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EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Gender equality is a constituent of development as well as an instrument of development. No country can be deemed developed if half of its population is several disadvantaged in terms of basic needs, livelihood options, access to knowledge, and political voice. It is an instrument of development because without gender equality other goals of development will also be difficult to achieve. It can be achieved only through education. If education is properly insisted, then the empowerment of women can be easily achieved. The higher education paves way for empowerment. Here an attempt is made by the researcher to find out some of the empowered leading women personalities of India.

KEYWORDS: Women Education, Empowerment



Achievement.

INTRODUCTION :

Education has been a liberating force from darkness and ignorance to light and knowledge. It is a lifelong process. It is also co-extensive with life. The Greek Philosopher Plato was the first who advocated a state controlled system of compulsory education for both gender. The function of education was to make a man and women socially, economically intellectually and politically useful and fit. Hence education for citizenship is "Gymnastics for body and music for the soul."¹

Women Education: Need of the Hour

Women claim to be the largest minority in India with a variety of social and economic disabilities, which prevent them from exercising their human rights and freedom in societies. In modern society education is one of the necessary channels for achieving high class status and power further, women education can also bring about changes in the family size, fertility, decision making and participation in every walk of life etc., education is the essential process through which women are gaining confidence, self-esteem and the skills to equip themselves in the struggle for equal rights.²

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many literatures are available in this area of research. Some of the relevant issues are discussed here. Stilatha Batliwala (1994) in her book "The Meaning of Women's Empower

ment; New concepts from Action”, discussed about the empowerment of women through education and also the concept of empowerment. Sushma Sahay (1998) in her book “Women and Empowerment” briefly explain about the task of empowerment. Dr.Promilla Kapur (2001) in her book “Empowering the Indian Women” examines about the empowered Indian women various fields.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Most of the women in India are empowered, and they are not much known. Even though they occupy the higher posts, in the society, the stepping stone, which they have passed, was unknown to all. So it is necessary to study their life history to know their hard work. Hence the following specific objectives are framed.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1.To study the history of leading empowered women of India.
- 2.To identify their educational level, which leads them to the target of empowerment.

METHODOLOGY

The study requires primary data for its analysis. They are collected from Government Order and Reports. The Secondary data are collected from journals and magazines.

Improvement in the educational status of Women

From Independence and over a century of striving for a better status of women, India has developed several initiatives for guaranteeing education, because education was recognised as one of the important inputs for the development of women, national integration and social changes. And the content during those days was not very much capable of dealing with the problems and challenges of free India.

Right from independence education was for the first time perceived as an important agent of nation development as well as women development. Many committees and commissions were appointed for women education some of them are National council for Women’s Education, National Committee on Women’s Education Hansa Mehta Committee of and National committee on women’s education etc., in the year 1958 another committee was setup under the leadership of Mrs. Durgabai Deshmukh as National Committee on education especially for the education of girls. Later on in 1968 a resolution was issued to form National Policy on education which recommended that state level and national level councils are set up for the promotion of female education. The national policy on education of 1968 was modified in 1986 which emphasised on facilities for girl children were further revised in 1992. A fundamental mandate of the national policy on education is to educate for women’s equality. This goes beyond merely ending gender gaps in educational attainments.³ It seeks to after the very process and content of education so that it changes people and social mindsets. For that it is necessary to prepare a gender sensitive curriculum and removal of gender bias from the text books both at primary secondary and higher level of education.

Education leads to Empowerment

Education of women will place them on an equal footing with men in decision making positions in economic and political fields. Empowerment of women through education will lead to their greater participation in government and community institutions and better entrepreneurial opportunities .⁴ More women in parliament and cabinets, chief executive office in major corporations, top

administrators, managers and civil servants will lead the pace of progress towards equality and empowerment. Having women in top decision making positions will also lead to a better integration of women's concerns into the formulations of national policies and development plans which in turn would result in developing the full potential of women.⁵

.Empowered leading women personalities

Women in India now participate in all activities such as education, sports, politics, media, art and culture, service sectors, science and technology etc. Female activists united over issues such as female infanticide, gender bias, and women health and literacy especially higher education.

The Government of India declared 2001 as the year of Women's Empowerment. The National policy for the empowerment of women was passed.

Some leading personalities who are empowered by education are Kiran Bedi of Punjab, Bachendri pal of Garhwal, Justice M.Fathima Beevi of Kerala, Pratibha Devisingh Patil of Maharashtra, Meira Kumar of Bihar and K.M. Mayawati of New Delhi. These women not only empowered themselves by Education, but also became forerunners for the future generation.

Kiran Bedi of Punjab

Kiran Bedi was born in Amritsar, Punjab, India. She is the second of the four daughters of Prakash Peshawaria and Prem Peshawaria. She attended the Sacred Heart convent school Amritsar, where she joined the National cadet corps. She took up tennis, a passion she inherited from her father as a tennis player. She won the Junior National Lawn Tennis Championship in 1966, the Asian Lawn Tennis championship in 1972, and the All India interstate Women's Lawn Tennis championship in 1976. In addition, she also won the All Asian Tennis championship, and won the Asian Ladies title at the age of 22.

