

Education for Women's Equality

MRS.BABITA JHARIA

RESEARCH SCHOLAR, MATS UNIVERSITY, RAIPUR, (C.G.) M: 9098263173, R: 4035922



CONTENTS

- 1. Introduction Of Education.**
- 2. Education Defined In Constitution Of India.**
- 3. History And Importance Of Women's Education.**
- 4. Projects On Women Education.**
- 5. Organizations Related To Women's Education.**
- 6. Impact Of Women's Education.**
- 7. Conclusion.**
- 8. Refrences.**

I. INTRODUCTION OF EDUCATION



I.1 Defining the right to education

The right to education has been universally recognised since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 (though referred to by the ILO as early as the 1920s) and has since been enshrined in various international conventions, national constitutions and development plans. However, while the vast majority of countries have signed up to, and ratified, international conventions (such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) far fewer have integrated these rights into their national constitutions or provided the legislative and administrative frameworks to ensure that these rights are realised in practice. In some cases the right exists along with the assumption that the user should pay for this right, undermining the very concept of a right. In others, the right exists in theory but there is no capacity to implement this right in practice. Inevitably, a lack of government support for the right to education hits the poorest hardest. Today, the right to education is still denied to millions around the world. As well as being a right in itself, the right to education is also an enabling right. Education 'creates the "voice" through which rights can be claimed and protected', and without education people lack the capacity to 'achieve valuable functionings as part of the living'. If people have access to education they can develop the skills, capacity and confidence to secure other rights. Education gives people the ability to access information

detailing the range of rights that they hold, and government's obligations. It supports people to develop the communication skills to demand these rights, the confidence to speak in a variety of forums, and the ability to negotiate with a wide range of government officials and power holders.

I.2 Education and the 4 As

For education to be a meaningful right it must be available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable. The concept of these 4 as was developed by the former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Katarina Tomasevski, and it is one of the best ways to assess and act upon the situation.

However, it should be noted from the outset that these 4 As are not definitive. Whilst they are an extremely useful way of explaining the right to education in terms of tangible factors, they are not necessarily the standard used in every international treaty and as such should not be treated as a generic, comprehensive guide to what the right to education means under every law.

The 4 As are to be respected, protected and fulfilled by the government, as the prime duty-bearer, but there are also duties on other actors in the education process: the child as the privileged subject of the right to education and the bearer of the duty to comply with compulsory-education requirements; the child's parents who are the 'first educators'; and professional educators, namely teachers.

By using a participatory process this framework of the 4 as can become a tool to enable people to think through what the right to education means to them, and compare their current reality to this ideal context.

The 4 as can be summarised as follows -

Availability – that education is free and government-funded and that there is adequate infrastructure and trained teachers able to support education delivery.

Accessibility – that the system is non-discriminatory and accessible to all, and that positive steps are taken to include the most marginalised.

Acceptability – that the content of education is relevant, non-discriminatory and culturally appropriate, and of quality; that the school itself is safe and teachers are professional.

Adaptability – that education can evolve with the changing needs of society and contribute to challenging inequalities, such as gender discrimination, and that it can be adapted locally to suit specific contexts.

I.3 Visualizing the 4 As

Using an **Education Rights Circle Diagram** can use the 4 as to analyse local education provision and work with the local group to identify specific criteria by which education could be evaluated. The four circles show different aspects of the right to education. The inner circle shows issues that will make education acceptable to the individual or group.

