CHAPTER SIX

WOMEN'S EDUCATION : FOR PEACE, PROGRESS AND PROSPERITY
CHAPTER SIX

WOMEN'S EDUCATION:
FOR PEACE, PROGRESS AND PROSPERITY

'Give us good women, we will have a great civilization,
give us good mothers, we will have a great nation.'

S. RADHAKRISHNAN

In ancient times Indian women enjoyed liberty, equality
and status and had a position of honour and authority both in
the family and society as a whole. Later on they were denied
the right to action and movement, as independent members of
the society. It was said, "By a girl, by a young woman or
even by an aged woman nothing must be done independently, even
in her own house." There was a deep and strong prejudice in
the minds of men against women's free participation in education,
art, literature, singing and dancing. People believed in the
philosophy contained in verses like:

"Kaunchit gunwati sati" which means
'women who sings is seldom virtuous.'

William Adam wrote, "In fact, a feeling is alleged to exist in
the majority of Hindu females, principally cherished by the
women and not discouraged by men that the girl taught to write
and read, will soon after marriage become a widow.... The
Mohammedans participate in all the prejudices of the Hindus
against the instruction of their female offspring."¹

¹J. Long: Adam's Reports, p. 132.
Fortunately, after the attainment of Independence of India, women's education has acquired a great significance and there has been an ever increasing realisation, both in the minds of the people and the legislators that unless every effort is made to solve the problems of the women's education, the progress and development will be seriously impeded and retarded. Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru has beautifully said, "To awaken the people, it is the woman who must be awakened. Once she is on the move, the family moves, the villages moves, the nation moves." There cannot be an educated people without educated women. If general education has to be limited to men or to women, that opportunity should be given to women, for then it would most surely be passed on to the next generation.\(^1\)

The Founding Fathers of the Indian Constitution have provided for equality of status, liberty and opportunity for all women vide:

Article 15(1), "the State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them;"

Article 16(1), "there shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State;" and

Article 16(2), "no citizen shall on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated against, in respect of any employment or office, under the State."

These Articles and Preamble of the Constitution fully express the best and the highest aspiration of modern progressive philosophy on which depends the philosophy of Indian education. If education is the birth-right of every citizen, it automatically becomes the birth right of every woman as well as of every man. Fully realising the importance of women's education the Government of India set up in 1958, the National Committee on Women's Education, with Shrimati Durgeshri Deshmukh as its Chairman. In his inaugural address to the Committee on May 30, 1958, Dr. G. Radhakrishnan said, "While the greatest profession of women is, and probably will continue to be, that of home-maker yet her world should not be limited to that of one relationship."\(^2\)

The Committee finalised its Report on January 1, 1959 and suggested a few practical measures which the Government has tried to implement successfully to some extent. The Report is a big document consisting of Fifteen Chapters with 105 recommendations, grouped under three main categories viz.,:

1. Special recommendations which require Top priority and immediate consideration (1-20).

\(^1\)Resolution No. F-34-12/57 D.5 of May 19, 1958.

2. Other special recommendations (21-156).


Some of the important recommendations which have been accepted by the Parliament and Government are as follows:

i) Education of women should be regarded as a major problem for a good many years to come and given the highest priority, the funds required for the purpose being considered to be the first charge on the amounts set aside for the development of education;

ii) A special machinery should be created to deal with the problem of education of the girls and women, such as a National Council for Women's Education and a special unit in the Ministry of Education at the Centre, and a State Council for Women's Education, and a Special Officer for Women's Education in the Directorate of Education in each State; and

iii) The system of matching grants should be done away with in so far as the development of education of women is concerned and the entire financial responsibility for this programme should be taken by the Union Government.

It is on the basis of these recommendations that the education of women has been regarded as a major and a special problem in education during the post-Independence period, by the Parliament and the people. A bold and determined effort is being made to face its difficulties and magnitude and the
Existing gap between the education of men and women is becoming narrower year after year.

