

Role of Education in Women Empowerment with Reference to Udupi District

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Abstract

Women constitute almost half the human race. Education has been recognized as an essential agent of social change and development in any society of any country. Education is considered as a potent instrument through which process modernization and social change come to existence. Education exposes people to new thoughts and ideas and provides necessary skills. Hence to think of harmonious development without educating women is impossibility. Moreover it has been rightly said that to educate a woman is to educate the whole family. Therefore, the emphasis with regard to women education should be to equip her multiple role as citizens, housewives, mother, contributor to family income, builders of new society and builder of the nation. Gender discrimination still persists in India and lot more needs to be done in the field of women's education in India. The gap in the male-female literacy rate is just a simple indicator. It is with a view to making an attempt to study Women empowerment with reference to Udupi district, this study was undertaken.

Introduction

Education is the key factor for women empowerment, prosperity, development and welfare. Discrimination of women from womb to tomb is well known. There is continued inequality and vulnerability of women in all sectors- Economic, Education, Social, Political, Health Care, Nutrition, Right and Legal etc. Women are oppressed in all spheres of life, they need to be empowered in all walks of life. In order to fight against the socially constructed gender biases, women have to swim against the system that requires more strength. Such strength comes from the process of empowerment which in turn will come from education.

Traditionally, women have been compelled to play the second fiddle in every sphere, be it in family or public life. Such is the order of things in India in spite of the fact that women nowadays are no less proficient than men in any field. Today, women are not what they used to be some years ago; they have now made their presence felt in every sphere of life.

Women constitute almost half the human race. Education has been recognized as an essential agent of social change and development in any society of any country. Education is considered as a potent instrument through which processes modernization and social change come to existence. Education exposes people to new thoughts and ideas and provides necessary skills. Hence to think harmonious development without educating women is impossibility. Moreover it has been rightly said that to educate a woman is to educate the whole family. Therefore, the emphasis with regard to women education should be to equip her multiple role as citizen, housewife, mother, contributor to family income, builder of new society and builder of the nation.

Conceptual Framework

The word "Empowerment" is one, which is widely used but seldom defined. It is an active, multi-dimensional process which encompasses several multi reinforcing components that begin with and are supported by economic independence. Power is the key word of the term empowerment. According to the International Encyclopedia (1999 p.33): Power means having the capacity and the means to direct one's life towards desired, social, political and economic goals or status. Power means control over material assets, intellectual resources and ideology. Webster's

New World Dictionary (1982) says the prefix “em” which attached to the noun “power” is generally used to form verbs meaning to make, make into etc. So the word “Empower” means to make or cause power.

Empowerment literally means becoming powerful. In that perspective the empowerment of women and the improvement of their status, particularly in respect of education, health and economic opportunities is highly important. Women need to be empowered in order to become strong and ready to take up new challenges for the building up of the family, society and the nation. In fact women empowerment is human empowerment itself. According to Sushama Shay (1998, p.56.) Women Empowerment is a process which helps women to change other women's consciousness through creating awareness. According to the Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus, the word “Education” means bring up, civilized, cultivate, training, teaching, guidance, schooling etc. According to the Dictionary of Education the word “Education” means (i) It includes all the process that develop human ability and behavior. (ii) The aggregate of all the process by which a person develops abilities, attitudes and other forms of behavior, positive value in the society in which he or she lives.

Objectives of the Study

This study was undertaken with a view to make an attempt to study Women Empowerment with reference to Udupi district.

The specific objectives of the study are as under:

- To study the effect of education in women empowerment
- To know the number of Literates and literacy rates in India and Udupi district for a decade
- To understand the gender gap for a decade
- To study the work participation patterns in India and Udupi district;
- To understand the impact of education in the elected women representatives to Urban Local body of the area under study
- To suggest suitable measures for the empowerment of women

Need for Women Education

Women empowerment can only be achieved through the provision of adequate and functional education to the 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 (men and women), education which is relevant to its immediate needs, goals and objectives, such a nation would find it difficult to stand on its own. The brand of education being advocated is that type of education which embeds the spirit of self-realization and all that is needed for the country's overall development like mass literacy, economic empowerment etc.

