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## **Morality and Education: Foundation for Women Empowerment**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Due to the socio cultural norms of the Indian society, gender mindset and discrimination internalized to an extent where our self image is partially determined by the fact that we male and female. In this tenderized Indian society women should be empowered and need to follow their role models and become worthy of emulation. With the aim of value based education, the ability to make moral judgments based on sound reasoning can deliberately be cultivated. Empowerment has to come from within and is not something which can be given. Women empowerment is a process of individual and social transformation; and begins in the mind from her own consciousness and her own rights, capabilities and potentials from herself image and awareness about development in all fields. From the social perspectives, value based education promotes effective learning and underpins the continuous improvement of personal, social, moral and economic well being. So, with the imposition of value education one can promote significant value to understanding, co – relationship and development of one's personality with other fellow beings. All the prerequisites of women empowerment as a member of the society can be nourished with value based education. Value based education is investment in individual capability and self responsibility. Value based education refers to a wide gamut of learning and activities ranging from training in physical health, mental hygiene, etiquette and manners, appropriate social behavior, civic rights and duties to aesthetic and even religious training. This small paper is a humble attempt to study about the importance of value based education as a means for empowering women which is a great need of the hour. If women are not empowered and discriminated as before, development of the society will be very difficult. Induction method will be employed, on the bases of both primary and secondary data, for this research study.

**Keywords:** Education; Empowerment; Gender; Society; Women

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Women, by constituting an integral part of any society and culture, are often underestimated and discriminated in different forms and respects. Many a time, the contribution of women is neither given due attention nor marginalized while formulating socio-economic development plans. Being characterized by tradition of sex discrimination and social stratification, the Indian women also occupy a place of subordination to men in many occasions. The status of women is key indicator to the progress of a society as well as of the country. But, they shares distinct and equal footsteps along with the men folk of the society. In maximum societies, women had been considered naturally unsuited to political activity and had been formally or informally excluded from it. Due to the socio cultural norms of the Indian society, gender mindset and discrimination internalized to an extent where our self image is partially determined by the fact that we are male and female. In this genderised Indian society women should be empowered and need to follow their role models and become worthy of emulation. The consciousness of right and wrong, good and evil is called moral value. The concept of good differs from person to person. But the good considered from moral point of view is regarded as the highest good. It is education, which can make people understand the nature of the highest good.(Dash-2006) structurally, pedagogically and philosophically educational institutions, need to play a far more effective role in the development of a new cultural ethos that can contribute to the realization of the goals of comprehensive development of human material. This also requires that the educational institutions internalize the concerns for the equality of women. (Power-1999) With the main aim of value based education, the ability to make moral judgment based on sound reasoning can deliberately be cultivated. Value education is inspired and kindled the quest among the students by means of one's own example of character and mastery of knowledge. It is by

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embodying values within ourselves that we can really radiate values to our students. Value oriented education should not be concerned as an intervention of a series of 'dos' and 'don'ts'. Value is purely individualistic and inner conception of mind. Value is an individualistic ideal. It should be inculcated from inside then people should be empowered- socially, politically and economically. Empowerment has to come from within and is not something which can be given.

## **WOMEN IN INDIAN SOCIETY**

Socially and culturally women are still tradition bound and it is a disadvantageous position. They are well known for their hardworking nature-expert weavers and farmers, in addition to being the career of rich culture. After globalization, the traditional work culture and role of women is being undermined whereas mechanization and automation is prevailing in the market based economy which has adversely affected the village based traditional economy. With the advent of globalization, the same works which were women's exclusive domain came to be undertaken by men and machines, and women's works which determined their identity were snatched away reduced women to mere consumers rather than producers. Economic independence or access to an inherited or self generated income is considered to be the major means of empowering women. Thus women are still a subjugated and dominated social group instead of emancipation and empowerment.

In India, in principle, women have the right to vote and can contest the election. Even women members were there in the Constituent assembly of India. In political sphere, India's women in general and Hindu women in particular, stood in the forefront of every movement. Modern Indian women are objects of admiration by people of the rest of the world for the role they played in the country's public life. Women in India have not only reached the highest positions of power, and equal political and civil rights as men without having to fight for them, but they also have been increasingly joining the higher ranks of administration. When we start making a comparison between the role and status of women in modern India and in the other countries of the world, particularly in the matter of emancipation of women, we are struck with unexpected contrasts. The part that has been played by women in the freedom struggle and in the politics has been more important than that played by women in most other countries of the world. While their Western counterparts had to struggle to get political citizenship, Indian women won the franchise at the same time as men i.e at the time of the national independence in 1947, along with favorable legislation in many other areas. In Britain, Emmeline Pankhurst founded the Women's Franchise League in 1903, with her daughter Christabel (1880-1958), the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). She fought for women to have the same political status as men. The motto of the Suffragettes was 'deeds, not words'. They fought a long historic struggle for their political equality. In June 1918, the British women over 30 won the right to vote. On 2 July 1928, just three weeks after Emmeline Pankhurst's death, a law was passed allowing all women over the age of 21 to vote. It was only in the late 1970s, that women realized that they were winners of a 'hollow fortress' as the social structures had largely remained unchanged. They have got the right to contest election just with the independence of India. Women were elected from the first Parliamentary election of 1952. But the number of women in governmental ministerial level is not increased with a desirable amount. And those countries where women received the political rights later than India are increasing the number of women in governmental ministerial level higher than India. The issues of women empowerment arises because of the stark reality that women are still marginalized and sidelined from the mainstream as a use and throw commodity. The patriarchal canopy had always denied women the warm rays of autonomy and freedom. The indeclinable gender bias has disfigured the face of humanity. This discrimination originates well before the birth of a girl and is sustained right through her womanhood. India is a nation whose nationhood is equated with the 'Mother India'; image the 'Bharat Mata'. India is also a country having agricultural economy, where land is the main source sustenance, is connotatively associated with women in the form of 'Bhumi Devi'. It is quite ironical that in spite of these symbolical attributions, women in India are viewed as 'second sex'. (Bhowmik, 2006)

