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Empowerment of Women Through Education To Make New India

Kumar Tok[1]

ABSTRACT

The real society's development is indeed neither possible nor desirable by leaving nearly 50% of the population in the dark and depressed. Realising this virtue, Gandhi advocated for "women's empowerment". By supporting women's empowerment, he writes, he claims that of all the ills that man has caused, none is more heinous, terrible, or vicious than his mistreatment of the better half of humanity—that is, the feminine sex, not the weaker sex. The two are more honourable as they still represent humility, faith, knowledge, sacrifice, and quiet suffering.

Objective: *The study examines women's empowerment through education to make a New India.*

Methods: *The materials gathered from various sources, especially the census of India, have been examined, validated, and methodically arranged.*

Result and Discussion: *For equality, progress, and peace to be achieved, women must be empowered and participate equally in all areas of society. Women certainly play a vital role in the development of society today. Man's natural tendency is to remain happy. We require certain basic steps to attain peace, happiness and full-fledged satisfaction. One such step is "Women Empowerment". Women's empowerment through education is considered the only effective capacity-building instrument.*

Conclusion: *Education is a milestone for women's empowerment because it enables them to respond to opportunities, challenge their traditional roles, and change their lives. Similar ideas were supported at the International Conference in 1994. It was said that 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 process.*

INTRODUCTION

Another debated topic in which the Indian Government, as well as the non-government organisations and inter-governmental organisations, including the UN, is "women empowerment". However, real society's development is neither possible nor desirable, leaving nearly 50% of the population in the dark and depressed. Realising this virtue, Gandhi advocated for "women empowerment". By supporting women's empowerment, he writes, he claims that of all the ills that man has caused, none is more heinous,

[1] Dr. Kumar Tok, *Vice-Principal, Dera Natung Government College, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh, India, E-mail: kumartok1@gmail.com,

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terrible, or vicious than his mistreatment of the better half of humanity—that is, the feminine sex, not the weaker sex. The two are more honourable as they represent humility, faith, knowledge, sacrifice, and quiet suffering. Therefore, he was in favour of educating women and giving them all the freedom which men enjoy. In a society or nation where women are not respected, he adds, males should learn to make room for women. He even encouraged the women to join politics hand by hand with men but also warned them to be independent in their thinking without simply carrying the wishes of their parents or husbands. When the country was still struggling to escape from the clutches of foreign rulers, Gandhiji was thinking about rescuing the women folk from the clutches of parochial caste-ridden thinking of the Indian male bastion. However, this progressive thinking of Gandhiji has yet to be realised even after 60 years of independence for the country. Still, women are fighting hard to get their political justice with limited success in the Panchayati Raj Institution, where the seats are reserved for 33% of the women. The Women Reservation Bill has yet to be passed in our parliament, and it seeks to equalise the advantage of women's participation in politics at the national level. Therefore, this made Gandhiji's thinking more relevant as we still struggle to match his wishes to place women on an equal footing in our male-dominated society.

OBJECTIVE

The study examines women's empowerment through education to make New India.

MATERIALS

The materials gathered from various sources, especially the census of India, have been examined, validated, and methodically arranged under the relevant headings to hold the necessary presentation and conclusion. Different methods of quantitative and qualitative analysis comprising of descriptive analysis, content and text analysis are performed.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

For equality, progress, and peace to be achieved, women must be empowered and equally participate in all areas of society (IV World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995). From time immemorial, women have faced the challenges of coping with a male chauvinistic milieu. Even after several years of planned development in India, the position of women in our nation is low, and their socio-economic conditions are far more melancholy than men's. Empowerment through education, literacy or modest income-generating projects is insufficient to ameliorate women's prospects for a better quality of life. The empowerment process is taking place at so many levels that it is quite challenging to gauge the actual nature and extent of empowerment in improving the status of women. Indeed, the process is entangled in the struggles of civil society against the state under the weight of historical practice and ongoing debates over the appropriate role of ideologies. Women constitute 48% of the Indian population, but when we often sermonise human rights, we often forget that women as human beings are also entitled to fundamental human rights. We have denied and continue to deny

