



STILL MILES TO GO ...

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ABSTRACT

Discrimination and inequality always begin at the root level. When a boy goes to school while his sister remains at home because she is a girl, it sows a seed of bias in the boy's head. He believes he is superior simply because he is a boy, and he has no rationale for this belief. When women participate in education by attending schools and colleges with males, the males are more aware of their educational rights and are less likely to acquire a superiority complex. As a result, teaching both men and women promotes the concepts of equality and democracy.

An awakening of women in India is the need of the hour and it can be achieved through education. Women have to be conscious and aware to feel and realize at every step of their life that they are the builders of their nation and the peaceful world. If women cease to be inferiors, men cannot be their superiors. Women still have miles to go to achieve their cherished goal to be on par with men. The situation of women is slowly and gradually improving. A young girl could approach a young boy to win his heart and the two could go out together to view entertainment and sporting events. The presence of women in social and public gatherings is a normal feature now. They can go out to visit their friends and relatives. Women who have more power or more resources invest in their families and their communities.

If women have been regarded as mere market commodities and war prizes or if men have considered women their indispensable partners in a happy home is revealed through social customs and marriage laws. How much freedom a woman is given in society or how often she is allowed to participate in public affairs shows how greatly she may decide what controls her progress and development. Getting education is the fundamental human right of every individual irrespective of gender. Educated women could play a significant role in the progress and development of our country.

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God's greatest gift to humanity is woman. She has the power to create or destroy. There is a saying that "Behind every successful man there is a woman" means men to act as a leader, holding power and being ambitious, while there is a woman who acts a stimulator, playing a plain subordinate role who organizes and plans for him. In Indian society it is always risky to break the tradition.

Patriarchal society orders women to back up and help men in all their works in spite of being educated. They are expected to play a role that is purely behind the screen type. The majority of Indian women, who many a times turn to be the sole bread winner of the family amid-st of poverty and light-less home, dream to bring up their children to be educated, women who do all the household to pay their children's school fee, women who have the willpower to save their alcoholic husbands from drug addiction, women who travel daily in the rushed local trains with their lunch boxes, despite all the efforts, why there continues to be so much of

exploitation, abuse, discrimination, violence and crimes against women? Women's education is critical to the country's entire development. It's similar to an effective medicine that may know how to cure a patient and recover their health. A well-educated woman is capable of managing both her personal and professional lives. "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world" Nelson Mandela. So educated women could do much to transform India on all levels.

Women who have more power or more resources invest in their families and their communities. It's that simple. When men try to limit their power or control their resources, they only hurt themselves in the long run. I like to caught here Melinda Gates (The Times of India, Patna; Tuesday, March 8, 2016) narrates a case study, When Neelam Bhengra's husband wakes up before she does, he makes the tea. It wasn't always this way, Neelam told me when I met her last year in Himachal Pradesh.

Things changed after she joined a self-help group and started getting better yields from her crops. With surpluses came more self-confidence and a better standard of living for her family, and Neelam earned more respect and authority in her home. Now, her teenage sons boast about her. Her husband sometimes goes to collect water. So educated and empowered women transform society. Women's empowerment can't be just about women; it also has to be about the men - the fathers, brothers, husbands and sons - with whom they live their lives.

In many cases, it is men who uphold harmful social norms that stand in women's way. Their husbands determine how, or whether, they will plan their family. Women don't have a say in so many aspects of their lives, and when women are silenced, it's usually because their fathers, brothers or husbands speak for them. The fact is that when women are empowered, everyone benefits, including men.

In India during the Rig Vedic Age women enjoyed an exceptionally high status. At that time women were not only their husbands' life-long partners and companions in weal and woe, but real partners in all their activities. Women's entry into the husbands' homes were regarded as an auspicious event bringing blessings to the entire household. The girls, like boys, had access to higher education. It was a necessary accomplishment for being well placed in life.

By the end of the ancient period women's social and domestic life had generally suffered a radical change and they had come to occupy a position of inferiority both at home and in society, this situation continued till, under the impact of western ideas, a movement began for women's emancipation. Gradually opportunities for education and avenues of work started opening up for women.

Women need to realize their dignity and privilege, and make full use of it for themselves and for the progress and growth of our motherland. But men have delighted in enslaving them and women have proved willing slaves. Women need to realize their dignity, they need to open their eyes. They need to get equal treatment. The face of India needs drastic change. Indian society's preference for a boy and general neglect of a girl child needs to be transformed. The daughters and sons need to be treated equally. We can see there is a jubilation over the birth of a son and for mourning over that of a daughter. Both of them are gifts from God. They have an equal right to live and keep the world going. The mind set of both requires change. This change can be brought only by Education.

Women could play a significant role in the progress and development of our country. An awakening of women in India is the need of the hour and it can be achieved through education. Women and men are one, their problems must be one in essence. They must complement each other. The one can't live without the other. However, at some point there is a bifurcation. For example, the duty of motherhood will always be undertaken by women. Women have poured into the workforce, schools, colleges and universities. What has not changed is their place at home. Women want men to pitch in more at home. Social media and the text books need to portray housework as a mutual responsibility. There is a need to change the traditional mindset of both men and women.

