

‘Education is an important source of Women Empowerment in India’

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Abstract

Education is a key which improves the entire life of a person. Education is tool which has a significant impact on women’s empowerment. Education has played a significant role to improve the status of women in society. It is a most important dimension of five dimensions of women empowerment. Other dimensions are closely attached with Education, it plays most important role to achieve the key of other dimension of women empowerment. Now-a-days women are receiving advance education and filing their presence in the entire field such as Science, Medical, Engineering, Art, Social-works, Politics, Literature, Economic, Education etc. but it is too less in the view of their population. Women are almost half of entire population, but their quantity is not satisfactory. They are not able to utilize their capability. Thus, education is essential to empower the women. But it is painful to know that girls enrollment is too less than boys in quality and quantity. Only through education women could be emancipated from exploitations and discriminations to empower the women. The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, UN Resolution 48/104 defines violence against women as any act of gender based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or only arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether in public or private life. Since India is signatory of United Nation Charter as an original member amongst 51 nations who signed the UN charter. Hence it is the primary responsibility to follow the basic principles of UN like Human Rights, Women Rights, Rights of Children or refugees, Disarmament, Environmental Protection, International peace missions etc. There are numerous acts of violence and discrimination against women is existed in India. The ultimate solution to wipe out the crimes against women is to empower the women through education.

KEYWORDS: Education, women’s empowerment, educated woman, Violence against Women, Legal and Constitutional Rights

Introduction: Education is a key which improves the entire life of a person. Education is tool which has a significant impact on women’s empowerment. Education has played a significant role to improve the status of women in society. It is a most important dimension of five dimensions of women empowerment. Other dimensions are closely attached with Education, it plays most important role to achieve the key of other dimension of women empowerment. Education increases the money earning opportunities for a woman. Education makes women strong to make their household decisions and financial decisions herself. Education is an important source of women empowerment. Education helps to decrease the violence against women, it makes them self-depend to shape their own life. Gender equality can be achieved through education. Education reduces the Gender Discrimination in male dominated society. Education helps them to handle with their household responsibilities. There is no doubt to say that an

educated woman will be better informed of her legal rights and how to exercise of them. An educated woman will be aware of her health and well-being. Educated women are living her life in a better way. An educated woman improves the economic status of her family and her nation.

Here, the term “education” does not refer just to get literacy; it does mean to know how to read and how to write. It means at least secondary or higher level of education.

Now-a-days women are receiving advance education and filing their presence in the entire field such as Science, Medical, Engineering, Art, Social-works, Politics, Literature, Economic, Education etc. but it is too less in the view of their population. Women are almost half of entire population, but their quantity is not satisfactory. They are not able to utilize their capability.

Economic participation of women can be increased by increasing their workforce quantity, but it does not mean that by increasing the number of women; it means by skill development of women, by improvement of quality of education for women. Women should get education which improves their capability. Women should gain skills in new technologies such as computer, internet etc... A well-educated woman is more able to compete with men in labour market. Education level and its quality effects both the women’s economic participation and competitiveness in labour market. Being literate or having primary level education is not enough to get a good-paying job. The rate of female unemployment is very high.

Thus, education is essential to empower the women. But it is painful to know that girls enrollment is too less than boys in quality and quantity. If the cost of education is much to afford by a parent then it is seen that they prefer to enroll the boy child than the girl child and sometimes girl child enrolled in a low quality school. Sometimes other social factor becomes the problem in enrollment of girl like tradition and lack of awareness. The school dropout rate of women is also very high. To solve these problems public school’s quality should be improved. It is essential to improve the quality and quantity of government schools. Generally, women are depending on men in regular education system. But now it is time for women to do something for Women, whatever and however they can do. Female school enrolment rate should be increased and the school dropout rate of female should be decreased. Vocational training institution for women should be increased to learn them skills.

