



Pratidhwani the Echo

A Peer-Reviewed International Journal of Humanities & Social Science

ISSN: 2278-5264 (Online) 2321-9319 (Print)

Impact Factor: 6.28 (Index Copernicus International)

Volume-VIII, Issue-I, July 2019, Page No. 272-278

Published by Dept. of Bengali, Karimganj College, Karimganj, Assam, India

Website: <http://www.thecho.in>

Education is A Mechanism for Empowering Women: A Truth or A Mistaken Belief

Dr. Soma Das

Asst. Professor, Dept. of English, Karimganj College, Karimganj, Assam

Abstract

"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." As such education plays an important role in the life of every girl. Education is the first step towards empowering women. Education is not only the gate way to many other opportunities but also the very education of women can positively influence the family. Education helps women to be confident about themselves, know their rights and above all fight for their cause. But the question that arises is whether the education provided in our curricula in both school and college level is really helping the girls to become empowered in the real sense of the term. The contention of this paper is to see whether the girls are taught to be empowered in any manner by the curricula followed in their basic education. The study will be based basically on primary data. For collection of data all the colleges of Karimganj District will be taken into consideration. From each college 50 numbers of female students from higher secondary and degree classes will be selected on random basis. To analyse the data necessary statistical tools will be taken.

Key Words: Women, Empowerment, Education, Curricula, Students.

Introduction: Education is regarded as one of the most important means that can empower women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence which are necessary to participate fully in the development process. As such education plays an important role in the life of every girl. Education is the first step towards empowering women. Education is not only the gate way to many other opportunities but also the very education of women can positively influence the family. Education helps women to be confident about themselves, know their rights and above all fight for their cause. Empower and educate the women so that the whole family, society and the nation as a whole will be empowered is the buzz word in the present times. It is a popular saying that when a woman is empowered it not only benefits her but the society as a whole. Nehru once said "Women empowered means mother India empowered". It often involves that the empowered develops confidence in their own capacities. Another popular saying is that women empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social or economic strength of women. Several policies have been framed and adopted to meet the needs of both rural and urban women so that they come out

in the open and actively participate in both the inner world of her home and the outside world, be an active member in all decision making process- domestic, social, economic, political etc. But all said and done are the women able to overthrow and come out of the patriarchal norms laid down by the patriarchal society to actively involve themselves in the various facets of their life. A vital question that arises is whether the education provided in our curricula in both school and college level is really helping the girls to become empowered in the real sense of the term.

The very phrase empowerment and education of women seems vague as every other day both the print and electronic media come up with headlines where women are brutally tortured both mentally and physically and as such bear the pains. Still more there are many who suffer silently in the darkness of the four corners of their homes. We often say that to empower a woman we should educate her. It is true that education plays a pivotal role in making the woman aware of her own entity in her family and society. But inspite of her realization, the question that arises is - is she able to see herself as an entity, an individual, who, has a clear identity of her own- as someone whose likes and dislikes being adhered to and respected. Education no doubt helps an individual in their physical, mental, social and intellectual growth. Education is a key to development and inevitable means of addressing structural inequality and disadvantage. Education also becomes important for economic development of a person. Education of a woman is a powerful means for sustaining improved health and education in the long term. Education is the knowledge of putting ones potential to maximum use. Without education one will never be able to develop the skills that would help one become successful in respect to one's career, family, in making right decisions in life etc.

Review of Literature: The first thing that can guarantee a woman empowerment is definitely education. The term empowerment has been bandied about so much in present years that there is now an authentic jeopardy of it being co-opted as a 'development buzzword' that will meet the same fate as terms like 'decentralisation', 'people's participation' and similar other terms. Notwithstanding this, it is important to comprehend what the very term connotes. After attempting a review of literature, Shetty (1992) comes to the conclusion that empowerment is easy to perceive but difficult to define. But while it may be difficult to define it, one is able to comprehend its meaning when one sees the materialization of what it implies. Thus an empowered person would be one who experiences a sense of self-assurance and self -importance; a person who perilously analyzes his/her social and political surroundings; a person who is competent in implementing control over decisions that concern his/her life. Mohammad Abul Hossen says, "Empowerment has various dimensions which includes individual involvement, organizational development and community change". Individual involvement means participation of a person in decision making, community change is the impact of involvement in the community and organizational development deals with the structures which mediate between the individual and community that facilitates collective action and which lies at the heart of the community change. According to Dr. Dasarathi Bhuyan