Women have to be conscious and aware to feel and realize at every step of their life that they are the builders of their nation and the peaceful world. If women cease to be inferiors, men cannot be their superiors. We still have miles to go to achieve our cherished goal to empower women. Empowerment of women would mean equipping women to be economically independent, self-reliant, have a positive self-esteem to enable them to face any difficult situation and they should be able to participate in developmental activities. The empowered women should be able to participate in the process of decision making.

As someone said "Education will be the only factor which would play the most crucial role in empowering women". The status of women depends upon economic power, the extent of women's access to education determines their position in the hierarchy of prestige. Education plays a significant role in changing the general societal attitude toward women. With education, both women and men can develop their personalities, thus enabling them to fulfil their economic, political and cultural functions. Education helps to bring equality in the family and society.

In the twentieth century, the need arose to train women as teachers and nurses with the expansion of schools and medical facilities. These two professions had to be incorporated in a general plan of female education that went well beyond the mere uplift of motherhood.

The Independence of India in 1947 and the preparation of its Constitution in 1949 built a different conceptual framework for women's education. Declared equal with men, women had to play equal and multiple roles in the political, social, and economic life of the nation. This new attitude led the central government to appoint various committees to frame the goals of national education. In 1959, the central government created a National Council for the Education of Women, and a special unit in the Ministry of Education began to concentrate on the issues of female education in both urban and rural areas. The state government did the same. India has made significant progress.

Although changes associated with industrialization and urbanization have dealt a severe blow to many of the time-honoured ideas about women, marriage, and the sanctity of the joint-families, urban society has not uniformly adjusted to these changes. Certain families have shown radical progressiveness in allowing their women to seek education and employment both, while some have limited their girls to education only. Educated women want their aspirations for self-expression and self-actualization to be fulfilled. They take up jobs, but their husbands complain as it leads to neglect of domestic duties even though they enjoy the earnings

of their wives. Some men do not even approve of free mixing of their wives with other men at a job which, in turn, raises problems of marital adjustment.

Processes of industrialization, urbanization, and secularization, have brought about socio-political changes in the attitudes of educated urban women toward marriage and their own status. Women are now adopting a personal conception of marriage which is fast replacing the religious conception. More and more educated women consider self-respect and the development of personality as necessary goals of life.

Education is an important tool of women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, to care-front their traditional role and change their life. Education of women is the most powerful tool to change their position in society. Women education in India has been a need of the hour, as education is the foundation stone for the empowerment of women. Education also brings a reduction in inequalities and functions as a means of improving their status within the family and developing the concept of participation.

Women education in India plays a very important role in the overall development of the country. It not only helps in the development of half of the human resources, but in improving the quality of life at home and outside. Education means modification of behaviour in every aspect, such as mentality, outlook, attitude, etc. Educated women not only tend to promote the education of their children, but also provide better guidance to all their children.

The word Education means “the process of imparting knowledge, skills and judgment between right and wrong”. In this age, education is one important tool to differentiate between human beings and animals. It doesn't only teach us skills, imparting knowledge but also addresses how we can live in a diverse society. Education is important for both men and women. But Women Education! This word might give a sense of education to women but it actually means “Education to a Nation” as it is commonly said: Educating a woman is like educating the entire family.

Education plays a very important role in our lives but women's education is more important as being an important tool of achieving good self-respect. There are still some deprived areas where women are meant to live a domestic life only, they are not allowed to get education has become the culture of some of the societies. In few of the areas, women are allowed to get education but they have limited options to choose and pursue their professional career. They don't know that other professional careers do exist for a female beyond the medical career and we lack the quota of female seats for various jobs. People who don't know the worth of educating a woman do suffer a lot. These days education is more likely to have degrees but it includes your ethics, norms, culture, and behaviour too.

Women are strong until they don't want to be weak. They can make each and everything come about as planned and improvise it accordingly. Education enhances women's level of health as it enhances their level of awareness regarding a healthy lifestyle. Women have a lot of things to manage but only if they are educated will they be managing them in a proper way. Women who receive education are less likely to marry very young and more likely to lead a wholesome life. Educated women earn higher income, participate in the decisions that affect them most and build a better future for themselves and for their families. Education strengthens economies and reduces inequality.

A large number of empirical studies have revealed that increase in women's education boosts their wages. Increase in the level of female education improves human development outcomes such as child survival, health and schooling. Lower female education has a negative impact on economic growth as it lowers the average level of human capital. Developmental Economists argue that in developing countries female education reduces fertility, infant mortality and increases children's education. Gender inequality in education directly and significantly affects economic growth. "Education is proven as an educational weapon for our next generations." It is the key factor for women empowerment, prosperity, development and welfare. Education provides more strength to women. Such strength comes from the process of empowerment and empowerment will come from education.

Women education in India plays a very important role in the overall development of the country. It not only helps in the development of half of the human resources, but in improving the quality of life at home and outside (Suguna, 2011). There are an estimated 33.3 million Indians enrolled in higher education courses in India, according to the HRD ministry's All India Survey on Higher education report for 2015. Of these, 17.9 million are boys and 15.4 million are girls as of 2014-2015.

