

# EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH EDUCATION: MEDIA INITIATIVES

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## ABSTRACT

This article aims at the contribution of media on gender education. Since ages, women's education has been marginalized in many societies. They are denied access to education in many communities. However, with the globalization and growing media technologies, a sea change has set in the access for women education. To achieve gender equality, economic growth, social development and empowerment, women education is essential. It focuses on the changing trends in the life style and the challenges being faced by the women. The media play significant role in bridging gap between women and education to help them change their perception towards finding suitable solutions. Further, it also highlights different aspects including the highs and lows of the impact of education on the overall persona of the present generation in Indian society as well. Media is a major contributor in the construction and circulation of social understanding and mutual cooperation for achieving common goals of women both in traditional and modern societies. Hence media has potential to play transformative role in achieving gender equality in societies by creating gender-sensitive and gender-transformative content and breaking gender stereotypes. It can boost education to reach women and teach them to challenge traditional social and cultural norms and attitudes regarding gender perceptions both in content and practice and eventually leads to the final re-shaping of Indian society towards better future.

**Key Words:** Women, Education, Media Technologies, Social Development and Empowerment

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## Introduction

As Francis Bacon says, “Knowledge is power”. Education and practical approach towards life gives knowledge, which makes women empowered. Education enlightens and promotes confidence in day today living and media facilitates communication to interact with large audience. The newspapers, periodicals, radio, television, films, and the Internet are significantly powerful tools to educate and empower women. Media contributes for the overall development of society and thus media can educate and empower women. Women in India have mutely maintained the performance and strength of society’s cultural institutions, living a life of roles and doing their duty as daughters, wives and mothers. But the fullness of their persons has never been allowed to break through these bounded roles. Gender equality is one of the UN Sustainable Development Goals for 2030, and is crucial to achieving many of the other goals, from eradicating poverty and hunger, to decent work and economic growth, peace and justice.

Women, the first school of the child, constitute roughly one half of the world’s population. But their social, economic, and political status is lower than that of men in almost all countries of the contemporary society, of course, women do enjoy better position in some societies than in others, but their overall position everywhere is lower than their male counterparts. Why it was happened. In course of account, the role of women changes from time to time depends upon the economic conditions and political structure. In the Vedic literature we find that one of the remarkable features of ancient India was the high level of education and social status which women enjoyed. The Vedic women were allowed access to different branches of knowledge.

## Women’s Education: Historical Perspective

During the period of 200 B.C. - 1200 A.D. female education received a great set back due to the deterioration of the religious status of women and the lowering of the marriage age. In the Vedic period the girls were married at about the age of 16 or 17 but during this period the marriageable age lowered down to 12. Girls in rich, aristocratic and royal families however continued to receive a fairly good literary education. In the period 1200-1800 AD – percentage of literacy among women went down very rapidly during the Muslim rule, society as a whole became prejudicial against female education. However, during the period of 1800 -1854 AD, touched by the work done by missionaries and philanthropic Englishmen, several great Indians lent their support to the opening of schools for girls. Among them, Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Pandit Ishwarachandra Vidyasagar played an important role. By 1850, the stage was set for a change in the state policy the lead has taken by Lord Dalhousie, the Governor – General of India.

**During the period of 1854 – 1882 AD** establishment of special primary schools for girls, and mainly establishment of training college for women, primary teachers were started. About 2,600 primary schools, 81 secondary schools, 15 training institutions have started for improving the educational levels among girls and women. **During 1882 – 1902 AD** public funds and payment of liberal grants-in-aid for scholarships was introduced. Women colleges and women medical colleges were also started. Further, **during 1902-1921 AD** appointment of the Indian universities commission in 1902 and the great public awakening was the demand of educated men themselves to have educated wives gave further encouragement of women education. A very vital development of this period was the considerable rise in the age of marriage. A huge number of women took up commercial and technical careers opportunities for formal education got almost denied to women due to child marriage, purdah, enforced widowhood and sati system. The society looked down upon the idea of girls stirring out of their homes. **1921-47 A.D** the favourable factors for the promotion of women education of this period were: a further rise in the age of marriage, the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, the phenomenal awakening of Indian womanhood. The period also showed an increase in the trend towards co-education. And **after 1947** the University Education Commission (1948-49) made certain recommendations regarding women education. In fact, education of women has come to be considered to be more important than that of men. The university education commission has rightly remarked: “there cannot be an educated people without educated women. If general education had to be limited to men or to women, that opportunity should be given to women, for them it would more surely be passed on to the next generations”.

