WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

There are always a number of elements in the society which are deprived of their basic rights in every society, state and nation, but these elements lack in the awareness of their rights. If we enlist such elements from the society, then women would top this list. In fact, women are the most important factor of every society. Even though everybody is aware of this fact, yet nobody is ready to accept this fact. As a result, the importance which used to be given to women is declining in today's society.

As a consequence of this growing tendency of underestimating women such as to make them occupy a secondary position in society and to deprive them of their basic rights, the need for empowering women was felt.

Today we enjoy the benefits of being citizens of a free nation, but we really need to think whether each of the citizens of our country is really free or enjoying freedom, in the true sense of the term. If we consider our country, each Indian citizen is given certain basic rights. The Constitution of our nation doesn't discriminate between men and women, but our society has deprived women of certain basic rights, which were bestowed upon them by our Constitution.

Due to such current situation, it was needed to make women free from all the shackles and to empower them as well. This is nothing but empowerment of women.

Definition:

"Women's empowerment is defined as the process in which their spiritual, political, social or economic status is raised".

This also includes the right to raise their level of confidence regarding their own capabilities.

Empowerment includes the following aspects -

1. The ability to take their own decisions,
2. To take information and have other facilities at their disposal which would enable them to take proper decisions,
3. To have wide choices (Only 'Yes/No' and not 'If/ Else' choices)
4. Firmness while taking collective decisions,

5. Possessing positive way of thinking regarding the ability to bring about transformation,
6. The ability to bring about improvement in one's own capabilities,
7. The competence to modify other's attitudes in a democratic manner,
8. To participate in continuous and self-propagated development process and to take active participation in the transformation process,
9. To control on negative factors and build up a positive image of oneself.

Importance of Education:

If it is said that education is the key to all problems, then it won't be improper. Thinkers have given a number of definitions of education but out of these definitions, the most important definition is that which was put forth by M. Phule. According to M. Phule, "Education is that which demonstrates the difference between what is good and what is evil". If we consider the above definition, we come to know that whatever revolutions that have taken place in our history, education is at the base of them. It is through education that one realizes what is good and what is bad, what is proper and what is not (just and unjust etc.). It is education which gives a vent/ voice to injustice. The 3-fold formula which Dr. B. R. Ambedkar gave to Indian society includes the most important thing to be education. In other words, he has emphasized education.

Importance of Education in women's Empowerment:

Women's empowerment is not limited only for the Indian society. If we consider the global aspect in this regard, we see that women are being given equal treatment in developed nations. In fact, if we take a retrospect of history, we come to know that women have always been given secondary position in society, but the difference between men and women created by the Nature is but natural. It is education through which we realize this fact. When American women realized this, they opposed this injustice which was meted out to them by way of a huge movement, through which they asked for equal rights. For eradicating this injustice, the UNO (United Nations' Organization) framed a Convention / Charter which is called 'The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women' (CEDAW), which further led to the formation of Women's Commission.

Taking an account of this background, we come to know that women's empowerment has now become a topic of global discussion. Seeing all the aspects of this discussion, we will realize that education is the only means for empowerment of women. Therefore, literacy should spread amongst women. The literacy rate amongst the women in the post-Independent Era is not as per the expectations. We, as a nation, dream of becoming a Super Power by 2020. For becoming a Super Power, each element of our society/ nation should contribute in the nation building process. But women, who are a major factor of this society, aren't literate then we can't expect to become a Super Power. Therefore, it is urgent for us to know the importance of women's education, which would, in turn, give an impetus to the process of women's empowerment.

Table 1. Literacy rate in India

Year	Persons	Males	Females
1901	5.3	9.8	0.7
1911	5.9	10.6	1.1
1921	7.2	12.2	1.8
1931	9.5	15.6	2.9
1941	16.1	24.9	7.3
1951	16.7	24.9	7.3
1961	16.7	24.9	7.3
1971	29.5	39.5	18.7
1981	36.2	46.9	24.8
1991	52.1	63.9	39.2
2001	62.38	76.0	54.0
2011	74.4	82.14	65.46

On observing the above table, we come to know that at no point could the literacy rate of women match that of men. As a result, even after 65 years of independence, women occupy a secondary position in our social hierarchy. Inspire of being aware of her position, women can't transform the situation due to lack of education. Therefore, women's empowerment can't be effected unless we persuade the importance of women's education.

OBJECTIVES TO BE ACHIEVED THROUGH WOMEN'S EDUCATION

1. Instead of giving women a secondary position in society, they should be given equal status.
2. To change the approach towards women based on sex discrimination.
3. To induce the feeling of self-dependence amongst women.
4. To make women realize their own potential and to provide guidance to them for developing their potential.
5. To create opportunities for them so that they can prove themselves in society and social institutions.
6. To create certain roles for women in economic, political and social arena.

CONCLUSION

Taking an overview of all the above aspects, we come to know that the transformation is very much needed, accepting at the same time that its pace may be less than the desired pace. For giving this process a momentum, education is indispensable. Hence, if women's empowerment is to be effected, it can be carried out only through the medium of education. Hence, it is of foremost importance to raise the level of education amongst women.

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