Chapter - II

Education of Women - An Overview
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This chapter makes a study of various views on the importance of Education in general, and of Women's Education in particular, which is so essential for the development of mankind and the Nation.

Education is a heavenly gift, a boon and a blessing bestowed upon human beings, which enables them to adapt themselves to progress in order to meet the demands of a growing society. It is actually a refulgent light, which illuminates the mind and expels the darkness of ignorance, illiteracy, prejudices, superstitions and uncouthness. Further it is a tool of uplift, growth, development, expansion, extension, dilation and augmentation and a systematic intellectual and moral training and instruction. It also inculcates discipline of the mind and character to produce and enhance sterling traits like self-restraint as well as habits of obedience. It sharpens wisdom, widens the realm of knowledge and awakens dormant abilities and mental powers. From the earliest times of man's existence he must have been concerned with the preparation of young to face the problems of living in a world that were called challenging and demanding.

The foundation of human civilisation is man's creativity, developed and expressed by his intelligence. Education is an all round, drawing out of the best in man's mind and soul. The educational process helps each succeeding generation to increase in knowledge. Thus, the task of education is to equip men and women towards better understanding of the world and the human situation, and develop their abilities to discharge their distinctive roles in Society. Learning through education is a process, by which, knowledge of past experience is used to understand and project the image of the future.

Every development depends upon the system by which education is imparted.

No nation can be optimistic of a peaceful and prosperous future without a comprehensive well-designed, long term and result oriented education. In planning
such an educational system we have to keep in view the old Chinese proverb which says:

If you wish to plan for one year plant grain
If you wish to plan for 10 years plant a tree
If you wish to plan for 100 years plant man

In doing so, it provides a whole gamut of skills—manual, mechanical, intellectual, scientific, clerical and executive—that go into the fields of agricultural, industrial, administrative and technological development to keep pace with the material advance of the society. This however is only one side of it. That there is another equally important and potential side in education which undertakes the delicate and difficult task of moulding character, inculcating self-discipline and developing individual potentialities and qualities that go into the infra-structure of the society should not be forgotten; for it is that side of education which plays an instrumental role in social change, social mobility and integration and in giving status, security and success coupled with a spirit of service and satisfaction to the young and tender minds.5

The planning of education on a national scale is perhaps even more important than national planning in economic and industrial development. Economic and industrial development creates material goods. These can be used by the people in different parts of the world whatever be their source or origin. Education, on the other hand, trains the citizens, and if this training fails to inculcate the right attitudes and ideals or encourages fissiparous tendencies, the security and welfare of the community is at stake. Therefore, reconstruction of national education must aim at creating a unity of purpose among all our nationals and developing in them a common outlook, which will transcend and harmonise in an attractive pattern the differences in history, background, language and culture that exist among various sections of the people.6

Whatever be the programme for industrial, scientific, agricultural, commercial or material progress and development, none of them can be achieved without an improvement of the human material, which is the basis of our national wealth. That
human material is largely conditioned by the training and education, which it receives. Hence, we must take every step to see that education is given the first priority among all our national requirements.\(^7\)

The enlightened citizen is the most valuable asset of a society, which cherishes the pursuit and preservation of democratic ideals and human values. Towards this goal, all the world over, developed, developing and backward nations have been investing their precious resources in ever increasing measure in providing the avenues for education.\(^8\)

Education is a tool for socio-economic development. Rightly, it is so and we have seen it from the developed countries and are witnessing it from the developing countries of the third world. Education, when given and utilised in its correct perspective, helps to develop human resources and potential, which in turn, increases the income of the individual and national income and productivity. Therefore, education is an investment for economic returns. Educational emancipation helps the individuals and family to improve their socio-economic status, which in turn reflects at the national level to a significant extent.\(^9\)

Accordingly, perspective planning is required to bring the entire tender and young population of the country within the reach of education, and then to divert the talents and skills for increasing national productivity and thereby the national income. There is, therefore, an imperative need for revolutionary changes and reforms in education opening more and more opportunities to the younger people.\(^10\)

The welfare, progress and prosperity of any state depends upon the quality of its citizens and this in turn depends upon the education, which moulds their character and shapes their thoughts. It is universally recognized today, that a system of national education is one of the fundamental tasks, which faces any Government. Not only, is the existing condition of society determined by the quality of individuals composing it,
but its future as well. Nothing has a more important bearing on the quality of the individuals than the type of education imparted. A truly liberal and humanitarian education may transform the outlook of the people and set it on the path of progress and prosperity.

