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RESEARCH ARTICLE

**EDUCATION AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN IN INDIA (ENCOURAGE –
EDUCATE - INSPIRE)**

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Abstract

“Yatra naryshu pujanthe ramathe thatra devatha” is the view of the India towards it’s women. Clearing the hindrances of the patriarchal societies modern women have reached the glory in various challenging sectors like Space, Health, Defense, Education, IT, Banking etc. Many of them have outperformed their male counterparts in these sectors. In this technology driven world where every walk of life is digitalized, handled by internet and digital appliances making life easier and better, there are majority sections of the society who are marginalized and are unable to reap the fruits of this advancement, specially women from all sections are not making life.Both the Central and State governments through their policy measures focused on the upliftment of these women starting from the infancy. Their measures to promote women in Social ,Economical and Political are achieving remarkable outcomes pointing positive trends on the graph of Women empowerment like improved sex ratio, increase in enrollment ratio , rise in the female labour force etc. In spite of immense contribution women still face heavy hurdles , glass ceilings, stereotypes alarming the policy makers and institutions to shift gears and transform all the sectors especially for women to align with the global standards.

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Introduction:-

India is one of the world’s ancient civilizations which has rich and diverse culture , traditions , rituals ,with women occupying the core roles. We carry the legacy of the participation of women in various fields and their immense contribution to the world. Their roles were diversified and dynamic. Personalities like Lopamudra , Apala etc., are the well known women who were highly educated in ancient times . Nalanda , Taxila Nagarjunakonda¹ etc., were educational centers which imparted scientific education along with religious features. But due to several changes the world has to change its colors making women symbol of fear , sub-ordinates and reduced in stature. Vedic period² has heavily reduced the status of women giving men superiority over them. Fast forward to modern times to British era³ in spite of opportunities and development women were not encouraged to get good education. Even though educated they were limited to humanities and arts fields. Post independence efforts such as Five year plans and other initiatives improved the situations but not to the full extent and the implementation and policy failures are still haunting us today. With the advancement in science and technology enhancement of all sectors has taken place and made lives better. Globalization⁴ of the world economic order mandated interdependence of the nations which laid more emphasis education. This sacred sector is the key that has unlocked the immense hidden human potential. Through

education we drove away the poverty and achieved the economic equality, we eradicated the social disorders and achieved social equality. But gender equality in Education across many countries is a long lasting dream even today. There are millions of women around the world who are deprived of the basic needs and are far away from the dignified life. Indian scenario of Education is a mixed one which is the combination of failures and achievements. Initial schemes like Operation Black Board, National Literacy mission, National Educational Policies and opening of the institutions like Kasturba Gandhi Vidyalaya(KGBV), Navodaya Vidyalaya samithi(NVS), Kendriya vidyalaya samithi(KVS) Ekalavya Model Residential Schools(EMRS) Regulatory bodies and other institutions through inclusive education are contributing to the Nation building. But there are huge lacunas in these institutions and the standards they are imparting in tomorrow's future. Functioning and goals of these institutions and policies are criticized and challenged. These initiatives are not sufficient to achieve 21st century and the global goals.

Objectives of The Study:-

There are three objectives in this study:-

- a) To analyze different schemes introduced by the government concerning women empowerment in India
- b) To analyze the factors affecting skill development and education status of women in India
- c) To study awareness of the concept of skill development of women in India.

Research Methodology:-

This paper tries to analyze the initiatives that have been taken towards empowerment of women in India, along with challenges faced by women and concerned developments. In order to achieve the above objectives, the researcher used Doctrinal method, for the purpose of collecting and analyzing the data, the Secondary Sources like: various research papers, articles and journals, along with PIB and websites of NFHS and PLFS.

Policies For Women Empowerment And Development:-

Constitution of India laid more emphasis on education. Education is categorized as the subject in the Concurrent list providing ample powers to both the centre and state governments to make effective laws for achieving the 100% literacy goal and for imparting quality scientific education in order to meet the demands of the present day society. With the 1974 Report⁵ on women's status in the country, Emphasis is also laid on the education of women, empowering them, along with men in all ways driving away the social inequalities.

The following are some of the important schemes implemented by the government of India to foster education among women and develop entrepreneurship among them and integrate them with the main stream economy:

1. Swayasjdha.
2. Women Entrepreneur Development programme given top priority in 1997-98.
3. Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY) 1995.
4. Rastria Mahila Kosh (RMK) 1992-1993
5. Swa Shakti Group.
6. National Mission for Empowerment of Women.
7. Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) (1975)
8. Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY) October, 1993.
9. Ujjawala (2007).
10. Balika Samridhi Yojana
11. Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescence Girls (RGSEAG) (2010).
12. The Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers.
13. Integrated Child Protection scheme (ICPS) (2009-2010).
14. Swadhar.
15. Short Stay Homes.
16. Crèches/ Day care centre for the children of working and ailing mother.
17. Mahila Samakhya being implemented in about 9000 villages.
18. Beti bachao, Beti Padhao
19. Dhanalakahmi (2008).
20. Swalamban.
21. Hostels for working women.
22. Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women(STEP).
23. Sukanya Samridhhi Yojana.

