and empowerment. The ratification by the Government of India of various International Conventions like convention of Elimination of endorsement by the Government of various declarations consolidates the administrative willingness. The description of such provisions incorporates the perception of absolute women empowerment.

These provisions surely ensure of legal protection of women rights, but socio-economic rights of freedom and decision-making is still not realized to the extent of social empowerment. One of the reasons is the right patriarchal structure of the Indian society. The rate of illiteracy along women hampers the awareness and the claims of such provisions. The district sociolization of girls from the beginning also contributes to the easy acceptance of suppression by women. The changing trends of education and employment among women have relatively transformed the situation towards the positive direction. However the nature of problem has also changed its direction in the sense that crime against women in working places are at steep rise. The workable and pragmatic commitments of the Government of India at various forums and National Police for the empowerment of women can prove to be a milestone in ensuring women's rights and facilities women empowerment.

Equal access to education for women and girls will be ensured. Whom? by whom Special measures will be taken to eliminate discrimination, universalize education, eradicate, illiteracy, create a gender sensitive educational system, increase enrolment and retention rates of girls and improve the quality of education of facilitate lifelong learning as well as development of occupation/vocation/ technical skills by women. Reducing the gender gap in secondary and higher education would be a focus area. Sectoral time targets in existing policies will be achieved, with a special focus on girls and women, particularly those belonging to weaker sections including the Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes/ Other Backwards Class/Minorities.



Gender sensitive curricula would be developed at all levels of educational system in order to address sex stereotyping as one of the causes of gender discrimination.

## Conclusion

I shall conclude that to improve the status and empower the women the following points could be considered which would go a long way raising their standards and in becoming equal partners to development.

Allotment of more seats for girls at college level especially in professional courses.

Improving / increasing the opportunities for education for Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST's) girls.

In administrative services, increasing the opportunities for women, so that they would raise the problem of women at policy level.

Mass literacy programs should be launched effectively, the learners under this programme could be given some incentives in job market.

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