

Impact Factor - 6.261

ISSN - 2348-7143

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH FELLOWS ASSOCIATION'S
RESEARCH JOURNEY
Multidisciplinary International E-research Journal

PEER REFREED & INDEXED JOURNAL
February-2019 Special Issue - 132

**'Women Empowerment and
Sustainable Development : A Perspective'**

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This Journal is indexed in :

- University Grants Commission (UGC)
- Scientific Journal Impact Factor (SJIF)
- Cosmoc Impact Factor (CIF)
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- International Impact Factor Services (IIFS)

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- Chief & Executive Editor



Education and Women Empowerment: A Study with Reference to Legislative And Judicial Efforts.

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Abstract:

This research article attempts to study the role played by education in empowerment of Indian women, along with efforts which have been made by legislative and judicial organs of the state. We examine in our day to day life how women become offended by various social malpractices, and reason behind this is the lack of awareness of her regarding her rights. Education is a good solution to solve problems relating to women and improve her political, social and economical condition. Basically women are considered as indigent section of society who requires special efforts by state machinery for development. In this regard central and state legislatures also judiciary is making honest and wise efforts but due to lack of social awareness and willingness this efforts are falling shorts.

In spite of the reformative movements, legislative provisions, reservations, protective discrimination, constitutional guarantees, policies, plans, programme for her empowerment on one hand has not made expected desirable changes, even after the seven decades of our freedom. The researcher in this article would reflect on, how education is plays a vital role in the empowerment of women and would also review the efforts made by legislative and judicial personnel to fulfil the Constitutional mandates.

Keywords: Constitution, Education, Empowerment, Right, Women etc

Introduction:

"To educate your women first and leave themselves, they will tell you what reforms are necessary"- Swami Vivekanand

Empowerment of women is basically the method of up-liftment of economic, social and political position of women, the conventionally underprivileged ones, in the civilization. It is the course of guarding them against all forms of evils. Women empowerment involves the building up of a society, a political environment, wherein women can breathe without the fear of oppression, exploitation, apprehension, discrimination and the general feeling of persecution which goes with being a woman in a traditionally male dominated structure.

Education is milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to respond challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life. Education can bring phenomenal change in her life which can enhance her confidence, bring awareness about their rights, reduce dependency, better upbringing of new generation etc.



What is meant by Empowerment?

There are various approaches to define empowerment. It is an active and multidimensional process which encompasses several multi-reinforcing components that begin with and supported by economic independence.⁴¹ The general conceptualisation of empowerment reflects as: "The term empowerment refers to a range of activities from individual self-assertion to collective resistance, protest and mobilization that challenge basic power relations. For individuals and groups where class, caste, ethnicity and gender determine their access to resources and power, their empowerment begins when they not only recognize the systemic forces that oppress them, but act to change existing power relationships. Empowerment, therefore, is a process aimed at changing the nature and direction of systemic forces that marginalize women and other disadvantaged sectors in a given context. "It is giving lawful power or authority to act. If people were empowered they would be able to participate in the planning, execution and implementation of developmental schemes. Apart from Political Empowerment, Economic and Social Empowerment are crucial. Empowerment and development are closely related. Empowerment leads to development, which further leads to greater empowerment".⁴² Empowerment has various facets such as social empowerment, political empowerment, educational empowerment, political and legal empowerment etc.

Education and Women Empowerment:

"If you educate a man you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family, Women empowered means mother India empowered"- Pandit Jawaharlal Neharu.

The concept 'Women Empowerment' was first discussed at International Women's Conference at Nairobi in 1985, it was also deliberated in the conference that education is milestone of women empowerment as it gives them the strength of facing the challenges ahead, According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia, education in the largest sense is any act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character, or physical ability of an individual. In its technical sense, education is the process by which society deliberately transmits accumulated knowledge, skills and values from one generation to another.

Women empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender or economic strength of individuals and communities of women. Educated women not only tend to promote education of their girl children, but also can provide better guidance to all their children. Moreover educated women can also help in the reduction of infant mortality rate and growth of the population.

41 Role of education in women empowerment' Lata Prasad and Amit gautam University News,53(14)April06/12/2015

42 Babu, C. Sylendra (2007) "You too can become an I.P.S. Officer I.P.S.", Krishna Press, Chennai, P 133



Historical Perspective of Women Education:

The status of women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennia.⁴³ Women during the early Vedic period enjoyed equal status with men in all aspects of life.⁴⁴ In olden period women had access to education but they had gradually lost this right. However, in the British period there was revival of interest in women's education in India. During this period, various socio religious movements led by eminent persons like Mahatma Phule, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar emphasized on women's education in India.

After independence also this position has not changed. Recent statistics shows that there is an increase in women education still the female literacy rate in India is less than the male literacy rate.⁴⁵ Far fewer girls than boys are enrolled in school, and many girls drop out. In urban India, girls are nearly on a par with boys in terms of education. However, in rural India, girls continue to be less educated than boys. According to the National Sample Survey Data of 1997, only the states of Kerala and Mizoram have approached universal female literacy. According to scholars, the major factor behind improvements in the social and economic status of women in Kerala is literacy.⁴⁶

According to a 1998 report by the U.S. Department of Commerce, the chief barriers to female education in India are inadequate school facilities (such as sanitary facilities), shortage of female teachers and gender bias in the curriculum (female characters being depicted as weak and helpless).⁴⁷ The literacy rate is lower for women compared to men, the literacy rate is 60.6% for women, while for men it is 81.3%. The 2011 census, however, indicated a 2001-2011 decadal literacy growth of 9.2%, which is slower than the growth seen during the previous decade.