Later, she obtained her BA in English (Hons) (1964-68) from the Government College for women, Amritsar. She then earned a Master's degree (1968-70) in political science from Punjab University Chandigarh, graduating at the top of her class.⁶

She began her career as a lecturer in Political Science (1970-72) at Khalsa Osman College for women, Amritsar. In July 1972, she joined the Indian police service. She married Brij Bedi in 1972. Even while in active service in the IPS, she pursued her educational goals, and obtained a Ph.D in social sciences from the Department of social sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi, where the topic of her thesis was "Drug Abuse and Domestic Violence."⁷

She served in a number of tough assignments ranging from New Delhi traffic postings, Deputy Inspector General of police in insurgency prone Mizoram, Advisor to the Lieutenant Governor of Chandigarh, Director General of Narcotics control Bureau, to a United Nations delegation, where she became the civilian police Advisor in United Nations Peacekeeping operations. For her work in the UN, she was awarded a UN Medal. She is popularly referred to as "Crane Bedi" for touring the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's car for a parking violation during the PM's Tour of United States at the time.

Kiran Bedi influenced several decisions of the Indian police service, particularly in the areas of narcotics control, traffic management and VIP security. During her stint as the Inspector General of prisons, in Tihar Jail (Delhi) (1993-95) she instituted a number of reforms in the Management of the Prison and initiated a number of measures such as detoxification programs, Yoga, Vipassana Meditation and literacy programmes. For this she won the 1994 Ramon Magsaysay Award, and the 'Jawaharlal Nehru fellowship,' to write about her work at Tihar Jail.

She was lastly appointed as Director General of India's Bureau of police Research and

Development. In May 2005, she was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Law in recognition of her “humanitarian approach to prison reforms and policing”.⁷

On 27th Nov 2007, she had expressed her wish to voluntarily retire from the police force to undertake new challenges in life. On 25 December 2007, the Government of India agreed to relieve Bedi of her duties as Director General of the Bureau of police Research and Development.

After retirement, she launched a new website www.saferindia.com on Jan 3, 2007. The Motto of this website is to help people whose complaints are not accepted by the local police.

She established Navjoti and India Vision, two major voluntary organisations to improve the condition of drug addicts and poor people. Her organisations were awarded the “Serge Soitir off Memorial Award” for drug abuse prevention by the “United Nations.”⁸

These achievements of Dr. Kiran Bedi, proves that she was able to fulfil the task only through his education. She was empowered through education.

Bachendri Pal of Garhwal

Bachendri Pal was born into a family of very moderate means in 1954 in a village named Nakuri in Garhwal. In her school days, she was excellent in sports. Her first exposure to mountaineering was the age of 12, when during a picnic she along with several school mates climbed about 13, 123 feet high peak).

Despite many constraints, she continued, her schooling and completed it successfully. On being persuaded by the principal of her school, her parents sent her to college. She completed her graduation, becoming the first girl of her village to desa while doing her graduation; she also secured the first position in a rifle shooting event, beating other boys and girls. She also completed university courses leading to securing and MA and Bachelors’ degree in Education. Then she joined the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering. She was declared the best student and was considered as “Everest Material” In 1982, while at NIM, she claimed Gangotri I (21,900 ft) and Rudugaria (19,091 ft). Around that time, she got employment as an instructor at the National Adventure foundation, which had set up an adventure school for training women to learn mountaineering.⁹

In 1984, India had scheduled its fourth Expedition, christened “Everest ‘84”, to the Mount Everest. Bachendri was selected as one of the members of the elite group of six Indian women and eleven men who were privileged to attempt an ascent to the Mount Everest, Sagarmatha in the Nepoleses.

The team commenced its ascent in May 1984. On the night of 15-16 May 1984, Bachendri and her tent mate were sleeping in one of the tents camp II at an attitude of about 24,000 feet. Then they were surrounded by glacier. Her tent mate cut the ice with knife. Many members of the team were injured and became unnerved; and they climbed down to the base camp.¹⁰

On May 22, 1984 some other climbers joined the team to ascent the summit of the Mount Everest. Bachendri was the only woman in this group on May 23, 1984 Bachendri reached the summit of Mount Everest, and at 1;07 PM IST, she was standing at the peak (29,084 ft) along with other climber). She remained on the summit for about 43 minutes and took some photographs. She became the first Indian women to scale the Mount Everest, and the fifth women in the world. She climbed down and reached the base camp safety she continued to be active after ascending the highest peak in the world.” In 1985, she led an Indo-Nepalease Everest Expedition team comprising only women. Nine years later in 1994. She led an all women team of rafters.

Justice M. Fathima Beevi of Kerala

Fathima Beevi was born on 30 April 1927 at Pathanamthitta Kerala State, India as the child of Meera Sahib and Khadeeja Bibi she did her schooling in catholicate High school Pathanamthitta and degree. B.Sc at University College, Trivandrum, she took her BL. From Government Law College, Trivandrum.