In the field of women education was the setting up of a National Committee on Women’s Education 1958, under chairmanship of Smt. Durgabai Deshmukh, which examined the problem of women education very comprehensively. As a result of the recommendations of the committee, a National Council for education was set up in 1959 under the chairmanship of Smt. Durgabai Deshmukh. Which help them improve the educational levels among Indian women.

The Kothari Education Commission 1964-66 also made valuable recommendations regarding women education in India. The resolution on the National Policy on Education 1968 also laid emphasis on women education. The National Committee on status of Women in India (1974) studied various aspects of the status of women and their education and made useful recommendations. The National Policy on Education (1986) has made important recommendations regarding women’s education. That girls and children of poor and illiterate families need special remedial programmes of common core curriculum, health and nutrition, child and mother care.

According to the constitution, guaranteed free and compulsory education to every child up to the age of 14 years. It is the responsibility of the centre and the states to see that every individual is equipped with the necessary knowledge skills and attitudes to discharge his duties as a responsible and cooperative citizen so that the proper functioning of democracy in the Nation. There are a number of articles and clauses in the constitution which directly or indirectly make provision for education. The specific provisions for the education of women: Article 15 (1) Article 15 (3) Article 16 (1) article, 39 (a). The following provisions regarding women’s education have been made and part-IV of the policy named **‘Education**

**for Equality’.** Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women, role in the empowerment of women. It will foster the development of

new value. This will be an act of faith and social engineering. Various courses and educational institutions encouraged to take up active programmes to further women’s development. The removal of illiteracy, elementary education received top priority major emphasis on women’s participation in vocational, technical and professional education at different levels. The policy of non-discrimination will be pursued vigorously to eliminate sex stereo-typing in vocational and professional courses and to promote women’s participation in non-traditional occupations.

Later National Policy on Education review committee report 1990 had made various recommendations with regards to the following dimension:

1. Access to education and quality of learning,
2. Content of education and gender bias,
3. Vocational education,
4. Training of teacher and other educational personnel,
5. Research and development of women’s studies,
6. Representation of women in the educational hierarchy,
7. Empowerment of women,
8. Adult education
9. Resources
10. Management

Education contributes in large measure not only to the elimination of the idea that women are inferior but also to the elimination of the inferiority of their actual status. An American Journalist Mrs. Hale in her writing pointed out that the first of which was the right to education in its widest sense, an education that would enable women to develop fully the individual, intellectual and moral qualities. The inferior status of women is linked to their traditional role. Even today there are many countries where the laws grant almost all rights to the husband over the wife and to the father over the children.

Even in many of the countries where the law confers practically equal rights on both husband and wife, women do not feel really free. This dependent status in the past, the traditional subservience still weighs heavily on woman’s mentality everywhere. Matter requiring the greatest attention, for it constitutes a force of resistance to progress not only directly through the attitude of women, but also indirectly through the attitude of men. Through education, men as well as women must be convinced to the need for change. The future prospects of women depend also on far-reaching economic, social and legal changes being made that will promote the access of women to education.

Kothari commission suggested the following two strategies for the development of education of girls and women in India:

- a) The ‘special’ programmes are recommended by the National Committee on Women’s Education.
- b) The ‘General’ programmes that is to give attention to the education of girls at all stages and in all sectors and for the expansion and improvement of education.

The National Policy on Education was accepted by the Parliament in 1986: Due to political compulsions arising out of change of governments, this policy was debated again in 1992 and accepted with minor modifications. The section of education for women's equality was brought forward from being chapter-IV of the 1986 programme of action to Chapter-I in the 1992 version.

