



A STUDY ON IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

India is a very famous country known for its cultural heritage, traditions, civilization, religion and geographical features from the ancient time. On the other hand, it is also popular as a male chauvinistic nation. Women are given first priority in India however on the other hand they were badly treated in the family and society. They were limited only for the household chores or understand the responsibility of home and family members. They were kept totally unaware of their rights and own development. People of India used to say this country as “Bharat-Mata” however never realized the true meaning of it. Bharat-Mata means a mother of every Indian whom we have to save and care always. Women constitute half power of the country so in order to make this country a fully powerful country, women empowerment is very necessary. It is empowering women to understand their rights to be independent in every area for their proper growth and development. Women give birth to the baby means future of the nation so only they can better involve in making the bright future of the nation through the proper growth and development of the children. Women need to be empowered instead of treating as a helpless victim of male chauvinism. Women empowerment is empowering the women to take their own decisions for their personal dependent. Empowering women is to make them independent in all aspects from mind, thought, rights, decisions, etc by leaving all the social and family limitations. It is to bring equality in the society for both male and female in all areas. Women empowerment is very necessary to make the bright future of the family, society and country. Women need fresh and more capable environment so that they can take their own right decisions in every area whether for themselves, family, society or country. In order to make the country fully developed country, women empowerment is an essential tool to get the goal of development. The Study is Purely Theoretical. The Study is based on secondary data sources. The necessary information about the Importance of Women Empowerment in India and its various components are collected from Books, Journals, Internet Source or related topic. The Researcher study about the Importance of women Empowerment in India. The Research Work includes I. Concept and Definitions of Women Empowerment II. Methodology III. Women Empowerment in India. IV. Importance of Women Empowerment

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INTRODUCTION

I Concept and Definitions of Women Empowerment

“Women Empowerment” is a burning issue all over the world. “Women empowerment” and “women equality with men” is a universal issue. Women Empowerment refers to the creation of an environment for women where they can make decisions of their own for their personal benefits as well as for the society. Women Empowerment refers to increasing and improving the social, economic, political and legal strength of the women, to ensure equal-right to women, and to make them confident enough to claim their rights, such as:

- freely live their life with a sense of self-worth, respect and dignity,
- have complete control of their life, both within and outside of their home and workplace,
- to make their own choices and decisions,
- have equal rights to participate in social, religious and public activities,
- have equal social status in the society,
- have equal rights for social and economic justice,
- determine financial and economic choices,
- get equal opportunity for education,
- get equal employment opportunity without any gender bias,
- get safe and comfortable working environment,

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Definitions

According to Moser (1989) empowerment is the capacity of women to increase their self-reliance and internal strength. This is identified as the right to determine choices in life and to influence in direction of change through the ability to gain control over material and non-material resources. In the words of clothes but CK and Stuart (1992) we need not “empowerment women but “power man”.

According to Pillai (1995) “Empowerment is an active multi dimensional process which enables women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life.

Hoshemi (1996) developed five indicators to measure women’s empowerment: mobility, economic security, ability to make larger purchases, realize freedom from domination within the family and political and legal awareness and involvement in political campaigning and protests with this in mind. An attempt is made in the following situation to measure empowerment of women respondents

Mayoux’s (2000) definition of empowerment relates more directly to power, as “a multidimensional and interlinked process of change in power relations” it consists of: one is “power within”, enabling women to circulate their own aspirations and strategies for change; another one is “power to”, enabling women to develop the necessary skills and access the necessary resources to achieve their aspirations; third one is “power with”, enabling women to examine the circulate their collective interests, to organize, to achieve them and to link with other women and men’s organization for change; and lastly “power over; changing the underlying in inequalities in power and resources that constrain women’s aspirations and their ability to achieve them. These power relations operate in different spheres of life (e.g., economic, social, political) at different levels (e.g., individual, household, community, market, institutional) etc.