Only through education women could be emancipated from exploitations and discriminations to empower the women. The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, UN Resolution 48/104 defines violence against women as any act of gender based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or only arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether in public or private life. The Beijing Platform for Action retakes the above definition and stresses that — in all societies, to a greater or lesser degree, women and girls are subjected to physical, sexual and psychological abuse that cuts across lines of income, class and culture. Since India is

signatory of United Nation Charter as an original member amongst 51 nations who signed the UN charter. Hence it is the primary responsibility to follow the basic principles of UN like Human Rights, Women Rights, Rights of Children or refugees, Disarmament, Environmental Protection, International peace missions etc. Violence against women is a technical term used to collectively refer to violent acts that are primarily or exclusively committed against women. Similar to a hate crime, which it is sometimes considered, this type of violence targets a specific group with the victim's gender as a primary motive. This type of violence is gender-based, meaning that the acts of violence are committed against women expressly *because* they are women considered to physically weak, or as a result of patriarchal gender constructs. So violence against women is linked to the patriarchal system of gender relations that grew and persists for hundreds of years. It has its deep rooted socio-cultural dimension that makes it distinct from mere acts of victimization. It has been argued that elimination of violence against women cannot be approached within a narrow —victim approach. An act of violence against women is a part of disempowering process against woman. It impacts women's self dignity, their capabilities and ability to enjoy the full spectrum of their human rights, with lasting impact on the victim's mental and physical health.

There are numerous acts of violence and discrimination against women is existed in India. The ultimate solution to wipe out the crimes against women is to empower the women through education. The concept of women empowerment was started to improve the position and status of women and reduce the crimes against them. In earlier times women were never given any right of liberty & equality. Men treated them in a humiliated manner. They were not only permitted not to step outside their house but also abstained from being educated. Their condition becomes even worse when they gave birth to girl child. They were also supposed to eat after their husbands or even sometimes to eat their husband's leftovers. Women were prohibited from taking external matters as well as domestic matters. They were under the influence of their parents before marriage & their husband after marriage. The number of dowry deaths, rapes, tortures and molestations were the highlights of the newspapers.

Women Empowerment refers to inculcating in women the ability to face the challenges of life, to reduce the dependency on men and to progress in life with a positive attitude. It refers to empowering them in different domains.

The capabilities domain: It refers to bringing women at par with men with regard to basic human abilities as measured by education, health, and nutrition. These capabilities are fundamental to individual well-being and are the means through which individuals access other forms of well-being.

The access to resources and opportunities domain: It refers to providing equality in the opportunity to use or apply basic capabilities through access to economic assets (such as land or housing) and resources (such as income and employment), as well as political opportunity (such as representation in parliaments and other political bodies). Without access to resources and opportunities, both political and economic, women will be unable

to employ their capabilities for their well-being and that of their families, communities, and societies.

The security domain: It is defined to mean reduced vulnerability to violence and conflict. Violence and conflict result in physical and psychological harm and lessen the ability of individuals, households, and communities to fulfill their potential. Violence directed specifically at women and girls often aims at keeping them in “their place” through fear.

How and Why Violence against Women

Women play a central role in the family unit. They contribute to all the functions of the family: (a) creation and enhancement of family (b) domestic work and economic support (c) take care of children (d) giving family support and caring.

They keep their families together, undertake care work for those who are sick, play a key role in securing food and are in general the backbone of socio-economic activities. Literature indicates that the presence of a mother within the family is so important for family stability that it should be recognized and supported in every way. Given the centrality of the role of women in families, they still are facing a major challenge of violence against women. Violence against women has received growing global attention in recent months following high profile and severe incidents in India.