24. CBSE UDAAN scheme

¹ Ancient education centres served as global universities

² Dominance of religion

³ Class segregation

⁴ Privatization of education

Contemporary Developments In Women's Education In India:-

The access of women to education and opportunities thereof, has significantly progressed over the past few decades. This is especially due to several initiatives and policy reforms introduced by the government of India. There has also been an increase in awareness concerning gender equality among local masses. As per the Census of India, literacy rate of females increased from 53.67% in 2001 to 65.46% in 2011. This reflects a steady improvement in girls' access to education in our country. For increasing the enrollment in schools, several national programs have also been initiated, such as the Mid-Day Meal Scheme, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. These initiatives have been playing an impactful role in encouraging parents to send their girl children to schools and to continue their education. Latest national surveys such as National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) implies that attainment of education among women, especially younger age groups has enriched in many states of our country. Further, the New Education Policy, introduced recently in 2020, has placed robust emphasis on equitable access to education and gender inclusion. The policy recommends that, for supporting education for women and socially disadvantaged groups, a "Gender Inclusion Fund" must be established. It also places emphasis on vocational improvements, digital education and skill-based learning. However, there are still significant disparities that exist in both urban and rural areas as well as amongst different socio-economic groups. This disparity highlights the necessity for continued policy attention and effective implementation.

Current Status Of Women's Education In India:-

An analysis of present status of education of women in our nation reflects various achievements, though the same is not without certain significant setbacks and challenges. Over past few years, the Government has sought implementation of various educational schemes or programs in order to increase the enrollment and reduction of gender disparity in education. Several schemes such as Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan have led to a significant improvement in girls' access to school, especially in marginalized communities and rural areas. As per the National Statistical Officer (NSO), there has been significant improvement in the literacy levels of women over the past 2 decades. However, this improvement is still lower as compared to that of men in many parts of the country. Girls, especially those in rural areas face multiple significant barriers in their access to education such as lack of proper infrastructure, lack of transportation and poverty. Thus, disparities in rural and urban areas has been continuously affecting opportunities for education of women. One of other pertinent aspects of education of women is their participation in technical fields and higher education. It has been indicated by the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2021-22 that approximately 49% of total enrollment in higher educational institutions in the nation has been that of women. While this data shows gender parity in statistical terms, practically there are less women actually working in their respective fields such as information technology, education and other STEM disciplines. Consequently, the underrepresentation of women in these sectors leave no room for opportunities in high-skill employment. Therefore, the need of the hour is increasing opportunities for women to participate in technical education, digital training and education.

Challenges:-

Educating a girl child and empowering her through the sufficient skills is still a dream that is too far for many of them. Girls from the marginalized communities, according to the Sachar committee, are more vulnerable. Girl child from the infancy face problems and post birth they multiply making them victims at all the stages. Sex ratio is improving in many states but the quality of life of the girl child is still questionable. Gender stereotypes⁶ is forcing them to take up education and career only in the limited spheres constructing walls around her. Gender violence is making her to leave the employment and the masculine evils have become a great hurdle to cross and occupy the leadership roles. Technological divide forms the blockades between rural and urban women causing great differences in capacities among women of the nation. Social and cultural fences are those which are growing and moving along with aging of women which are sealing their fate. In spite of many schemes and programs most of the women are unaware of them to achieve progress. "The Global Gender Gap report 2024" of the World

Economic Forum ranks India with 129 out of 146 countries highlights the status of Indian women and their abilities to compete with the world. This also proves that the policies made are not effective both in the formulation and implementation. Many of these policies lie so strong on paper but on ground reality they fail miserably with no results. Many schemes such as “Deen Dayal Upadhyaya – Grameen Kaushalya Yojana” by the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) are not performing as per their capacities. Other major challenges affecting skill development and educational opportunities for women and young girls in our country are economic inequalities and the culture of early marriage. Even in the present era of global advancement, families with low economic status generally prefer to educate their male children over female children. These girls are then expected to stay at home and help in household chores or contribute to household income. Further, the culture of child marriages still persist across certain socio-economic disadvantaged communities in rural areas.

According to United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) reports, child marriage or girls’ marriage at an early age frequently lead to the discontinuation of education and also significantly limits their opportunities for employment and skill development in the future. Even if a girl child somehow manages to attend school, there are barriers with respect to infrastructure of schools. Rural areas often have schools which lack basic facilities such as clean washrooms, separate sanitation facilities for girls, adequate classroom environment and infrastructure for comfort and safe transportation. As per several studies on this aspect, it is shown that the absence of proper sanitation facilities affects particularly the adolescent girls and often act as one of significant factors in contributing to increased dropout rates at the secondary school level. Aside from the abovementioned challenges, the digital divide has emerged as another major challenge. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the unequal access to internet connectivity and digital devices was very much apparent. This made it more difficult for girls to attend online classes and to keep up with the curriculum.