Education for women's equality is too important and institutions in the field of education at all levels to be gender sensitive and ensure that women have their rightful shake in all educational programmes and activities.

The period from 1986 to 1991 was, perhaps, a very creative period in the history of basic education and women's education in India. Six new initiatives were launched by the government, namely: British ODA supported the Andhra Pradesh Primary Education Project and the Swedish aided the Rajasthan Shiksha Karmi Project in 1987; Netherlands supported Mahila Samakhya Education for women's equality in Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat in 1988. UNICEF funded the Bihar Education Project and World Bank supported the Uttar Pradesh Basic Education Project in 1990; and Swedish aided Rajasthan Lok Junbish in 1992. The basic education was opened up to external assistance and adult literacy remained a national commitment.

In 1988-89 the Government of India launched the National Literacy Mission. Later National Adult Education Programme (NAEP), was launched and non-formal Education (NFE) initiative was also launched by the Government. The Govt. of India proposed the District Primary Education Project (DPEP) in 1992. The assessment and challenges brought out in 1998, which contributed to accelerated increase in enrolment especially of girls. Gender and social inequities have reduced to a substantial level.

### **Statement of the problem**

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of the media in supporting women education. It examined the influence of media on women's empowerment. The paper emphasizes on the media's contribution on women education and offers media policymakers to usher changes in content and programmes for women education.

### **Significance of the study**

This research is significant that the media is a source of education, growth, and empowerment

for women. This research may also be used to assess the media's function in terms of its strengths and faults. The study throws light on how to promote societal progress coupled with women empowerment with the initiatives of media towards women education.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To find out the importance of media in bringing awareness on women education
2. To find out the influence of media to enhance women's attention on education
3. To find out the positive and negative impact of media on women
4. To examine the media role in promoting women education

## Research Methodology

The aim of this research is to make a qualitative investigation about the media role in women education. In this pursuit analytical methods have been employed to understand data, facts, and information that are already published or the information available in the form of books, journals, or Magazines already available. The research explores important questions that i. How Indian media plays a key role in promoting women education? ii. How are women affected by the persuasion towards education by the Media? The secondary sources of data used for this particular study include books, journals, magazines, periodicals, and online websites.

## Importance of Women Education

Khurshid, & Guerrero, (2016) said that Malala Yousafzai is a Pakistani youth activist who has become a worldwide symbol for her promotion of young ladies' schooling, youth office, and sexual orientation strengthening. Yousafzai began The Malala Fund, and her activism has become a motivation for nearby and worldwide associations dealing with youth related issues. Malala Yousafzai is an international advocate for girls' education and women's rights. She has said that education is a way to break the chains of gender inequality. She says, "Everyday I fight to ensure all girls receive 12 years of free, safe, quality education. I travel to many countries to meet girls fighting poverty, wars, child marriage and gender discrimination to go to school". In 2013, Malala and her father co-founded the Malala Fund to bring awareness to the social and economic impact of girls' education and to empower girls to demand change. In December 2014, she became the youngest-ever Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

Majority of people in developing countries live in rural areas with limited access to education and other amenities and services. Literacy, numeracy, health education, community improvement, education, and technical skills are the most basic educational needs of most rural people, and these can all be met with intervention of media.

The World Bank is committed to gender equality and the education of girls and women:

### World Bank Mission

The World Bank Group's mission is to end poverty on a livable planet, and gender equality is at the core of that mission.

Educating girls and women has many benefits, including:

**Economic development:** Women's economic empowerment is essential for economic development and poverty reduction.

**Health:** Better educated women are more informed about nutrition and healthcare, and their children are usually healthier.

**Social cohesion:** Removing gender barriers deepens social cohesion.

**Well-being:** Educating girls yields far-reaching benefits for girls and women themselves, their families, and the societies in which they live.

