

A Study on Issues and Challenges of Women Empowerment in India

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Abstract

This paper attempts to analyze the status of Women Empowerment in India and highlights the Issues and Challenges of Women Empowerment. Today the empowerment of women has become one of the most important concerns of 21st century. But practically women empowerment is still an illusion of reality. We observe in our day to day life how women become victimized by various social evils. Women Empowerment is the vital instrument to expand women's ability to have resources and to make strategic life choices. The study is based on purely from secondary sources. The study reveals that women of India are relatively disempowered and they enjoy somewhat lower status than that of men in spite of many efforts undertaken by Government.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Education, Health, Socio-Economic Status. Crimes against women, Policy Implications.

Introduction

Women Empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process occurring within sociological, psychological, economic, political and other dimensions, which helps women in gaining control over their own lives. Empowerment is the capacity of individuals, groups and/or communities to take control of their circumstances, exercise power and achieve their own goals, and the process by which individually and collectively, they are able to help themselves and others to maximize the quality of their lives (Adams, 2008). It includes self-strength, own choice, own decision making, being awakening and capacity expanding the freedom of choice and action with the core concepts of the inclusive and participatory environment. According to UNFPA Guidelines, "The empowerment of women comprises five components-women's sense of self-worth; their rights to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives; both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create just social and economic order on national and international levels".

Thus, the objective of women empowerment is to inculcate large scale sentience with the active involvement of women themselves. It aims at laying the foundation for women folk to utilize the existing resources without discrimination and their indulgence in all the spheres and at all the levels in a balanced way. Empowerment is not just confined to be active only for oneself, but is an act of guiding and supporting other women as well by paving the productive path for all. It does not mean degrading men; rather being productive and proceed further along with them by yielding equal opportunities. Therefore, empowerment creates a system in which different thespians are provided with resources needed for everyone to make a unique contribution to the whole system leading to a complete social transformation. It involves creating a conducive environment so that women can use their individual, civic as well as collective networking competencies to address the fundamental issues of society in parity with their male counterparts (Tamarana, 2012). Political Empowerment deals with the level at which individuals have access to the process by which decisions, particularly those that affect their own decisions, are made making it not confined to power to vote only but power of voice and collective action (Mensah & Boateng, 2012). Women's political empowerment means the autonomy of women to cast vote according to their consent, contest elections, political participation, political expression and political demonstration, power politics, authority, decision making and implementation regarding their actions, needs and priorities (Naz, Ibrahim & Ahmad, 2012). It thus implies the degree of equality and freedom enjoyed by them in shaping and sharing of power and the value given by the society to political role of women.

Objectives of the Study

- To know the need of Women Empowerment.
- To assess the Awareness of Women Empowerment in India.
- Empowerment of Women.
- To identify the Hindrances in the Path of Women Empowerment.

Research Methodology

This paper is basically descriptive and analytical in nature. In this paper an attempt has been taken to analyze the empowerment of in India. The data used in it is purely from secondary sources according to the need of this study.

Why Need of Women Empowerment?

Reflecting into the “Vedas Purana” of Indian culture, women is being worshiped such as LAXMI MAA, goddess of wealth; SARSWATI MAA, for wisdom; DURGA MAA for power. The status of women in India particularly in rural areas needs to address the issue of empowering women. About 66% of the female population in rural area is unutilized. This is mainly due to existing social customs. In agriculture and Animal care the women contribute 90% of the total workforce. Women constitute almost half of the population, perform nearly 2/3 of its work hours, receive 1/10th of the world’s income and own less than 1/ 100th the world property. Among the world’s 900 million illiterate people, women out number men two to one. 70% of people living in poverty are women. Lower sex ratio i.e. 933, The existing studies show that the women are relatively less healthy than men though belong to same class. They constitute less than 1/7th of the administrators and managers in developing countries. Only 10% seats in World Parliament and 6% in National Cabinet are held by women.

Hindrances of Women Empowerment: The main Problems that were faced by women in past days and still today up to some extent:

- Gender discrimination
- Lack of Education
- Female Infanticide
- Financial Constraints
- Family Responsibility
- Low Mobility
- Low ability to bear Risk
- Low need for achievement
- Absence of ambition for the achievement Social status Dowry Marriage in same caste and child marriage (still existing) Atrocities on Women (Raped, Kicked, Killed, Subdued, humiliated almost daily.)

Reasons for the Empowerment of Women

Today we have noticed different Acts and Schemes of the central Government as well as state Government to empower the women of India. But in India women are discriminated and marginalized at every level of the society whether it is social participation, political participation, economic participation, access to education, and also

reproductive healthcare. Women are found to be economically very poor all over the India. A few women are engaged in services and other activities. So, they need economic power to stand on their own legs on par with men. Other hand, it has been observed that women are found to be less literate than men. According to 2001 census, rate of literacy among men in India is found to be 76% whereas it is only 54% among women. Thus, increasing education among women is of very important in empowering them. It has also noticed that some of women are too weak to work. They consume less food but work more. To sum up, women empowerment cannot be possible unless women come with and help to self-empower themselves. There is a need to formulate reducing feminized poverty, promoting education of women, and prevention and elimination of violence against women.

Challenges

There are several constraints that check the process of women empowerment in India. Social norms and family structure in developing countries like India, manifests and perpetuate the subordinate status of women. One of the norms is the continuing preference for a son over the birth of a girl child which in present in almost all societies and communities. The society is more biased in favor of male child in respect of education, nutrition and other opportunities. The root cause of this type of attitude lies in the belief that male child inherits the clan in India with an exception of Meghalaya. Women often internalize the traditional concept of their role as natural thus inflicting an injustice upon them. Poverty is the reality of life for the vast majority women in India. It is the another factor that poses challenge in realizing women’s empowerment. There are several challenges that are plaguing the issues of women’s right in India. Targeting these issues will directly benefit the empowerment of women in

India Education

While the country has grown from leaps and bounds since independence where education is concerned. the gap between women and men is severe. While 82.14% of adult men are educated, only 65.46% of adult women are known to be literate in India. The gender bias is in higher education, specialized professional trainings which hit women very hard in employment and attaining top leadership in any field. Poverty: Poverty is considered the greatest threat to peace in the world, and eradication of poverty should be a national goal as important as the eradication of illiteracy. Due to this, women are exploited as domestic helps.. Morality and Inequality: Due to gender bias in health and nutrition there is unusually high morality rate in women reducing their population further especially in Asia, Africa and china. Household Inequality: Household relations

show gender bias in infinitesimally small but significant manners all across the globe, more so, in India e.g. sharing burden of housework, childcare and menial works by so called division of work.

Conclusion

Thus, the attainment in the field of income/employment and in educational front, the scenario of women empowerment seems to be comparatively poor. The need of the hour is to identify those loopholes or limitations which are observing the realization of empowerment of women and this initiative must be started from the women folk itself as well as more importantly policy initiative taken by the state and society. Let us take the oath that we want an egalitarian society where everybody whether men or women get the equal opportunity to express and uplift one's well being and well being of the society as whole. Women's empowerment is not a Northern concept women all over the world, including countries in South, have been challenging and changing gender inequalities since the beginning of the history. Society must take initiative to create a climate in which there is no gender discrimination and women have full opportunities of self decision making and participating in social, political and economic life of the country with a sense of equality.

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