Improving girls' educational levels has been demonstrated to have clear impacts on the health and economic future of young women, which in turn improves the prospects of their entire community. After the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Basic education is more than an end in itself; it is the foundation for lifelong learning and human development (Ramachandran, 1998)

"Women are the backbone of society". Mahatma Jyotirao Phule (1827, Pune) was a real philanthropist. He was the one to open first girl school in India and credited with opening first home for widows of the upper caste and a home for new-born girl children so that they can be saved from female infanticide.

Some important thoughts are:

- "If you educate a man you educate an individual but if you educate a woman you educate a family (nation)". Dr. James Kwegyir Aggrey
- Education is one thing no one can take away from you. – Elin Nordegren
- When girls are educated, their countries become stronger and more prosperous. – Michelle Obama
- Weakness, fear and hopelessness died. Strength, power and courage was born. – Malala Yousafzai
- We want the education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one's own feet. – Swami Vivekananda
- "The seeds of success in every nation on earth are best planted in women and children". **Joyce Banda**
- "Education, leading to financial independence, has surely made women more empowered" Sudha Murty
- "The education of women is the best way to save the environment" E.O. Wilson.

“The content of a book holds the power of education and it is with this power that we can shape our future and change lives” Malala Yousafzai

Objectives to improve women education: It is obvious that the above objectives can only be achieved by, first and foremost, ensuring that women acquire quality education. When this is done, the knowledge, skills, attitudes and other potentials that are required by women for full participation in national development will be developed. To get education is the fundamental human right of every individual irrespective of gender. The objectives to improve women education:

- To have a healthy and happy family life
- To become better human being
- To become a successful mother and a responsible citizen
- To increase the living standard
- To motivate her kids to study further and wish them to live a better life than hers
- To promote self-respect
- To raise the status of women
- To become aware of their rights
- To fight against social evils such as domestic violence, demand for dowry, low wages etc.
- To help women to fight their own fears and feelings of inadequacy or inferiority
- Educate women in all round development that is mentally, socially, physically, psychologically, religiously and economically etc.

Advantages of woman education:

Social improvement: Women’s education leads to important social development. For example decreased fertility rates and lower infant mortality rates

Gender equality: Women are a part of an unprivileged section of society. Education helps them to seal a gender gap in society. Coeducation promotes children to give respect to females.

Economic productivity: Through women education the country can attain the growth in the economic level and it also raises the GDP of a nation.

Decrease in infant humanity: The educated women understand her family situation and take suitable and better decisions in the family to avoid the dispute among the family members. Women education also brings down the infant humanity rate in India.

Improved living standard: Education will automatically increase the employment opportunity for a woman. A well-educated woman has the possibility of getting a good job and better standard of living.

Strengthening of democracy: Education creates awakening among women which causes enlarged contribution in politics which eventually leads to strengthening of democracy. They could protect their rights through mobilization.

The need of the hour is to treat women with openness, respect, acceptance and tenderness. In this way we can uphold the dignity of women in the family, society and in the country at large. In all spheres of life women assume full and proper roles.

The educated girls of today become the women leaders of tomorrow. Investing on women and providing equitable educational opportunities are not just decisions that influence the day-to-day lives of women. They can provide women with lifelong skills. The next wave of women

who attend school and learn will receive skills to improve their future livelihoods and in turn champion education for their daughters. The power of women's education shine through in families, in communities and in life. However, the opportunities must be present and ripe for the taking.

In many traditional societies, women are prevented from attaining their full potential because of lower priority placed on educating daughters. Families may also have concerns about the school fees, women being taught by male teachers and women's safety away from home. The overwhelming evidence of the benefits of educating women have been understood by the present society. Household surveys in developing countries have consistently shown that women with more education have smaller, healthier and better-educated families. Educated women are more likely to take care of their health, desire fewer children and educate them well, which, in turn, makes it more likely their children will survive and thrive into adulthood. When women earn more money, they are more likely to invest it in their children and households, enhancing family wealth and well-being.

Advances in women's' education worldwide have been a success story in development. In countries with high levels of school enrolment, women often fare better than men. Still, women account for two-thirds of the world's illiterate adults, because older women are less likely to have attended school than their younger counterparts. They are also much more likely to be illiterate if they are poor and live in rural areas. Literacy programs and continuing education exist, but the efforts are not systematically reported across countries. In addition, women are disadvantaged when it comes to technical and vocational education, in fields such as science and technology that have long been dominated by men. Because the gender gap is wider at higher levels of education, it will not be enough for women to merely sign up for school; they need to stay in school.

Governments, educators and communities must address issues such as gender stereotypes that reinforce women's lower status, poor school quality, and early marriage and childbearing, which often cut short women's education. Also, the mismatch between education and the skills needed for today's workforce must be corrected. These steps may ensure that women reap the greatest benefits from education. The road ahead is long and hard - but full of promises for women.

Reference:

1. "Women in India", Tripta Desai
2. "Empowering the Indian woman", Promilla Kapur.
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4. From Google