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EDUCATION & WOMEN EMPOWERMENT ARE INTER RELATED: AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Empowerment is a multi-faced, multi-dimensional and multi-layered concept. Women empowerment is a process in which women gain greater share of control over their resources like human, material, intellectual, financial etc. Education is the pillar for women empowerment, prosperity, development and welfare. It is the only tool to fight all social evils prevailing in the society from ancient era. Illiteracy among women is the single most important factor leading to high birth rate, infant mortality, malnutrition of children, dowry problems and proliferation of dismal poverty, gender discrimination, casteism, exploitation, domestic violence etc. During the British ruling India some social thinkers of the time paid their attention to the education of women in our country. Man and woman are like the two sides of a coin, without one, the other cannot exist. Women are the mothers of the future generation. If women are uneducated, the future generations will be uneducated. Thus women must be educated so that we can secure the women by giving power in the hands of women and make India healthy, wealthy and wise.

KEYWORDS

women literacy, empowerment, discrimination, social evils.



woman, you are not merely the handiwork of God, but also of men; these are ever endowing you with beauty from their hearts. Poets are weaving for you a web with threads of golden imagery; painters are giving your pearls, the mines their gold, the summer gardens, their flowers to deck you, to cover you, to make you more precious. And the desire of men's hearts has shed its glory over your youth. You are one half women and one half dream".¹

INTRODUCTION²

"If you educate a man you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family. Women empowered means mother India empowered".³

A Woman is the Back Bone of the body, gate keeper of the home, builder and moulder of a nation's destiny. After every great man we find a woman being him whether it is mother of Abraham Linkon or Mahatma Gandhi or beloved Chacha Nehru. It is a woman only, who gives birth to a child and also rites. Half of the World's population known as better half are women. But better half are great sufferers in man dominated society under man made Laws like 'Might is Right'. Though, Law makes similar provisions for men and women but due to above quoted phrase and illiteracy of women in India, the curse of social evils is assuming alarming shape which are engulfing the Goddess of Wisdom i.e. Mother of India as well as deteriorate the development rate of India. India has the most diverse religion and has a very rich culture. There are many beliefs and rituals that people are following from a very long period of time. Many rituals have transferred into social evils and engulfing the powers of women and also have made the progress of India go down. People are not judged on the basis of quality but on the basis of caste, creed or gender.

SOCIAL EVILS PREVALENT IN INDIA

India is developing at a very fast rate but the social evils have hindered the growth of this nation.⁴ Some of the most prevalent social evils are mentioned below:-

- i. **Gender inequality** – In India men are considered for superior than women in every field. There are many religions in India which force women to cover their faces and their heads while going out. They are still treated to be lower than men. Gender inequity has given rise to many other types of discrimination and other evils too like harassment, wage discrimination etc. It is still not considered important to educate the girl child in many parts of the country.
- ii. **Dowry**- Dowry system is the most deep-rooted problem in the Indian society. Due to dowry system in Indian society many other social evils have taken birth eg. Girl children are neglected, sex-selective abortion, illiteracy of girls, etc. Parents don't spend money to teach their girl child as they think they have to pay this money in future when their daughter will get married. Even in the Rig Veda it is mentioned that the bride's family have to offer the dowry to the boy's family.
- iii. **Castism** - Casteism is one of the social evils that is found in India unlike the gender division. Every society of India is divided into many groups according to the family they are born in. Members of the same caste have to do the same occupation, marry in the same caste and many of the lower caste were not allowed to eat with people who belong to upper classes. People of the lower caste are termed as untouchables and were not allowed to even touch the people from higher caste. Though there are many rules and laws made in India to eradicate the caste system but they are not successful.
- iv. **Child exploitation**- Child exploitation is the worst social evil in India. Children are exploited and are made to work in dangerous places like cracker factories. They are not treated properly. Like other social evils there are rules and laws made to stop the child exploitation but nothing has been ever properly implemented in India and hence you can still see teenagers and children working in the shops and factories. It should be eradicated by literacy.
- v. **Female infanticide**- Female infanticide is the most shameful social evil prevalent in India. Girl child is considered to be a burden on the family and hence people get sex-selective abortions done. There are thousands cases of abortion intentionally. Though female infanticide is not legal in India but still in many rural parts of the country it is practiced.
- vi. **Prostitution**- Prostitution is the sexual service people give in return of money. Many women are forced sexual slavery and many of them work as prostitute to earn their living. Women and girls are made as sexual slaves from a very long period of time in India.
- vii. **Drug abuse**- Drug abuse is also a very major problem in India that not only affects many of the people addicted to it but also their near and dear ones. Drug addicts are mainly found in the Urban areas. People who are more influenced by the drugs are street workers and transportation workers. There are many social awareness programs started in India to reduce the number of drug users in India but all in vain. Due to the modern lifestyle people are getting more used to drugs and alcohols.

¹Tagore – in the Gardner

²Sharma Kumud, —Grassroots Organisations and Women's Empowerment: Some Issues in the Contemporary Debate||, in Samya Shakti, Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi, Vol. VI, 1991-92,p. 29.

³Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru

⁴S. P. Agarwal (2001), Women's Education in India (1995-98) Present Status, Perspective, Plan, Statistical Indicators with Global View, Vol III Concept Publications Co, New Delhi.

