

**EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN INDIA****Manju Maria Solomon<sup>1</sup>, Ph.D. & Ashmita Solomon<sup>2</sup>**

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**Introduction**

In the history of human development, woman has been as important as man. In fact, the status, employment and work performed by women in society is the indicator of a nation's overall progress. Without the participation of women in national activities, the social, economical or political progress of a country will be stagnated.

Women and men in India enjoy de jure equality Article 14 of the Constitution of india guarantees equal rights and opportunities to men and women in political, economic and social spheres. The concern for women economic empowerment has been a priority in the agenda of many national, non and governmental as well as international stakeholders in India. Despite the various efforts that were carried on by the government and the different stakeholders concerned with the women economic participation in India, it is evident that there are still various challenges and gaps that still hinder women full participation in the labor market and economic life.

**Education and career training for women****Equality between Men and Women in Education****Historical perspective:**

The most note worthy feature of ancient Indian Education is the Education of women. Women were given equal rights with men in all ways of life, including education. we hear of lady *philosophers and of Brahma Vadinis* who dedicated their whole lives to education. We find that women had the freedom to remain single as well as freedom to choose their life partners. But as conditions changed, when girls started to lose the privileges of education, the marriage age came

down, they lost their equality, came to be considered as mere possessions and by 100 A.D. i.e. Manu's time, they were ascribed completely to dependent status. During the middle ages, seclusion or "Pardah" was added to the existing subordinate and subservient status of women and in course of time, women became completely illiterate and entirely dependent on men- father husband and son, economically socially and culturally. The social reformers of the 19th century tried to use education more to ameliorate the position of women socially; they were able to awaken the consciousness of the nation to the evils of child marriage, sati, enforced widowhood, dowry system, etc. since the new western education which developed during the 19th century invariably "meant a method of earning" and since women were not required to earn, it was not considered necessary for women to be educated.

### **Women in India**

Indian women generally faced all types of barriers to success like illiteracy, domestic violence, lack of motivation and support and many more. India is a country where man dominance in the society prevails. It is very essential for the harmonious development of the country that women should go hand by hand and shoulder to shoulder with men.

Education is a basic human right that increases the economic, social and political opportunities available to women. It empowers women to take control of their lives conditions as well as that of their families. The Indian government too has expressed a strong commitment towards education for all. Women are found to be economically very poor all over the India. A few women are engaged in services and other activities. So, they need economic power to stand on their own legs on par with men. Other hand, it has been observed that women are found to be

	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991
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less literate than men. According to 2001 census, rate of literacy among men in India is found to

be 76% whereas it is only 54% among women. Thus, increasing education among women is of very important in empowering them.

### **Literacy –**

The	<b>Male</b>	24.9%	34.4%	39.51%	46.74%	63.86%
	<b>Female</b>	7.83%	12.9%	18.44%	24.82%	39.43%
	<b>Total</b>	16.6 %	24.0%	29.45%	36.0%	52.11%

literacy rate went up from about 7% in 1901 to 7.9% in 1951, 18 % in 1971 and 24.88% in 1981. but there is still a wide gap between male and female literacy. This disparity between men's and women's participation in education becomes greater at the more advanced levels of education.

**Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru** once said –“To awaken the people, it is women who must be awakened ;once she is on the move, the family moves, the villages moves and the nation moves.”

Higher education strengthens the growing women power providing them a better place to locate them and to define their own identity and recognition. towards the uplift of women ,numerous colleges and universities have been set up concerning miscellaneous women issues.

**The National Policy on Education** declares the educational policy for women with a raised voice and in an enthusiasm through these words:

Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. In order to neutralize the accumulated distortions of the past, there will be a well- conceived edge in favour of women.

The National Education system will play a positive ,interventionist role in the empowerment of women.(IV.10)

Higher education definitely raises women's status whether she contribute in the income of the family or not. She can be at par with men. Majority of the women in our country are uneducated that is why they are suppressed .It is the duty of school teachers to tell them that becoming a wife

is not their ultimate goal. Their standing up on their feet and being something is important.

What should be the role of Universities and Colleges in empowerment?

What is our social commitment?

