Preface

“Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another”

-G. K. Chesterson

It is essential to know the word ‘education’ etymologically. The word ‘education’ is a derivation of Latin words ‘educe’, ‘educatum’ and ‘educare’, meaning to bring out and developing. So education is an act of bringing out human innate potentialities and developing various intellectual, social, physical, behavioural, aesthetical, mental as well as manual faculties of which they are unaware. So, education entails knowing, learning, analysing and comprehending. Likewise, the ‘Sanskrit’ word ‘Vidya’ has emerged from Sanskrit word ‘Vidh’ meaning raising. The word ‘Siksha’ has come out from the Sanskrit root ‘Sikhs’ means bringing up from within. Also the Arabic word ‘Talim’ = Ta + alim means self-learning from within. Thus, we can say ‘Education is bringing out the hidden potentialities of a person and leading him or her on a correct path in his/her life. But here the question is; what is to be brought out, from where it is to be brought out or raised?

Answer is, ‘Atma’ or human soul which accumulates the acquired experiences gained by it through per-se (perception), gained by the sense organs of the human body in which the soul is embodied. What we remember, we remember what was experienced and stored by the human soul. This has been stated in Hindu Naya-Veshiska Darshan. According to Greek thinkers the recovery of these soul accumulated experiences which were gained and stored in previous life and supplemented further through experiences, is a process of education. This recovery is done through educating or bringing out these experiences through the logical process of teaching by the teacher. Therefore, education is a process of development of latent or innate, potentialities or capacities enshrined in the child or student of an individual.

Nature has gifted every boy or girl with specific unique capabilities and capacities. In comparison to other living beings human child has been gifted with bigger brain to think, reason, comprehend and take a decision for appropriate action. He has been rewarded with moving hands for acting and flexible legs for walking. A student cannot be dictated to accept the diction of the teacher, as an ignorant client of a doctor or a lawyer accepts their advice. Therefore, it is essential to educate the students (boys or girls) in a proper or logical manner and in a congenial atmosphere while teaching, so as to develop their capacities and capabilities. After developing these capacities and capabilities, man and woman become two
equal familial social life partners. They perform more or less equal family life roles. They become two inseparable parts of human society and share joys and sorrows together.

With the changing trends and circumstances, the reforms were carried out in the system from time to time. The British education system was later shaped to match the west and the Indian need. In 1947, a new education policy was formulated as per the aspirations of the countrymen. Due scope and provision was made for the development of women education. Since then a lot of progress has been seen in this field in all parts of the country.

My research region is the state of Rajasthan, where I was born and brought up and in spite of being a girl child I got opportunity to get good education up to Post Graduation. This shows that even Rajasthan a State with rigid traditions and social scenario has progressed in the field of women education. Though this progress in comparison to the other states of the country is slow and still at the bottom of the graph.

After independence and the formation of the state of Rajasthan, many policies and programmes have been launched to promote women/girls education by the state government. Due to these efforts the ratio of girls in schools has increased but still lot of awareness is needed in the community and specially the families towards educating their girl child. This is the reason why I have selected women education as my topic of study.

Rajasthan’s Hindu society has been the most conservative of structures, as far as the social scenario is concerned. The norms and traditions governing the society were so strict that they could not be violated or overstepped by women. There was particular emphasis on women’s adherence to the social customs and traditions, which shaped their behaviour and guided them at every step. This structure remained very rigid and refused to let any liberal influence penetrate, by the end of the nineteenth century. The social customs, traditions and institutions attracted the attention of British officers. Customs like sati, child marriage, marriage and death expenses, female infanticide, etc. were widely prevalent in the society. Many British officers took an active interest in seeking remedies to cure such ills.

Factors such as age old customs and traditions like purdah, traditional forms of education, marriage, joint family etc. were inimical to the positive influences that were striving to enter this structure. However, the society maintained its conservatism and refused to respond to positive influences which were theoretically operating in all the other sections of society at large.
Despite such negative factors, today we see the State of Rajasthan emerging on an equal footing with the other States of India. The main purpose of my work is to highlight the traditional social institutions governing women and society. Post independence new outlook of the society affected by the change.

Chapter one is my study of the literature of the authors who have worked on the women studies, women empowerment, gender discrimination, women education and the government documents to get an insight of the topic. This review of literature helped me a lot in understanding the subject deeply. Thus, I have tried to cover the entire study in my ‘Review of Literature’.

Chapter two contains description of the various underlying customs and traditions prevailing in the society and affecting the women in turn. It deals with the various aspects of gender discrimination and its effects on the educational system specifically. I have tried to focus on the social and traditional customs imposed on women and hampering her educational progress and this low rate of education is encouraging these customs. Therefore, it can be said that customs and education are affecting each other vice versa. Education can open the society’s attitude towards women and open attitude will increase the rate of education.

In Chapter three, I have discussed the nature and the form of women education in the three periods of History, i.e., Ancient, Medieval and Modern. The high status of women in the Vedic period, its degeneration in the later Vedic period, various restrictions that came into force and the women was confined into the four walls. Different acts passed by the British and the political, social and reform movements of the reformers in favour of women education and her development.

Chapter four is dedicated to the post independence development in the society due to the steps taken by the Government. The condition of dalit women and education has also been discussed. Public private partnership has also been discussed.

Finally, in the conclusion in Chapter five, I have tried to analyse growth of women education and have few suggestions to increase the growth rate.