

A Study on Women Empowerment in India: Challenges and Remedies

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Abstract: Women are the epitome of strength, love, sacrifice and courage. The role of women in today's world has changed significantly and for better. Earlier they were under the shadow of a husband or a father, but now they have established their own identity and are independent. Education is an important key to success. With the encouragement of co-education, women are now marching side by side with men, in every walk of life. Women are now self-sufficient, well aware and financially independent. They have attained immense success in every field, whether it's sports, politics or academics. The 21st century has brought a new hope and has empowered women during a positive manner. Empowering women would become more pertinent if women were well informed and educated. The role of women has changed tremendously and that they are able to create a positive impression within the society. From housewives to CEOs, the transition are often seen at an accelerating rate. Modernization and therefore the advent of the latest technology have widened hope and opportunities for them. They have established themselves socially, politically and economically in almost every field. Women are no longer considered unfit or weak for military or for other defense forces. Still the women of India are relatively disempowered and they enjoy somewhat lower status than that of men in spite of many efforts undertaken by government. Now this study attempts to know the problems and challenges faced by women in India.

Keywords: Epitome, empowerment, financially, independent, self-sufficient, modernization, etc.

I. INTRODUCTION

India is a country having rich cultural heritage. Women who once treated as Devi and Devata and were given much importance gradually lose importance and just restricted to kitchen rooms and mean to take care of children and families. The women were facing a lot of problems because of male dominated, patriarchal society system, practice of old traditional believes, etc. Women were only responsible to the traditional roles like child bearing and child rearing. In the modern times, where women status has been improved a little while, still they're facing problems. They have to perform both family and professional responsibilities together without the assistance of their husbands. In some cases, the condition of women becomes more embarrassed once they get tortured by their family members instead of getting help. Sexual harassment is more common at homes as well as in the offices by the family members, relatives, neighbors, friends, boss, etc. They have to suffer a lot in their daily life to nourish their career also as saving their family relationships.

Objectives

- To study and understand the concept of women empowerment.
- To study the challenges of women empowerment.
- To offer suggestions to overcome the challenges of women empowerment.

Concept of Women Empowerment

Empowerment refers to policies and measures designed to increase the degree of autonomy and self-determination in the lives of individuals and in communities so as to enable them to represent their interests in a responsible and self-determined way, acting (again) on their own authority. Empowerment is a multidimensional process, which should enable women or group of women to realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life (Surekharao and Rajamanamma, 1999). It consists of greater access to knowledge and resources, greater autonomy in decision making to enable them to possess greater ability to plan their lives, or to possess greater control over the circumstances that influence their lives and free from shocks imposed on them by custom, belief and practice.

Women Empowerment

In context of women, empowerment essentially refers to a sense of awareness of one's own situation backed up with the knowledge, skills and knowledge which could enable women to gain higher self-esteem and facilitate their role as decision makers in the current patriarchal society where women have always been subordinate to men. Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social or economic strength of individuals and communities. It often involves the empowered developing confidence in their own capacities.

II. ISSUES AND PROBLEMS FACED BY WOMEN IN INDIA

There are various issues and problems which women generally face within the society in India. Some of the issues are mentioned and described below:

1. Selective abortion and female infanticide

It is the foremost common practice for years in India during which abortion of female fetus is performed in the womb of mother after the fetal sex determination and sex selective abortion by the medical professionals.

2. Sexual harassment

It is the form of sexual exploitation of a girl child at home, streets, public places, transports, offices, etc by the relations, neighbors, friends or relatives.

3. Dowry and Bride burning

It is another problem generally faced by women of low or middle class family during or after the marriage. Parents of boys demand a lot of cash from the bride's family to be rich in one time. Groom's family perform bride burning just in case of lack of fulfilled dowry demand. In 2005, around 6787 dowry death cases were registered in India according to the Indian National Crime Bureau reports.

4. Disparity in education

The level of women education is less than men still in the modern age. Female illiteracy rate higher in the rural areas. Where over 63% or more women remain illiterate.

5. Domestic violence

It is like endemic and widespread disease affects almost 70% of Indian women according to the women and child development official. It is performed by the husband, relative or other family member.

6. Child Marriages

Early marriage of the girls by their parents in order to be escaped from dowry. It is highly practiced in the rural India.

7. Inadequate Nutrition

Inadequate nutrition in the childhood affects women in their later life especially women belonging to the lower middle class and poor families.

8. Low status in the family

Women are given low preference in the family. They are not allowed to participate in decision making relating to family issues.

9. Women are considered as inferior to men, so they aren't allowed to join military services.

10. Status of widows

Widows are considered as worthless in the Indian society. They are treated poorly and forced to wear white clothes.

III. CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

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 is present in almost all societies and communities. The society is more biased in favor of son in respect of education, nutrition and other opportunities. The root cause of this type

of attitude lies within 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 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 education, specialized professional trainings which hit women very hard in employment and attaining top leadership in any field.

Poverty: Poverty is considered the best 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.

Health and Safety:

The health and safety concerns of women are paramount for the wellbeing of a country and is an important factor in gauging the empowerment of women in a country. However there are alarming concerns where maternal healthcare is concerned.

Professional Inequality: This inequality is practiced in employment and promotions. Women face countless handicaps in male customized and dominated environs in Government Offices and private enterprises.

Morality and Inequality: Due to gender bias in health and nutrition there's unusually high mortality 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 world, more so, in India e.g. sharing burden of housework, childcare and menial works by so called division of work.

IV. SUGGESTIONS

- The first and foremost priority should be given to the education of women, which is the grassroots of problem. Hence, education for women has got to be paid special attention.
- Awareness programmes need to be organized for creating awareness among women especially belonging to weaker sections about their rights.
- Women should be allowed to work and should be provided enough safety and support to work. They should be given proper wages and work on par with men so that their status can be elevated in the society.

- Strict implementation of Programmes and Acts should be there to curb the mal-practices prevalent in the society.
- Review of curriculum and educational materials to include gender education and human rights issues.
- Use of different forms of mass media to communicate social messages relating to women's equality and empowerment.

V. CONCLUSION

The journey of liberation of women has crossed many milestones and the society has indeed come a long way. They have struggled hard over the last few decades but still been able to successfully establish their own identity. Today's women are adorned with patience and perseverance, which has helped them to achieve the pinnacle of success. Earlier, women were seen only as housewives who were projected to cook, clean and look after their family. Today- along with handling tough clients at office, they successfully multitask reception too. Women are more focused and have a unique decision making power even at senior leadership level, in the most optimal manner, and at times are in a better position than men. A vital need of the current age is to reform the social values and status of women. Society without women consider as body without heart. Empowering women can help the society to grow and develop at a faster pace. The most important measure of their success should be the extent to which they enable women to interpret, apply and enforce laws

of their own making, incorporating their own voices, values and concerns. We are definitely redesigning the world.

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