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them basic human rights. Even after 61 years of independence, these women continue to live in a state of neglect and exploitation. At the 1985 International Women's Conference in Nairobi, the idea of women's empowerment was first presented. "A distribution of social power and control of resources in favour of women" is the definition of empowerment. Empowerment cannot be given to people we believe needs to be in pill form. It is more than an idea that might be described using a few generally agreed-upon criteria. The following elements are part of the process of empowerment:

I. Equal access to opportunities for using society's resources.
II. Prohibition of gender discrimination in thought and practice.
III. Freedom from violence.
IV. Economic independence.
V. Participation in all decision-making bodies.
VI. Freedom of choice in matters relating to one's life.

The national policy for women's empowerment has established specific, well-defined aims and objectives. The advancement, development, and empowerment of women is the aim of this policy. In order to promote active engagement from all stakeholders in accomplishing its objectives, the policy will be extensively distributed. The policy's specific goals are: (i) Creating an atmosphere that supports women's complete growth and allows them to reach their full potential through constructive social and economic measures.

(ii) Women's equal access to all human rights and fundamental freedoms in all domains, including political, economic, social, cultural, and civic.

(iii) Equal opportunities for women to participate in and make decisions on the country's social, political, and economic affairs.

(iv) Women should have equal access to healthcare, high-quality education at all levels, career and vocational counselling, equal pay, occupational safety, social security, public office, and other resources.

(v) Fortifying legislative frameworks to eradicate discrimination against women. (vi) Changing community customs and cultural attitudes via the active engagement and participation of both men and women.

(vii) Integrating a gender viewpoint into the process of development.

(viii) The abolition of all types of violence and discrimination against girls and women.

(ix) Establishing and enhancing alliances with civil society, especially women's groups.

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A key component of the sustainable development process is education. Learning the three "Rs" (reading, writing, and arithmetic) is simply one aspect of education's involvement in empowerment; other components include:

- Increasing awareness;
- Critically analysing different structures and
- Learning to empower people on all levels.

In addition to formal education, skill development and functional literacy should be incorporated into schooling. First and foremost, the idea that females are not sent to school because they are girls and because their primary function is that of homemakers and mothers must be dispelled. In addition to being moms and housewives, girls and women are also considered "workers" in the context of the economy. In addition to bringing knowledge and freedom, they should be taught to play an essential role in the home and family economy. Women's empowerment via education will progress:

- Women's self-worth and confidence;
- a favourable perception of them based on their contributions to society;
- politics and the economy; critical thinking skills;
- collective decision-making and action; choices in fields like education, work, and health;
- equitable involvement in the process of development;
- knowledge and skills for financial independence and
- access to legal literacy and information about their rights.

Women certainly play a vital role in the development of society today. Man's natural tendency is to remain happy. We require specific basic steps to attain peace, happiness and full-fledged satisfaction. One such step is "Women Empowerment". Women's empowerment through education is considered the only effective instrument of their capacity building. There is always a high degree of correlation between the attainment of education and the level of economic development. This notion is true both at the macro and micro level. If education plays a pivotal role in designing the development course, the women folk form the primary element of the development process. The pre-requisite in the development process is their empowerment; the empowerment initiatives should begin with education. The deprivation of women is significantly visible in various macro indicators such as education, health, employment, etc. In different spheres of life, they are also subject to many hurdles that are necessarily gender-specific. Sincere effort is urgently required to emancipate women from all distress. The significance of women's empowerment has gathered momentum over the years. It is also reflected in the recent Union Budgets of the Government of India. The 7^{th} Five Year Plan adopted the Women's Component Plan (WCP) to initiate a mechanism for identifying and monitoring the schemes benefiting women.