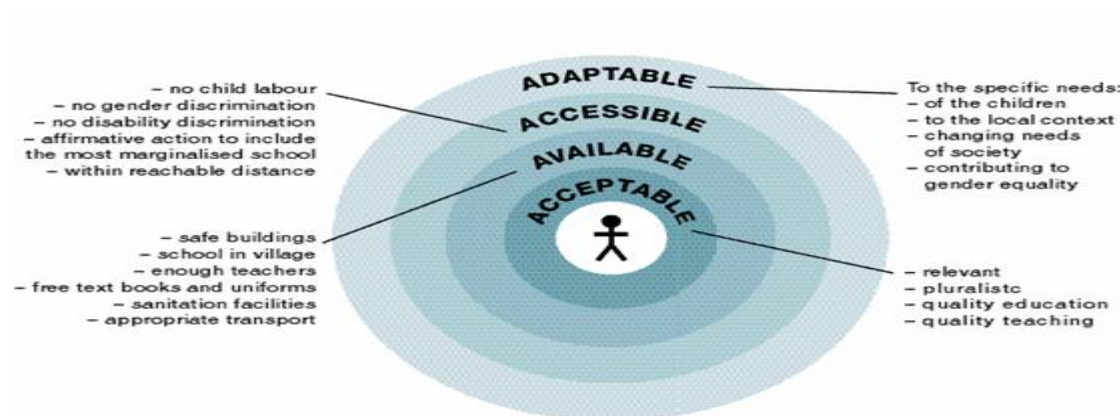
The second circle identifies the 'ingredients' which would make education available. The third circle shows ingredients that would make education accessible, and this is framed within the context of the wider environment of how adaptable education is – the outer circle. Through

asking the question:

'What would make education available to us?'

(Substituting the different 'A' word each time the question was asked) one may develop the ingredients and conditions for the right to education.

For the outer circle the group should consider issues in relation to their current reality which impact on education (these may have a negative impact on education and the challenge will be to think through what needs to be put in place to facilitate education rights). Once the diagram is generated the group could compare their lived reality to this ideal context. This involves looking at where the differences and similarities are, analysing why these differences occur, and developing strategies for action.



II. EDUCATION DEFINED IN CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

II.1A. Right to education : The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine.

(Ins. By the Constitution (Eighty-sixth Amendment) Act, 2002.)

The Constitution of India 1950, amended 2006

EDUCATION: Art. 21A. The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine. (EIGHTY-SIXTH AMENDMENT ACT, 2002)

Art. 41. Right to work, to education and to public assistance in certain cases.

The State shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, and in other cases of undeserved want.

Art. 45. Provision for free and compulsory education for children.

(1) 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.

(2) The State shall endeavour to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years. (EIGHTY-SIXTH AMENDMENT ACT, 2002)

Art. 46. Promotion of educational and economic interests of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other weaker sections.

The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

Art. 51A (k) who is a parent or guardian to provide opportunities for education to his child or, as the case may be, ward between the age of six and fourteen years. (EIGHTY-SIXTH AMENDMENT ACT, 2002)

III. HISTORY AND IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN'S EDUCATION

Women education in India plays a pivotal role in the development of country. It has helped in the development of half of population as well as the living standard of family at home and outside. Educated women support women education and give better education to their children. Educated women help in reducing the mortality rate of infant in India. Educated women handle their family in a better way than illiterate women. So, we shouldn't forget the importance of women education in India.

Women comprise approximately half of the population in the world. But the hegemonic masculine ideology made them bear a lot as they were denied equivalent opportunities in different parts of the world. The augment of feminist ideas has, however, led to the marvelous development of women's condition in the society through out world in recent times. Access to education has been one of the most urgent and important demands of these women's rights movements. Women education in India has also been a chief preoccupation of both the government and social or civil society as educated women can play a very important role in the development of the country.

In the present era, the Indian society has established a number of Institutions for the educational development of women and girls. These educational institutions aim for immense help and are concerned with the development of women. In the modern society, women in India have come a long way. Indian women is at par with men in all kinds of tasks like reaching the moon, conquering Mount Everest, and participating in all fields. All this is possible just because of education and the profound impact it has had on women.