The National Council for Women's Education was set up by the Ministry of Education in 1959 under the Chairmanship of Pt. Durga Bai Deshmukh. A special unit was also set up in the Union Ministry of Education to deal with the problems of women's education. State Councils for Women's Education have been established and women officers have been appointed in all States to increase the pace of development and progress of women's education. A National Institute for Women's Education has been established for high level training in various spheres, law, civil services, education, medicine, engineering and police etc. Adequate funds for the expansion of women's education at all stages have been provided in the Five Year Plans by the Union Government as well as the State Governments. On the recommendations of the National Committee on Women's Education, most of the States have also provided funds for special programmes for girls education. It is expected that there will be large expansion of women's education during the Fifth Five Year Plan period and that, by 1980 the existing gap and leeway between the education of boys and girls would be substantially narrowed if not totally removed. The Central Social Welfare Board has been operating a very useful scheme of condensed courses for the education of adult women, particularly of the rural and tribal areas. A sum of Rs. 1.5 crores was provided for the first time in
the Third Plan for this scheme to make the beginning.

Under another scheme The National Institute of Education imparts high level training to women in research, organisation, administration and management to enable them to take up responsible positions in society.

In the words of President S. Radhakrishnan, "Women can play a leading part in the matter of educating our people for a new society where the only distinctions will be between the base and the noble, between the wicked and the virtuous. Other distinctions are contingent and transitory. Our women are said to be 'tapabpradhanya' while our men are 'Vajnapradhanya'. While men have strength, courage, and power, women are noted for their beauty, wisdom and love."¹

Indian women have themselves tried to emerge from social and political passivity imposed on them by old social traditions. Awareness of the importance of women's education in the scheme and structure of social life of India dates back to the Vedic and the Post- Vedic periods of history. Manu, the code-giver of the Hindus had said, "Even a daughter deserves to be brought up well and educated with care." It is a well established fact of history that Indian women enjoyed full freedom in the sphere of education, marriage and self development, during the Vedic period. It was only during the pre-British period that women's

¹Inaugural Address at the Seventh Annual Conference of the Chairman of the State Social Welfare Advisory Boards, March 24, 1961.
education was neglected and they lost their liberty of movement and development. During the British period also proper attention was not paid to the education of the women, notwithstanding, there had been a great awakening in the society for the all-round development of women through education. This awakening was the result of the selfless service done by great men and women like Dr. Annie Besant, Vishnu Dayanand, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, G.K. Gokhale, Rabindra Nath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi etc. These pioneers boldly fought for the right of women's education in the face of orthodoxy and conservatism, superstitions and taboos. Though women's education continued to suffer during the British Rule as far as the quantity is concerned, yet in quality the Western influence and impact produced great women in all fields of life - art, literature, politics etc., to name a few of them, Pandita Ramabai Ranade, Sarojini Naidu, Aruna Asaf Ali, Bhashabai Deshmukh, Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, Sucheta Kripalani and Vijay Laxmi Pandit, Indira Gandhi, Satapathi Pandit, Hem Chakravarti etc.

Dr. Annie Besant herself said, "Woman must be educated, that is her fundamental need. The treasures of Philosophy, Literature, Science and Arts must be thrown open to her as to man. There should be no store-houses of knowledge locked by the key of sex." The ideal of Indian woman-hood has been very beautifully given by her in the words, "What Indian women have
been, we know, what they are today, despite all disadvantages, we see that earth has no fairer flowers; what they shall be, who can say? We hope for, we dream of, a womanhood that shall blend into one perfect whole the wisdom of Gargi, the timeless courage and wit of Savitri, the unchanging love of Sita, the proud endurance of Damayanti, the unwavering fidelity of Shakuntla. "1 The aim of education is to preserve, transmit and enrich the 'values' of life; but it can only be possible through educated women that these 'values' are preserved, transmitted and enriched in the transmitting to the future generation.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATION:

The Hon'ble Members of Parliament have been expressing their views on the problem of women's education for quite sometime. During the discussion on U.G.C. Bill 1954 Shri C.S. Narasim, Shrimati Jaya Shri and Prof. S.C. Sharma spoke in favour of providing equal opportunities for all women in education, both in matters of admission to educational institutions and appointment as teachers, at various levels, and nomination to the education commissions, committees, and corporate bodies like U.G.C. and the U.G.C. etc.

