

GLIMPSE OF WOMEN EDUCATION DURING COLONIAL ERA

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Abstract

Women education always been a very debatable topic between the researcher, scholars, government. For a better civilized society educated women can do best job in the development of the country. As education serves as a milestone in the of women and for every person in this world belongs to any community, caste , creed, religion , etc. in fact it is a fundamental right of every person. Traditionally in our Indian society women had a different kind of role as compared to men . They are not treated as bread earner, because of not having proper support from our menfolk of our society. Importance of education was not considered to be an important part of their life, result was that they did not understood the real advantage of having education in their life. However, its obviously means that still large womenfolk of our country are illiterate, weak, backward, exploited, victims etc. education of women can serve as the most powerful tool of change of position in society. Education can brings down dueto the certain evils that were against them. Well this essay try to explores the status of women and their education in colonial time.

Keywords: women , education, literacy, illiteracy, reformers.

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INTRODUCTION, DEFINITION AND MEANING OF EDUCATION:

Education is an important indicator for any developed society. Undoubtedly, plays a central role in human development which effects overall development. Literacy and Education are itself correlated with each other. Automatically when Education and literacy status goes up then it can lead to better attainment of health and nutritional status, economic growth, population control, empowerment of the weaker sections and community and a lot more because through education one can make differences between good and bad things. Education widens one's capability to do better thing. Intrinsically education is important for individual development and confidence.

Education is one of the most essential factor which is responsible for the development of a human person. Right to education, therefore, is held as a very important human right. It is the very foundation of good citizenship. Education is not only meant for human development but also enables the humans to regulates and make entire society in a well civilized and cultured shape. Because through educated human we can make educated society.

The term Education is derived from the latin word 'Educere' , 'Educatum' which means 'to learn', ' to know', and 'to lead out'. That is education means to lead out all the internal qualities, all the hidden talents of a particular person or a child. Education plays an effective role in developing a wholesome human personality. Education today has the enormous task of the upliftment of the underprivlized and their empowerment. Education brings about modification in one's behavior through continuous and intensive interaction with the environment. Thus, education and society are interdependent and each other reinforces the other. Here are the some definitions of Education given by some eminent scholars:

- 1) Pestalozzi: Education is the natural, harmonious and progressive development of man's innate powers.
- 2) Swami Vivekanand: Education is the manifestation of divine perfection already existing in man.
- 3) Forbel: Education is unfoldment of what is already unfolded in the germ. It is process through which the child makes internal as external.

- 4) Sri Aurbindo: Education is helping the growing soul to draw out what is in itself.
- 5) Rousseau: Education is a positive approach which is given to the child and which is intended to shape his mind. It is intended to teach him the duties of adults.
- 6) Upanishad: Education is something which liberates man from all bondages.

Education is a fundamental means to bring any desired change in society, which is an accepted truth of the world. Education helps an individual to develop his personality. Through education we can promote good habits to another.

HISTORY OF WOMEN EDUCATION:

Women constitute almost half of the population in the world. They are independent to each other. But the traditional old thinking of our male counterpart made them suffer from equal opportunities. Undoubtedly, in the development of country educated women plays a vital role in the development of country. Education eliminates inequalities and disparities as the means of recovering their status within and out of their families. Women education is the vital role to contribute for national progress and a good indicator of development. Access to Education has not been one of the most pressing demand in today's scenario, but it was the most one of the urgent need of women even before independence.

1} Even if we go little bit in ancient time then we found that women enjoyed a better status. From the available sources it is clear that they full right over education or any other religious sacrifices. They were actively involved in different kinds of religious and social matters. Education was their for women in vedic age. Well Radha Kamal Mukherjee has rightly said that “ women had free access to education and training in their learning and participation in religious ceremonies and functions”(NL Gupta 2000). However it appeared that the prevalence of education was their for education but it assumed that it was limited upto the higher class of women ,women of low caste were denied from this right. Well in the vedic age upanayansanskar was their for girls and it was very common. Religion was played very important part in Indian society in ancient time as well as in today's scenario. We have some eminent female scholars of ancient time like gargi, materiyee, etc.

They enjoy full freedom in society. Thus ,we see the deteriorating trends in the education of women in the post vedic age as well as in the epic age. Later on when Buddhism and Jainism came into the existences then again after some issues women were admitted into the sanghs. They had full right to do religious sacrifices. Many women achieved the great status as teachers due to their hard work.They equal status in the society during these time phase.

