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41	महाराष्ट्रातील उच्चशिक्षणाची स्थिती	प्रा.गजानन भिकाजी फुलसावणे	144
42	उच्च शिक्षण, सामाजिक परिवर्तनाचे साधन	प्रा.डॉ.सण्द कुरेशाची नजीरसाब	147
43	एकविंशत्या शतकातील उच्च शिक्षणासमोरील आव्हाने आणि उपाय योजने	प्रा. नितीन दत्तात्रय दारमोड	149
44	भारतातील उच्च शिक्षण रु दशा आणि दिशा	प्रतिक वसंतराव दांडडे	151
45	इक्कीसवीं सदी के भारत में उच्च शिक्षा की समस्या और निदान	प्रा. शेख साबेर शेख कदीर	156
46	उच्च शिक्षणातील विद्यार्थी सह स्थिती व आव्हाने	श्रीमती. कौशल्या जगन्नाथ खरात	159
47	गुप्त परम्पराचा इतिहास	श्री. माधव शाहूराव डाकणे	163
48	उच्च शिक्षण आणि व्यक्तिमत्त्व विकास	डॉ. नरसिंग आबासाहेब पवार	165
49	उच्च शिक्षणाचे बदलते प्रवाह	प्रा.डॉ. बी.एल. म्हस्के	168
50	उच्चशिक्षा : दशा और दिशा	श्री. गणेश विश्वनाथ बोचरे	170
51	उच्च शिक्षण – राष्ट्रीय विकासातील आणि व्यक्तिमत्त्व विकासातील एक दृष्टिक्षेप	प्रा.डॉ.के.जे.खलीफा	172
52	उच्चशिक्षणातील २१ व्या शकातील ब्लेंडेड लर्निंग-संकल्पना	श्रीमती.आशा रंगनाथ वानखेडे	176
53	ग्रामीण भागातील स्वीयांचे उच्चशिक्षणातील योगदान	प्रा.डॉ.कांबळे विभिषण विठ्ठलराव	178
54	The Challenges And Trends In Higher Education	Prof. Dr . Balvant Patil	180
55	E-Commerce : Higher Education in India 21st Century	Miss. SaritaBaburaoKadam	187
56	The Role of English Language in Higher Education	Dr. Manisha Vinayak Bhise	193
57	Women Empowerment Through Higher Education	Dr. Vaishali M. Choudhari	195



Women Empowerment Through Higher Education

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'To educate your women first and leave them to themselves, they will tell you what reforms are necessary'. Swami Vivekananda.

Abstract: Women managers working in diverse socio-cultural and geographical contexts analyze the obstacles which they have faced and overcome during their careers. Four principal themes emerge: the general participation of women in education; the extent of their involvement in higher education management, including impediments to their advancement; the development of strategies to surmount these career limitations; and the particular contribution of women to the management of higher education.

As the 21st century approaches, women graduates face exciting perspectives. Increasingly, they will be strongly urged to assume their rightful place in the decision-making process - both in the systems and institutions of higher education and also in the various professions for which they have studied. As this dual role is of the greatest importance for society, women merit strong encouragement in these endeavors. This paper discusses the role of higher education in women empowerment.

Keywords: Women , empowerment, higher, education .

1. **Introduction:** Always an empowered woman is independent because of the knowledge and skills. An empowered woman doesn't mean that she is highly educated with employment rather along with it she should be rational, intelligent and skilful. In India, since the time immemorial women is treated as inferior to men within the patriarchal system of the society. They were away from all the rights like, education, voting, participation in public life, etc. In general they stick on to the traditional role of women within in the four walls of a house because of the rigid system of traditions and customs. They always led secondary life. In this situation giving importance for female education was like a mirage. When a woman is empowered, can able to take any decisions based on her own ability. The Oxford Dictionary defines 'empowerment' as 'to make stronger and more confident especially in controlling their life and claiming their rights. Education is an important factor for the development of every nation and its human resource too. From the last few decades importance is given for educating women out of her role as a home maker. This traditional role of women has undergone gradual change with primary education and higher education.

2. Women Empowerment

"Woman is the builder and molder of a nation's destiny. Though delicate and soft as a lily, she has a heart far stronger and bolder than a man, she is the supreme inspiration for the man's onward march, an embodiment of love, pity and compassion, she is no doubt, her commanding personality; nevertheless, is given by solemn" - Rabindranath Tagore

Women who nearly constitute half of the population of the country are essential to play vital role in the growth and development of the country. A nation goes ahead only through the contribution of all its members. To realize the dream of becoming a developed country, there is a need for mobilization of women in large numbers by empowering them. Empowerment of women that will have long-term impacts must comprise of consciousness raising before the social structure of gender, which minions women in the family, class, caste, religion, or



society, can be improved. Bookman and Morgen (1988) accepted empowerment as the recognition of the forces which act to dominate women and the motivation to change those factors in each woman's life which allow them to act. As Hall (1992) wrote in his literature "It is not the women's purpose to take power from men; rather, the goal of women is to develop their own power while respecting men for who they are" (1992: 104).