Shrimati Jayaashri said, "Women need different kind of education, via, home science, nutrition, child development, home management, food, clothing and other such things which are useful to girls. Lady Irwin College, Delhi, Home Science

1Tbid.
Institution of Baroda University, Natubhai Damodar University, Bombay are specially meant for women education. These institutions have difficulty to provide proper type of personnel, equipment and finance.\textsuperscript{1} She suggested that such institutions should be encouraged by the Central Government through the U.G.C.

Prof. D.C. Sharma said, "During the Third reading of the Hindu Succession Bill, our Prime Minister gave one of the most lucid and illuminating exposition of the social philosophy that the India of today needs. He has made many speeches on political philosophy and economic philosophy. According to his social philosophy he wants to build up a good society, and the basis of that society is equality, equality between the sexes and not merely a sentimental equality, not mere platitudinous equality, but equality, all along the line, equality in practice."\textsuperscript{2}

According to Shri P.V.G. Naju, "One of the sad features of our educational development is the short fall in the women education in all its aspects. The overall percentage of school age children falls low due to the short falls in the enrolment of girls. There are economic, social and religious barriers which are responsible for this state of affairs."\textsuperscript{3} In the programmes of women's education the needs of different age groups have always to be kept in view, from the pre-primary stage to the university stage. These age groups are girls below

\textsuperscript{1} Lok Sabha Debate on University Grants Commission Bill, 1954, May 11, 1954.

\textsuperscript{2} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{3} Address to the 3rd Seminar on Compulsory Primary Education, May, 1963.
the age of six; second, girls of the school going age group of 6-11; girls of the age group 11-16; girls above this age of sixteen who are married and have to look after their families; and unmarried girls above this age who have to learn some vocation and earn their livelihood. There is also the problem of the social education of all women in general. An integral part of the campaign of social education must be the task of arousing the consciousness of parents, especially mothers, to the need of educating their children, particularly their daughters. Organisation of parent-teacher associations would also go a long way towards the promotion and betterment of education in general and women's education in particular. Other social organisations like the Bharat Sewak Samaj, Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj, Mahila Mandal etc. should undertake propaganda work in this field to mobilise the public opinion to provide equal opportunities in education for all women. Special needs of girls above the age of eleven, who, owing to social and economic conditions, are not free to remain in schools must be met by providing special facilities for prosecuting studies beyond the primary stage at home and by allowing them to sit for the secondary school examinations privately. The Government must aid financially the voluntary organisations which hold their own examinations and issue certificates and diplomas to those who are successful; and these diplomas and certificates must be recognised by the State and Central Governments. The poor girls who are interested in higher studies after the completion of the secondary courses must
be encouraged to pursue their studies in their leisure moments and pass the formal university examinations in the capacity of private candidates. The country is still passing through a period of transition in regard to education and there should be the fullest freedom and scope for experimentation at various levels. Part time schools and colleges, evening colleges, extension lectures, correspondence courses, radio and television lessons, are at present, a common feature of educational organisation in most of the countries of the world and the Government of India must also encourage all such innovations of informal education. Generally, women cannot always be educated in the same continuous process as men. Social and domestic circumstances force the girls to suspend their studies in their early teens due to a variety of reasons, because they have to take up the home responsibilities. The educational organisation and administration should make arrangements to facilitate resumption of studies by women at a time suitable to them. Social service organisations have to take up the cause of the education of middle aged women and conduct short-service and short-term courses for general education as well as for training them in small scale industries and crafts. The planning for women's education must have the objectives of providing vocational and occupational training at the secondary and even at the post secondary stages. The proposed scheme of bifurcation and diversification of educational courses under the 10 plus 2 pattern must be co-ordinated and implemented properly and scientifically. In
the field of educational development of women, the Girls Guide Movement has to play an important part. Unfortunately this movement has been restricted to the urban areas so far and the girls of the rural areas have been neglected altogether. The Girls Guide Movement must be spread widely in the rural and tribal areas to bring into its fold all the girls studying in schools. The State Governments should constitute separate women's welfare organisations at the block and district levels to administer comprehensive programmes of women's education with the help of trained social workers and voluntary organisations.