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on the secondary data sources. The necessary information about the Importance of women Empowerment in India and its various components are collected from various books, journals, internet source of related topics.

Brief information about women Empowerment in India

Throughout history and in many societies including India. Gender inequality was part and parcel of an accepted male-dominated culture.

Atrocities and discrimination are the two major problems, which the Indian women face in the present day society. The traditional mentalities of Indians assume that the place of women is mainly concentrated to the household activities like kitchen work and upbringing of the children. They have been considered as sex object and inferior to men in different spheres of knowledge. The ‘Sati Pratha’, Purdah System’, ‘Child Marriage’, ‘Dowry System’, etc. have been some forms of atrocities and discriminatory attitudes against the women. Even after fifty eight years of Indian independence, women are still one of the most powerless and marginalized sections of Indian society. The 2001 Census shows that the sex ratio for India is 933. which is lowest in the world. Percentage of female literacy is 54.16 (2001 Census) against

male literacy of 75.85 per cent. In India, women’s representation in Parliament and in the State Assemblies has never gone beyond 8 and 10 per cent respectively. Most of the working women remain outside the organised sector. A mere 2.3 per cent women are administrators and managers, 20.5 per cent professional and the technical workers all of whom collectively earn 25 per cent of the shared income. Violence against women is on the rise.

The democratic process in India created the awareness among the women about their plightful condition. The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favor of women. The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) in the Constitution of India provided for reservation of seats (at least one-third) in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women. Another Constitutional Amendment (84th Constitutional Amendment Act 1998) reserving 33 per cent seats in Parliament and State Legislatures is in the pipeline.

The Indian Government has passed various legislations to safeguard the Constitutional rights of women. These legislative measures include, the Hindu Marriage Act (1955), The Hindu Succession Act (1956), Dowry Prohibition Act (1961), Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act (1971), Equal Remuneration Act (1976), and Child Marriage Restraint Act (1976). Immoral Trafficking (Prevention) Act (1986) and finally Pre-natal Diagnostic Technique (Regulation and Prevention of Measure) Act (1994) etc.

Apart from these, various welfare measures have been taken up by the Government from time to time to empower women. They are the support to Training for - Employment Programme (1987), Mahila Samridhi Yojana (1993), the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (1992-93), Indira Mahila Yojana (1995), DWACRA Plan (1997) and Balika Samridhi Yojana (1997). On 12th July, 2001, the Mahila Samridhi Yojana and Indira Mahila Yojana have been merged into the integrated self-help group programme i.e. Swayam Siddha. The Government of India in 1953 established a Central Social Welfare Board with a nation-wide programme for grants-maid for women, children and under-privileged group. A separate department of women and child development was set up at the Centre in 1985 to give a distinct identity and provide a nodal point on matters relating to women’s development. National Commission on women was created by an Act of Parliament in 1992. Besides these, India has also ratified various international conventions and human rights

In recent years there have been explicit moves to increase women’s political participation. The Women’s reservation policy bill is however a very sad story as it is repeatedly being scuttled in the Parliament. In the Panchayati Raj system, however, women have been given representation as a sign of political empowerment. There are many elected women representatives at the village council level. However, their power is restricted, as it is the men who wield all the authority. Their decisions are often over-ruled by the government machinery. It is crucial to train and give real power to these women leaders so that they can catalyst change in their villages regarding women. All these show that the process of gender equality and women’s empowerment still

has a long way to go and may even have become more difficult in the recent years.

