UNIT 7 : WOMEN EMPOWEMENT AND EDUCATION

UNIT STRUCTURE

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7.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you will be able to-

- define the term women empowerment;
- describe the different constitutional provisions, laws and policies for women empowerment in India;
- explain the role of education in women empowerment;
- identify the barriers of women education in India; and
- suggest different measures for promotion of women education in India.

7.2 INTRODUCTION

You all agree with the fact that women can play a very important role in the development of the country as half of the country's population is constituted by women. So, empowering women is a prerequisite condition for creating a progressive nation. The stability of society is assured if women are empowered. It ensures the progress of the nation. Hence, providing quality education to women is very essential to enable them to respond to the challenges, confront their traditional role and change their life in the progressive path. In this unit, we will epitomize the concept of women empowerment and also discuss the role of education in empowering women. It also highlights the constitutional provisions, special laws, and national policies regarding women's empowerment in India.

7.3 THE CONCEPT OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Discrimination against women is witnessed all over the world. It is seen in communities, society, and nations across time and space. Women are distinctly lagging behind as compared to men in all aspects of life. Women are usually seen to have more deprived status in terms of access to resources and enjoyment of rights and freedom that together enhance the quality of human life. There is continued inequality and vulnerability in all spheres of women's life - economic, social, political, education, health care, nutrition, and legal. Since women are oppressed in all the spheres of life, they need to be empowered in all social contexts.

Women empowerment, in general understanding, is a manifestation of redistribution of power that challenges patriarchal ideology and male dominance. It is a process that enables women to gain access to and control of material as well as information resources. It is both a process and a result of the process. The United Nations Development Programme (1994) states that empowerment is an active process enabling women to realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life. Beijing Declaration of 1995 stressed upon women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society including participation in the

decision-making process and access to power that are fundamental for the achievement, equality, development, and peace.

Empowerment may be defined as a process which enables individuals or groups to change the balance of power in social, economic and political relations in society. The goals of women empowerment are to challenge patriarchal ideology, to transform the structures and institutions that reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and social inequality and to enable poor women to gain access to and control of both material and informational resources.

Women empowerment is a complex issue and may be seen from different social, natural and cultural contexts. However, some common components of women empowerment can be expressed as below:

- Awareness building about women's situation, discrimination and rights and opportunities as a step towards gender equality. Collective awareness building provides a sense of group identity and the power of working as a group.
- Capacity building and skills development, especially the ability to plan, make decisions, organize, manage and carry out activities to deal with people and institutions in the world around them.
- Participation and greater control and decision making power in the home, community and society.
- Action to bring about greater equality between men and women.
- A process of attaining the three types of freedom by women - freedom from ignorance, freedom from exploitation and freedom from inequality and injustice.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q. 1: Define the term Women Empowerment.

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Q. 2: Why is women empowerment necessary for all-round development of a nation? Give two reasons.

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7.4 CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

A number of Articles of the Constitution are there towards the socio economic development of women and upholding their political right and participation in decision making. Among these measures, some notable ones are presented in Table 7.1:

Table 7.1: Constitutional Provisions in Support of Women Empowerment

Sl. No.	Article	Description
1.	Article 14	Men and women to have equal rights and opportunities in the political, economic and social spheres.
2.	Article 15 (1)	Prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex etc.
3.	Article 15 (3)	Special provision enabling the State to make affirmative discriminations in favour of women.
4.	Article 16	Equality of opportunities in matters of public appointments for all citizens.
5.	Article 39 (a)	The State shall direct its policy towards securing all citizens, men and women, equally, the right to means of livelihood.
6.	Article 39 (d)	Equal pay for equal work for both men and women.
7.	Article 42	The State to make provision for ensuring just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.
8.	Article 51 [(A)(e)]	To renounce the practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

7.5 SPECIAL LAWS AND POLICIES IN SUPPORT OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

The Government of India has also enforced specific laws to safeguard the interests of women in pursuance of the constitutional

provisions for upgradation of their status. Many schemes have been launched specifically for women's betterment. A national policy for women empowerment has been adopted by the Govt. of India. Some of these special provisions for women are mentioned below:

(i) Special Laws:

- **The Special Marriage Act, 1954** which provides rights to women on par with men for inter caste marriage, love marriage and registered marriage. The Act has also fixed the minimum age of marriage at 21 for males and 18 for females.
- **The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955** which prohibits polygamy, polyandry and child marriage and concedes equal rights to women to divorce and to remarry.
- **The Hindu Succession Act, 1956** which provides for women the right to parental property.
- **The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956** which gives a childless woman the right to adopt a child and to claim maintenance from the husband if she is divorced by him.
- **The Suppression of Immoral Traffic of Women and Girls Act, 1956** which gives protection to women from being kidnapped and being compelled to become prostitutes.
- **The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961** which declares the taking of dowry an unlawful activity and thereby prevents the exploitation of women.
- **The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971** which legalises abortion conceding the right of a woman to go for abortion on the ground of physical and mental health.
- **Equal Remuneration Act, 1976** which provides payment of remuneration equal with men for work of equal value.
- **The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1983** which seeks to stop various types of crimes against women.
- **The Family Court Act, 1984,** which seeks to provide justice to women who get involved in family disputes.
- **The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act,**

1986 which prohibits the vulgar presentation of women in the media such as - newspapers, cinema, T. V., etc.

- **The 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Acts, 1993** which empower women and seek to secure greater participation of women at all the levels of the Panchayat System.
- **The Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994** which regulates investigation for sex determination of foetus.
- **The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005** provides for more effective protection of the rights of women guaranteed under the Constitution who are victims of violence of any kind occurring within the family and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. It provides for immediate and emergent relief to women in situations of violence of any kind in the home.
- **The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (PREVENTION, PROHIBITION and REDRESSAL) Act, 2013** is a legislative act in India that seeks to protect women from sexual harassment at their place of work.
- **The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013** is a new tougher anti-rape law to punish sex **crimes** redefined rape and made punishments more stringent — including death for repeat rape offenders.

(ii) Women Empowerment Schemes

The government of India has initiated many schemes for empowerment of women. Some of these are as below:

- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme** is a campaign of the Government of India that aims to generate awareness and improve the efficiency of welfare services intended for girls in India.
- **One Stop Centre Scheme** is intended to support women affected by violence. It has been established across the country to provide integrated support and assistance under one roof to

women affected by violence, both in private and public spaces.

- **Women Helpline Scheme** is exclusively designed to support women affected by violence, both in private and public spaces, including in the family, community, workplace etc.
- **UJJAWALA :** A Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of Trafficking and Rescue, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Victims of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation.
- **Working Women Hostel** to promote the availability of reliable and conveniently located accommodation for the working women who are leaving their homes due to professional commitments.
- Ministry approves new projects under Ujjawala Scheme and continues existing projects
- **SWADHAR Greh** (A Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances)
- **NARI SHAKTI PURASKAR**, offers to individuals, groups and institutions for outstanding work towards empowerment of women ·
- **Awardees of Stree Shakti Puruskar, 2014 & Awardees of Nari Shakti Puruskar**
- **Awardees of Rajya Mahila Samman & Zila Mahila Samman**
- **Mahila police Volunteers Scheme** was launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in collaboration with the Home Affairs for the engagement of MPVs in the States and UTs. It is a central sector scheme that intends to serve as a public-policy interface to help women in distress.
- **Mahila Shakti Kendras (MSK)** to empower rural women through community participation and to create an environment in which they realize their full potential.
- **NIRBHAYA FUND** meant for women empowerment, and safety and security for women and girl children.

(iii) The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001

The National Policy on Empowerment of Women was formulated in 2001. The goal of this Policy is to bring about the advancement,

development and empowerment of women. It states that "All forms of violence against women, physical and mental, whether at domestic or societal levels, including those arising from customs, traditions or accepted practices shall be dealt with effectively with a view to eliminate its incidence". It further states, "Equal access to education for women and girls will be ensured. Special measures will be taken to eliminate discrimination, universalise education, eradicate illiteracy, and create gender sensitive educational system, increase enrolment and retention rates of girls and improve the quality of education to facilitate life-long learning as well as development of vocational or technical skills of women. Reducing gender gap in secondary and higher education would be a focus area. Specific time targets in existing policies will be achieved, with special focus on girls and women, particularly those belonging to weaker sections including the SC/ST/OBC/Minorities. Gender sensitive curricula would be developed at all levels of educational system in order to address sex stereotyping as one of the causes of gender discrimination." The objectives of this Policy include:

- Creating an environment, through positive and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential.
- The de-jure and de-facto enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedom by women on equal basis with men in all spheres - political, economic, social, cultural and civil.
- Equal access to participation and decision-making of women in the social, political and economic life of the nation.
- Equal access to women to health care, quality education at all levels, career and vocational guidance, employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security and public office etc.
- Strengthening legal systems aimed at elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.
- Changing societal attitudes and community practices by active participation and involvement of both men and women.

- Mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development process.
- Elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and the girl child; and
- Building and strengthening partnerships with civil society, particularly women's organizations.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q. 3: Describe briefly about the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.

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Q. 4: Why is the Mahila police Volunteers Scheme introduced?

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7.6 ROLE OF EDUCATION IN EMPOWERING WOMEN

Empowerment in the context of education as human rights minimally touches upon educational access, retention, and success of some marginalized people who find no access to education for satisfying their needs and aspirations and who do not discover any meaning for educational achievement that is rendered by schooling. Education is the most powerful means to the empowerment of women. Education helps women to gain knowledge about the world outside of their hearth and home and helps them to get status, positive self-esteem, self-confidence, necessary courage, and inner strength to face challenges in life. Education makes women eligible for a job which will help them to supplement the income of the family and achieve social status. Education, especially of women, has a major impact on health and nutrition as an instrument of developing a sustainable strategy for population control. Moreover, educated women can play an equally important role as men in nation-building. The University Education Commission (1948-49) has well understood the importance of women's education in national life, so, the Commission says, "There cannot be an educated people without educated women. If general education is to be

limited to men or women, that opportunity should be given to women, for then, it would most surely be passed on to the next generation".

Empowerment of women does mean helping women to be economically independent, self-reliant, and having positive esteem to enable them to face any difficult situation. The empowered women should be able to participate in the process of decision-making and development activities. Education plays the most crucial role in empowering women. It is education that provides knowledge, awareness in regard to social, civic, political, economic, and environmental issues and skills for securing employment and means of livelihood. Education will leverage women's skills and knowledge, and make effective use of the latest information technology tools to find better ways to serve their country and the people.

Education greatly contributes to social development. And for social development education of women is very probably the most important precondition for any society. Ensuring equal rights to education will enable women to enrich and develop themselves, and in the process, achieve true equality in terms of economic, political, and social participation. And wherever women are denied the right to equal participation with men in national affairs, a great human resource is lost. Ensuring equal access to education is fundamental to promoting the status of women for the good of both the individual and that of the nation.

7.6.1 The National Policy on Education (1986) and Women Empowerment

National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 gives special emphasis on empowering role of education for which it suggested for the provision of special support services and removal of factors which result in discrimination against women at all levels of education. In this regard the NPE (1986) states –

"Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. In order to neutralize the accumulated distortions of the past; there will be a well-conceived edge in favour of women. The National Education System will play a positive, interventional

role in the empowerment of women. It will foster the development of new values through redesigned curricula, textbooks, the training and orientation of teachers, decision makers and administrators, and the active involvement of educational institutions. This will be an act of faith and social engineering. Women's studies will be promoted as a part of various courses and educational institutions encouraged to take up active programmes to further women's development."

This Programme of Action (POA), which was laid for implementation of NEP-1986, spells out the actions which need to be taken to promote education for women's equality. It declares the following parameters of empowerment of women, namely:

- Building a positive self image and self confidence.
- Developing ability to think critically.
- Building up group cohesion and fostering decision making and action.
- Ensuring equal participation in the process of bringing about social change.
- Encouraging group action in order to bring about change in the society
- Providing the wherewithal for economic independence.

7.6.2 National Education Policy 2020 on Women Empowerment

National Education Policy 2020 opines that Education is the single greatest tool for achieving social justice and equality. Inclusive and equitable education - while indeed an essential goal in its own right - is also critical to achieving an inclusive and equitable society in which every citizen has the opportunity to dream, thrive, and contribute to the nation (P.24). Keeping females under the category of Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs), the NEP 2020 states that women cut across all underrepresented groups, making up about half of all SEDGs. Unfortunately, the exclusion

and inequality that SEDGs face is only amplified for the women in these SEDGs. The policy additionally recognizes the special and critical role that women play in society and in shaping social norms; therefore, providing a quality education to girls is the best way to increase the education levels for these SEDGs, not just in the present but also in future generations. The policy thus recommends that the policies and schemes designed to include students from SEDGs should be especially targeted towards girls in these SEDGs (P.26).