2}Afterwards during Medieval Period the condition of women in society deteriorated with the advent of Muslims in India. Very less attention was paid towards their education. They were treated mere as an object in the society by the people with no respect. This was the time when there was the arrival of different of social evils in India society, which took away all the fundamental rights from the women. Women of only high classes were allowed to attain education. At this age we only some royal ladies again from very high class like Rajia Sultan, ChandBibi, NurJahan, etc.Evil practices like child marriage, sati, female infanticide, purdah, early widowhood, etc. at this period the women education was not very common among all the classes. Mainly pardah system banned female education at this time as it prohibited the movement of female outside the home, because of it very less attention was paid towards their education.

3} It is said that with the advent of Britishers in India female was totally disappeared from the scene. The condition of female education was very pathetic. Hardly not even one percent of female was educated in different parts of India in pre independence time. Later on with the advent of Charter act of 1813 ,Wood Dispatch , Hunter Commission brought some hope in respective towards female education. In different parts of country like in Bengal , Bombay , Madras some good colleges along with universities were opened for women as to access some education. Actually earlier education was limited upto very section of women in the society, and basically lower women were remain untouched from it. With the help by some reformers and Christian missionaries women education came into forefront and native people have realized the importance of female education.. However, with the help of some Christian missionaries some zenana missions were opened for the women where they were taught in home by the female teachers themselves along with the domestic science and other all skills. Actually at very earlier stage women education was not given so much of attention but later on with the help of

missionaries who went into the different parts of the world and thought people about the importances of female education then only people realized the importance of educating women also. The problem is that the social evils in the society and the nature of menfolk in our society basically hampers the education of females in India.

Actually Britishers were not interested in the education of Indians. They provide the education by which they could get some good clerks. That's why there education system was limited up to only few section of people of India which not reached upto the masses of Indian people. The controversy began with Charter act 1813 which had asked the East India Company to spend some amount on the education of Indians. Not so much of were attained from this. The difference in ideologies regarding the language to be taught created two groups, namely the Orientalist and the Anglicists. The orientalist were in the favour of indigenous education, however the Anglicists were against this. Well there famous controversy lead to famous Macaulay 'Minute' in 1825. According to him the minds could be only colonized with the Indian roots shaken. So he tried to uproot the Indian culture through English education. Not much was done in favour of women education. Very little progress was made in this direction.

Later, all the measures taken by Charles Wood in his Despatch (1854) and Hunter's commission only aimed at building or expanding Colleges or Universities all over India. They dispatch of 1854 gave a lot of efforts and attention towards the female education. Well Wood Despatch claims that " the total numbers of girls schools was 256 in Chennai, 65 in Mumbai, 288 in Bengal, and 17 in Northeastern Provinces"(NL Gupta). In many provinces the modern types of education just get started in this phase because earlier education was limited upto the religious matter. In the certain provinces education was limited upto the indigenous system. Well it is remarkable to note that " by 1854 , the new born education of women had made satisfactory progress in spite of the lack of support from the state"(Y B Mathur, 1973).

In consequences , a large expansion of the education of girls was came into existences between the period from 1870-1882. More focused was made when in 1882 the Indian Education Commission came into existences. They focused on women education and made several provisions on women education so that it could made better progress in coming centuries.

Basically Indian Education Commission discussed the problem of education of women with minutely. It pointed out the estimate that 98 percent of the female children of school going were still outside the schools and out of the total female population of 99.7 millions covered by its enquiries no less than 99.5 were returned as unable to read and write (NL Gupta, 2000). That's why education Commission were made special measures to enhances women education. It gave several provision like, adoption of pupil-teacher system, more establishment of normal schools, offer to liberal inducement to the wives of school masters to qualify them as school teachers , provision of the scholarships for girls who are above 12 years, training of widows as teachers for primary schools and lots more to improve women education in India. Well later on slowly slowly progress was made in the field of women education.