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In the 9th Plan, provision was made for allocating an unconditional minimum quantum of funds for the women's welfare-related schemes run by the different Ministries/Departments. The WCP was the precursor of Gender Budgeting. The 10th Plan went a step further when it decided to launch Gender Budgeting. In 2004-05, the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, adopted "Budgeting for Gender Equity" as a Mission Statement. Finally, based on the recommendations of the Ashok Lahiri Committee on "Classification of Budgetary Transactions", the Government of India has introduced a statement on Gender budgeting in the Union Budget 2005-06. It included 10 demands for grants. Gender Budgeting is now well institutionalised in India. The Draft Approach Paper to the 11th Five Year Plan aimed "Towards Faster and More Inclusive Growth" (Planning Commission, June 14, 2006). Its objective is to include the excluded, and it gives stress on 'Gender Balancing'. All the steps echo the nation's concern for women, their overall development, and thus empowerment. The government has recognised that education is the primary step towards women's empowerment. The government's policy stresses the removal of illiteracy among women and all the hurdles to their access to education.

In India, at present, there are as many as 1578 women's colleges. Along with this, there are five universities exclusively for women. Today, the importance of education in capacity building and empowerment is no longer an unfamiliar notion. If basic education is the preliminary step toward women's progress, higher education is perhaps the best way to ensure women's social, economic, and political empowerment in India. When discussing women's empowerment, the topic involves many issues like economic opportunity, social equality, political representation, participation in governance, and property rights. The agenda is always to remove the gender-based asymmetry in all events. All the gender-asymmetrical issues in all events against women can be removed through the enlightening of education.

For centuries, under an artificial dispensation, women's intrinsic qualities had been suppressed, and they were forced to live a wretched life. Not being counted as human beings, women did not even have voting rights.

The statement recalled that it was on March 8, 1857, in New York City, that the Suffragette movement had brought a new awakening. Making it clear that women were no less capable then men, a sustained movement for women's rights had been launched.

Accordingly, the United Nations General Assembly declared March 8 as International Women's Day, and the statement was noted, adding that this day is an occasion to examine how far the goals of equality among the sexes, peace, and development have been achieved.

Only when men and women work hand in hand can the economic and political problems facing Arunachal Pradesh be successfully resolved (The Assam Tribune, March 12 2007).

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A manual, developed after a year-long intensive research by the Gender Training Institute (GTI) of the Delhi-based Center for Social Research, deals with crimes related to dowry, illegal trafficking and domestic violence.

"The law is the same for both men and women. However, if those who implement it (policemen) lack sensitivity towards women's problems, that gets reflected in their behaviour," says Sucharita of the Purogami Mahila Sangathan, a national women's organisation that has been active for nearly two decades.

However, Kiran Bedi, India's best-known policewoman, feels that on its own, the manual will struggle to solve problems related to how the police treat women. Welcoming it as a significant step, she says, "The manual is an obvious roadmap which tells the trainer exactly what path he should take. However, the problem may lie not with the trainer, or the training method, but with the trainee," she says (The Telegraph 12th July 2006).

Human Resource Development Minister Arjun Singh said it is civil society to understand that a nation can only progress if women are literate since children learn the words from mothers. The country can only be proud when the literacy rate among all sections of society is high.

From time immemorial, women have faced the challenges of coping with a male chauvinistic milieu. Even after several years of planned development in India, the status of women in our country is low, and their socio-economic conditions are much more depressed than those of men.

Former M P Murlidhar Bhandare said it was necessary for the Govt. to take programmes of female literacy on a war footing and ensure that adequate funds are put at the disposal of the implementing agencies and non-Govt. Organisations for the purpose (The Arunachal Times, September 4, 2005).

The resolution on the National Policy on Education (1968) stressed the importance of women's education: "The education of girls should receive emphasis not only on grounds of social justice but also because it accelerates social transformation".

The 1967 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women included the following recommendation in Article 9: "All appropriate measures shall be taken to ensure to girls and women, married or unmarried, equal rights with men in education at all levels and in particular." The declaration acknowledged the significant role that women play in social, political, economic, and cultural life as well as in the family, particularly in raising children.