In addition, the Government of India constitutes a 'Gender-Inclusion Fund' to build the nation's capacity to provide equitable quality education for all girls as well as transgender students. The fund will be available to States to implement priorities determined by the Central government critical for assisting female and transgender children in gaining access to education (such as the provisions of sanitation and toilets, bicycles, conditional cash transfers, etc.); funds will also enable States to support and scale effective community-based interventions that address local context specific barriers to female and transgender children's access to and participation in education. Similar 'Inclusion Fund' schemes shall also be developed to address analogous access issues for other SEDGs. In essence, this Policy aims to eliminate any remaining disparity in access to education (including vocational education) for children from any gender or other socio-economically disadvantaged group (NEP-2020, P.26).

Further the policy keeps provision of building free boarding facilities - matching the standard of Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas - in school locations where students may have to come from far, and particularly for students who from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, with suitable arrangements for the safety of all children, especially girls. Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas will be strengthened and expanded to increase the participation in quality schools (up to Grade 12) of girls from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds (NEP-2020, P.26).

7.7 PRESENT STATUS OF WOMEN EDUCATION

The scenario of women's education is slowly changing in recent years in our country. We can see a slow and steady rise of women in all fields of importance. Women of today are not just restricted to their traditional roles, due to expansion of education they have to step out of it to create their own images in the outside world as well. Inspite of this positive signs, India has a lot to achieve in the development of women education. The country is yet to cover all women in the ambit of education especially in rural areas and women belonging to socially, economically disadvantaged groups. This fact is reflected in the low level of literacy rate among women in the country than their male counterparts, which is presented in Table 7.2:

Table 7.2: Literacy Rate of India 1951 to 2011

Census Year	Total	Male	Female	Gender Gap
1951	18.33	27.16	8.86	18.30
1961	28.30	40.40	15.35	25.05
1971	34.45	45.96	21.97	23.98
1981	43.57	56.38	29.76	26.62
1991	52.21	64.13	39.29	24.84
2001	64.83	75.26	53.67	21.59
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46	16.68

Source: http://censusindia.gov.in

From Table 7.2, it reveals that after putting numerous efforts for the development of women's education for the last more than seven decades of getting independence of the country, we are still unable to bring the literacy rate of women to the equal level of men. The gender gap was recorded 16.68 in 2011 in terms of literacy rate in India. As per the census report (2011), India still has 34.55% illiterate women to educate. So, this is a daunting task for the country to accomplish in the coming days.

The Central government and state governments have taken many initiatives for the development of women education including establishing separate educational institutions for women. These initiatives have brought many women in the ambit of education. As per the report recently published

by All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE-2019-20), the following facts related to women education have been explored and these there are as below:

- There are 17 Universities which are exclusively for women in India. Out of these universities, 3 in Rajasthan, 2 in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu & 1 each in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Uttarakhand and West Bengal.
- According to the AISHE-2019-20 report, the total enrolment in higher education has been estimated to be 38.5 million with 19.6 million boys and 18.9 million girls. Female constitute 49% of the total enrolment.
- Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher education in India is 27.1, which is calculated for 18-23 years of age group. GER for the male population is 26.9 and for the female population, it is 27.3.
- Distance enrolment constitutes about 11.1% of the total enrolment in higher education, of which 44.5% are female students.
- The total number of teachers is 15,03,156, out of which about 57.5% are male teachers and 42.5% are female teachers. At All-India level there are merely 74 female teachers per 100 male teachers
- The proportion of female students is lowest in Institutions of National Importance followed by Deemed University-Government and State Private University.
- In its analysis on Programme-wise gender distribution in enrolment, the AISHE-2019-20 report reveals that the percentage share of students enrolled in B.A programme (Total- 96.55 lakh) is 47.1% for male and 52.9% for female. Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) has 47.07 lakh students enrolled in total and out of them 47.7% are male students and 52.3% are female students. There are 41.6 lakh students enrolled in B.Com. programme and out of them 51.2% are male and 48.8% are female. B.Tech. has 21.48 lakh enrolled students out of which 71.5% are male whereas the percentage of female is 28.5%. Bachelor of Engineering (B.E.) has 14.9 lakh students enrolled out of which 71% students are from male category and 29% students are from

female category. Master of Arts (M.A.) has 16.02 lakh total number of students enrolled with 62.3% female students. B.A. (Hons) has 17.7 lakh students with 43.8% male and 56.2% female students. B.Ed. has a total number of 13.7 lakh students and out of them 66% is female. M.Sc. has a total number of 7.84 lakh students with 37.5% male and 62.5% female. MBA has a total number of 6.09 lakh students with 57.4% male students and 42.6% female students. B.Sc. (Hons.) has a total number of 6.40 lakh students with 54.8% male students. Diploma has a skewed distribution with 65.1% male and 34.9% female. Ph.D. level has 55% male and 45% female. Integrated levels have 56.2% male and 43.8% female. PG Diploma student enrolment is 53.6% for male students and 46.4% for female students.

