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## The Role of Education & literature in Women empowerment

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Women constitute almost half the population of our nation but their status in our society as a woman is not satisfactory. It is very clear from the well known dictum of Manu, "A woman does not deserve liberty." In childhood she is protected by her father, after marriage, in youth by her husband, and in old age she is protected by her son. Service to her husband and her family was considered to be her only role and it received religious sanction. She is treated and considered as her husband's property. Fathers or husbands are regarded as bread winners for their families whereas wives are allocated the role of home makers and taking care of "hearth & children. This is a mentality of majority of men in our society. In this connection Russell remarks. "Patriarchy is a form of social organization in which the father or husband is recognized as the head of the family. Thus control of women by their husband is a complex aspect that cannot be regarded as a sole contributory factor to physical, psychological, and sexual abuse etc.

As bread winners, men believe that women should depend on them for number of needs. In this case, they treat them as they wish. Looking at most of the women from rural areas, they depend on their husband for number of things. For example, they depend on them for food, shelter and safety. The other reasons might be that most of these women are not educated enough. Even educated women also depend on their husbands for survival. But the ratio of uneducated women's sufferings is more than that of the suffering of educated women. It simply implies that education plays a significant role in the life of majority of woman. And that is possibly the reason why the governments of various countries in the world in general and the governments of India in particular is attempting to offer quality and free education to women for achieving the goals of women empowerment and development. According to kaur and singh: "empowerment of women means being able to avoid shyness, have courage for speaking, provide abilities to get in touch with self realities, overcome hesitation and tentativeness, recognize and accept her capabilities and limitations, articulate her desires and convert them into objectivity, enhance self-confidence, and acquire needed abilities to develop will to achieve the desired goal." This definition very aptly implies how crucial role could education play to bring a large mass of marginalized women to the main stream of the society from the vicious chain of male dominance. It also reveals the overall objective of education which as stated earlier is to make the learner increasingly independent, so that the learner can take up the responsibility of his/ her duties & rights.

People from different walks of life always talk and discuss regarding women's empowerment. We hear every day in the media including newspapers whether women are educated or not. The most important thing therefore, is that they need to be given free and compulsory education so as to make them aware of the rights and duties. Now a days, at a very few places the position of women is found to be satisfactory where they enjoy equal rights and other facilities as compared to men. The Question therefore, "is the number sufficient to ensure women their fundamental rights" remains unanswered. At the same time one can see that the number of institution imparting women's education have increased considerably, after independence, the problems have equally increased due to increase in population and thereby we find the imbalance in the society where there is the dominance of male over the female. This responsibility may therefore be entrusted to all the NGOs and the government organizations to create awareness among women regarding their fundamental rights in the society. This may help them to lead a satisfactory life.

If we briefly deep through the pages of ancient history of the empowerment of women especially with regard to education from the Vedic times till independence with one exception of the period 1200-1800 A.D. during which percentage of literacy among women went down very rapidly especially during the Muslim rule, we can observe that women occupied higher place in the society. There are examples when women were so advanced in knowledge that they challenged men of acknowledged learning in public discussion on philosophical and metaphysical subjects. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad gives us a instance of Gargi who challenged Yajnavalkya in the court of Janaka King of Videha and at the end made him defeat with the words. "O Gargi, do not ask me too much." Like Gargi Maitreyi was a scholarly lady who could easily speak in the assembly of eminent scholars who were well versed in Vedas. She was deeply interested in philosophy. Similarly, Arundhati, Kambhaya, Tara and Draupadi were also no doubt highly learned



women of ancient times. Several women in Buddhist Families used to live a life of celibacy in pursuit of religion and philosophy.

During the period 1800-1854 A.D. impressed by the revolutionary work done by some British men like David Hare, Prof. Patton and Bethune for the education of girls, several great Indians supported the opening of girls schools and breaking down the popular resistance against women education. Among them Raja Rammohan Roy, Pandit Ishwarchandra Balshastri Jambhekar, Lokhitwadi Deshmukh, Jotiba Phul, Telang, Agarkar, Karve, Pandita Ramabai and many others played a very important role. Lord Dalhousie the then Governor General of India, Decried that no single change in the habits of the people is likely to lead more important and beneficial consequences than the introduction of education for female children. As a result of revolutionary efforts of these visionary people, by the year 1946-47, there were 2370, secondary & 21479 primary schools for girls and 4288 institutions for professional, technical and special education for women. Another significant event was the establishment of SNDT women's University in Bombay by Maharishi Dhondo Keshav Karve in 1916. Again there were 76 women in medical colleges and 166 in Medical School during the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Lady Dufferin fund was created for the medical education. This also showed an increase in coeducation system especially in the schools as there were almost 40 to 50 percent of girls studying with their counterpart boys.

Women's empowerment would also mean the propagation of total literacy in society among the women but the illiteracy is increasing as compared to men's literacy due to political, economic, social factors which creates an alarming situation in the country. As literacy has the functional link with mortality, fertility, migration, and the Sex-ratio. The post independence period had tremendous improvement in providing facilities for the education for women. The State of Maharashtra too made number of efforts for women's empowerment. The census 2001 result indicates that Maharashtra state has registered impressive growth in literacy among major states in India. The literacy rate of Population aged seven years and above increased from 64.9 percent in 1991 to 77.3 percent in 2001. Maharashtra has always remained much above the national average. Among the major states in India, Maharashtra ranked second in respect of literacy rate after Kerala (90.9 Percent). The main finding of the census of India highlights the increasing share of female literacy rate than the male. It is observed that the increase in the female literacy rate in the rural areas during the decade is much more pronounced than in the urban areas. Though the State has registered impressive growth in literacy during the decade 1991-2001, about 1.90 crores persons are still illiterate in the State of which about 69 percent are females. Again it is ironic that the majority of the state's out-of-school children are girls, who are also under-represented at every school level.

Thus, the efforts of our nation for women empowerment since independence certainly have changed the scenario. The passing of number of laws which recognized women's work and attempted to protect the women both as workers as well as women. The several five year plans have also stressed on women education to enable them to have their rights of education, health, and employment etc. The constitutional provisions have also helped to improve their status in the society. All these resulted into women's contribution now a days in each and every field of activity and different capacities. Viz housewife, mother laborer, politician, administrative officer, scientist, technocrat, social worker and production etc. Thus, the educational and economic status of women is considered as an indicator of social development. Therefore, education has been universally, recognized as an important element in the empowerment of women. One can realize the importance of education in the dictum, "Education is for life, not for mere living." Education, thus, plays an important role in women empowerment as it offers them the opportunity to realize their potential which can be used in all spheres of actions.

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