III.1 Women's Education in Ancient India

In Ancient India, women and girls received less education than men. This was due to the set social norms. Interestingly, in the Vedic Period women had access to education, but gradually they had lost this right. Women education in ancient India prevailed during the early Vedic period. In addition to that Indian scriptures Rig Veda and Upanishads mention about several women sages and seers. Women enjoyed equivalent position and rights in the early Vedic era. However, after 500 B.C., the position of women started to decline. The Islamic invasion played a vital role in restricting freedom and rights of the women. A radical change attended and there was a terrific constraint for women education in India

III.2 Women's Education in Medieval India

Women education in this period further weakened and declined with the introduction of Purdah system. Different customs and conventions of diverse religions like Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity further deteriorated and depreciated the state of women in the country. A range of socio religious movements contributed to the development of women literacy in the country. Many leaders took several initiatives to make education available to the women of India. The ordered form of women education in India was incorporated in the early centuries of the Christian era.

III.3 Women's Education in Colonial India

The position of the women education in India revived with the British in the country and with the advent of Bhakti movement. The colonial period also introduced the institutional form of imparting learning Women education in Colonial India witnessed as essential expansion. Various movements were launched to make women of the country literate. Furthermore, this progress journeyed through the years and influenced the modern Indian education system.

III.4 Women's Education in Modern India

The idea of women empowerment was introduced at the International Women Conference at Nairobi in 1985. Education is milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to responds to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life. So that we can't ignore the significance of education in reference to women empowerment India is poised to becoming superpower, a developed country by 2020. This can become reality only when the women of this nation became empowerment. India presently account for the largest number of illiterates in the World Literacy Rate in India have risen stridently from 18.3% in 1951 to 64.8% in 2001 in which enrolment of women in education have also risen sharply 7% to 54.16%.

Despite the significance of women education unfortunately only 39% of women are literate among 64% of the man. Within the framework of a democratic polity, our laws, development policies, plan and programmes that have focused at women's progression in different spheres. From the fifth year plan (1974-78) onwards has been a marked shift in the approach to women's issues from welfare to development in recent years, the empowerment of women has been accepted as the vital concern in determining the status of women in the Indian society. The National Commission of Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the right and legal entitlements of women. The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) to the Constitution of India have

provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayat and Municipalities for Women, laying a study basis for their contribution in decision making at the local level.

Moreover the Central Government of India has recently launched the Saakshar Bharat Mission for Female Literacy, which aims to reduce female illiteracy and spread education and awareness even in the most remote and rural parts of the nation.

IV. PROJECTS ON WOMEN EDUCATION



Women's Education Project (WEP) is dedicated to helping young women succeed in higher education and careers. Through partnerships with established grassroots NGOs whose programs end at the 10th grade, WEP develops resource centers which provide students academic, financial and social support to ensure their high school and college graduation and employment.

Founded in 2002, WEP, registered 501(c) 3 not-for-profit organizations with headquarters in New York, operates centers in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh and Bangalore, Karnataka.

Graduates of WEP centers have gone on to become teachers, computer operators, paralegals, health care workers and entrepreneurs. Educated and employed, they bring 58%* more income and better food and health care into their homes—breaking the cycle of poverty.

*Based on WEP alumnae data.

Women's Education Project is a 501(c) 3 not-for-profit organization registered in the State of New York.

It is WEP's keystone belief that the decisions an educated woman makes as a self-reliant, informed, responsible citizen, effect lasting social change in her own life, her family, and society.

Women's Indian Association

Gyanodaya Singaperumalkoil, Kancheepuram District TAMIL NADU (ASHA for Education)

IV.1 Project Description

Gyanodaya School was started in the year 2001 by St. Johns Leprosy Patients Rehabilitation Association to provide educational opportunity for healthy children of leprosy affected people. The majority of the children's parents are below poverty line and Gyanodaya provides shelter (in hostel located on campus), food and education to the children—all at no cost to the parents. Due to stigma attached to this disease, these children find it extremely difficult to attend regular schools. The idea behind such a residential school comes from the background of most leprosy-affected patients/parents. Many of them earn a living by begging. The children either go along with them or wander near the homes. They don't go to school or even if the parents take an effort to enroll the children in a school, they are discriminated/cast aside as children of beggars. So, even if enrolled into school the children drop out due to the discrimination faced in school. Through proper medical care, good nutrition and education these children will be integrated in to the mainstream society. Some children belonging to backward communities from nearby villages also attend the school as day scholars, which promotes integration of the leprosy affected families with mainstream society. The school caters to children of leprosy affected people from all over India—from Delhi to Kanyakumari. There are currently 102 children residing in the on-campus hostel and 101 children from surrounding villages. Currently the school has students from 1st standard to 8th standard (a nursery class for younger children is also run in the campus) and it plans to upgrade to higher classes (9th and 10th standard) in the next 4 years. Asha Austin currently supports part of the annual expenses for running the school which includes teacher salaries, electricity charges, uniforms, food related costs etc.