## **EDUCATION AND SOCIETY**

Education is intimately connected with life. Human life is reflected in the system of education. Again, education becomes complete and meaningful in and through the experiences of life. With change in life situations and values, education is bound to change. Every society should promote the educational and economic interests with special care and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. The ultimate aim of education is the integral development of human personality.

Education must look at the spiritual development of man enlargement of his soul. (Purkait, 1996) The Indian society is now shattered due to the over materialistic character of education. At present the trend of entire human society is materialistic. The results are disastrous. Human peace is disturbed. Values are eroding fast. The youths are in dire necessity of an ideology by which they can imitate. The entire society is confronted with a large number of practical problems. In short, in modern human life, living has become more important than life.

The main purpose of any system of education should be to perpetuate the process of development of the individual as well as the society. The curriculum should include those subjects which can facilitate both the processes of development, and it must reflect both individual and social needs. Its resultant effect will be benefitted to all the members of the society. There should not be any condition for discrimination or disparity among the members of the society. Gender disparities can be bridged by distributive justice to reduce inequalities in resources and power. Amongst the powerless vis-a-vis the more powerful, women's subordination to men due to class, caste, religious laws and rituals, prevalent social values and kinship relationship within family constitutes an additional reason of gender disparity. This can be removed only when people have proper value education.

### **NEED FOR VALUE EDUCATION**

Since India has decided to make itself a democratic republic, the Indians should have to be trained to uphold and practice the values of democratic social order. This can be possible only when the qualities of discipline, tolerance, understanding, respect, patriotism, cooperation etc. are inculcated, and developed in the students in their young age. With the influence of different religious and spiritual leaders which have been giving great emphasis on human values, it is confirmed that any sort of education should be based on value. The most important need of the day is the pervasive concern for man as man, and not as cut up into caste, sex, and communities, and the formulation of a sanction for the same from a rational ethics and morality. Individuals constitute society which has certain ideals, models and norms about behavior, conduct, duties and responsibilities towards one another. Love, universal brotherhood, sincerity, honesty and integrity of character, firm attitude of rendering help and performing actions and works for general benefit etc. are some of the constituents of healthy social life. True education aims at developing individuals into social beings having these values. Value based education is the only vehicle for achieving the proper knowledge and understanding about the rights of women and their problems. Education is not simply about jobs. Education is also about access to new knowledge, information and ideas as well as the capacity to use these effectively. These are enhancements of the capabilities that individuals bring to their goals in many areas of life, aside from the labor market. They explain some aspects of the correlation between women's education and various human development outcomes. There are lessons to be learnt from studies which demonstrate that access to particular resources have helped women to empower themselves. At the same time, there are also lessons to learn from studies that suggest the reverse. Unpacking these different outcomes to look at underlying causes draws attention to the social relationships through which they were brought about. (Sarkar 2006) The gender concentration explores the social and cultural construction of gender as fundamental bases of social relations and institutions. The guiding intellectual mission for this concentration is to consider the intersection of gender, race, ethnicity, social class, age, disability, sexuality in a transnational and historical context. Education, culture, communication, and information obviously plan are an important part in all these. School text books, teachers' and parents' attitude, music and video industries, the mass media including Internet, all of these have an impact on the individual's attitudes and are by and large prominent in perpetuating sexist stereotype, in practically all societies today. A concerted consolidated approach with proper academic and analytical study is necessary to deal with their root causes. During the last two decades women's education increased significantly which had further accelerated the increasing proportion of women in the service sector. The employed women in the service sector, particularly who are married, face tremendous difficulties to adjust themselves both in family life in home and working life outside in the workplace. When women are increasingly participating in employment, family conflicts are arising. These conflicts are due to scarcity of time to compete both types of works on the one hand and clashes of values, perception, beliefs and roles of traditional society on the other. Women of the middle and upper middle class are not in position to emancipate themselves from the traditional roles and social values which may be reasons for conflict in the family. To avoid role conflicts they are found to take extra load and try to balance the situation.