From the above analysis, it is found that female participation in technical and professional courses is lower in comparison to academic courses at both Undergraduate and Postgraduate levels. Female participation in the Institutions of National Importance is also less in number. Further, at All-India level the male-female teacher ratio is 100:74 only.

7.8 BARRIERS TO WOMEN EDUCATION

There are many barriers to the education of women. Some of the barriers to women's education are sociological that are rooted in gender stereotyping and gender inequality and others are driven by economic concerns and systemic constraints. Some of these are discussed below:

(1) Poverty: Poverty is the single biggest cause of illiteracy in India and a precursor to all other effects. Women are found to be economically very poor all over India. A few women are engaged in services and other activities. So, in a poor family, girls are the main victims; they are malnourished and are denied the opportunity of better education and other facilities. The poor parents cannot provide dress, textbooks, and other learning materials to girls for education. Thus, poverty has stood on the way of women's education in a big way.

(2) Problem of access: The number of higher educational institutions in rural areas is very low. So, many girls desirous of pursuing education

above middle level cannot avail themselves of these facilities due to distance or lack of hostel arrangements as such facilities are not available nearby their home. There are also many remote and interior places that do not have any communication facilities. Girl students of these areas cannot get any transport facility to attend their educational institutions. Moreover, parents often complain about insecurity for girls attending schools located at distance. So, education beyond a certain age stops for many girls and they remain bound to their homes.

(3) Negative Attitude of Family: Many parents have a negative attitude towards girls' education. So, in many instances, many parents do not allow girls to leave the home for higher studies. This negative parental attitude towards educating daughters is one of the important challenges to overcome in the field of girl's education in India.

(4) Unavailability of female teachers: Girls are more likely to attend school and have higher academic achievement if they have female teachers. In the presence of female teachers, girls are able to express themselves more freely and confidently. In some conservative communities, parents will not allow their daughters to be taught by a male teacher. But, inspite of a significant increase of female teachers in educational institutions in recent years, the number of female teachers is still less in schools and colleges than their male counterparts.

(5) Lack of infrastructural facilities: There are many schools whose infrastructure is still not properly arranged for girls' convenience. Annual Status of Education Report (2014) agreed that due to lack of girls' toilet facilities, dropout rates at elementary and secondary levels have been increased than in the past decades.

(6) Socio-cultural Traditions: There are many prevailing wrong practices and evil customs which prevent women to get educated. Some people believe that educating a girl is just a waste of time and money as she will get married and go to another family. So, they feel that girls should learn household activities rather than wasting time on education. Due to the Purdah System, girls in some areas are not permitted to sit with

boys in an educational institution. So, many cultural and religious norms governing gender relations exert a strong influence on access to higher education.

(7) **Domestic household tasks:** Typically, girls are asked to fetch water, take care of their younger siblings, and help their mother's cook. Due to this, girls may not have the opportunity to attend school because their involvement in the household is valued more than their personal education.

(8) **Poor Health:** In many parts of the country, children's health is a big concern, especially if they're facing poverty. If there's not enough food or sufficient clean water to keep girls nourished and healthy, they may not be well enough to attend school.

(9) **Early Marriage:** When girls are forced to marry young, they are often pulled out of school at a very critical age in their development. The transition from primary to secondary education is very crucial for girls to gain the life skills they need to escape the cycle of poverty. Yet, this is often the same time that many girls leave school due to early marriages.

(10) **Administrative Negligence:** Lack of enthusiasm and interest of the officials in charge of education is another problem for promoting girls' education.

(11) **Negative Perception:** Many girls possess a very low perception of themselves due to traditional ways of socialisation for which she never sees herself in a big or high position. As such, her aspiration level remains very limited to the stereotyped roles of women.

(12) **Post puberty practices:** In rural areas, there are many unscientific post-puberty practices that are still being observed by girls for which they lose important school days regularly. Such practices gradually develop absenteeism among girls that ultimately lead to poor performance or drop-out.

