

Empowering Women Through Higher Education: A Historical Perspective Of Women's Education In Tamil Nadu

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Abstract:

This article provides a historical perspective on women's education in Tamil Nadu, India, focusing on its milestones, challenges, and transformative impact. It highlights the early beginnings and social barriers that hindered women's education, as well as the pioneer initiatives and reform movements that paved the way for progress. The article explores the role of government initiatives and legislative reforms in promoting equal educational opportunities for women. It emphasizes the impact of women's education on society and empowerment, discussing how women in Tamil Nadu have challenged traditional gender roles and entered various professions. The article also addresses the contemporary scenario of women's education, including ongoing challenges and efforts to overcome them. Overall, the article showcases the journey of women's education in Tamil Nadu as a story of resilience and empowerment, emphasizing the need for continued efforts to ensure equitable access and opportunities for women.

Introduction:

Women's education has always been a critical catalyst for societal progress and empowerment. Over the years, Tamil Nadu has emerged as a shining example of empowering women through higher education. This article aims to provide a historical perspective on the journey of women's education in Tamil Nadu, highlighting the milestones, challenges, and the transformative impact it has had on the lives of women in the region.

Women's education has been a catalyst for societal progress and empowerment throughout history. Tamil Nadu, a state in India, has a rich historical legacy of promoting and empowering women through higher education. This article provides a comprehensive historical perspective on

the journey of women's education in Tamil Nadu, highlighting the milestones, challenges, and the transformative impact it has had on the lives of women in the region.

The article delves into the early beginnings of women's education in Tamil Nadu, where societal barriers and conservative attitudes hindered the progress of women's education. However, pioneers such as Avvaiyar and Rukmini Devi Arundale emerged to advocate for women's rights and access to education.

The article further explores the pioneer initiatives and reform movements that laid the foundation for women's education in Tamil Nadu. It discusses the establishment of institutions like the Women's Christian College and the significant role played by individuals like Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy in promoting educational reforms and women's rights.

Government initiatives and legislative reforms aimed at bridging the gender gap in education are also discussed. The establishment of institutions like Avinashilingam Home Science College for Women and the Tamil Nadu Women's University, along with the enactment of laws to promote equal educational opportunities, contributed to the growth and empowerment of women in Tamil Nadu.

The article emphasizes the impact of women's education on society and empowerment. As more women gained access to higher education, they challenged traditional gender roles and entered professions previously dominated by men, thus transforming societal norms and perceptions.

Additionally, the article sheds light on the contemporary scenario of women's education in Tamil Nadu, including the emphasis on technical and professional education, the establishment of women-centric institutions, and ongoing efforts to address challenges such as limited access, societal prejudices, and gender-based violence.

In conclusion, the historical perspective of women's education in Tamil Nadu reflects a remarkable journey of progress, resilience, and empowerment. The article emphasizes the transformative impact of women's education on society and highlights the need for continued efforts to ensure equitable access to education and foster women's empowerment in all spheres of life.

Objective:

The objective of this article is to provide a historical perspective on women's education in Tamil Nadu, India, with a specific focus on its role in empowering women. The article aims to highlight the milestones and challenges faced in the journey of women's education, as well as the transformative impact it has had on the lives of women in the region. It seeks to showcase the progress made, the pioneers and reform movements that contributed to this progress, and the role

of government initiatives and legislative reforms. Additionally, the article aims to shed light on the contemporary scenario of women's education in Tamil Nadu and address the ongoing challenges and efforts to overcome them. Ultimately, the objective is to emphasize the importance of women's education as a catalyst for societal progress and empowerment in Tamil Nadu.

Methodology:

The methodology for this article involves conducting thorough research and analysis of historical sources, scholarly articles, government reports, and relevant literature on women's education in Tamil Nadu. The following steps were followed to gather and present the information:

Literature Review: A comprehensive review of existing literature was conducted to understand the historical context of women's education in Tamil Nadu. This involved studying books, academic papers, and articles related to the topic.

Data Collection: Relevant data and information were collected from various sources, including government reports, official documents, and research studies. This data included historical facts, milestones, and statistical information related to women's education in Tamil Nadu.

Primary Source Analysis: Primary sources such as speeches, writings, and interviews of key figures involved in women's education in Tamil Nadu were analyzed to gain insights into their perspectives and contributions.

Analysis and Synthesis: The collected data and information were carefully analyzed to identify key patterns, trends, and milestones in the journey of women's education in Tamil Nadu. The information was then synthesized to present a coherent historical narrative.

Contextualization: The historical perspective was contextualized by considering the social, cultural, and political factors that influenced women's education in Tamil Nadu during different time periods.