With the dawn of independence education has been accepted as a nation building activity. India developed a national system of education, to help in the all round development of the children. The achievements so far are not satisfactory, social values should be developed both inside and outside educational institutions. With the possession of such values, student can learn love for their fellow being, love for the country-means love for nation, and love for mankind leads to international sympathy. This paves the way for education for international understanding and brotherhood, which is the cry of the day for world peace.

## **WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND VALUE EDUCATION**

One of the recommendations of the National Policy on Education-1986, by the Government of India is to promote 'empowerment' of women through the agency of education and it is considered to be a landmark in the approach to women's education. In recent years, the empowerment of women has been recognized as the central issue in determining the status of women. Since independence, the government of India has made concerted efforts towards women empowerment by removing gender biases so that women enjoy equal status vis-a-vis men in the real sense as enshrined in the Constitution of India. In spite of all the provisions of the constitution of India, efforts made by different conventions and covenants, and laws of different countries of the world, women are still subjugating in different forms- knowingly or unknowingly. With the progress of development, women are commodified, made chief labors and are made instrumental enhancing the market for commodities. Atrocities on women at their working places, as well as, outside, which have resulted in rape, molestation including murder cited as instances of exploitation, oppression and subjugation of women. Rape of female patients by doctors and sexual torture of women in police custody are not unknown in this country. Trafficking, sexual abuses, violence against women and many other crimes like these are increasing against women. Food and health care is another domain where women are discriminated against men due to their economic position. It is advanced that women and the girl child are always neglected in this respect. It is abject poverty and deprivation that lie at the root of the problem and not the supposed discriminatory attitude. Except few lucky employees of central/private organizations millions of people belonging to lower and lower middle classes in India are left to their fate when they fall sick or suffer from serious ailments. Those who can manage and are economically well of do not make any distinction between boys and girls. But the fact remains that when the bread winner of a poor and lower middle class family suffers he is given more attention than females and girl child under similar circumstances. (Gassah (ed), 2008) These are the main causal factors for the problems of women empowerment. If women are still remain in these conditions, development of the society will be meaningless because they constitute fifty percent of the total population.

Empowerment refers to enabling people towards self determination. For women, empowerment emphasizes the importance of increasing their power and taking control over decisions and issues that shape their lives. This includes having full access to complete information and to self discern the quality and credibility of such information in making these decisions. To empower women means to understand and address the various dynamics of power and relationship in a particular society which are intertwined with issues of age, class, ethnicity, gender, history and race. (Suryanarayana, Rao and Himabindu, 2011) Women empowerment is a process of individual and social transformation; and begins in the mind from her own consciousness and her own rights, capabilities and potentials from herself image and awareness about development in all fields. From the social perspectives, value based education promotes effective learning and underpins the continuous improvement of personal, social, moral and economic well being. So, with the imposition of value education one can promote significant value to understanding, co-relationship and development of one's personality with other fellow beings. All the prerequisites of women empowerment as a member of the society can be nourished with value based education. With value based education a person understand how to behave with others, the impact of good behavior with others, the impact of others good to the society. It is the only surest way for removing social evils including violence, torture, humiliation etc.

Value based education is investment in individual capability and self responsibility. Value based education refers to a wide gamut of learning and activities ranging from training in physical health, mental hygiene, etiquette and manners, appropriate social behavior, civic rights and duties to aesthetic and even religious training. The National Policy on Education, 1986 stated in respect of value education that the policy statement mentioned that 'the growing concern over the erosion of essential values and an increasing cynicism in the society has brought in focus the need for readjustment in curriculum in order to make education a forceful tool for cultivation of social and moral values. In

May 1990, the Government of India appointed A Review Committee with Acharya Ramamurty as its Chairman, to review the NPE, 1986 and to make recommendations for revision of the policy. The Committee conceived education, inter-alia, as a process of liberation, under India context,- 'liberation from numerous prejudices based on caste, gender, religion, region, language etc., from prejudices based on superstitious beliefs, from a variety of unfounded fears, and positively, freedom to explore, to investigate; freedom to accept truth even when it goes against one's earlier notions and beliefs. True Education must humanize a person.' (Nanda R.T. 1997).

## **CONCLUSION**

Human life can develop through proper education of any type but emphasis should be given to the development of values because the aim of education is the ideal life. Values form the basic elements of life. Value can be developed through acquisition of experiences. Opportunities should be provided to both boys and girls to apply and practice the acquired experiences in practical life. The whole environment must be favourable to the development of values in the younger generation. Indian women are as capable as any women in any part of the world. But unlike women in many Western countries, Indian women are denied equal opportunities for working with men in many spheres of life. Constitutionally, Indian women have been granted equal rights with men, but practically speaking they are kept much behind men in various life activities. Hence, the women should be given equal rights with men everywhere according to their special interests and legitimate demands. (Mishra and Mohanty, 2005) Women should, also on their side, realize all their potentials and facilities which they can enjoy as a member of the society. Discrimination on the ground of sex can be removed only when both the sexes get the value based education. No one should be permitted to act against the rights and obligation of others. Women empowerment is the empowerment of the whole society because they are the beginning of the society.

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