



Women's Response to English Education: A Roadmap to Empowerment

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ABSTRACT

Education is the most pressing tool in the socio - economic scenario. The abstract attempts to showcase the historical background, relevance, challenges and the transformative aspects that account for the English Education of women at large. During the British reign in India, the women didn't have a free access to any kind of formal education. However, this English Education acted as a powerful medium to break the shackles and set their spirit free to savour the delight hidden in knowledge, world literature and communication skills. The study makes a sharp focus on the diverse areas that contribute to confidence, hegemony and advocacy for women rights. Crossing the barriers to contribute meaningfully to the enhancement of global education for women. The transformative nature of English Education to shape the destiny of women is indispensable for a more equal and responsible situation.

Introduction

It is to be sharply noted that English Education during that British era was for the male bastion to serve the administrative needs and demands. Gradually times changed and certain social reformers like Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and Raja Rammohan Roy felt the necessity of English education for the women for their true upliftment in the society. They realised that such an education would serve as a powerful tool for the real empowerment of women.

However, this was not a pretty easy task. As the society was very traditional and conservative, the patriarchal clan out of fear and insecurity didn't support ' this ' approach and considered to be a major cause of social disruption.

It was natural that English education would not be devoid of western clout. Infact it was interesting to note that the towering figures like Sarojini Naidu and PanditaRanabai backed up the English education. They viewed it as a gateway to embrace more knowledge, wisdom, employment and reformation.

Though the introduction of English education into the Indian milieu kicked off the sparkling debates on gender equality, rights for the women and the advancement of the social fabric, it never talked less, rather a loud, clear summon for the women of diverse cultural backgrounds to come and participate in public life, art, culture, literature, theology, mass communication and social activities.

Objectives

There are certain strong objectives behind writing this paper on " Women's Response to English Education : A Roadmap to Empowerment " .

First, it is important to examine and analyse the historical contexts pertaining to the status of women during the core British rule and its subsequent socio - economic and socio - political impacts.

Secondly, the foray of western education hailed the reaction of women.The question that lurked at the corner of every heart was whether it would bring about a radical change in their life and stature or an unbeatable menace to their mundane existence.

Thirdly, to convince the women of diverse socio - linguistic classes , it was essential to bring forth the immense contributions of early women in the fields of art, culture and literature. This would perhaps inspire them to do something better for that better days.

Fourthly, although women agreed to step out and participate in various social engagements yet they faced extreme resistance from the patriarchal society, orthodox culture and institutional values.

And last but not the least to give a complete look to the paper, it is utterly important to reflect on the essence of contemporariness, which suggests how the western education influenced and aided in the promotion of women empowerment and gender equality.

Scope and Relevance

The scope of this paper attempts to encapsulate the evolvement of English education to empower the women in the accepted sense of term. Secondly, how the women despite caste and creed and geographical borders gathered under the same umbrella to imbibe the basic tenets of western education for their own progress and prosperity and the society at large. And finally through this powerful tool of western education, the women were encouraged to fight for their rights, reformation and the sum total growth and expansion.

On the other hand, the relevance of the paper lies in a deeper understanding of the roles of gender in a water tight compartment situation. Western education provided an incisive insight into the policies needed to be implemented in multifaceted societal structures. And last but not the least, retelling the stories of women and their prowess to overcome the poignant challenges from the patriarchal community to stand out of the crowd and ensure their independent existence.

Methodology

The methodology enshrines a "multidisciplinary approach" towards history, sociology and literary spheres. Moreover, the primary sources (literary angle of women manifested through their speeches and documents related to education) and the secondary sources mainly comprise critical essays and interpretations of women's response towards western education. And finally a few analytical tools have also been chosen and cited for the sub themes like recognition, empowerment, resistance, reformation, socio - cultural and socio - economic backdrops and the contemporariness of English education to keep pace with men in every single step.

Society is never an easy factor. There are always challenges to be envisaged to reach the desired destination. Moreover, during the colonial rule the English Education of women was a menace to the male dominating society, who always wanted to make them stay behind the curtain! Besides , mockery and violence also ruled the roost.

The Empowerment of Women:

Nevertheless, English Education made its way towards the society. The western metaphor cultivated the ideas of liberty, justice and equality. Different women managed to turn out to be key figures to uplift the socio - economic status of the women.

Literature played a pivotal role. The works of Austen, Wollstonecraft, Simon di Beauvoir inspired to think and evaluate critically the hard concepts of gender and society.

A massive social reformation came to the fore which chiefly addressed the problems of child marriage, dowry and various forms of women's rights. The motto was one and absolute - the women empowerment and here the English Education gave them the strength to augment their arguments and involve with the policy framers of the society. Job opportunities were available to them and helped them carve their own niche.

However, this growth and expansion of the women invited blows from the cultural milieu. The pioneers opined that the advent of western education was solely responsible for the erosion of the traditional values and ethics. A sheer crisis of identity was pointed at too.

Apart from the intervention of the orthodox families and ostracizing the women opting for western education led to the upheaval.

Another important feature was the blatant 'social stratification', which stated the fact that women educated in a foreign manner are far ahead of those in the rural sphere. A lack of uniform reformation instigated the social resistance in its best form and content.

Gradually times changed and breaking down of the social barriers carried a paramount importance. They learnt to voice their own opinions and views in the various realms like debate, public speaking, extempore (to name a few). Leadership in women was a noticeable issue not only in the freedom struggle but also in the 'chair ' they held in British officials.

At this very hour, the Western or the English education has helped in giving a proper shape and structure to the modern education system. English is a global language aiming at bringing this socio - linguistic, culturally diversified nation together! There are varied opinions on this progress and persistence. Some consider it to be a threat to linguistic diversity. Some consider English not so important without understanding the truth that the present job world needs English to encourage this era of globalisation.

Success doesn't come easily. The potential for education also lies in the digital platform. The robotic age demands English education for a transformation in the globe!

Conclusion:

To bring this discussion to a comfortable end , it can be asserted that the response of western education was shaped by the various layers of this society. The causes and the resistance of empowerment are still evident. Thus the echoes of history ought to blend with the sense of contemporariness to induce a force to bring about more and more changes for a complete look!!

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