

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract

Knowledge Society is about capabilities to identify, produce, process, transform, disseminate and use information to build and apply knowledge for human development. It requires an empowering social vision that encompasses plurality, inclusion, solidarity and participation. As emphasized by UNESCO during the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), *“The global information society is meaningful only if it favours the development of knowledge societies and sets itself the goal of tending towards human development based on human rights.”* For UNESCO, the construction of knowledge societies *“opens the way to humanization of the process of globalization.”* In a knowledge society, women empowerment means the process through which women, who are currently most discriminated against, achieve gender equity. The extent of current disadvantage and inequality means that women’s empowerment may require support by development agencies at household, community and also from macro levels. In such a situation, education is an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality and development, and is also important to empowering women to participate in decision-making in our society

Key words: Knowledge Society, Human Development, Women Empowerment

Introduction

Education is an instrument of social change. It enhances knowledge, wisdom as well as skill. It refines sensitivities and perceptions that contribute to cohesion, scientific temper and independence of mind and spirit. Education holds the key to the all round development of one’s personality. A good educational system produces and nurtures socially sensitive, progressive, responsible and forward looking citizens. When we are talking about the social change, how can we forget one of the inevitable agents of social change and that is none other but a woman? Women constitute nearly half of the world population. **Growth, development and progress in any society are intimately linked with the development and empowerment of our women.** No nation can afford to neglect such a precious segment of human resource. Our great poet and the Nobel Laureate, Dr. Rabindranath Tagore has rightly quoted:

“Woman is the builder and moulder of nation’s destiny. Though delicate and soft as a lily, she has a heart, far stronger and bolder than of a man....”

In consonance with the spirit of our Constitution, the goals of our National Policy for the Empowerment of our Women are the advancement, development and empowerment of women in social, political as well as economic spheres. Over the years our planning strategy has also evolved from ‘welfare’ to ‘development’ and to ‘empowerment’. We are the first democratic nations to offer equal right to vote to both men and women. Our Constitution provides for 33% reservation in local bodies for women. Today, we have over a million women elected representatives in local bodies. We are amongst first countries in the world to have a woman Prime Minister and today we have a woman Chief Minister in Gujarat. It’s a matter of great satisfaction that around 49% of the women electorate voted in the 15th Lok Sabha elections in 2009.

Today is one of the world leaders in having professionally qualified women. From Sports to Literature to Corporate Sector to Arts and Entertainment, Indian women are excelling and making their mark in each and every sphere of life. It’s a matter of pride for us that the list of women achievers who have brought fame to our nation is quite longer.