By social education, we mean an education for the complete man. It will give him literacy so that the knowledge of the world may become accessible to him. It will teach him how to harmonise himself with his environment and make the best of the physical conditions in which he subsists. It is intended to teach him improved crafts and modes of production so that he can achieve economic betterment. It also aims at teaching him the rudiments of hygiene, both for the individual and the community, so that our domestic life may be healthy and prosperous. Last, but not the least, this education should give him training in citizenship so that he obtains some insight into the affairs of the world and can help his Government to take decisions which will make for peace and progress.

Every individual has a right to an education that will enable him to develop his faculties and live a full human life. Such an education is the right of every citizen. A state cannot claim to have discharged its duty till it has provided for every single individual, the means to the acquisition of knowledge and self-betterment.

The quality of education is that: If education does not conform to the requirements of the age and contemporary life, it can never be successful. Therefore, the process of education must help to build men and women suited to the age and the tasks they have to perform. It should presumably deal with certain basic factors in the development of boys and girls to give them strength of character and the right outlook on life.

Education is a process involving three references - the individual, the society or national community to which he or she belongs and the whole content of reality, both material and spiritual, which plays a dominant role in determining the nature and
destiny of Man and Society. All important eastern and western educationists argue that
education is a continuous process necessary for the full and balanced development of
persons\textsuperscript{16}. Here in lies the importance of education in the modern world. Experience
has shown that education can profoundly affect the development of individuals, and
through individuals, of societies. If the individual is not an integrated personality, society
cannot be harmonious. Therefore, the function of education in the modern world is to
build up integrated individuals in an integrated society and the concept of both the
east and the west must contribute to such a development. We should look upon
education as an end rather than as a mere means to some external good.\textsuperscript{17}

Women's education has got a special significance in human society. It has many
facets to cover. The fact that women being housewives and mothers play vital role in
educating and moulding the citizens of the new generations, should not be a forgotten
factor in our system of education. Education should not segregate women from the
management of family but when they are accommodated in various professions as a
matter of economic help, sufficient emphasis has to be given on their role in shaping a
happy family society.\textsuperscript{18}

The education of a man is the education of an individual and the education of a
woman, is the education of the family. This idea gives a clear exposition of social aspects,
and social significance, of women's education and its impact on social and family life,
influence in curing ills and strengthening the wills of the society and exterminating
prejudices and misunderstandings in society. Unlike man's education, woman's
education is inseparably and inextricably connected and concerned with the human
life and progress and its concept and character, principle and practice should be
transformable in today's life.\textsuperscript{19}

In the face of the growing social and economic pressures, women should retain
their freedom and identity. In order to do so, they must emerge from the educational
system well informed, unprejudiced, courageous and compassionate, capable of
fearless independent thinking and be able to appreciate other’s problems and share their burdens. The change from joint families to nuclear families requires greater independent decision making. The growing emphasis on the small family norm means that more women will be free to exercise their talents to a greater extent both in the home and in the community.\textsuperscript{20}

Education is a potent instrument of social change. Kindling new aspirations it paves the way for the effective exercises and implementation of the rights conferred on the individual by the Constitution and the Law.\textsuperscript{21}

Education, especially of woman has a major impact on health and nutrition and is the key of developing a sustainable strategy for population control. The educated people realises the importance of the family planning and try to limit the size of their family. Women who engage themselves in acquiring higher education will invariably have late marriages. Education for woman was thought necessary for them not for their own sake but because it would help them to become better wives and mothers. The status of woman is affected by the level of their education. As the level of women education increases, it improves the status of women and has larger impact on demographic behaviour. The mother’s education has a very strong and positive impact on the morality and upbringing of their off-springs. Education brings improvement in services and increases people’s consciousness towards their health. It increases the life expectancy of human being and it leads to decrease the level of mortality. In a society, where illiteracy is found in abundance, people believe in superstition and conventional social customs. No country has been able to alleviate poverty without removing mass illiteracy.\textsuperscript{22}

Modern woman faces a complicated life and is required to play many roles. Her primary function of motherhood is gradually giving priority to manifold other activities. She is striving hard to assume a multifaceted professional status on par with men in all respects. As a home maker, the woman looks after the domestic chores. Her contributions
to production activities or to the earnings of the family varies at different socio-economic levels, professions and regions, but ultimately she is the home maker. Many studies, have found a strong association between the performance of the children at school and factors such as the socio-economic status of parents, mother’s and father’s education and their occupation. Nowadays, a child’s admission to a school verily depends upon the education of the mother, who should be a graduate. Thus, the effect of the mother’s education on the development of the children is one of the social benefits of higher education for women.23