The United Nations defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”

Women’ Legal and Constitutional Rights in India:

Times changed and multiple programs were started to empower the women so that they can come out of the above situation and live the life with dignity and positive attitude. Indian government also took many steps to eliminate gender disparity in fields of education, employment, decision making, and other domains realizing that country’s sustainable development is possible only if women of the country are empowered. To mention the important actions of government of India were setting up of The Ministry for Women & Child Development drive the holistic development of women and children in the country. Swayamsidha Program to establish women’s self-help groups which will empower women to have increased access to all kinds of resources that they are denied, in addition to increasing their awareness and skills. Setting up of National Commission for Women to exclusively help women via the Constitution – by reviewing Legal and Constitutional safeguards for women, recommending remedial legislative measures, by facilitating quick redressal of grievances and by advising the Government of India on all policy matters affecting women. Many Laws were passed to protect the women from domestic violence. Many Constitutional improvements have been done. The principle of

gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women for neutralizing the cumulative socio economic, education and political Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants disadvantages faced by them. Within the framework of a democratic polity, our laws, development policies, Plans and programmes have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres. India has also ratified various international conventions and human rights instruments committing to secure equal rights of women. Key among them is the ratification of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1993.

Constitutional Provisions for women are as under:

- 1) Article 14, confers on men and women equal rights and opportunities in political, economic and social sphere.
- 2) Article 15, prohibits, discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex etc.
- 3) Article 16, provides for equality of opportunities matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state.
- 4) Article 39(a) (d), mentions policy security of state equality for both men and women the right to a means of livelihood and equal pay for equal work for both men and women.
- 5) Article 42; direct the State to make provision for ensuring just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.

Legal Provisions for women are as under:

- 1) Factories Act 1948: Under this Act, a woman cannot be forced to work beyond 8 hours and prohibits employment of women except between 6 A.M. and 7 P.M.
- 2) *Maternity Benefit Act 1961*: A Woman is entitled 12 weeks maternity leave with full wages.
- 3) The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961: Under the provisions of this Act demand of dowry either before marriage, during marriage and or after the marriage is an offence.
- 4) The Equal Remuneration Act of 1976: This act provides equal wages for equal work: It provides for the payment of equal wages to both men and women workers for the same work or work of similar nature. It also prohibits discrimination against women in the matter of recruitment.
- 5) The Child Marriage Restrain Act of 1976: This act raises the age for marriage of a girl to 18 years from 15 years and that of a boy to 21 years.

- 6) Indian Penal Code: Section 354 and 509 safeguards the interests of women.
- 7) The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act of 1971: The Act safeguards women from unnecessary and compulsory abortions.
- 8) Amendments to Criminal Law 1983, which provides for a punishment of 7 years in ordinary cases and 10 years for custodial rape cases.
- 9) 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act reserved 1/3rd seats in Panchayat and Urban Local Bodies for women.
- 10) The National Commission for Women Act, 1990: The Commission was set up in January, 1992 to review the Constitutional and legal safeguards for women.
- 11) The Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993:
- 12) Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005: This Act protects women from any act/conduct/omission/commission that harms, injures or potential to harm is to be considered as domestic violence. It protects the women from physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, psychological, economic abuse.
- 13) Protection of Women against Sexual Harassment at Workplace Bill, 2010: on November 4, 2010, the Government introduced protection of Women against Sexual Harassment at Workplace Bill, 2010, which aims at protecting the women at workplace not only to women employee but also to female clients, customer, students, and research scholars in colleges and universities patients in hospitals. The Bill was passed in Lok Sabha on 3.9.2012.]

Gender Gap in India and Gender Gap at World level

Though gender gap is higher in India yet in terms of political empowerment of woman status of India is higher even better than some important countries. The World Economic Forum has placed India in the 101st position among 136 countries in the 2013 edition of an annual report that makes a global assessment of the progress made in bridging the gender gap. But India has fared better in terms of the political empowerment of women. India's gender gap index was 0.655 on a 0 to 1 scale, with 0 denoting inequality and 1 equality. India's position has improved marginally in recent years; after hovering between positions 114 and 112 between 2007 and 2011 it has now shot to the 101st position. But its best position so far was in 2006 - when it stood 98th. It was ranked 105th in 2012.

The Global Gender Gap Index tries to measure the 'relative gaps between women and men' across countries in four key areas - health, education, economics and politics.

The rankings are based on four of sub-indices that measure economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment. It is in the political empowerment arena that India has scored strong, being ranked 9th.