Time is now to bridge the broken link to employment for women. There are clear disparities in women and men's labour market outcomes, and education has a pivotal role in this tackling this. We see an education-employment paradox, in which high learning

outcomes are not translating to labour market outcomes for women. On the flip side, men have higher labour market outcomes.

The 1974 Report of the Committee on the Status of Women (Joshi Committee Report) found that 'women are represented as wives and mothers in most TV and other media programs. Although 36% of them are agricultural workers, women are predominantly projected as non-producers, with a decorative function, being marginal to national growth and development. The plural nature of Indian culture and the diverse roles women play is neither acknowledged nor communicated.

The emergence of media has revolutionized access and receiving of education by women. The technological developments in media have emerged as powerful tools for women to access information, express their opinions, share information, and engage in infotainment activities. These technologies have enabled women to increase their access to knowledge and information, exchange information with others, and disseminate their views instantaneously. Over the years, significant progress has been made to bridge the gender gap in education. While this is a positive development, there is still much work to be done. Even with the progress made, education remains out of reach for many girls, especially those living in rural areas. However, access to media is important and women must be capable in using these tools to shape strategy and narratives to meaningfully participate in mainstream activities of development and empowerment.

The media has great potential in promoting women's education. It also has its own set of challenges. One of the significant challenges is the access to technology. Women in developing countries and marginalized communities often face barriers to access technology and thereby limiting their ability to profit from media efforts to promote women's education. Another challenge is the

relevance of gender stereotypes and biases in media content. Negative stereotypes about women and their capabilities continue to be perpetuated in media, making it challenging to promote women's education effectively. According to Kilbourne (1993), the usual body language of women is often portrayed as passive, vulnerable, and submissive in comparison to their male counterparts who are often showcased as strong, dignified, and courageous.

All forms of media communicate images of the sexes, many of which perpetuate unrealistic, stereotypical, and limiting perceptions. Three themes describe how media represent gender. First, women are underrepresented, which falsely implies that men are the cultural standard and women are unimportant or invisible. Second, men and women are portrayed in stereotypical ways that reflect and sustain socially endorsed views of gender. Third, depictions of relationships between men and women emphasize traditional roles and normalize violence against women. Problems caused by toxic masculinity, gender inequality and archaic family patterns all around us. The continued projection of negative and degrading images of women in media communications - electronic, print, visual and audio - must be gender-sensitive and change accordingly. The Indian Media is full of such advertisements (Both Print and Electronic) e.g., advertisements of Man's Briefs, Man's Shaving Creams, Bikes, Real Estate and many more where the presence of the women is just to induce the erotic quotient such that the sales rise no matter how the women and her body is the portrayal cheaply and disgustingly (Roy 2012).

## Conclusion

It is an age old adage that woman is designated as the source of Power and but yet the society subjugates them as the naturally inferior. The media are in powerful position of having the ways to change all that and yet, a very little progress is being done.

For centuries, women remained rooted in the social affinitive systems, confined in a net work of social relationships as daughters, wives and mothers and society continued to regard them as such. Media should organize special programmes for creating awareness among women especially for those belonging to weaker sections. Greater access to education for women must be ensured by media. The educated women, armed with knowledge and skills, can enter the world of occupation, career, profession, competition and achievements in their own right, and create a space in society towards acceptance and empowerment.

Media can play very strong transformative role in achieving gender equality in societies by disseminating gender-sensitive and gender-transformative content and breaking gender stereotypes. Media can educate women and empower them to challenge traditional social and cultural norms and attitudes regarding gender perceptions. It is crucial to address these biases and stereotypes in media content to create a more inclusive and empowering environment for women. The media has potential to be used to promote positive images of women and raise awareness about the importance of education. It's the need of the hour that media should give top priority to women's education and motivate them in that direction. Media should give information on government schemes to foster women education. Media should invite women to take part in different programs, wherein it promotes motivation and goodwill on the success stories of women to others. In short, all these programs by media contribute towards the realization of sustainable community development and empowerment of women.

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## **STATEMENTS & DECLARATIONS**

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## **DECLARATIONS**

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