



Education and Woman Empowerment: An Overview

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Received: 01 Jan 2023; Received in revised form: 21 Jan 2023; Accepted: 30 Jan 2023; Available online: 06 Feb 2023

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Abstract— *The present research paper highlights the importance of education for women empowerment. It discusses how higher education is discouraged for girls in patriarchal society. In the dearth of proper education women are weak mentally and psychologically. It reveals how women empowerment is not possible in the absence of education. In this paper an attempt has been made to explain the factors which are essential for women empowerment, and how these traits can be inculcated in behavior through education.*

Keywords— *Woman empowerment, Gender inequality, Personality development.*

For the development of a nation, it is essential that its every citizen should be sound mentally, physically and intellectually, for which education is must for all and sundry, irrespective of caste, creed and sex. It is possible only if the society is free from gender biases because gender inequality becomes a hurdle in the way of the mission for providing education to all. It is a hard fact that if women don't get proper education, the nation often lags behind in advancement. In this context Swami Vivekanand aptly comments: "There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing." Education is a tool to woman empowerment because it transmits knowledge, promotes skills and develops character traits. If a person has knowledge, is skillful, and a developed character, he is an empowered citizen who can contribute a lot to the growth and progress of the nation.

In the patriarchal society, which is marked by gender inequality, women are underprivileged. They are discriminated, ultimately not getting enough opportunity for personality development. She is discouraged even for getting education, especially higher education, in the dearth of which her persona remains underdeveloped mentally, psychologically and intellectually. When she is weak inwardly, psychically and thoughtfully how can she commit for the welfare of the nation. Feminist writers advocate for higher education for girls. In his book, *The Subjection of*

Women(1869), John Stuart Mill, a male feminist, strongly argue for women education.

In a patriarchal society no attention is given to woman empowerment. So woman needs empowerment that provides individuality and autonomy to a person. Here man is supreme, and he is the controller of all power- social, political, economic and sexual. In this society woman has been rendered to secondary position, ultimately leading her to self-annihilation. She is supposed to be confined within the four walls of the house, and serve the family and the husband. In this context Gur Pyari Jandial comments:

While she has played different roles – as a wife, mother, sister and daughter, she has never been able to claim her own individuality. The words which we always associate with what we consider to be the concept of an ideal woman are – self denial, sacrifice, patience, devotion and silent suffering. A woman was and is expected to subordinate every wish and every desire to someone else – a parent, a husband or a child (211).

Higher education is a step towards women empowerment. Education provides knowledge, and knowledge is a liberative phenomenon. It liberates women from ignorance in which they have been wrapped by the patriarchal society. Ajay Singh justly remarks, "Education is a vital part of a living being., whether it is a boy or a girl. Education assists an individual to be smarter, to learn new things, and to know about the facts across the globe".

Education makes them aware of their rights which the orthodox social system denies them. Through it, they come to know about the fact that the Constitution has given them equal rights as their male counterpart, but it is only the male-dominated culture that doesn't allow them to enjoy those rights. The Constitution allows them to live with dignity and freedom but the patriarchal ideals keep them in the clutches of slavery. And when they become aware of this fact, they reject the male-domination. They rebel against the oppressive social system, and establish self-identity. Amruta Bhaskar aptly says, "Education is the milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life. Hence, we cannot neglect the importance of education in reference to women empowerment."

Higher Education brings rationality. In the patriarchal society woman is characterized by irrationality, and this is one of the reasons that she is put at the secondary position. If she gets higher education her vision broadens, and she starts perceiving the realities logically. She may think of her status reasonably. It is true that woman has rights to live with dignity inside the house as well as outside. But many times she cannot exercise her faculty of reasoning while enjoying the rights, consequently leading to catastrophe. David Moshman asserts, "Rationality is defined as the self-reflective, intentional and appropriate coordination and use of genuine reasons in generating and justifying beliefs and behavior".

Higher education brings economic empowerment that enables women to control over productive resources. Education makes them skillful, and skills give them economic independence. It is apt to depict:

Women's economic empowerment includes women's ability to participate equally in existing markets: their access to control over productive resources, access to decent work, control over their own time, lives and bodies; and increased voice, agency and meaningful participation in economic decision-making at all levels from the household to international institutions. ("Facts").

The woman who is independent economically may fulfil her aspirations and dreams. Economic independence is one of the factors that makes women empowered.

Thus, it is evident that education is must for women empowerment. Education gives knowledge. It brings rationality in behavior. Knowledge and rationality are stepping stones to empowerment. Education makes women strong inwardly, psychologically and intellectually providing them autonomy and individuality. So, education is a powerful weapon for women emancipation.

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