Therefore, steps towards bridging this digital divide must be taken in order to ensure equal educational and skill development opportunities for young girls. Institutional and Organizational challenges are also making the goals impossible to achieve. They are far from the real time governance and ineffective and toothless evaluation process of these organizations is also a major factor in diluting the aims and goals of the schemes. Budgeting and funding of these institutions is a key compromise in the development and effective implementation of schemes for girls and women. Poor and limited representation at all the levels is also a reason for the failure of the many organizational goals and objectives. These institutions suffer from infrastructural weakness and human resources that are the key to progress. Redtapeism⁷, corruption, poor quality training and short durations and some other problems are also contributing to the issue of the women development.

Case Studies Of Women Empowerment Through Skill Development:-

- I. There Are Many Initiatives In India, Which Have Been Successful And Considerably Demonstrate How Women Can Be Empowered And Economic Dependence Can Be Enhanced. One Of The Prominent Examples Is The Self-Help Group (Shg) Movement, Which Is Supported Under The “National Rural Livelihoods Mission” (Nrlm). These Shgs Provide Women With Access To Valuable Resources Such As Training Programs, Opportunities For Entrepreneurship And Financial Resources. By Participating In These Groups, Women Acquire Skills Such As Food Processing, Handicrafts, Tailoring And Small-Scale Manufacturing. These Activities Help Women In Enhancing Their Skills And Using Them To Generate Income And Contribute To Their Household, Along With Providing Them Financial Security And A Chance To Save Money For Themselves And For Emergencies.
- II. Kudumbashree, A Program Implemented In Kerala Is Another Successful Model Which Has Been Promoting Women Empowerment. This Program Is Being Recognized Widely As A Large Poverty Alleviation Program For Women. This Program Is One Of The Largest Of The Programs Of Its Kind. The Focus Of This Program Is On Organization Of Women Into Community Groups Which Thereby Receive Training In Various Vocational Skills, In Entrepreneurship As Well As In Financial Management. Many Women Have Established, Through This Initiative, Micro Enterprises And Have Consequently Improved Their Socio-Economic Status.
- III. Further, Many Programs Introduced By The Government Such As The “Support To Training And Employment Programme For Women” (Step) Aim To Enhance The Employability Of Woman By Providing Them The Necessary Skills Through Training In Sectors Such As Service, Dairy Farming, Agriculture, Handcraft Etc.

Overall, Initiative Such As These Is A Concrete Prove That When Woman Receive The Right Training, Financial Resources Or Assistance And Institutional Support, They Are Able To Actively Contribute To The Economic Development And The Society.

Findings:-

Empowerment means a shift from a delicate situation to accomplish supremacy, in higher levels of literacy, educational qualification, knowing about their rights and responsibilities, and their participation in economic activities, getting better healthcare and equity in productive resources and improvement in the standard of living. While, Demographic division in India has been a global taking point, in every region and zonal a different policy implementation would prove to be an asset to achieve prosperity and bring world economic power.

Suggestions And Way Forward:-

In the immense idea of women empowerment and development it is the rural women who are the most vulnerable in all ways. Focus should be laid on the rural women who form the major part of unorganized work force. Skill development is need of the hour to these women without whose inclusion wholesome growth cannot be achieved. Urban women face different challenges like sexual harassment , lower wages , lack of opportunities in some sectors , attitudinal sufferings which is reducing the competency of women and harms the inclusive growth principle. Technological divide should be immediately bridged to empower the women digitally(Digital India Mission). Budgeting and financial support should be timely and strict evaluation measures has to be followed. 2025 is recognized as the “International year of co operatives”⁸ and so we have to strengthen the Co operatives to streamline and make them competent at the global level. We should not focus on the quantity of the schemes but the quality and outcomes of these schemes. We are no more local but we are Global. Quality improvement programs like “Naari shakti” are to be emphasized and steps to penetrate the schemes and their objectives has to be focused. Finally in the goal to achieve the 5 Trillion dollar economy if we don’t integrate our women this will stay back as a dream and it is too hard to achieve. Apart from the government initiative, the plan of action also demands new partners, including NGO’s, SHG and other voluntary organisations to break contradictions affecting women empowerment

Limitation:-

This research has been done to analyze different schemes introduced by the government concerning women empowerment in India, and the schemes were taken from the collection of secondary data from various journal, articles and has not done any comparative study with the previous research. I.

Conclusion:-

Women play different roles in their life with their growth. But their role is always under estimated , neglected and ignored. Many of the women who are capable of reaching pinnacles lay down due to lot of hurdles that obstruct at every step. In India majority of the Rural women are the victims. So it is not just encouraging them to go to school and college but we also have to target the uneducated women in certified skill development programs and improving them with the employment opportunities. At last let us stop chanting the idea of Women’s Empowerment rather pave the way for Women led developm

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