Later on during the period from 1901 different Universities were opened in the different parts of India. Several training schools, medical schools, different Universities were opened for women. One significant development was observed in the latter half of the 19th century was that women now freely choose there career as outside the home. With the passage of time from 1921 till 1947 a phase of development can be seen on the face of women. They are making better progress in different fields. Meanwhile the Sadler University Commission of 1917 by Dr. ME Sadler made recommendations for women education like- like modification in the curriculum as to different classes, and making an formulation of suitable scheme of instruction. Later with the advent of Hartogscheme, and Seargent report of 1944 made several progress in the field of women education. The result was that upto 1947 different schools and colleges were established for women in the different parts of India and were supported by native reformers and governments . Undoubtedly, their attendances were arouse rapidly with great numbers.

EFFORTS BY SOCIAL REFORMERS:

There is no doubt that the social reformers of 19th century boosted not only the social but also the legal status of women. They not only fought for the right of women but become successful in changing the orthodox mindset of people in India. From the 19th century onwards many efforts and women movements were took place in India. Every movement has one motto that--- “women should be given equal footing to men in this society”. The exposition of their problems became one of the primary concerns for every reformer. The Indian women's movement began

with a number of small efforts, and made individually, in the nineteenth century. Indian women were easily identified as objects of social reform, since they were the most discriminated ones. With the efforts and help of social reformers women's status in the society was upgraded. The social reformers of 19th century like Raja Ram Mohan Roy with the help of William Bentick removed sati system from the society, Ishwar Chand Vidyasagar efforts for wome education and widow remarriage, PanditaRamabai immense efforts for women education, D K Karve efforts for female schools , JyotiraoPhule , Mahatama Gandhi called hero of national movement which helped women to came in forefront in every corners of society, Annie Beasant who established 'Central Hindu College' to explore education among masses of Indians, RamabaiRanadeetc.,are the name of such great eminent leaders who not only worked hard in respective of women but also gave them a different position in society. These social reformers were actually concerned about the women education and did a lot more towards this field.

With the passage of time more women were enrolled in primary, secondary as well as in higher education. More Universities were opened at that time. With the passage of time women were becoming more aware about their social rights.

The success of these, in many cases, individual efforts is reflected in the comparatively rapid growth of female education. It was not easy for women and men to overcome the prejudiced and conservative reaction to their struggle to gain society's approval for female education, widow remarriage, and removal of purdah. By the end of the 19th century , women had started showing sign of their determination to fight for their rights and position in society.

PROBLEMS AGAINST THE WOMEN EDUCATION:

Women had to face a lot of problem to uplift their status in the society. Well the reasons are many which not only affected the women education but also lower their status in the society. The reason are many like the cruel patriarchal system of social organisation which do not think about the welfare of women in society. They are as follows:

- 1) One and foremost things that comes in the way towards women education i.e. one of the social evils SATI system that was more prevalent at that time and also forced women to participate in this cruel system, which really hamper their growth towards their life.
- 2) Next is Pardhasystem , which ties women into the four walls of their home and this evil had really very bad effect on women education, as it does not allow women to move freely in society by which they could not give attention towards their education.
- 3) Early marriage of women also creates hurdles in their life as it took freedom from women to do anything. Early marriage hamper their life badly, as very soon they indulge into the different kinds of household activity. By which they can't make focus on their studies. Girl children undergo severe health problems like pregnancy and childbirth through early marriage.
- 4) Sometime early marriage lead to certain disastrous result like early widowhood of women at very early age. Because early widowhood lead them nothing to do life.
- 5) One also major factor seems that the parents also were not very educated at colonial era. They don't understand the importance of educating women in their home. If parents were educated then they can give better importance's to their female child.
- 6) Female infanticide during colonial time also reduced the literacy rate among women. Actually from ancient the parents treated girl mere as a burden to their family which mainly lead to the killing of female child in our society.
- 7) Next it can be said that the lower importance's of female life. Indian people doesn't understand the value of female life that's why many cruel evils were practiced among them. We should try to save the life of our female counterparts

CONCLUSION:

No doubt women consitute our half population from total population. And without their development our country or even any country can never progress. We should pay a lot of attention and should try a lot to maintain their status in society. Their development plays a

crucial role in the development of a nation. They were the most discriminated one's in the society and because of the efforts of our social reformers with a lot of movements, several laws made by them regarding the women education and also banned several cruel evils practices which going on in the name of women and which really hampers the growth of women lives. The movements lead by our social reformers provide them a great platform to move ahead in their life as well as boosted their status in the society. Now I would like to end my paper by saying the famous quote of **Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru** that-----

“ If u educate a man you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family. Women empowered means mother India empowered”.

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