The main reason for the contradiction is that, targeted schemes tend to have only limited impact when the basic thrust of development is not reaching an average woman, making her life more fragile and vulnerable. To make a positive change basic infrastructure should be provided in every village and city. To begin with, providing safe drinking water supply and better sanitation can not only directly improve the lives and health of women but also reduce their workload in terms of provisioning and ensuring such facilities. Access to affordable cooking fuel will reduce the need to travel long distances in search of fuel wood. Improved transport connecting villages with each other and with towns can also directly improve living conditions as well as unpaid labour time spent in transporting household items. It can also lead to access to a wider range of goods and services plus better health facilities. Expenditure on food subsidy and better provisions for public distribution services directly affect the lives of women and girl children in terms of adequate nutrition. The patterns of resource mobilization by government also have significant effects on women that are usually not recognized. When taxes are regressive and fall disproportionately on items of mass consumption, once again these tend to affect the women more. This is not only because the consumption of such items may be curtailed but also because the provisioning of such items is frequently considered to be the responsibility of the women of the household. Also, credit policies reduce the flow of credit to small-scale enterprises thus reducing the employment opportunities for women. There is a need to have women-friendly economic policies that can enhance their social and economic position and make them self-reliant.

The emancipation of women is not a simple matter. It requires the attitudinal change of the husband, other family members and society as a whole. The community consciousness and bureaucratic efforts are integral parts of the implementation of the programmes. The first and foremost priority should be given to education of women, which is the grassroot problem. The struggle for gender justice will be slow, strenuous and protracted, as the change cannot be brought about easily. It has to be fought at emotional, cognitive and action levels. The struggle has to be carried on within caste, class, race, religion, everywhere in which man woman relationships figure and matter.

Importance of Women Empowerment

- 1. Under-employed and unemployed:** Women population constitutes around 50% of the world population. A large number of women around the world are unemployed. The world economy suffers a lot because of the unequal opportunity for women at workplaces.
- 2. Equally competent and intelligent:** Women are equally competent. Nowadays, women are even ahead of men in many socio-economic activities.
- 3. Talented:** Women are as talented as men. Previously, women were not allowed higher education like men and hence their talents were wasted. But nowadays, they are also allowed to go for higher studies and it encourages women to show their talents which will not only benefit her individually but to the whole world at large.
- 4. Overall development of society:** The main advantage of Women Empowerment is that there will be an overall development of the society. The money that women earn does not only help them and or their family, but it also help develop the society.
- 5. Economic Benefits:** Women Empowerment also leads to more economic benefits not to the individuals but to the society as well. Unlike earlier days when they stayed at home only and do only kitchen stuffs, nowadays, they roam outside and also earns money like the male members of the society. Women empowerment helps women to stand on their own legs, become independent and also to earn for their family which grows country's economy.
- 6. Reduction in domestic violence:** Women Empowerment leads to decrease in domestic violence. Uneducated women are at higher risk for domestic violence than an educated woman.
- 7. Reduction in corruption:** Women Empowerment is also advantageous in case of corruption. Women empowerment helps women to get educated and know their rights and duties and hence can stop corruption.
- 8. Reduce Poverty:** Women Empowerment also reduces poverty. Sometimes, the money earned by the male member of the family is not sufficient to meet the demands of the family. The added earnings of women helps the family to come out of Poverty trap.
- 9. National Development:** Women are increasingly participating in the national development process. They are making the nation proud by their outstanding performances almost every spheres including medical science, social service, engineering, etc.
- 10. Irreplaceable in some sectors:** Women are considered irreplaceable for certain jobs.

CONCLUSION

The empowerment of women would result in overall development of society both at micro and macro level. Active participation of women in economic activities and decisions, would contribute towards overall economic development.

The challenges also are there, the challenges/ barriers of women empowerment are the following: Because of the inherent superiority complex among the males, they often doesn't allow their female counter-part to rise as high as them, High level of domestic responsibilities, Restrictions to participate in social, economic and religious activities, In our society, the boy-child often gets preference for education and healthy diet over the girl child, Preference for male-child still exist among many families in the society. Solutions also available. The solution for empowerment of women includes the following: Education through mass communication is very important. Both women and men should be made aware of their responsibilities to promote and practice gender-equality, Gather national data and identify the areas where an instance of violence and gender-inequality is the most. This data can be used by the Government, NGOs and field workers to raise the status of women, The society should be made aware that both boy-child and girl-child are equal, and they both should have equal access to resources.

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