As a citizen, an educated woman has an important contribution to make to the quality of civic life. College educated women with children in school, tend to be very active also, in Parent-Teachers’ Associations and other groups concerned with schools. On the national scene, the dramatic awareness of women in the concerns of the country and their notable participation in the freedom movement, have not been followed up by their active participation in development activities, to the extent expected. Hence, a significant area in which educated women must take the lead is working towards an attitudinal changes which would contribute to national integration and development.24

“Leadership” generally begins for a woman, during her educational process, and this gets extended the moment she decides to marry or she is married off by her people. After her marriage, she takes on the responsibilities of seeing to it that her home is run smoothly. Women are usually industrious and what is more, they do not mind sharing whatever work needs to be shared and done. Because of the special bond between them and their children and other family members, they become the first and the most important teachers of their children, teaching them values, skills and personal self-worth. Thus, they take the role of ‘Leaders’. A woman’s personal power grows with age and her status can be a focal point of wisdom for her children and grand children, provided, of course, she uses her power wisely and fruitfully.
“Leadership” and education, go together. Education is essential for a woman to do her job effectively, whether at home or in the society at large. It gives her confidence in herself and in whatever role she chooses to perform. Higher education is the training ground for persons capable of assuming such leadership.

The present era has been one of explosion in several respects. The problems that concern us here are one, of numbers and the other of knowledge. Studies of science and technology and other subjects have been growing at a fantastic pace knowledge is expanding fast both in expanse and in depth. Our very life from day to day is so much influenced by scientific and technological progress that a popular knowledge of such developments is a must. Apart from the use of technology in daily life, there are many spheres of scientific and technological advancement that also call for wider knowledge at least among the enlightened section of the society. What was specialised knowledge a decade back is becoming common knowledge of today. Side by side there have been social, economic and political events and developments the world over of a revolutionary nature that have upset conventional thinking and values in several respects calling for expansion of social studies.

At the same time world travel has become quick and easy, international relations and contacts are getting closer, there has been growing awareness of the need for mutual co-ordination to solve mutual problems at the international level, though competition in research and the arms race are very much on the scene. There is, certainly, a need for every one to know many things about other lands and other peoples. Frontiers of knowledge and information are rapidly widening. A need has also been felt more than ever before, to evolve and establish rules of morality and conduct that will hold humanity together with a sense of mutual regard and adjustment. All this has necessitated elevating the average level of knowledge and understanding in every society. The explosion in education in general and higher education in particular is inevitable to meet the situation. Compulsory education upto the age of 14-16 have
been in existence in most of the developed countries for several decades. For raising the educational level further what has to be done is to extend educational facilities which will result in an explosion in higher education.\textsuperscript{28}

Socialisation of education has been envisaged as an important common feature of reform in all societies whatever be their political philosophy. Not only that, but socialisation of education is being attempted even if socialisation of their amenities in life as of housing and recreation has not been possible while socialisation is a powerful force to break the financial barriers in the way of higher education, democratisation is yet another force to keep the doors of higher education open to all and not to only the talented or gifted few. Higher education has also to be made flexible and adjustable to suit the aptitudes and interests of the large section of the student body, as is true in the case of Secondary Education.\textsuperscript{29}

To some extent, the ability of women to participate in modern economic, political and social structures remains contingent upon their ability to acquire the skills needed for this participation. Traditionally, women did and could participate in economic activities without necessarily requiring sophisticated modern skills. The necessary training and skills required education. Women, thus, tend to be self employed, in domestic or other service employment, as labourers in small workshops or in agriculture. But, even these limited opportunities can be eroded as the economy adopts technologically advanced techniques for which women are not trained. Though, education may not ensure the entry of women in the required job market, it remains an important factor in their on-going struggle to deal with and adapt to changes in the economy. Therefore, education is necessary both in rural and urban areas, if women are to effectively improve their participation rate in economic activities. In urban areas women find it even more important to acquire the skills needed to compete against already skilled competitors.\textsuperscript{30}

Thus, education has continued to evolve, diversify and extend its reach and coverage since the dawn of human history. Every country develops its system of education to express and promote its unique socio-cultural identity and also to meet
the challenges of the times, of course, India is not an exception to this. There are moments in history, when a new direction has to be given to an age-old process in the light of socio and economic transformation.  

To conclude from the above mentioned views it is pertinent to note that Women's education is the greatest prerequisite for National development. It is in recognition to this fact, that Islam gives an absolute importance to the Education of men and women.
References

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10. Ibid., p. 56.


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