IV.2 Organization Description

St. Johns Leprosy Patients Rehabilitation Association was started in the year 1965 and the association became registered with the Tamil Nadu government in 1979. The main purpose of the association is to rehabilitate the leprosy patients who are shunned by society as well as family members. The stigma associated

with leprosy leads to discrimination of the affected patients and many of them resort to begging for survival. The association purchased 5 acres of land in Venkatapuram village near Singaperumalkoil in Kancheepuram district, near outskirts of Chennai, Tamil Nadu. Houses were built for the leprosy patients here and part of the land is also used for cultivation. The farming activities helps to provide employment to the patients along with rice, vegetables etc for consumption. Poultry farm and dairy farm is also run to generate income for the association. The association started Gnanodaya middle school in 2001 to provide free education for children of leprosy patients in the same area. The education is aimed to promote social, cultural and economical improvements for the leprosy affected families.

V. ORGANIZATIONS RELATED TO WOMEN'S EDUCATION

Human rights obligations and global political commitments

The norms and principles of gender equality and non-discrimination are at the core of all Fundamental human rights treaties. International human rights law prohibits discrimination against women in the area of education.

The realization of the right to education is essential to women being able to enjoy the full range of human rights. Women's exclusion from education and participation intersect with other problems, such as discriminatory patterns in ownership and exploitation of land, inheritance and maternal mortality and morbidity and the feminization of poverty. **(United Nations: Human Rights, Office of High Commissioner)**

India-Ministry of Women and Child Development is one of the most important departments of the Government of India. The ministry was initially established in the year of 1985 as an integral part of the Ministry of Human Resource Development. The main aim, with which this department was set up, was the complete and extensive development of women and children. On 30th January, 2006, this department was upgraded to the status of a ministry and was called the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

Several plans, policies and guidelines have been laid down by the ministry to upgrade the status of women and children in the country. There are many awareness programs, child welfare and support facilities as well as developmental activities that have been undertaken by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in India. Both Government and non-Government organizations are involved in these developmental works.

Special programs for children are also planned by this ministry. Integrated Child Development Services is an active movement that has helped in the physical as well as psychological growth and development of children in the country. Primary education has been made mandatory for all children. The girl child has been given great importance and special programs have been launched to protect the girl child. Commissions have also been set up for safeguarding Child Rights and to protect women against Domestic Violence.

There are several jobs that have been assigned to the Ministry. These also include implementation of various Acts and Policies.

The jobs under India-Ministry of Women and Child Development include:

- a) Pre-primary education as well as care of pre-school children
- b) Family welfare
- c) Welfare of Families and Children in coordination with other ministries and other organizations related to the subject
- d) To resist trafficking of women and children as per norms of United Nations Organization
- e) To take good care of nutrition and implement the various Nutritional policies
- f) To promote and encourage voluntary efforts in all matters that are directly related to this particular ministry
- g) To provide a probation period for juvenile offenders
- h) To try and maintain gender equity and to fight for women empowerment
- i) To handle issues related to adoption and child care, Child Help Line and Central Adoption Resource Agency
- j) To take care of research programs, project planning, training and evaluation regarding various developmental programs that are undertaken for women and children.

There are several Acts that are implemented by this particular ministry.

