



## Education as a Tool to Women Empowerment

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*Women play a major role in a country's political, social cultural, educational and economic development. Empowering or entrusting power upon them means allowing and accepting their full participation in all realms of life for better families, society and nation. But the scene has not always been the same. In ancient times, women enjoyed equal status and respect in the society. Vedas are proof to the fact that women were scholars and sages, and enjoyed power and equal status in the vedic age. However, the Brahmanic age saw a setback in the status of women, which further deteriorated during the Muslim rule. Evil practices and discrimination were seen in the form of purdah system, sati, child marriage, denial of education to girls, besides many others. Again, female inferiority was preached during the British rule. But with the dawn of freedom, an urgent need for feminine emancipation was felt. It was established that without the support and strength of women folk, political, economic, domestic and educational upliftment of the country was not possible. Therefore educating women became one of the priorities of free India.*

As Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru put it 'If you educate a man, you educate a individual, however if you educate a woman, you educate a whole family. Women empowered means mother India empowered'. Education is one of the most important means of empowering women with knowledge, skills and self confidence. This holds special significance for women as it brings about a positive influence

upon families and generations. It helps eradicate poverty, health problems, rigid views and positively improves the family atmosphere. Educating women also helps in spreading across the message of smaller families, healthy habits, equal status and justice. Thus the impact can be seen in the form of economic growth, peace, good nutrition and reduction in mortality rate. Education also plays a crucial role in helping the women to make personal achievements and build a career to the best of their skills and capacities.

Education also helps in bringing down atrocities against women as they have the strength and knowledge to fight for justice and their rights.

Women were earlier confined to playing roles of child rearing, teaching children, maintain households, carry out family chores etc. But the newer policies and directions of government have created their space in various fields such as business, banking, education, industry and defence. The government has played a significant role in providing education to women. Ever since independence, the strategies of the Government have been to provide social development, economic empowerment and gender justice. These are kept in mind while formulating the five year plans. It has focussed on various areas that may facilitate empowerment such as self employment, vocationalisation, reservation in tuition fees and studies and special quota in jobs, social security, legal protection and professional training.



For educating girls 2180 residential Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Schools have been sanctioned and are providing elementary education to 1,82,000 school girls. The National Policy on Education 1986 triggered the Mahila Samakhya programme which aimed at women empowerment. Operation Blackboard, national policy on education, navodaya and Kendriya Vidyalaya are efforts of the government to provide free education to the girl child. The efforts since then have shown a tremendous increase in the literacy rate all over the country ever since. For vocational training, community polytechnic, shramik Vidyaiths etc. are set up. The UGC encourages institutions to take up research projects in the area of women's studies by providing necessary funds. Women's studies centres are set up in various universities and colleges.

A greater focus has been given to issues relating to women through creation of an independent ministry of women and child development. Special welfare schemes for women's welfare have been rising every year. It is ensured that 33% of the beneficiaries of all government schemes are women and girl children.

The 73rd amendment in our constitution ensures reservation of not less than one third of seats in the panchayat. The womens reservation Bill 2010 also aims in giving more political space for women and allows them to actively participate in the process.

As per the world bank Report Women accounted for 94% of total employment in dairy sector, 51% in forest based small scale industries and 48% in the agriculture sector. This does ensure that empowerment of women and financial independence is on the rise. Even

within the defence forces, all women officers can hold ranks and the short service commission tenure has been increased.

Swashakti, Swayamsiddha, Swawlamban, STEP, construction of womens hostels, rehabilitation centres, counseling cells, Women technical training institutes, Mahilla Samridhi Yojna, Indra Mahila Yojna, Rashtriya Mahila Kosh are a few of the many schemes monitored by Government to facilitate empowerment of women.

Now that women have regained their status and glory, their contribution can be seen in all areas. The success stories around us, make us to believe that women are gaining the right to take decisions. Their role in all the sectors is visible and their participation in the countries economic, social cultural educational development can be felt.

#### References :

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