(13) **Lack of awareness:** Lack of awareness among implementing agencies and community members to implement different schemes and provisions of girls' education at the grass-root level is also a barrier

to women education.

(14) Less Enrolment in Professional Courses and Technical Education: Fewer women enroll in science and technology-related and professional courses as compared to men. Gender stereotypes encourage women to pursue a career in humanities, child development, education, etc. The highest concentration of women is seen among undergraduates mostly in arts and science streams only.

(15) Sexual Harassment: We have seen a significant increase in media reporting on gender-based violence including sexual harassment in educational institutions for the last few years. This kind of unhealthy trend in the educational scenario discourages many women from continuing their education.

7.9 SUGGESTIONS FOR PROMOTING WOMEN EDUCATION

It is obvious that the objectives of women empowerment can only be achieved by, first and foremost, ensuring that women acquire quality education. When this is done, the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and other potentials that are required by women for full participation in national development will be developed. Following are some suggestions to improve women education:

- Women have been facing inequality and injustice for a long time in various aspects of their life. But we should not forget that if we educate a girl we educate the entire family. So, we should make a serious effort at various levels through generating a stimulating environment for women for their participation in education on equal footing and pace with men.
- To increase the participation of women especially in higher education, special scholarships, stipend and fellowships are to be introduced to encourage women's participation in education. In this regard, special focus should be given to Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes/Other Backwards Classes/ Minorities, financially poor students, and meritorious students.

- A large number of students in India are not getting the scope to pursue education due to lack of educational institutions, poverty, and some other reasons. So, our efforts for Universalisation of Education at all levels should be implemented in letter and spirit for inclusion of all sections of students in the ambit of education. If we are truly able to universalize our primary, secondary and higher education, definitely women would be at the receiving end and they will really prosper in all aspects of their life with their male counterpart.
- Parents or families play a decisive role in the case of women's education. So, it is advisable to provide counselling for both family and person concerned at the primary and secondary stage of education. This kind of special counseling may help the parents and girls to understand the importance of women's education and its multiplying effect in the future life of the girl as well as family.
- A coordinated effort of the Central government, State governments, curriculum designers, and administrators seem to be essentially inevitable in making vocationalisation of secondary education in real sense. And in the case of higher education also, providing skill-oriented education is the need of the hour. Government should take steps to open more women ITIs and Polytechnics and their courses should be redesigned with new trades and disciplines suiting the needs of present-day society. Besides in higher professional courses, women should be given opportunities to take part in the course and profession. This will help develop their confidence and competence in pursuing higher sophisticated technical and managerial Jobs.
- Different autonomous bodies of the government like UGC, NCERT, NIEPA, AICTE, ICSSR, ICHP, CSSE, ICAR, ICMR, State Board of Education, etc. should prepare concrete plans for women's development. In this regard, they may adopt a new policy and restructure its syllabi and give emphasis on gender equality to facilitate women's participation in different levels of education.
- There are many traditional communities where sex segregation is practiced, have the reservation to send girls to co-educational

institutions. So, there is a need to establish more female educational institutions across the country. This step will certainly enhance access of women to education and create more opportunities for women.

- Government should formulate and implement policies to check the dropout of girl students in secondary and primary levels of education.
- Urgent steps should be taken to establish higher educational institutions in rural and tribal areas with separate hostel facilities for women. There should be special transport facilities for women students in difficult areas.
- Increasing women teachers in co-educational educational institutions will surely help female learners to deal with the different difficult situations. This also helps girls to successfully complete their studies as a female teacher may be their role model or source of inspiration. There is also a need to increase women's representations in decision-making bodies of educational institutions of different levels.
- All efforts should be made to sensitize teacher educators and administrators on gender equality. Create a gender-sensitive educational system. Gender-sensitive curricula to be developed at all levels of the educational system. The environment of educational institutions should be made conducive to culminate the feeling of equality of sex.
- NGOs (Non-government Organisations) can play a significant role in promoting women's education. They may facilitate women's empowerment in rural areas by providing education, training, and skills to rural women. So, NGOs should be encouraged to take an active and effective role in sensitizing and empowering women.
- Above all, attitudes of the male-oriented society must be changed. Strict rules and regulations should be initiated to stop sexual harassment within and outside of all educational institutions. And if there is an attitudinal change in the mindset of male-folk in the society towards women education and also ensure women security in the educational institutions, then women participation in education will surely increase.