The need for women 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 the provision of effective and functional education and guidance and counseling. This is likely to guarantee women empowerment with its root based on women struggle to improve their status. The empowerment suggested is such that it entails the process of challenging power relations and of gaining wider control over source of power. This however, cannot be achieved without the provision of reasonable access to formal and functional education to women. This is based on the premise that education has been adjudged to be a viable instrument of change in the positive direction. Provision of formal and functional education is needed for the women folk, because:

- It would empower them to know and ask for their rights to education, health, shelter, food clothing etc.
- It would empower them to fight against every form of discrimination against their folk, assert themselves about their right to equal treatment with their men as bonafide citizens of this nation
- It would enable the women to take decisions and accept responsibilities for taking such decisions

concerning themselves

- It would give economic power to the women and there by enable them to contribute their quota to the economic growth of the nation
- 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
- It would help women to reduce maternal and infant mortality through improved nutrition, improved child rearing practice, health care and prevention against killer diseases
- It would avail women with the opportunity of participating keenly in the world of sophisticated politics and governance as enlightened citizens

Importance of Women Education

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." Taking this further, a woman has to play three roles in the course of her life. Each of these roles expects some duties from her. It is only with the help of education that she would be able to do them successfully. The first duty of a woman is to be a good daughter. The second duty is to be a good wife and third duty is to be a good mother. Education teaches a woman what she should be. It also teaches her how she should do it to be good daughter, a good wife and a good mother. Many men spend their evening time at clubs and societies. But a gentleman with an educated wife will not feel the need of a club or a society. He can share his thoughts with her. He can have her advice in trouble. He can spend his leisure in her pleasant company. An educated lady is a good friend, a clever nurse and a useful adviser to her husband. So she is a true help-mate. She can get her husband's affection and regard. An educated lady is always able to share her sorrows. There is a saying in English "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world". The meaning is that the mother exercises a very great influence over the lives of her children. She is able to mould their thoughts and character. If she is educated, she will make such impression on the mind of her children that will enable them in the later life to grow into a great man. It is true that education will enable women to make their parents, husbands and children truly happy. Hence it is very necessary that women should be educated.

Women education in India plays a very important role in the overall development of the country. It not only helps in the development of half of the human resources, but in improving the quality of life at home and outside. Educated women not only tend to promote education of their girl child, but also can provide better guidance to all their children. Moreover educated women can also help in the reduction of infant mortality rate and growth of the population. Equality in social systems is a necessary condition for empowerment of women. However, it is not sufficient for their development for which education is important; development and empowerment are also not synonymous.

Gender discrimination still persists in India and lot more needs to be done in the field of women's education in India. The gap in the male-female literacy rate is just a simple indicator. While the male literary rate was more than 75% according to the 2001 Census, the female literacy rate was 53.7% and according to the 2011 Census, the male literacy rate is 80.9 while female literacy rate is 64.6 only.

Women Education in India

It is very important to know the historical background, if we are to make a study of status of women in India. It is not easy to find answers for questions like when did women start losing their status or who was responsible for this situation. The position that women occupied in the medieval and later the colonial period is of utmost importance. Women were never put on high pedestal in the Shastras.

The history of Indian women can be divided in to three periods i.e. Ancient, Medieval and Modern. The East

India Company established its rule over India since 1757, which is called modern period. During this period education of men was modernized and institutions were opened to promote this but nothing was done to promote women education. In 1858, the British government took upon itself the direct responsibility of the administration. But in spite of this, they did not pay any attention towards the education of women of this country. In 1904, Annie Besant established Central Hindu Girls School at Benaras for the promotion of women education.

After independence, India's national government introduced development of women education in India, i.e. Radhakrishnan Commission or University education Commission (1948) Smt. Durgabai Deshmukh committee (1959), Smt. Hansa Mehta Committee (1962), M. Bhaktvatsalam Committee to look into the causes of Public Support particularly in Rural Area for girls Education and to public Corporation, Kothari Commission (1964-64), Resolution on the National policy on education (1968), Report of the Committee on the status of women in India (1974), Challenge of Education (1985), National policy on Education (1986), Programme of Action (1986) etc. On the other hand, to develop the primary education and to achieve the aim of universalization of primary education upto age level 6-14 years, some schemes or programmes like, OBB, DPEP, SSA, NLM, National Programme of Nutritional Support of Primary Education (NPNSPE) or (Mid-Day Meals), RTE Act 2009 and Knowledge Commission etc. were introduced to achieve the national goal i.e. hundred percent literacy. Despite these government efforts to the education, still women are lagging behind than men. Women of India generally remained unlettered and uneducated. As a result of ignorance, women become victims of man dominated society.