Let us empower our own students, first, by

- ✓ Removing sex bias in our curriculum and by designing course incorporating women's dimensions
- ✓ Emphasizing on the multiple role of women.
- ✓ Developing the ability to think creatively about situations the hurdles to face, possibilities of change etc.
- ✓ .Overcoming social taboos and traditional beliefs.
- ✓ Encouraging late marriages

- ✓ Sensitizing them to laws related to property, marriage, divorce, minimum wages, maternity leave benefit etc.
- ✓ Encouraging them to take careers seriously.
- ✓ Helping them to developing interest in application of science.
- ✓ Educating parents on the importance of making women economically self sufficient

### **Career Training for women**

All over the world, education, is being re shaped for the following reason:

More and more linkages are being developed between education and work: there is a great concern for the rising rates of youth unemployment.

In india, since independence, i.e. 1947, provisions of educational opportunities to women has been an important programme in the educational sector. Between 1951 and 1981 through the percentage of literacy among woman has improved from 7.83% to 24.82%

Usually girls are not taken seriously as careerists as it is considered to be of secondary importance. Marriage is principle determinant of a woman's social position and it is more important to get married to men with high paid jobs. The loss is to the nation, of the work the girls could do and the tremendous disappointment for girls who do not find a rewarding career. Girls who might have been successful architects, lawyers or engineers end up in safe jobs as teachers or nurses.

Very few women happen to be in a position to influence political thinking or the decision making process. There is a great difference between men and women in employment pattern, occupation entered, financial returns and unemployment rates. Women are concentrated in low paid dead – end jobs.

### **Economic Empowerment**

Economic Empowerment as an approach to development and gender equality has acquired greater importance in India and elsewhere over the last decade, perhaps because it appears to be a market compatible approach and hence in consonance with prevalent macro economic policy approaches. It has two aspects, one is income or livelihood. The other part is whether or not women have effective control over this income or livelihood.

Women constitute roughly half of the world's population.. But they are the largest excluded category in almost all respects. They have only 1/10<sup>th</sup> of global income. They own 1/100<sup>th</sup>.of the means of production.

**Educational Women Empowerment** -It means empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process. It means making women aware of their rights and developing a confidence to claim them.

**Economical and occupational empowerment** - It implies a better quality of material life through sustainable livelihoods owned and managed by women. It means reducing their financial dependence on their male counterparts by making them a significant part of human resource.

#### **Government Schemes for women empowerment**

The government programs for women development began as early as 1954 in india but the actual participation began in 1974. At present ,the government of india has over 34 schemes for women. some of these are as follows.

**Ministry for Women & Child Development** - The Ministry for Women & Child Development was established as a department of the Ministry of Human Resource Development in the year 1985 to drive the holistic development of women and children in the country. In 2006 this department was given the status of a Ministry, with the powers to:-Formulate plans, policies and programmes; enacts/ amends legislation, guiding and coordinating the efforts of both governmental and non-governmental organisations working in the field of Women and Child Development.

**National Commission for Women** - The National Commission for Women is a Department within the Ministry of Women and Child Development. It was set up exclusively to 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.

**Mahila Samakhya(MS)Programme** - Launched in 1988 in accordance to the New Education Policy of 1986 ,It aims to integrate formal and non formal education for girls,education schemes for adult women and vocational training for girls and women.

Due to poverty the quality of survival of women life is not satisfactory. Unfortunately in India, women's right to health remain mere rhetoric in many states. The incidence of poverty is customarily sever in rural areas than that of urban areas, among scheduled caste and scheduled

tribes. The government of India made special efforts to increase its support for social sectors a number of schemes aimed at the poor women, particularly poor women in the informal sector. These include the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, Support to training and employment etc.

### **Invisible Works Of Women**

The economic status of women is now accepted as an indicator of a society's stage of development. Women in rural India participated in a variety of economic activities but their potential is under utilized. With standing all social and cultural suppression, a rural women in India shares abundant responsibilities and performs a wide spectrum of duties. In running the family, maintaining the household, attending farm labour, tending domestic animals and extending a helping hand in rural artisanship and handicrafts. Much of women's work never appears in the national statistics. Because it is seen as an extension of their caring and nurturing functions rather than as materially rewarding activity.

### **Conclusion—**

**Swami Vivekananda**, one of the greatest sons of India, quoted that, "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." Therefore, inclusion of "Women Empowerment" as one of the prime goals. Thus, in order to achieve the status of a developed country, India needs to transform its colossal women force into an effective human resource and this is possible only through the empowerment of women.

The change in development policies from the focus on women's active role in production as a means to more efficient development, to the approach of women's empowerment through women organizing for greater self-reliance, has also meant a change in policies for the enhancement of women's economic role. Women empowerment will be real and effective only when they are endowed income and property so that they may stand on their feet and build up their identity in the society.

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