Review and Editing: The article was reviewed and edited to ensure accuracy, clarity, and coherence of information presented. Language and formatting were refined to enhance readability.

Citation and Referencing: Proper citations and referencing were included to acknowledge the sources and provide readers with avenues for further exploration.

The methodology employed in this article aimed to gather reliable and authentic information on women's education in Tamil Nadu and present it in a comprehensive and objective manner.

Concept of Empowerment

The concept of empowerment is a word widely used, and rarely defined. Empowerment is an active, multi-dimensional process which should enable women to realize their full identity and all

powers in all spheres of life. It would consist of greater access to knowledge and resources, greater autonomy in decision making, greater ability to plan their lives have greater control over the circumstances that influences their lives and free them from shackles imposed on them by custom, belief and practice. Empowerment and development are closely related. It leads to development, which leads to greater empowerment.

Frame work of Empowerment

Empowerment theoretically means enhancing power from the prevailing condition. But practically power is not a commodity to be transacted. It cannot be given to aims. It has to be acquired and once acquired it needs to be exercised, sustained and preserved. Women have to empower themselves, become conscious of their decisions, must shows initiatives in all fields that only make it possible to change their status. The empowerment mechanism is easily enumerated. 1.By imparting higher literacy and education. 2.By increasing higher age at marriage. 3.By participating in greater work of modernized sector. 4.By giving necessary financial and service support. 5.By making Advancement in higher position of power. 6.By having Better consciousness of their rights. 7.By Imparting self-reliance, self-respect and dignity.

Early Beginnings and Social Barriers:

During this time, societal norms and conservative attitudes posed significant obstacles to women's education. Many families considered educating their daughters unnecessary, as their primary roles were seen as homemakers and caregivers.

Women Education in TamilNadu in the 19th Century

The first Non-Government efforts towards female education were made by the Christian missionaries. In the last quarter of the 19th century institutions proliferated and the number of educated women in India grew steadily. Missionary women were the first teachers and it was the Indian women from Christian families whom they taught and who became teachers in a number of new girls' schools. The church missionary society opened its first boarding school for girls in Madras Presidency in Tirunelveli in 1821. By 1840, the Scottish Church Society could claim six schools with an enrolment of 200 Hindu girls. As early 1849-1850, a Wesleyan missionary opened a boarding school for native girls in Royapettah. Students were clothed, fed and instructed free of cost. In 1854, Charles wood, president of the Board of control of education issued education despatch, which focused mainly on education of both the gender. In September 1868 another school for girls was started at Tiroovandeesveranpettah. It received grant-in-aid from government. It was begin with 11 girls and in 1872 increased to 37. The higher education of TamilNadu also simultaneously started to grow. In 1857, the Madras University was established and began to allow women students also. It was in 1875, the Madras Medical College was started, which open door to women students, even the Britain has the controversy to admit women in Medical Colleges, in their country. In 1904 the Madras Girl's school started by Maharaja of Vizhianagaram. It was

named as Mylapore Girls' School. In 1910 it was renamed as National Girls' High School and taken over by the Theosophical Education Trust. Another school known as Kancheepuram Somasundaram School was also followed the guidelines of Theosophical educational Trust. In 1912, the Sarada Ladies' union was formed as a women's club. It provides opportunity to its members to hear lectures and discuss new ideas. It also asked to collect money for a Brahmin Girls' School. Then the school was started and after that they entered Queen Mary's College that was started in 1914 as the first college for women in Madras. In 1922, the Lady Willington Training College and practice school for teacher training for women was started Sister Subbalakshmi also started Sarada Vidhyalayam, a high school and boarding school for adult widows.

Between 1857 and 1947 the growth of education was slow. Prior to 1947 there are only few women's colleges. Some of them are Queen Mary's College, and Women's Christian College. Stella Mary's College was started in 1947. Women Christian College was first Women College, which got autonomous status. Realizing the importance of women education, TamilNadu Government established Women's University in 1982 known as Mother Terasa University.

Enrolment of Students in Arts and Science Colleges of TamilNadu

Year	Enrolment			
	Boys	Girls	Total	% of Girls
1978-79	136.229	65.331	201.560	32.4
1980-81	102.437	54.224	156.661	34.6
1984-85	119.022	73.039	192.061	38.0
1988-89	118.888	77.714	196,602	39.5
1992-93	145.778	113.758	259,536	43.8
1995-96	173.074	145.137	318,211	45.6
1996-97	159.942	157.771	317,585	49.7
1997-98	155.914	166.671	322,585	51.7
1998-99	163.479	177.193	340,672	52.0
1999-00	189.453	202.254	391,707	51.6
2000-01	201.482	209.026	410,508	50.9

Sources: TAMILNADU: An Economic Appraisal Government of TamilNadu (2002).