(a) Equal access to and conditions for studying in all kinds of educational institutions, such as universities and technical, professional, and vocational schools;
(b) The same selection of courses, exams, and teaching staff with the same level of qualifications;
(c) Equal opportunities to receive study grants and scholarships;

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(d) Equal opportunities to access continuing education programs, including adult literacy programs, whether the institutions are coeducational or not.
(e) Educational resources should be available to support families' health and welfare.

Phenomenal progress since independence

Education is a vital channel to prepare people for the kind of effective role mentioned above, to achieve a sound democratic system with full knowledge of the citizens' duties and rights. The benefits of education are many. Education is the best investment a country could make and has lasting benefits.

Women's education's importance has been recognised since the achievement of independence. Accordingly, strenuous efforts have been made in this area. The following figures in Table 1 reveal that literacy among women has increased proportionately compared to men. However, much more is needed to bring it to Pat with men.

Table 1: Sex wise Literacy Rate 1951 – 2001 in India

Year	% Literate	Male	Female
1951	18.33	27.16	8.86
1961	28.31	40.46	15.34
1971	34.45	45.95	21.97
1981	43.56 (41.42)	56.37 (53.45)	29.75 (28.46)
1991	52.11	63.86	39.42
2001	55.30	64.13	45.84
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46

Source: Census of India, Various Issues.

Notes: (i) The five and older population was associated with the literacy rate for 1951, 1961, and 1971. The population seven years of age and older is included in the 1981 and 1991 rates. In 1981, the literacy rates for people five years of age and older are displayed in brackets.

(ii) Assam, where the 1981 Census could not be carried out, is not included in the 1981 rates. Jammu & Kashmir, where the 1991 Census was not carried out, is not included in the 1991 Census rates.

The number of women per hundred men from 1950 to 2000 is depicted in Table 2 in India. From the beginning, women lagged behind men, but in the later part, they made much progress in higher education.

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Table 2: Number of Women per Men in Higher Education since 1950-51

Year	Number of women per hundred men
1950-1951	14
1960-1961	17
1965-1966	24
1981-1982	38
1982-1983	39
1983-1984	40
1985-1986	42
1987-1988	46
1988-1989	46
1989-1990	47
1990-1991	47
1999-2000	55

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Education.

Encouragement of Women Empowerment

During the NDA Government, it has taken many steps to empower women in all respects, giving them equal space in every step of life. Now, women have been allowed to serve and compete in the defence sector and shoulder their male counterparts. Women's education is prioritised under the scheme **"Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao: Encouraged gender equality and education for girls".**

Causes of Slow Progress of Women's Education

a. Economic backwardness of the rural community.
b. Lack of proper social attitudes in the rural areas for girls' education.
c. Lack of educational facilities in rural areas.
d. Lack of women teachers.
e. Lack of proper supervision an guidance due to inadequate women personnel in the Inspectorate.
f. Lack of proper incentives to parents and children.
g. Lack of adequate incentives.
h. Lack of suitable curriculum.

CONCLUSION

Education is a milestone for women's empowerment because it enables them to respond to opportunities, challenge their traditional roles, and change their lives. Similar ideas were supported at the International Conference in 1994. It was said that 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 process. Educating women

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benefits the whole of society. It has a more significant impact on poverty and development than men's education. It is also one of the most influential factors in improving child health and reducing infant mortality. At least 60 million girls lack access to primary education, and the gender gap in literacy persists to date. Although literacy and school enrolment among girls and boys have increased dramatically, much remains to be done. More and more girls should be enrolled in school and complete their schooling. This will become true as the level of education increases. There are signs of progress as enrolment of boys and girls in primary schools edges closer and closer to parity.

Every year, even at the university level, women catch up and surpass male enrolment in some countries. In Kuwait, Bahrain, the Philippines and Cuba, more women are enrolling in universities than men. Although girls' and women's access to education is improving, they are often channelled into traditionally 'female' fields of study that reinforce their traditional societal roles.

The greater demands for more gender equality and women's empowerment that are being made both socially and politically are certainly not the result of public policy promoting gender equality but rather emerge from past and present gender oppression and discrimination against women.

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