- viii. **Sati**- The practice of sati was considered to be religious in the history of India. Wives used to burn themselves alive on the corpse of their husband. Sati means the burning of the Hindu widow in India. Though this practice used to be voluntarily done but in many cases the women were forced to burn on the pyre of their husband. Sati was a Hindu Goddess, who burnt herself alive for his dead husband's corpse.
- ix. **Domestic violence**- Domestic violence is an endemic predominantly against woman. In almost every house woman are tortured for dowry by her in-laws. In every city of India girls are harassed and tortured in every street they walk. Today girls are afraid of coming out from their houses, they are afraid of walking alone in the streets. There are several Acts and laws are passed but no serious action is taken against this dispute.
- x. **Poverty**- Poverty has given rise to many other evils in India. unemployment and the increasing population is the main cause of poverty in India. People commit many kinds of crimes like robbery and murders because they are not able to get the basic amenities of life. There are measures taken by the Indian government to reduce poverty in India. Awareness programs are started; subsidies are provided to poor people. Many other measures are also taken.

Education is the pillar of development of a country. It is the only tool to fight all social evils and make the society and country a healthy one. Well educated people live in harmony and believe in a well knit social community. It has always played a very vital role in fighting social evils. Education of woman can eradicate many social evils. India is the second largest country in the world so far as population is concerned. But so far as education is concerned it is a backward country. In past, women did not receive any education at all. They were not allowed to come out of the four walls of their houses. Domestic works were their only education, which is now the country faced many problems due to lack of education in the past. The role of education as an instrument of development and social change, policies regarding equity, access, relevance and also administrative leadership should be highlighted. Illiteracy among women is the single most important factor leading to high birth rate, infant mortality, malnutrition of children, dowry problems and proliferation of dismal poverty, larger spread of female education is bound to raise the age of marriage promote planned and smaller families and result in healthy and educated children and better citizens. Growth of any society necessarily depends on education of women world around.

During the British ruling India some social thinkers of the time paid their attention to the education of women in our country. Raja Ram Mohan Ray, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar were famous reformers who gave emphasis on the education of women. They put forth a very strong argument-

Man and woman are like the two sides of a coin, without one, the other cannot exist. They help each other in every sphere, where are we standing when it comes to men and women's education in our family and in our society.

Therefore, education should be given to both man and woman at equal level and balance it well. Women's can do what a man can do and performed better than a man. Further, women are the mothers of the future generation. If women are uneducated, the future generations will be uneducated. For this reason, the Greek Warrior Napoleon once said-

"Give me a few educated mothers; I shall give you a heroic race".⁵

In day-to-day life, women first face the real problems and then the same problems are conveyed to men for solution. If the women are educated, they can solve all the problems of their houses. Which will further lead to development in the family, and once a family in the society is developed the so-called development in the society will come into existence. Very often, the workers of some families become handicapped in unfortunate accidents. In that situation, the complete burden of the family rests on the women of the families. To meet out this problem, women must be educated. Education or literacy is a creative process. Its aim is to develop the capacities latent in human nature and to coordinate their expression for the enrichment and progress of society, by equipping children with spiritual, moral and material knowledge. True education releases capacities, develops analytical abilities, confidence in himself, will-power and goal setting competencies, instills the vision that will enable him to become, self-motivating agent of social change, serving the best interests of the community. A well educated person is determined and becomes the centre of the divine appearances, the source of spiritual qualities and divine aspirations. Education brings honor, prosperity, independence and freedom to a government and its people. Through educator savage nations become civilized and even animals become domesticated.

Education is the light house of society consisting building blocks & pillars of education-

BUILDING BLOCKS⁶

1. Universal values – Like honesty, sincerity, truthfulness, hard work etc. that are extolled in all religions.
2. Global understanding- Developing an international perspective to become a true world citizen.
3. Excellence in all things- Making pursuit of quality & excellence a habit and cultivate purity of heart, fine manners and humility.

PILLARS OF EDUCATION⁷

1. Knowledge- Thorough knowledge of prescribed subjects.
2. Wisdom- Use of knowledge with positive mind set in the service of mankind.
3. Spiritual perception – Service of mankind according to the teaching of God contained in spiritual books of all religions.
4. Eloquent speech – to acquire perfection in speaking global language and be able to express one's views fearlessly with best interest of welfare and goodness of mind.

CONCLUSION

On the above discussion we can say that if we shall educate the women and wipe out their tears, our country will certainly develop automatically. In fact, this is the right time when we should save Goddess of wisdom or Saraswati of the nation i.e. women from social evils by way of giving education to women & develop our beloved nation. The menace of social evils is deep-rooted in our society and bring miseries, sorrows and atrocities to women. These social evils must be eradicated with full vigor on the social level. Hence it is the moral duty of people of India to struggle for eradicating the aforesaid social evils with this Slogan:

Forget that the Earth is round

Forget that the Sun is bright

But do not forget the women education

with whom we must always rise our Nation.

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⁵Greek Warrior Napoleon

⁶R. C. Majumder ed., History and Culture of Indian People-The Maratha Supremacy, Vol.VIII, Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan, Bombay, 1951, p. 757.

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