The political sub-index measures the gap between men and women at the apex of the

political decision-making hierarchy in terms of the ratio of women to men in minister-level positions and in parliament. The ratio of women to men in terms of years in executive office (prime minister or president) for the past 50 years is also taken into consideration.

But in the other three, India has not been ranked particularly high - 124 in terms of economic participation and equality, 120 for educational attainment and 135 for health and survival.

The Global report clearly indicates status of women in India and disapproves the major positive impacts of women empowerment in India. There are certain suggestions to stop violence against women and empowering the women in real sense:

- a) Increase knowledge and awareness through Formal and Informal Education.
- b) Achieving gender-equality means eradicating all forms of discrimination against women and removing barriers that prevent women from being fully equal with men and realize their rights.
- c) Promote, protect and fulfil the human rights of women and girls, including, among others, their right to the highest attainable standard of health; their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of discrimination, coercion and violence; and their reproductive rights.
- d) Ensure that programmes to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger are designed specifically to promote women's economic participation, independence and self reliant.
- e) One of the biggest challenges is attitudinal change on the part of communities that hold on to cultural practices that form violence to girls and women such as early marriage or wife beating. Governments have a major responsibility to spearhead attitudinal change towards culture and traditions that foster subordination of women by men, gender discrimination and practices that are harmful to the health and welfare of women and girls.
- f) Media has an important role to play – to create awakening in women to achieve their potential as the prime movers of change in society. In today's world, print and electronic media play a vital role in effectively conveying message that needs to be conveyed Everywhere the media has the potential to make a far greater contribution to the advancement of women. They can create self-regulatory mechanisms that can help to eliminate misleading and improper gender based programming.
- g) In order to eliminate violence against women, the banks and financial institutions, gender activists and women bodies must urge women to use economic empowerment as a tool against abuse.

Women Empowerment and Misuse of Legal and Constitutional Women Rights

The legal and constitutional rights provided to women to empower them are being misused too in India like cases of demand of dowry, sexual harassment /exploitation, domestic violence, the benefits of women reservations in local self govt institutions are being benefited by the males in their families etc. In the race to empower women and

improve the scenario it seems as if the scenario has reversed. It seems that women have forgotten that women empowerment never wished women to have power over men, but over themselves. But it seems as if women have wrongly understood the concept of women empowerment. They do not understand that they are been empowered to create gender balance and not to create women's superiority over men or about enmity towards men. Empowerment of women means women's ability to face the challenges of life and not the ability to throw family life for flimsy reasons. Women ability to use the resources for the betterment of their life and not to use the laws available to wreck vengeance on their partners with whom they have lived together and had children.

Women have to progress in life with positive attitude, without attempting suicide and not to use their intelligence, to drive men towards suicide. Women's ability should be used to take proper decisions about their life and not to use that ability to break up the families. We should remove excessive dependency on men which force them to suffer in silence, but it surely is not meant for development of superiority complex and to take decisions to live as single parent without adjusting to small differences in day today life.

Conclusions: Education is a key which improves the entire life of a person. Education is tool which has a significant impact on women's empowerment. Education has played a significant role to improve the status of women in society. It is a most important dimension of five dimensions of women empowerment. Other dimensions are closely attached with Education, it plays most important role to achieve the key of other dimension of women empowerment. The status of women empowerment is not constructive in India. The legal and constitutional rights provided to women to empower them are being misused too in India like cases of demand of dowry, sexual harassment /exploitation, domestic violence, the benefits of women reservations in local self govt institutions are being benefited by the males in their families etc. The Global Gender gap index clearly proved that India is lagging behind in each and every sphere of gender equality. Perhaps we could achieve some of goals in political sphere where we really empowered them by providing 33% reservations in local self institutions like rural and urban local bodies. But women are still deceived by the male dominance chauvinism as the women are deprived to avail 33% reservations in state legislative assemblies and in Indian Parliament. If we could achieve this goal we would be at number one in political sphere in the world. But some of the constitutional and legal rights which were given to establish gender equality is being misused by the aware, literate and economically well to women. Where, one can think to stop the empowerment process of women in India.

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