These Acts include the following:

- a. The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
- b. The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987
- c. The Child Marriage – Restraint Act, 1929
- d. The Children Act, 1960
- e. The Indecent Representation of Women (Prevention) Act, 1986
- f. Immoral Traffic in Women and Girl Act, 1956
- g. Infant Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles and Infant Food (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution)

- h. Act, 1992
- i. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000.
- j. The establishment of several Boards and Commissions has also helped a lot in the process of achieving the target that the Ministry has set up.

Some of them are as follows:

- i. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- ii. Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK)
- iii. Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB)
- iv. Food and Nutrition Board (FNB)
- v. National Commission for Women.
- vi. Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE)
- vii. National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD)

The Ministry of Women and Children in India is headed by Smt. Renuka Chowdhury. Mr Anil Kumar is designated as the secretary of the department. There are several bureaus under this ministry.

The bureaus and bureau heads are as follows:

1. Child Prostitution and Gender Budgeting- Smt. Manjula Krishnan, EA
2. Child Development- Dr. (Smt.) Kiran Chadha, JS (KC)
3. Statistical Unit- Smt. S. Jeyalakshmi, SA
4. Financial Adviser- Shri S.K. Ray, FA
5. Women Welfare and Development- Ms. P. Bolina, JS (PB)
6. Child Welfare- Dr. (Smt.) Loveleen Kacker, JS (LK)

VI. IMPACT OF WOMEN'S EDUCATION

TULSI NANJI

VI.1. Spreading Light

Tulsi Nanji is an aged widow, living all alone in the Jhakhra village of Virat Panchayat in Sagwar Block, Dungarpur district, Rajasthan. The Jhakra village comprises of 165 households, housing mixed communities and the primary source of income was daily labour. Most of the villagers being illiterate had no access to information about the various schemes provided by the Government.



Tulsi Nanji had no family to take care of her, she was living in penury, barely sustaining her existence on the mercy of the villagers and would have been forced to beg any day for her survival. Appalled by the pathetic condition of the village, Suravi, one of the implementing partners of IGSSS under the PEARL programme, opened a "Knowledge Resource Centre" in Jhakhra village. The resource centre was extensively used as a point to generate awareness among the community on the various welfare schemes of the Government. The team of PEARL intervention not only initiated awareness but also helped the villagers in availing these schemes. Tulsi Nanji was brought to this Knowledge Resource Centre by one of the SHG (Self Help Group) members, the team took up her cause on a priority basis and successfully enrolled her under the widow pension scheme. Tulsi Nanji is now a regular recipient of the widow pension, her head held high, she is living a life of dignity. The Knowledge Resource Centre has become a focal point of information, it is being successfully used as a platform to sensitize the community on their Rights and Entitlements. Due to increased awareness generation and access to information, the villagers of Jhakhara have also now started their struggle for Right to Work.

VI.2 Geared Up Against Corruption: Women pressure groups from 19 villages

Geeta Devi, an active community member, played a lead role together with PEARL partner SSK (Samagra Seva Kendra, Bihar) to check the corrupt practices in the Public Distribution System. She mobilized women of 19 villages into pressure groups and organized a series of small meetings and communicated with families to team up for a common goal, resulting in mass representation in the form of 'Dharma' (protest) in front of government offices, followed by constant visits/follow up to block offices. Finally, the BDO (Block Development Officer)



visited the village and initiated an enquiry on the issue of corruption with regard to distribution of grains under Red Card. On knowing the facts, an order was passed to commence distribution of ration (low priced grain from public distribution system) under the Red Card. The situation has changed now. Around 100 Red Card holders of 19 villages are receiving regular provisions under the scheme for the last three months.

VII. CONCLUSION



“There is in every true woman's heart, a spark of heavenly fire, which lies dormant in the broad daylight of prosperity, but which kindles up and beams and blazes in the dark hour of adversity.” With the Globalization and Liberalization the position of women had taken a drastic change. They are playing important role in each and every field. Now gone are the days of Pardah System. They are having multidimensional personalities in them. They had realized their power, position and legal rights in the society. With the women empowerment society, state and world is progressing day by day. With the modernization they had make over their role from four walls of home to the independent world

PADEIGI NARI TOH BADEGI NARI.

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