Literature review

Average women in India were disempowered absolutely relative to men, and there had been little change in her empowerment over time. The authors viewed that there were several cogent and pressing reasons for evaluating, promoting and monitoring the level of women's empowerment in India, not the least of which was that household health and nutrition was generally in the hands of women and their empowerment was necessary for ensuring not just their own welfare, but the wellbeing of households. They also asserted that empowerment was critical for the very development of India, as it enhanced the quality and quantity of human resources available for development. (Sunita Kishor and Kamla Gupta, 2004).

The need of the hour to empower women folk is to provide necessary political education and proper orientation. (Dr. M. Pargunan, 2007) Empowerment has multiple and interdependent dimensions: economic, social, cultural and political. The political situation in the country has its inevitable reaction on its educational system. (Shiv Kumar Saini, 1980).

Analysis and Interpretation:

As per the data published by the 2011 census (Table 1) India has managed to achieve an effective literacy rate of 74.04 per cent in 2011. In the 2001 census the country's literacy rate stood at 64.8 percent. The most notable thing that came across in the 2011 census is the sharp rise in the literacy of females over males. According to the report released by the latest census there are almost 74 per cent literates that constitute the total population of India aged between seven and above. Some of the States and Union Territories like Mizoram, Tripura, Goa, Kerala, Pondicherry, Chandigarh, Lakshadweep, Daman and Diu, National Capital Territory of Delhi and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, in the last one decade have done extremely well for themselves by attaining a literacy rate of almost 85. Census data for 2011 reveals that Karnataka state achieved a total literacy rate of 75.6 percent out of which 82.8% Male literates and 68.1% female literates.

Literacy Rate India: 2001, 2011

Table 2 shows the comparison of literacy rate in India for a decade. The figures in the table clearly demonstrate that there was a positive change of 8.2% in the literacy rate. Interesting to note that increase in the female literacy rate is double compared to rise in male literacy rate. So the indication is that society is slowly realizing the importance of women education. Since Literacy rate is the positive indicator to human development the magnitude of change in female literacy rate speaks volume about the women empowerment.

Gender Gap in Literacy Rate India - 2001, 2011

An attempt has made to compare prevailing gender gap in literacy rates (Table 3). Census data for last five decade clearly shows that there was a gradual increase in literacy rate of both male and female citizens. Gender gap in Literacy Rate is steadily declining in every census. In Census 2011, the gap stands at 16.3 points.

Number of Workers by Residents in India: 2011

Table 4 shows that of the total number of workers it has been found that number of workers in rural area is 348.6 million and in urban area it is 133.1 million. This is an indicator that for every 100 people, 42 people are working in rural area when compared to 36 people in urban area. The reason behind this is density of population.

Women Work Participation Rate

Table 5 shows the percentage change in work participation rate for a decade. For the economic empowerment of women work participation rate is a positive indicator but major concern is that despite of considerable increase in female literacy rate, female work participation rate stood at -0.1.

Work Participation Rate for Karnataka State and Udupi District (2011)

Census data for 2011 reveals that Karnataka state achieved a work participation rate of 65.55 percent in male and 34.45 percent in female (Table 6). One of the indicators of women's empowerment is increase in female work participation rates (Table 7). It is presumed that increase in literacy and attainment of higher level of education and skills by women leads to larger entry of women in employment at higher levels of productivity and earnings. Exact change in work participation rate for women is rather difficult to gauge because of frequent changes in the definition of 'worker' used in the Population Censuses – which give the most reliable and exhaustive country-wide data. The changes in the definition affect the count of workers in agriculture and unorganized industrial sectors where the large majority of women work.

As women constitute half of the population there can be no development in the country unless the needs and interest of women are fully taken into account. Women empowerment is an essential element in national development and it is proved looking at the parameters in the Table 7. The parameter showing the sex ratio for every thousand males clearly shows that the awareness in women has increased over the years because of women education. In order to compare the participation of women in political system, one of the parameters depicts that the percentage of women elected representatives in urban local bodies is higher than that of statutory requirement of 33.33%. This implies that if women are educated, they not only get empowered but also contribute to the progress of nation.

Findings

Nation Specific (India)

- Sharp rise in the literacy of females over males for a decade
- Society realized the importance of women education and hence there are more women literates in India
- Steady decline in gender gap in literacy rate
- Despite considerable increase in female literacy rate, there decline in female work participation rate

District specific (Udupi)

- Female literacy is above national average
- Work participation rate is below the national average
- Educated women tend to focus on non-agricultural sectors
- Increase of women participation in the elected representatives of urban local bodies

Conclusion

In the national context, with the sharp rise in the literacy rate of females over males in a decade and a steady

decline in gender gap in literacy rate, the work participation rate is below the national average in Udupi District. This is a result of education where women have more choices in their hand and resulted in the attitudinal change to take decisions. Education has empowered women by making them more confident and vibrant in taking a decision about them and helps them to play a prominent role not only in their family but also in the society. They play the role of wife, mother and a leader in the society which is clearly indicated by the level of participations in the urban local bodies and panchayat raj institutions.