3. Higher Education

Education is an art of imparting knowledge to others for betterment of their life and preparing a person to attain the aims in their life. Higher Education means training of highly skilled specialist in the field of economics, science, technology and culture at various types of higher schools, which accept persons who have successfully completed secondary general education. Higher Education of women plays a pivotal role in releasing their energy and creativity and enabling them to meet the complex challenges of the present society. Special emphasis should be given to Research and Development by engaging women in larger population.

4. Status of Women in Indian society

A civilization can be judged by exploring the status of women in the society. The Muslim influence makes a considerable change in the status of women in our country. They were deprived of their rights of equality in the society. Raja Ram Mohan Roy brought improvement in the status of women in our country. Mahatma Gandhi also induced women to participate in the freedom movement in India. Thus women started participating in politics and administration. Though women have uplifted themselves from the past scenario, but still illiteracy, dowry, ignorance and slavery have to be removed in order to get a rightful place in Indian society. At present education is the only tool to get the right place in our society.

5. Needs of Women Empowerment

The needs of women empowerment in our present society are as follows:

- Empowerment enables women to acquire knowledge, skills and techniques for their betterment of life.
- Economic empowerment is essential for improvement of female sex.
- Empowerment helps in gender equity, which every women desire.
- Empowerment give women the decision making power of their own.
- It helps in having positive thinking on the ability to make change.
- It helps in increasing one's positive self- image and overcoming all stigma of our society.
- It also helps to change others perceptions by democratic means.
- Empowerment also helps to access to information for taking proper decision.

6. Obstacles in the path of women empowerment

In the 21st century, women began to get educated and take part in the social, legal economic and political field. Now women are not in boundaries, they are awake and moving towards progress. In India there is the persistent belief that women should not deign to take paid employment although voluntary work was acceptable. Yet, the census 2011 indicates that the literacy rate of women in India is only 64%, i.e. below the average which is 74%. Lack of education is the root base of women's exploitation and ignorance. Only education can help women to know about the rights and duties given in the Indian constitution. Furthermore, there are some more obstacles which hinder the empowerment of women. These are discussed below:

1. Social Norms

Many societies in India restrict women from leaving the house, given to their orthodox belief and age old traditions. Women in such societies are not allowed to go outside either for education or for employment and are forced to live an isolated and dejected life. Women



living under such conditions become accustomed to being inferior to men and are unable to change their present social and economic state.

2. Workplace Sexual Harassment

Workplace sexual harassment is the most significant barrier to women empowerment in India. Private sectors like hospitality industry, software industry, educational institutions, and hospitals are some of the worst affected. It is a manifestation of deep rooted male supremacy in the society. There had been a steep rise of about 170% in the workplace sexual harassment of women in India in the past couple of decades.

3. Gender discrimination

Majority of women in India still face gender discrimination at work place as well as in the society. Many societies don't allow the women to go out for employment or education. They are not allowed to take independent decisions either for work or for family, and are treated inferior to men. Such discrimination of the women leads to their socio economic decline and hugely contradicts "Woman Empowerment".

4. Child Marriage

Though, India has successfully reduced child marriages in the past few decades, through a number of laws and initiatives taken by the government; still a report in early 2018 by the UNICEF (United Nations Children Emergency Fund) states that nearly 1.5 Million girls in India get married before they turn 18. Early marriage reduces the growth prospects of girls who soon are moving onto adulthood.

5. Crimes against Women

Indian women have been subjected to domestic violence and other crimes such as – dowry, honor killing, trafficking etc. It's strange that the women in urban areas are more prone to criminal assault than the women in rural areas. Even working women in big cities avoid using public transport in late hours, fearing their modesty and life. Woman empowerment can only be achieved in true sense if we ensure safety of our women, providing them the liberty to roam free and without fear as the men in the society do.

7. Conclusion

The role of higher education defines the importance of women and their position in Indian society. It is especially more concern when talks in the sense of women from marginalized section of society, their empowerment, status, position in the society and the role of education in the higher and other strata of educational fields. The grant or financial support and the support of the family are like a catalyst in bringing the change in the status and position of women in society through the promotion of education. The study also discussed the obstacles such as social norms, workplace sexual harassment, gender discrimination, child marriage, etc. in the path of women empowerment.

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