

Women Education in India: Need and Barriers

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Education is the process of becoming critically aware of one's reality in a manner that leads to effective action upon it. An educated man/woman understands his/her world well enough to deal with it effectively. Education is important for everyone but it is especially significant for girls and women. Women's education is an instrument for liberation of Indian society. In the past, women did not receive any education at all. They were not allowed to come out of the four walls of their houses. Domestic works were their only education.

During the British rule in India some noble social thinkers of the time paid their attention to the education of women in our country. Raja Ram Mohan Ray, Ishwara Chandra Vidyasagar was famous reformers who gave emphasis on the education of women. They put forth a very strong argument. Man and women are like the two sides of a coin. Without one, the other cannot exist. If women are uneducated the future generations will be uneducated for this reason the Greek warrior Napoleon once said, "Give me a few educated mothers, I shall give you a heroic race."

Education enables women to acquire basic skills and abilities and foster a value system which is conducive to raising their status in society. Recognising these facts, great emphasis has been laid on Women's education in the five year plans. The first five year plan advocate the need for adopting special measure for solving the problems of women's education. It held that "Women must have the same opportunities as men for taking all kinds of works this presupposes that they get equal facilities so that their entry into the professions and public services is in no way prejudiced."

NEED FOR WOMEN EDUCATION

Education for girls has a strong and very important effect on the role of women in society. Women empowerment can only be achieve through the provision of adequate and functional education to women folk. This is crucial because no matter how rich or vast a nation is, without an effective, efficient, adequate and functional education for all its citizens which is relevant to its immediate needs, goals and objectives, such a nation would find it difficult to stand its own. Napoleon was once asked, what the great

need of France was. He answered, "Nation's progress is impossible without Trained and educated mothers. If the women of my country are not educated, about half of the people will be ignorant."

In the spirit of Universal Basic Education (UBE) provision of formal and functional education is needed for the women folk, because :

1. It would empower them to know and ask for their rights to education, health, shelter, food, clothing etc.
2. It would empower them to fight against every form of discrimination against their folk, assert themselves about their right to equal treatment.
3. It would enable women to take decisions and accept responsibilities for taking such decisions concerning themselves.
4. It would give economic power to the women and thereby enable them to contribute their quota to the economic growth of nation.
5. It would empower the women scientifically through exposure to science and technological education for the challenges of the present technological age and information computer technology break through unfolding worldwide.
6. It would help women to reduce maternal and infant mortality through improved nutrition, improved child rearing practices, health care and prevention against killer disease.
7. It would avail women with the opportunity of participating keenly in the world of sophisticated politics and governance as enlighten citizens.

The need for women's education is also informed by the fact that purposeful occupational achievement and satisfaction is ensured by deep self-awareness and understanding which can only be achieved through provision of effective and functional

education. Education is milestone to women empowerment because it enables them to confront their traditional role and change their life so that we can't neglect the importance of education and women empowerment.

BARRIERS TO WOMEN EDUCATION

The education of girls is lagging behind than boys at all levels of school education. Their enrolment rate is low and dropout rate is higher than boys. Many girls leave schools even without completing elementary education. There are many socio, cultural, economic and educational barriers, which hinder their participation in education. Some of these barriers are discussed below:

1. Conservation Mentality:-

In India, women education has been linked with employment. In other words, the children are educated simply because they are to get some employment. Those people who are not in favour of sending their daughter for employment do not feel the necessity of educating them.

2. Lack of Adequate Education Facilities:

Non-availability of a school within walking distance of girls, particularly in backward areas and the unwillingness of many parents to send their daughter to mixed schools beyond the age of 9 plus. Lack of separate sanitary facilities for girls in mixed schools and lack of suitable school buildings and equipment which lend to create a poor school environment and crisis of no. of girls hostel in near the schools.

3. Lack of female teachers:

Girls are more interested in going to schools if female teachers are there in the schools. They are more comfortable and more vocal with female, thus actively focusing and participating in learning processes. In rural areas, parents are also interested in sending their girl children to school if female teachers are present. If qualified female teachers are teaching in the school they feel more secured towards their girl children. They may be hesitating to send their girl children in male environment based school.

4. Molestation/abuse in school:

Most of the parents feel insecure towards their girl children as instances of abduction, rape, sexual harassment and molestation of girl dampens the enthusiasm of parents and girl students in pursuing their education beyond a certain age.

5. Inappropriate school timing:

In rural areas, morning time is not suitable for girl education, as they are engaged in domestic work at

home or in farms and field during these hours. The enrolment and retention rate maybe high when educational facilities are made available periods suitable to them when they are free from domestic chores.

6. Toilet facility:

This may be one of the reasons of lower participation rates of girls in education especially at upper primary level. The separate toilet facilities for girls must be created in the school premises must also cover the security aspect for girl. At the same time, toilet facility is needed for female teachers also.

7. Poverty:

The rate of illiteracy is closely linked to poverty. Due to the poverty or low family income, if parents are not in a position to send both boys and girls to school, they usually send boys to schools and retain girls at home to do house-hold work.

8. Child Marriage:

Many girls in many states of India still get married at an early stage, which affect their education to a great extent (e.g. girls in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Orissa etc.)

9. Lack of supervision and Personal Guidance for Women Education:

The development of women education in the different states have been seriously hampered because of the inadequate machinery to look after the various programmes in this field which require concentrated attention, special care and individual guidance. The number of lady officers is for too small to shoulder the responsibility of speeding of the progress of women education as envisaged in our plan. The officers are poorly staffed and ill-equipped.

10. Lack of Adequate Incentives for Women Education:

The poor enrolment position of girls, especially in backward areas, cannot be improved unless special incentives are provided. Special schemes sponsored by the government of India have been adopted in several states. Although the schemes have been implemented, they do not cover a very wide area and total results as fall short of expectation. In order to ensure that these special schemes provide adequate incentives to the students, it is necessary that they are adopted in larger measures and over a wider geographical area with special priority to the backward districts or pockets.

In specific situations, both the socio-cultural and physical environments continue to create barriers to girls education. These factors adversely contribute to

creating unattractive environments in which girls must run the gauntlet of difficulties to remain in school, as a result of which their learning is severely compromised. A discriminatory attitude builds up among teachers and other members of society resulting in girls dropping out in large numbers.

Due to cultural and social practices, the mindset of the community operates in a particular way. Men and women in the community develop rigid view about the way they are treated in the society. Thus the mindset needs to be made more flexible to accept change. This will need attitudinal change.

We have to make efforts to bring girls to schools, retain them and improve their participation and achievement too. Special attention has to be given to rural girls and girls from disadvantaged sections of society. To achieve this goal, we have to employ various strategies. Strategies have to be used to create awareness about girl's development and education among parents, community members and local governments. As a teacher, it is essential for us to be familiar about strategies of transacting various components of curriculum in a gender bias freeway in and outside the classroom. We have to make conscious efforts to highlight contribution of women/girls in different walks of life through teaching learning process of various school subjects.

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