empowerment of women can be achieved by the power they regulate in everyday affairs which in this manner facilitate them to move from the margin to the center. He regrets that despite the fact that government is showering lot of emphasis on women empowerment but the harsh reality is that she faces deprivation and humiliation. The solution for women problems can be overcome by educating them and unless and until women do not take major step they cannot come to the forefront.

Education empowers the woman with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process. Education represents a basic component of human development. We know women constitute half of the human resource, and without educating them it is impossible to ensure overall development of a country. Education has a direct link with income generation. Educational achievements of women will have positive effects within the family and across generations. But what remains important is that unless women understand the goals of empowerment they cannot raise their status within the family, society and the nation. Therefore the goals of empowerment should be to see that an economically empowered woman or an employed woman should have the ability to plan and take decision about her own life. She should also be able to face the challenges of her life, with courage and confidence and if needed take the support of judiciary. She should be able to make the best use of the resources available to her like education to realize the aspirations of her life. She should be able to take part in decision making process both within her home and her work place. Above all she should be able to live with self esteem and dignity without depending on others, even during crises.

The Government of India since independence has taken a number of initiatives to improve the condition of women as well as to empower them. Mention can be made here of Article 14 of the Constitution of India which guarantees equal rights and opportunities to men and women in political, economic and social spheres, Article 42 directs the State to make provision for ensuring just and humane conditions for work and Article 51 (A) imposes upon every citizen, a fundamental duty to renounce the practices derogatory to the dignity of women. Several measures were also taken to spread education among women.

The First Five Year Plan sought to “promote the welfare of women” by helping them to play their legitimate role in the family and the community. All the five Year Plans continued to reflect the same welfare approach to women’s interest. Priority was given to education for both, men and women and launched measures to improve maternal and child health services and supplementary nutrition for children as well as expectant and nursing mothers. It was the Sixth Five Year Plan in which focus on women’s interests shifted from ‘welfare’ and ‘development’. In the Seventh Five Year Plan developmental programmes aimed at raising the economic and social status of women which was knocking on economic as well as social empowerment of women. There was a stress upon the generation of both skilled and unskilled employment through formal and non-formal education and vocational training. Adoption of ‘National Policy for Empowerment of Women’, in Ninth Five Year Plan is a landmark showing ‘empowering women as agents of socio-economic change and development’.

Objectives: The contention of this paper is to see whether the girls are taught to be empowered in any manner by the curricula followed during their basic education. To know the impact that their education has in helping them understand the importance of women's empowerment, decision making, economic independence and above all how far they are aware of the contributions made by the women in various fields.

Methodology: The study is based basically on primary data. The universe for the present study is composed of 200 female students. For collection of data all the colleges of Karimganj District is taken into consideration. From each college 50 numbers of female students from higher secondary and degree classes are selected on random basis. To analyse the data necessary statistical tools was taken.

Discussion: In spite of various remedial measures taken for the women in respect of education and empowerment the plight of women in general and haven't changed much. It is now high time to look into the system of education that is being imparted. Education, whether general or vocational have positive externalities. General education has not only the intrinsic value in the sense of joy, of learning, reading, etc but also has instrumental, social and process roles. It also leads to interpersonal motivation. An educated woman is far more likely to send her daughter to school than uneducated women. Also, she is likely to maintain better conditions of nutrition and hygiene in her household and thereby improve her family's health.

