

Education and Women Empowerment



* **Manisha**

Empowerment is a term widely used in the context of 'development' particularly, women's development. Empowerment in a nutshell, is a way of defining, challenging and overcoming barriers in one's life through which the individual increases her ability to shape her life and environment.

Empowerment implies:-

- * A state of mind and attitude of a person. An empowered woman has a positive self image and takes an active part in decision making related to herself, her family and the community.
- * Greater access to knowledge and resources, greater autonomy in decision making and greater ability to overcome restrictions and constraints imposed by customs, beliefs and practices,
- * Self confidence and understanding of the importance of human values, rights and privileges, conducive for a more dignified and satisfactory of life.

Jawahar lal Nehru once said " Education of a boy is the education of one person, but the education of a girl is the education of entire family". Education of a women leads to a better human being as a mother, than a better family and ultimately an ideal society to a progressive nation. A progressive nation is one where all the people of the country irrespective of sex, religion, caste, and colour are economically, socially, culturally, politically and through all thoughts are independent. An egalitarian society can be an ideal nation. Hence to make a progressive egalitarian all women must be educated and empowered.

Women's empowerment can be achieved only through meeting the gender needs and interests. Education, which is the most dynamic factor of development is the only tool for realizing empowerment. It is also a productive investment. It brings about conscientisation which helps individuals to perceive, interpret, criticize and finally transform their environment.

Women are partners in development. They can play a more positive and active role in the development if they are given relevant education and training. They need to be enabled to use improved technology in their daily activities. As the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 has indicated, for full development of our human resources, for the improvement of human po-

tential and for moulding the character of children during their more impressionable years, education of women is of a paramount importance. Because of its multiplier effect on posterity, education of women must be given priority in national plans.

The NPE had pointed out clearly that every education institution should by 1995, take up active programmes of women's development built around a study and awareness of the women's predicament. Such efforts are necessary for the promotion of communication and organization among women.

The Programme of Action for implementation of NPE(POA) spells out the meaning of women's empowerment:

"Women become empowered through collective reflection and decision making. The parameters of empowerment are:

- ___ Building a positive self-image and self-confidence
- ___ Developing ability to think critically
- ___ building up group cohesion and fostering decision making,
- ___ ensuring equal participation in the process of bringing about social change, and
- ___ providing the wherewithal for economic independence....."

The programme entails the following:

- 1) A phased time bound programme of elementary education for girls, particularly upto primary stage by 1990 and up to the elementary stage by 1995.
- 2) A phased time bound programme of adult education for women in the age group 15-35 by 1995.
- 3) Increased women's access to vocational, technical, professional education and existing and emergent technologies, and
- 4) Review and re-organization of educational activities to ensure that they make a substantial contribution towards women's equality, and creation of appropriate cells/units therefor.

" Education is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development of process."

___ IPCD Programme of Action, Paragraph 4.2

Education is important for everyone, but it is especially significant for girls and women. This is true not only because education is an entry point to other

opportunities, but also because the educational achievements of women can have ripple effects within the family and across generations. Investing in girls' education is one of the most effective way to reduce poverty. Investments in secondary school education for girls yields especially high dividends.

The women's equality is essential for the overall growth of the society. Further, the women's equality can be achieved through education so that they are in a position to develop the critical under-standings of all the things around them.

The National Policy for Empower of Women 2001 outlines three policy approaches:

- * Judicial/Legal empowerment- by making the legal system responsive and gender sensitive for women's need.
- * Economic empowerment- by mainstreaming gender perspectives in the development process, enhancing women's capacities and access to economic opportunities.

Social empowerment- through focused efforts on education, health and nutrition.

In the recent years women have made their mark in different walks of life and are competing successfully with men despite of social, psychological and economic barriers. Today, women are changing the face of modern economy, they are at the fore front every sector particularly in the service sector which is the fastest growing sector of economy. There has been a

significant growth in women entrepreneurship with women now starting new adventures at higher rate than men. According to latest data from the Census Bureau and the Small Business Administration (SBA'S) office of the Advocacy, there are about 6.2 million Women owned firms today employing about 9.2 million people contributing and 1.5 trillion in revenue to the U.S. Economy.

In spite of the fact, women are the most deprived and socially discriminated in the society in the name of gender and treated as sex object and commodity. Thus education is very important for the development of the women and society. Feminists believe that education is an agent of secondary socialization that helps to enforce patriarchy. The concept of 'cultural transmission' shows how culture, and in particular expectations of the genders, can be transmitted from one generation to next.

Conclusion:-

Women education no doubt is vital for the growth and development of the family and society as whole, but it is a matter of fact that vast majority of women through out the globe continue to be far below than men. It is rightly believed that education of a man means education of one individual, but education of a women means education of the entire family. In order to promote social, economic and political development, education of women is to be given top priority everywhere at every level.

** M.Ed Student, Dayawanti College of Education (Pada) Gurgaon.*

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