Legislative efforts:

Need for empowerment arose due to centuries of domination and discrimination done by men over women; women are the suppressed lot. They are the target of varied types of violence and discriminatory practices done by men all over the world. India is no different. Women's rights under the Constitution of India mainly include equality, dignity, and freedom from discrimination; additionally, India has various statutes governing the rights of women.

-Constitution of India:

Preamble: The Preamble to the Constitution of India assures justice, social, economic and political; equality of status and opportunity and dignity to the individual. Thus it treats both men and women equal.

43 "Rajya Sabha passes Women's Reservation Bill". The Hindu. Chennai, India. 10 March 2010. Retrieved 25 August 2010.

44 Mishra, R. C. (2006). Women in India: towards gender equality. New Delhi: Authorspress. ISBN 9788172733063

45 Singh, Shweta (2007). "Schooling girls and the gender and development paradigm: quest for an appropriate framework for women's education". The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences. 2 (3): 1-12.

46 Menon-Sen, Kalyani; Kumar, A.K. Shiva (2001). "Women in India: How Free? How Equal?"

47 Velkoff, Victoria A. (October 1998). Women of the World: Women's Education in India



Article 14: Equality before law The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.

Article 15: Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth-

(1) The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them

(3) Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any **special provision** for women and children

(4) Nothing in this article or in clause (2) of Article 29 shall prevent the State from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes

Article 21 A: The Constitution (Eighty-sixth Amendment) Act, 2002 inserted Article 21-A in the Constitution of India to provide free and compulsory education of all children in the age group of six to fourteen years as a Fundamental Right.

Article 45: Provision for free and compulsory education for children: The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years.

-The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009: which represents the consequential legislation envisaged under Article 21-A, means that every child including boy or girl has a right to full time elementary education of satisfactory and equitable quality in a formal school.

Judicial Efforts:

Education is the very foundation of good citizenship and it only can provide dignified life to human being.

As one of the important organ of the State Judiciary is playing important role to safeguard rights of women specifically in matter of education. It has to play a creative role to give effect to the preamble message of socio-economic justice.

In the case of *Kharak Singh v. State of Uttar Pradesh*⁴⁸, the Supreme Court quoted and held that:

By the term "life" as here used something more is meant than mere animal existence. The inhibition against its deprivation extends to all those limbs and faculties by which life is enjoyed. The provision equally prohibits the mutilation of the body by amputation of an arm or leg or the pulling out of an eye, or the destruction of any other organ of the body through which the soul communicates with the outer world.

In *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India*⁴⁹, the Supreme Court gave a new dimension to Art. 21 and held that the right to live is not merely a physical right but includes within its ambit the right to live with human dignity. Elaborating the same view, the Court in *Francis Coralie v. Union Territory of Delhi*⁵⁰, observed that: "The right to live includes the right to live with human dignity and all that goes along with it, viz., the bare necessities of life such as adequate nutrition, clothing and shelter over the head and facilities for reading writing and

48 AIR 1963 SC 1295

49 1978 AIR 597, 1978 SCR (2) 621

50 1981 AIR 746, 1981 SCR (2) 516



expressing oneself in diverse forms. With regard to the education, judiciary has declared in many cases that right to education is fundamental right which flows from right to life and personal liberty.

In *Brown v. Board of Education*⁵¹ Warren C.J. cogently observed that education is perhaps the most important function of state and local Government. Child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of education. Such an opportunity, where the State has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms. In *Bapuji Education Association v. State* Justice Rama held that the right of an individual to have and/or to impart education is one of the most valuable and sacred right that among various types of personal liberty.⁵² In *Anand Vardhan Chandel v. University of Delhi*⁵³ The Delhi High Court in its unanimous decision held that Right to Education was a Fundamental Right under our Constitution.

In *Mohini Jain v. State of Karnataka*⁵⁴, popularly known as the "capitation fee case; The Supreme Court has held that Right to Education is a Fundamental Right under Article 21 of the Constitution which cannot be denied to a citizen by charging higher fees known as the capitation fee. It was ruled that Right to Education flowed directly from Right to Life. The court observed that Right to Life under Article 21 and the dignity of individual could not be assured unless Right to Education accompanied it.

In many other cases hon'ble higher Judiciary has held that, the State is under an obligation to make endeavour to provide educational facilities at all levels to its citizens. There are other important cases where court has emphasised the importance of education to weaker sections of the society.

Conclusion:

Education facilitates an increase in knowledge and also widens the mental horizon of the person. Education reduces inequality in gender perspectives which was basically aimed at by the draftsmen of our 'law of the land' - Constitution of India. Women education plays a vital role in the sustainable development of the country.

Women who constitute half a human population have been discriminated harassed and exploited irrespective of the country to which they belong, un-mind of the religion which they profess and oblivious of the timeframe in which they live.⁵⁵

As of 2018, the President of India, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha have been women. However, women in India continue to face numerous problems. . On the part of the government the strong political will to implement them to its true spirit is also must. We must not forget that education is the only input for the economic, Social and cultural development. Education is a primary solution to empower the women in India.

51 (1953) 347 US 483 at p. 494; 98 low Ed. 873 at p. 880.

52 AIR 1986 Kar. 119.

53 AIR 1978 Delhi p. 308

54 AIR (1992) SC 1858 (kuldip Singh and R.M Sahai. JJ.)

55 Dr. K.C. Jena, "Heirship of Women under Indian Personal Laws. A comparative study"



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4. Mishra, R. C. (2006). Women in India: towards gender equality. New Delhi: Authorspress. ISBN 9788172733063
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