An important question that arises now is – whether the general education attained by a woman enough to empower her? It is a known fact that the rural women are lagging far behind the urban women in terms of education. Most of the women of the rural areas are below HSLC, that is, they confine to either primary, or secondary schooling. Now the syllabi covered in that stage should be taken into consideration as to how far the syllabi was able to make the girl realize the importance of her empowerment both for herself and for her family and society. May be their responsibilities towards their families and societies is something which they learn quite early both from their homes and schools. But how far do they understand the importance of empowering themselves. The stories of Sita and Savitri and many others only teach her to be a dutiful daughter, sister, wife and mother. The fairy tales only make her dream of her prince charming that will come and protect her and take her to a blissful world. She, in these stories does not find a girl, who does anything to shoulder her own responsibilities. If at times the women are portrayed who are involved in the decision making process, it is only the women who belong to the upper strata of the society. There are hardly any representation of the common young girls and women who come from the rural areas or from economically backward groups, who strive and successfully make their voices heard. The bulk of education that a girl receives in the primary and secondary stage only get a negative to neutral effect on her growth and development.

The greatest challenge for education is to meet the needs of the society. The present day need of women of India is not simply to acquire general education, but an education to

empower them economically. As economic empowerment can help them find a place in their society /family. This function of education can be achieved by providing young girls as well as women vocational education so that they can train themselves for some trade or other professions.

Vocational education or vocational education and training (VET) prepares trainees for jobs that are based on manual or practical activities, traditionally non-academic, and totally related to a specific trade. Now looking towards the condition of women though it is true that general education is important but at the same time vocational education is very necessary. General education is time consuming to make a person enough equipped to get job and this education specifically should be started at the early age of a girl who of course in the long run surely will derive positive externalities. But the mother of that girl child, that is, the women can also be made empowered if they can be given vocational education. This will increase their income earning capacity and will raise their economic status. The domestic work that a woman does for her family is very much non-remunerative and unrecognized, most of the time she spends without contributing anything to her personal income. If she is trained and given education on some of the work that she can do sitting in her home surely it will ensure some earnings for her and lift her status in the home, as she is also contributing to family income in particular and in national income in general. It will raise the self-respect of that woman. Again a girl child apart from general education if goes for vocational education her job prospects can be strengthened. Thus education whether general or vocational is a fundamental tool for women's empowerment.

Vocational education, other than giving the results in the short run brings advantages in the long run also. When a group of rural women who received vocational education and training in some way or the other were asked about their condition, they ascertained their improved conditions in various spheres of their lives. Their confidence level has enhanced and many of them started their own business and contributed to their family income. It ensured them to improve their life style. They came out of the curse of poverty. The economic empowerment achieved by them gave them ways and means to find an identity which they can claim to be their own or self- created, make them actively involved in decision making regarding the self as well as family and finally help them derive the joy of financially supporting their family.

Major Findings: The respondent students belonged to the age group of 16 to 22. The empirical findings of the present study indicates that majority of the respondents' education till high school, which is 52 per cent, in English medium while 48 per cent had their education up to HSLC in Bengali medium. The survey reveals that 92 per cent of them have heard about empowerment of women but only 8 percent, that is only 16 respondents understands the meaning of empowerment. In India, it is seen that girls get married quite early almost by the time they start joining college. And even by that time they hardly know the importance of decision making of a woman. When the respondents were asked about decision making 89 percent said that it was the responsibility of male members be it their father or their brother. When asked to cite examples from their syllabi where girls were

portrayed as decision makers in their families, the response was surprising. Not even a single respondent could come up with a single name, that is, 0 percent. Even when asked to name a few stories/ autobiographies that dealt with women or women's issues from their syllabi only 54 percent could come up with 6 names while 81 percent came up with only 2 names. When they were asked to name a few great women from the World/ Indian history who have played a significant role in the history, all of them, that is, 100 percent took the name of Indira Gandhi. Only 23 percent could take two more names in addition to Indira Gandhi. Another important fact that was revealed in the survey was that the respondents hardly could name women writers from the syllabi covered by them. The respondents who have opted for English and Bengali honours in their TDC, who comprised of 19 respondents could name a few women writers. The rest 181 respondents of both Higher Secondary and TDC classes could name only 3 women writers, where Sarojini Naidu's name remained common with all. Finally when they were asked whether they were ever directly been told about the importance of empowerment of women 87 percent said yes.