Dr. Baisab Sengupta said that during the discussion and debate on the Report of Education Commission 1964-66, the Hon'ble Members had got themselves bogged down into a controversy, useless controversy, futile controversy of Hindi and English. The child had been completely forgotten. They did not discuss at all the pre-school children, the primary school children, or any other backward community like the tribals and women. Of course, she would not call women a backward community, but women's education had not been discussed at all in the Parliament. At least in the Commission's Report women had been discussed with a warmth that was their due. She further said, "The Commission had mentioned pre-school education and it has been kind enough to give it three years. But what the system would be, and how the children would be taught had not been discussed in
detail. This should have been done as this is the most important stage. In all the developed countries it has been now accepted and acknowledged that this is the most important stage when education should be given. In some cases, it has been even said that by the age of six months an infant acquires knowledge and all the habits are formed from six months onwards, and naturally education is a very important thing.\footnote{Lok Sabha Debate, On the Reports of Education Commission and N.P.'s Committee on Education (1967), November 22, 1967, cc. 2002-2004.} Many people share the sentiments expressed by Dr. Basu and it is the bounden duty of the legislatures to pay heed to her suggestions and do something tangible for the pre-primary education of all children. The directive given in Article 45 of the Constitution includes the education of children up to the age of fourteen and not the children in the age group 6-14, as most of the educationists think. The health and education of all the children, boys and girls below the age of fourteen must be the direct responsibility of the State. Equal educational opportunities cannot be provided to all children unless and until the State takes the responsibility to provide them with free meals, uniforms, milk, medicines, and textbooks etc.

In the First Five Year Plan the note on women's education says, "Everyone realises the significance of the problem of women's education in the special circumstances of our country today and the need for adopting special measures for solving
it. The general purpose and objective of women's education cannot, of course, be different from the purpose and objective of men's education. There are, however, vital differences in the way in which this purpose has to be realised. The main point of difference to be stressed is that there are particular spheres of life in which women have a distinctive role and in which they can make a special contribution. It is now universally recognised that in the management of the household, in bringing up children, in the field of service, in nursing and midwifery, in teaching, especially in elementary schools, in certain crafts and industries like knitting, embroidery etc., and in the field of fine arts, women have, by instinct, a better aptitude. This does not mean that women should, whatever be their individual aptitudes and ambitions, be confined to these few spheres. They must have the same opportunities as men for taking to all kinds of work and this presupposes that they get equal educational facilities so that their entry into the profession and public service is in no way prejudiced."1

The general principle that education must be according to the age, ability, and aptitude of the students must be also applied to the education of girls and women. The education of women in no case should be neglected any more as the Education Commission, 1964-66 said, "The significance

1First Five Year Plan, Government of India, Planning Commission, New Delhi.
of the education of girls cannot be over-emphasized. For full development of our human resources; for the improvement of homes, and for moulding the character of children during the most impressionable years of infancy, the education of women is of even greater importance than that of men.¹ The society should stop thinking that women, as wives and mothers, are to keep themselves busy at home only, while their husbands and children are engaged in really important work in different walks of life. Those days are gone when women were used as play-things and decoration pieces without having any emotions and sentiments of human beings. It has been rightly observed in the Badhakrishnan Commission Report that "women are fitted to carry the same academic work as men, with no less thoroughness and quality. The distribution of general ability among women is approximately the same as among men."² However, among the women there is a demand for equal rights but "old and delicate graces of women should not be lost and the individuality of womanhood should not be sacrificed on the altar of sex equality."³

The U.N. General Assembly in its 27th session had proclaimed the year 1975 as International Women's year. The

goals aimed at for that year were:

to encourage equality between the sexes,
to involve women to a greater extent in the economic, social and cultural developments on a national, and international level; and
to pay recognition to the growing contribution of women to the development of friendly relations and cooperation between States as well as the consolidation of world peace.