- Further, the empowerment process of women will be strengthened if women are given adequate opportunities in political participation and be part of the decision-making process. At length, we may summarize that if educational and other policies for women empowerment are implemented in true spirit and commitment, then the dream of women empowerment becomes a reality in the coming days in India.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q. 5: Write down the view-points of National Policy on Education (1986) on Women Empowerment.

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Q. 6: How do socio-cultural traditions hamper the process of women empowerment?

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ACTIVITY 7.1

Do you think the status of women's education in your district is satisfactory one? If yes, highlight the reasons for good performance and if not, highlight the causes for the backwardness.



7.10 LET US SUM UP

- There is continued inequality and vulnerability in all spheres of women's life - economic, social, political, education, health care, nutrition and legal.
- Women empowerment does mean participation and greater control and decision making power in the home, community and society.

- The 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Acts, 1993 which empower women and seek to secure greater participation of women at all the levels of the Panchayat System.
- Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme is a campaign of the Government of India that aims to generate awareness and improve the efficiency of welfare services intended for girls in India.
- The goal of the National Policy on Empowerment of Women was formulated in 2001 is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women.
- Education helps women to gain knowledge about the world outside of her hearth and home and helps her to get status, positive self esteem, and self confidence, necessary courage and inner strength to face challenges in life.
- The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 suggested for the provision of special support services and removal of factors which result in discrimination against women at all levels of education.
- The National Education Policy 2020 suggests that the Government of India constitutes a 'Gender-Inclusion Fund' to build the nation's capacity to provide equitable quality education for all girls as well as transgender students.
- There are many barriers to education for women and out of these barriers, some barriers are sociological, rooted in gender stereotyping and gender inequality and others are driven by economic concerns and systemic constraints.
- And if there is an attitudinal change in the mindset of male-folk in the society towards women education and also ensure women security in the educational institutions, then women participation in education will surely increase.



7.11 FURTHER READING

1) Bhatia, K.K. (2014). *Philosophical and Sociological Foundation of Education.* Ludhiana: Kalyani Publisher.

2) Dwibedi, R. (2008). *Teacher and Education in Emerging Indian Society.* Ludhiana: Kalyani Publisher.

3) Mondal, A. & Mete, J. (2012). Women Empowerment and Education in the Context of India. *University News.* 50(20): 12-18.

4) Patra, M. (2018). Higher Education: A Step towards Gender Equality. *University News.* 56(15):7-12



7.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q. No. 1: Women empowerment, in general understanding, is a manifestation of redistribution of power that challenges patriarchal ideology and the male dominance. It is a process that enables women to gain access to and control of material as well as information resources. It is both a process and result of the process.

Ans. to Q. No. 2: Women empowerment is the precondition for national development and two reasons are as below:

(i) Almost half of the country's population consists of women and without proper development of this half population of a nation, it is not possible to achieve national development; and

(ii) Women empowerment enables women to realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life.

Ans. to Q. No. 3: The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 provides for more effective protection of the rights of women guaranteed under the Constitution who are victims of violence of any kind occurring within the family and for matters connected therewith

or incidental thereto. It provides for immediate and emergent relief to women in situations of violence of any kind in the home.

Ans. to Q. No. 4: The Mahila police Volunteers Scheme was launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development with a view to serve as a public-policy interface to help women in distress.

Ans. to Q. No. 5: The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 gives special emphasis on empowering role of education for which it suggested the provision of special support services and removal of factors which result in discrimination against women at all levels of education.

Ans. to Q. No. 6: There are many prevailing wrong practices and evil customs which prevent women from getting themselves educated. Some people believe that to educate a girl is just a waste of time and money as she will get married and go to another family. So, they feel that girls should learn the household activities rather than wasting time for education. Due to the Purdah System, girls in some areas are not permitted to sit with boys in educational institutions. So, many cultural and religious norms governing gender relations exert a strong influence on access to higher education.



7.13 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

A) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q. 1: Describe the concept of women empowerment in your own words.

Q. 2: Mention three constitutional provisions for women empowerment.

Q. 3: Write three schemes that have been initiated by the Govt. of India for women empowerment.

Q. 4: Write three objectives of the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001.

Q. 5: Briefly describe the role of education in women empowerment.

B) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q. 1: Discuss the present status of women education in India.

Q. 2: Explain the different barriers to women education in India.

Q. 3: Give your suggestions for promotion of women education in India.

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