Conclusion: In the conclusion it can be said that if our syllabi particularly in the school level is relooked at with more addition of stories and examples of empowered women, it can greatly affect and inspire the girls from their young age to be empowered. The incidents and stories should be more lifelike and not fictional, imaginative etc. Had the school syllabi abounded with more portrayals of women who were the decision makers for their families, societies, nations etc. and were successful in the various ventures they had undertaken – economic, political, social, educational etc., it would have inspired the women to become empowered. The young girls should be shown that women play a significant role along with men in the all round development. The women too have established their own position in the various fields. The young girls from their young age should be taught the importance of empowerment, not just of family members but of the self. The seeds of the importance of women's empowerment should be sown in the tender age so that they reap a golden harvest of empowered women by the time they become adult.

Along with this vocational education should be given importance. It should be made mandatory for all the girls of rural areas to be vocationally trained along with general education. The Government should also take certain measures so as to attract the girls to join the vocational trainings. Scholarships should be provided to the trainees. Moreover it should be seen that there is no age bar for any one aspiring to be vocationally trained so that the young girl along with her mother can learn at a time. The Government should also take measures to see that after completion of training, women start their own business.

To sum up it can be said that if both the aspects-the general as well as vocational education is looked into seriously women, who are lagging behind the men can come forward and walk hand in hand with the men, at least in terms of economic empowerment and take the nation toward development. Moreover education which is assumed to be a positive tool for empowering women can no more remain a fallacy but turn out to be a veracity.

References:

1. Chandra Sinha “Empowerment of Women through Education” *Social Welfare* Vol.53, No.12, March 2007
2. Dr. Dandapani and Dr. Murugan, “ Education – A tool for Women's Empowerment and Sustainable Human Development” *Social Welfare* Vol.53, No.12, March 2007.
3. Dr. Dasarathi Bhuyan “ Empowerment of Indian Women: A challenge of 21st Century” *Orissa Review*, 2006
4. Joshi S C, *Women empowerment: Myth and reality*. Akansha Publishing House, New Delhi 2004
5. Mohammad Abul Hossen “Empowerment- based social work practice: Issues and challenges” *The Indian Journal of Social Work* Vol. 66, Issue 2, April 2005.
6. Neeta Tapan. *Need for empowerment* .Rawat publications 2000
7. Parida, Subash .C and Sarmistha Nayak. *Empowerment of Women in India*. New Delhi: Nothern Book Centre, 2009.
8. Rau,M.K. *Empowerment of women in India*. New Delhi, Discovery Publishing House, 2009
9. Rao, Bhaskar. D. *Women, Education and Empowerment*. New Delhi, Discovery Publishing House, 2006.
10. Internet Source: Surfed on December 2014
11. <http://www.beta.undp.org/undp/en/home/ourwork/womenempowerment/overview.html>
12. http://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:8rx81i433W0J:www.care.org/newsroom/publications/whitepapers/woman_and_empowerment.pdf+women+empowerment&hl=en&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEEShd1RkZLU79WkJIWie9py9BQYvGPGJHPDXaX-K3Li3qgPH0-thtHfDt6fKH390pGgvMXKOHWYzNIL3LddQbOURGILmVLvkhkXIyaZ96Gb311cOS4IxsWD5Pj3HTrxKO62T5QlJN&sig=AHIEtbTmVeKrJ4ef7b9jx2TABGy6NjdQNw
13. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Empowerment>
14. <http://www.icrw.org/publications/second-look-role-education-plays-womens-empowerment>
15. http://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:Pzo11V2Ntc0J:ccs.in/downloads/intern-papers-07/Education-for-Womens-Empowerment-183.pdf+education+and+women+empowermetn&hl=en&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESjdOFgjL0Ar1xuiHb6ZZafziJT7aeh1UTnGfnBY4a3canj0ETZdw0QoCUHRrdrIFKIPGsswxbx4mekxShtlriMP5nyofywbzblGCRjc4tD4gQ4U3NRDIJLfzhiFzzrxEh6K183RJ&sig=AHIEtbRORGk2-0eQK4mSzdBO_34qXFHxhQ