Women's hopes for peace and social progress, security and human dignity can be realized only under democracy and socialism as far as the developing countries like India are concerned. In India women must be given all the opportunities to make them active and creative, successful and model workers in all walks of life - in politics, economy, science, research, education, health, justice, social services, culture, arts and sports. The history of all socialist countries has proved that without great accomplishments of women, it would be impossible to build socialism and democracy in the truest sense of the words. On January 5, 1976 President F.A. Ahmed said, "Along with other countries, we observed 1975 as International Women's Year. The problems faced by women in a number of areas have been studied in detail. The ordinance guaranteeing to women equal remuneration for equal work will come before you this session. A national plan for women is being prepared, the
implementation of which will help to remove some
disabilities from which they suffer.\textsuperscript{1} It is very encouraging
that the Government of India has studied the problem of
women’s education and development and they realize that the
most of the women are still suffering from social and
economic disabilities but as long as the national plans
for women’s education are not implemented in the right
course, there will be no progress and change in women’s life
and education. The Report of the Committee on Status of
women in India was laid on the table of the Rajya Sabha on
May 13, 1973. While moving the motion for a discussion on
this Report Professor S. Nurul Hasan, Minister of Education,
said, “During the last twenty-eight years, there has been
a remarkable progress in the position of women, mainly as
a result of the traditions of the country’s freedom
movement, Constitutional guarantees, legal measures, and the
result of educational and developmental projects have all
led to the improvement in the position of women.”\textsuperscript{2}

Participating in the discussion Shrimati Indira Gandhi said,
“The level of any society is judged by the level of its
women. The women can develop if they have opportunity. Men
and unfortunately even women are conditioned by the non-
oriented society. Their lives are inducted by pre-conceived

\textsuperscript{1}Lok Sabha Debate, President’s Address to the Parliament
on January 5, 1976.

\textsuperscript{2}Rajya Sabha Debate on the Report of the Committee on
Status of Women in India, February 13, 1975.
motives and attitudes from birth onwards, at every level, in school, in society and in institutions. The lower status of women, or lesser opportunity for women, is a handicap for the growth of mankind as a whole and it does effect the lives of men themselves. Men will not know their true selves until and unless they allow women to develop their full potential. Women should have equality in wages and in such other matters. 1

Drawing a real picture of the situation Shrimati Roza Deshpande said, "This being a women's year, I would certainly like to know what you are thinking about it. But if you just say that you are giving equal status and lament that there is so much of illiteracy among girls, I would say: 'Thank you for it'. If you go to the villages, you will find that parents are really reluctant to send the girls to schools. I have seen a case where a person running a school and a hostel, provides everything to the girls, and the parents do not pay a single farthing to him. But the parents think that they are obliging that person by sending their girls to the school. At least during this women's year, we should have made it a point to open a few women's colleges, schools and hostels in major districts of the country." 2 The Government and the Parliament should pay proper heed to the progressive views and opinions of leaders of the masses like Shrimati Roza Deshpande who like Mahatma Gandhi feel that the real India

1Ibid.

lies in her villages, where most of the women are still suffering from illiteracy, ignorance and superstitions.

The U.N. General Assembly has declared 1976-85 as International Women's decade when the work initiated during the International Women's Year (I.W.Y.) can hopefully be completed. In India, the theme chosen by the world body has been the basis for a series of wide ranging recommendations about full equality of men and women in all spheres of life, their total integration in country's development, and their educational development.

The National Council for Women's Education has rightly asked the States to take positive steps to implement the various schemes of women's education, which is the basic prerequisite for the effective exercise of all other rights and the success of various programmes of development including the much publicized 20 point economic programme of the Prime Minister. The Council has highlighted the need for the expansion and strengthening of both formal and informal systems for women's education.

REMOVAL OF WASTAGE AND STAGNATION:

A recent study carried out by the National Institute for Public Cooperation and Child Development shows that over 60 percent of the children drop out of school in the first four or five years of school education. Less than 50 percent of the boys reach the fifth class or standard; and only 34
percent reach the eighth standard. The situation of drop outs is worse in the case of girls with only about 30 percent reaching the fifth standard and about 15 percent reach the eighth standard. This situation in rural areas and tribal regions is still worse than in urban areas.