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Table 1. Number of literates India: 2001–11

(in Millions)

Sex	2001	2011	2011	Change
Persons	560.7	763.5	763.5	+202.8
Males	336.5	434.7	434.7	+98.2
Females	224.2	328.8	328.8	+104.6

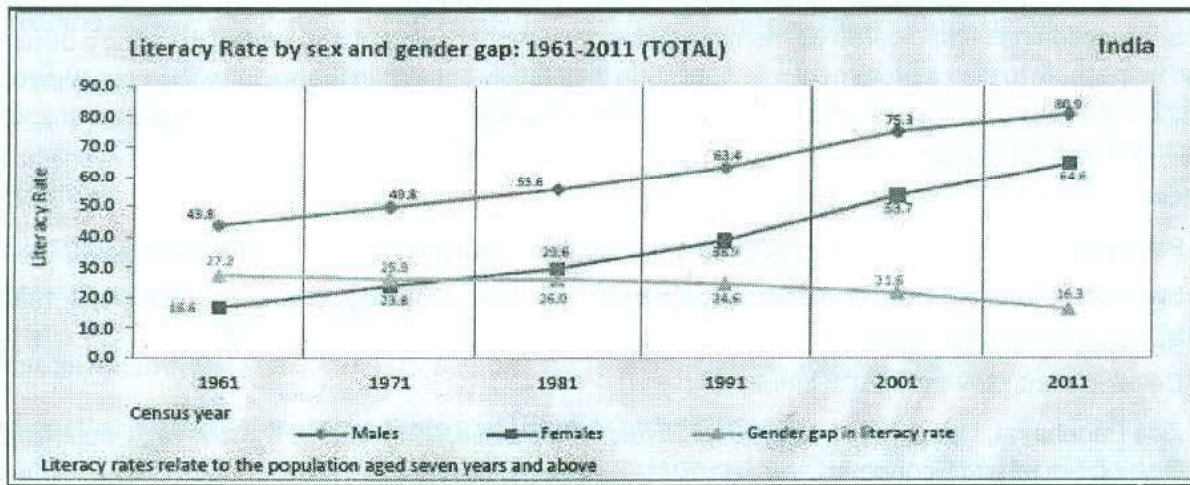
Source: Census Data 2011

Table 2. Literacy Rate India: 2001, 2011

(in %)

Sex	2001	2011	Change
Persons	64.8	73	+8.2
Males	75.3	80.9	+5.6
Females	53.7	64.6	+10.9

Source: Census Data 2011

Table 3. Literacy Rate by Sex and Gender**Table 4. Number of Workers by Residents in India: 2011***(in millions)*

Residence	Number of Workers	Non workers	Work Participation Rate*
Total	481.7	728.8	39.8%
Rural	348.6	484.9	41.8%
Urban	133.1	243.9	35.3%

*Work Participation Rate is defined as the number of workers per 100 populations.

Table 5. Women Work Participation Rate*(in %)*

Sex	2001	2011	Change
Persons	39.1	39.8	+0.7
Males	51.7	53.3	+1.6
Females	25.6	25.5	-0.1

Table 6. Work Participation rate for Karnataka State

Males	65.55 %
Females	34.45 %

Table 7. Indicators of Women Empowerment

Indicator	Kundapura	Udupi	Karkala	Udupi District
Share of female and male literacy (LITF, LITM)	F 69.19, M 79.83	F 78.62, M 85.04	F 75.88, M 82.57	F 74.88, M 82.85
Share of female and male Work Participation Rate (WPRF, WPRM)	F 33.14, M 66.86	F 33.07, M 66.93	F 40.67, M 59.33	F 34.65, M 65.35
Share of female and male workers in the non-agricultural sector (NAGF, NAGM)	F 23.32, M.76.68	F.29.28, M.70.72	F.40.82, M. 59.18	F.30.09, M.69.91
Female and male Agricultural wage rate(WAGEF, WAGEM)	Wf. 180, Wm. 20	Wf.200, Wm. 250	Wf.180, Wm. 200	Wf. 180, Wm. 200
Sex ratio (FOR EVERY 1000 Males)	1124	1077	1086	1094
Percentage of women elected representatives in urban local bodies	39.13	38.78	39.13	38.95