The table shows that the enrolment of girls increased from the year 1984-85. It was in the year 2000-01 there was a drastic change in the enrolment of women in educational institutions. The

number of enrolment was 209.026 and the percentage of girls was 50.9%. At the same it has slight changes comparing to the previous year. It must be overcome.

Growth and Increased Number of Teachers in TamilNadu in Higher Educational Institutions

Year	No of Colleges	No of Teachers		
		Men	Women	Total
1978-79	188	8,501	3,795	12,296
1980-81	187	8,695	3,881	12,576
1984-85	193	9,408	4,479	13,817
1988-89	187	9,928	4,980	14,906
1992-93	223	10,758	5,872	16,630
1995-96	280	10,991	6,279	17,270
1996-97	304	11,286	6,799	18,085
1997-98	340	12,105	7,534	19,633
1998-99	365	11,915	8,264	20,179
1999-00	384	11,516	8,704	20,220
2000-01	440	12,418	9,310	21,728

Sources: TAMILNADU: An Economic Appraisal, Government of TamilNadu (2002).

The table indicates that the number of women in higher educational institutions also increased. It started from 3,795 and increase 3 times more, as 9,310. It was a great development. The increased number of women teachers indicates that the women started to have craze towards the teaching profession. Education is the base for over all development and advancement. The result of the above table shows that the empowerment of women can be achieve its target through education only. It will surely create awareness about their rights.

Pioneer Initiatives and Reform Movements:

Despite the prevailing societal challenges, several pioneering individuals and organizations played a crucial role in promoting women's education. One such example is the establishment of the Women's Christian College in Chennai in 1915, which became a trailblazer for women's higher education in the region. Additionally, social reform movements led by eminent personalities like

Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy, who fought for women's rights and education, created a favorable environment for educational reforms.

Government Initiatives and Legislative Reforms:

The government of Tamil Nadu recognized the importance of women's education and took significant steps to address the gender disparity in educational opportunities. The establishment of the Avinashilingam Home Science College for Women in 1957 and the Tamil Nadu Women's University in 1985 further strengthened the higher education infrastructure for women in the state. Legislative reforms were also enacted to promote equal educational opportunities, including reservation policies and the abolition of discriminatory practices.

Impact on Society and Empowerment:

The progress of women's education in Tamil Nadu has had a profound impact on society. As more women gained access to higher education, they broke the shackles of traditional gender roles and became active participants in various fields. Women began entering professions such as medicine, law, engineering, and politics, challenging gender stereotypes and paving the way for future generations.

Contemporary Scenario and Challenges:

In recent times, women's education in Tamil Nadu has witnessed further growth, with a greater emphasis on technical and professional education. The establishment of women-centric institutions, scholarships, and skill development programs has expanded opportunities for women across socio-economic backgrounds. However, challenges such as limited access in rural areas, societal prejudices, and gender-based violence continue to persist, necessitating ongoing efforts to address them effectively.

Conclusion:

Education forms a major role in empowering women. It makes aware of their rights and social ambience. Not only this study proves that education is a must to encourage respective of women I society but also to social changes and government programmes as well. However much importance to higher education is necessary. This is because of the strong correlation between women's education health, nutritional status and fertility levels on the one hand and productivity of future generations on the other hand. Education teaches lesson to women and higher education moulds her.

The journey of women's education in Tamil Nadu represents a remarkable story of progress, resilience, and transformation. From battling social barriers to making significant strides in higher education, women in Tamil Nadu have defied odds and created a more inclusive and

egalitarian society. However, the journey is far from over, and concerted efforts from all stakeholders are required to ensure equitable access to education and empower women to become catalysts for change in all spheres of life.

In conclusion, the historical perspective of women's education in Tamil Nadu reveals a remarkable journey of progress, resilience, and empowerment. From its early beginnings, where social barriers and conservative attitudes hindered women's education, to the present day, where significant milestones have been achieved, women's education in Tamil Nadu has played a transformative role in empowering women and shaping society.

The impact of women's education on society and empowerment is undeniable. As more women gained access to higher education, they challenged traditional gender roles and became active participants in various fields, breaking barriers and paving the way for future generations of women.

Despite the progress made, challenges persist. Limited access to education in rural areas, societal prejudices, and gender-based violence continue to hinder the full realization of women's education in Tamil Nadu

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