According to 1971 Census there are 26.4 crores of females as compared to 23.4 crores of males in a total population of 54.6 crores, thus giving a sex ratio of 930 females for 1000 males. The combined literacy percentage for all persons is 29.45 percent with 39.45 percent for males and only 19.70 percent for females. Among the factors responsible for this low literacy percentage of women in particular and of men in general are poverty and the prevalent social inhibitions against the education of women and backward classes. Efforts will have to be made during the women's international decade to remove the social barriers by changing the attitudes of the people. It is an undeniable fact that women's active participation is very vital for raising the standard of living, increasing productivity and to improve the quality of life. Since women play a relatively more dominating role in so far as children are concerned it is argued that educating one male means educating an individual while educating one woman means educating the future generation. The role of woman in society stems from the fundamental difference in the philosophies and aims of different societies. For example, in the U.S.S.R. and other
socialist countries education has been completely nationalised and women have been its principal beneficiaries. The socialist States have made efforts to develop career-consciousness among young women who take active part in all the walks of life. In the U.S.A. and other capitalist countries the orientation of women education is primarily towards marriage and family; and the mass media of radio and television etc. extole the image of the housewife. Indian Parliament should take early steps to completely nationalise education at all stages, if the legislators have a sincere and firm faith in the principles contained in the Indian Constitution.

The Report of the Committee of Members of Parliament on Education says:

"In the post independence period, the enrolment of girls, as well as the number of women teachers, has increased rapidly at all stages of education, and in most areas of study, girls have shown remarkable achievements and have proved that they are at least equal to, if not better than, the boys. But inspite of all that has been done, there is still a wide gap in the enrolment of boys and girls at all stages. It is necessary to eliminate this gap at the primary stage, and to narrow it at the other stages. The education of girls should, therefore, receive special emphasis and the funds required for its advancement should be provided on a priority basis. Suitable measures for speedy
implementation should be devised, particularly taking into account the needs of the rural areas. The appointment of women teachers should be encouraged at all stages and especially at the primary stage. It is a fact that there has been a large scale progress in girls' education since 1951 as indicated in Table 6 of the Draft Fifth Five Year Plan 1974-79. Disparities, however, still exist in the relative utilisation of available facilities by girls at various stages of education. The problem of the inadequate supply of women teachers, which is a major reason for the low enrolment of girls, can be tackled by giving scholarships to the rural girls to complete their education and training, leading to a teaching career; organisation of condensed courses and correspondence courses for the less educated women and girls. The outlays for special programmes for education of girls and women should be stepped up. There is also a great need for the orientation of the curriculum to meet the special needs of girls to make them successful housewives and career seekers.

LEGAL PROTECTION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS:

With the sustained and continuous efforts of Indian leaders, India of today, can boast of educated and eminent women in almost every walk of life-in legislatures,

\footnote{National Policy on Education, para 35, page 10.}
\footnote{Infra, Appendix VI - 6.}
administration, medicine, judiciary, science, education
and sports, notwithstanding the fact that most of them
belong to the families of rich classes in cities and
villages. At present the strength of lady Members of
Parliament is nearly 20 percent, whereas even in Britain,
U.S.A. and other developed countries such a high percentage
in the representation of women is not achieved in the
Legislatures. All the Hon'ble Members of Parliament in
general, and the lady Members in particular must take
early steps to provide legal protection to all women,
after taking guidance from the developed countries of the
world. The British Parliament passed the Equal Pay Act in
1970 and the U.S.A. Congress passed the Equal Pay Act of
1963 as well as the Equal Rights Act of 1964 to make equal
employment-opportunities a reality. In U.S.A. the women
have received more equal access to higher level of
employment at universities and other institutions with
government contracts vide Education Order 11246 as amended
by Executive Order 11375 and the Sex Discrimination
provisions of the Higher Education Act of 1972. In German
Democratic Republic, Articles 20, 24 and 33 of the
Constitution ensure equal rights and same legal status to
all men and women in all spheres. The other Legal documents
protecting women's right in G.D.R.¹ are:

The Mother and Child Protection Act of September
27, 1950;


Indian Parliament must also make special legal provisions for the special encouragement of all working mothers, especially those working in production, in agriculture, health and industry and education. This encouragement and support must include:

i) time-off from work to study;

ii) guaranteed average income during studies;

iii) consideration of the student's previous educational professional experiences and life experiences, in working out course curricula.

iv) an assurance that the student can finish her course if she has to interrupt it because of her illness, illness of a child or pregnancy.

It would be impossible to build socialism and to have peace progress and prosperity without the great accomplishments of women.