She was enrolled as Advocate on November 14th 1950. She began her career in the lower Judiciary. She was appointed as the Munsiff in the Kerala sub-ordinate Judicial Services in May, 1958. She was promoted as the sub ordinate judge in 1968 and as the chief judicial Magistrate in 1972, as District 2 sessions judge in 1974.

She was further appointed as the Judicial member of the Income tax Appellate Tribunal in January, 1980.¹² She was then elevated to the High court as a judge on 4th Aug 1983. She became permanent judge of the high court on 14th May 1984. She retired as the judge of the High court on 29th April 1989. but was further elevated to the Supreme Court as a judge on 6 October 1989, where she retired on 29th April 1992.

Her appointment to the supreme court over several senior judges was seen as a political decision by Rajiv Gandhi following the controversy over the Muslim women's (protection of Rights on Divorce) Act.

She later won on to become Governor of Tamil Nadu on 25 Jan 1997. She had also served as the chairman of Kerala Commission for Backward classes (1993) and member of National Human Rights Commission (1993). She received Hon. D. Litt and Mahila Shiromani Award in 1990. She was also awarded Bhaiath Jyoti Award.¹³

Education has raised her position towards top. She was the first women judge to be appointed to the supreme court of India, and the first Muslim Women to be appointed by any higher Judiciary. She is the first women judge of a supreme court of a nation in India and Asia.

Pratibha Devisingh Patil of Maharashtra

Pratibha Devisingh Patil was born in Dec.19 1934, in Nadgaon Village of Jalgaon District Maharashtra. She was educated at R.R. Vidyalaya, Jangaon and later obtained her master's degree in political science and economics from the hoolijee jetha college. She pursued her studies as a law student while holding her position as M.L.A Later She obtained a law Degree from the government Law College, Mumbai Government Law college¹⁴.

She was elected four times consecutively for Muktainagar, Maharashtra, as a member of the Maharashtra Legislative Assemble between 1962 and 1985. She also served as a member of parliament in the Rajya Sabha from 1985 -1990. In 1991 she was elected as a member of parliament in the Tenth Lok sabha, representing the Amravati constituency and stayed in the role until 1996.

She was the 24th Government of Rajasthan between 2004-2007, and the first woman to hold that office. On 14th June 2007, United Progressive alliance, the ruling alliance of political parties in India headed by the Indian National congress, and the Indian left nominated her as their candidate for the presidential election to be held in july that year. She faced Bhairon Singh shekhawat, the NDA Cardidate, in a straight contest, Shiv sena party, an important ally of NDA, declared its support of patil on the grounds that she would be the first Maharashtrian to hold the office.

She won the presidential election held on July 19, 2007 defeating her nearest rival Bhairon Singh Shekhawat as India's first women president on 25 July 2007.¹⁵

Meira Kumar Bihar

Meria Kumar was born in March 31 , 1945, in the state of Bihar District parna to the former Deputy prime minister and prominent dalit leader, Babu jagaivan Ram, a born freedom fighter, Indrani Devi. She did her M.A L.L.B educated at Indraprastha College and Miranda House, Delhi University.

In 1973, she joined the Indian Foreign Service and served at embassies in Spain, United Kingdom and Mauritius. She also served as a member of the India Mauritius joint commission. She was at the High commission of India in London from 1977-1979 and at Ministry of External Affairs from 19680-1985.¹⁶

She entered electoral politics in 1985 and was elected from Bijnor in utara Pradesh. She was re-elected in 2004 at her father former constituency of Sasaram of Bihar. She served as the Minister of social justice and Empowerment from 2004-2009.

She was elected as the speaker of Lok Sabha, there by becoming the first woman speaker of the country.¹⁷

Km.Mahawati of New Delhi

Mayawati was born in Jan 15, 1965 in New Delhi. Her father is Ram Rati the belonged to the scheduled caste.¹⁸

She graduated in arts from Kalindi College of the University of Delhi. She holds bachelor's degrees in Law and education. She worked as a teacher in Delhi. In 1977 Dalit politician kanshi Ram became very influential in her life resulting in her joining his core team when he founded the Bahujan samaj party in 1984.¹⁹

She became the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh in 1995. She crossed three tenures and for the fourth time She again became the women chief minister in 2007. She is the first Dalit woman Chief minister of any Indian state after the death of kanshi Ram, she performed the funeral ceremonies. She followed Buddhist traditions and customs for that.

She announced an agenda that focused on providing social justice to the weaker sections of society and providing employment instead of distributing money to the unemployed. Her slogan is to make "Uttar Pradesh" in to "Uttam Pradesh" ("Excellent Province")

The above said are fewer examples for the Empowered women

CONCLUSION

The post-Independence period had tremendous improvement in providing facilities for the education of women if one looks at the history of the movement for improving women status all over the world, it indicates that education is the most powerful instrument of changing women's was regarded as a means to improve their status within the family and equip them to play any role in the wider social context. It is also envisaged that the National policy on education could be an important strategy for achieving a basic change in the status of women. The National education system would play a positive role in the empowerment of women and contribute towards development of new values. Only few examples of women in higher educational strata will not keep the community comfortable. One has to watch and see the progress of the country in all spheres.

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