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Gender Discrimination and Women's Development in India

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A nation or society, without the participation of women cannot achieve development. If we eliminate gender discrimination, women will deliver all the potentials, skills, knowledge to develop the family, the nation and the whole world.

Importance of Women in Development

Females are nearly 50 percent of the total population but their representation in public life is very low. Women continue to bear the major load of the household work. Her primary role is often viewed by the society as housewife. In cardinal goals of democracy "of the people, by the people and for the people" cannot be optimally accomplished if the female population remains out of political empowerment. Subordination of women in society acts a structural constraint to their participation in political activities. This constraint operates more or less for all classes and communities of women. Prevalent culture which is very complicated and often decisions are taken behind the scene may be regarded as another constraint in this regard. Recognizing women's rights and believing their ability are essential for women's empowerment and development. Females should realize their own capabilities and potentials which will strengthen their self image and foster them with confidence to take action in life. Political empowerment does not imply just a right to role silently but to discuss share and empower politics by knowing its pros and cons and thereby to influence policies and decision making. Empowering women is the basic to the basics of human rights where she wants neither to beg for power nor search for power hierarchy to exercise power against others. On the contrary she demands to be accepted as human first of all. She as a person in commands herself and for that necessary all the resources physical, social, economical, political, cultural and spiritual to be equally accessible to her, are prerequisites for considering the whole question of empowerment. India society is inherited with male chauvinism but now the society has started to realize women's importance and has being accepted women's empowerment, women as an active agent for development, participation in and guiding their own development.

Legislation for Women

In India, several laws, legislations, polities and institutional reforms have been enacted to carry out the gender action plan for the development of women. Legislation is an important instrument for bringing about a change in the unequal economic and social status in India, few laws were passed in response to social demands and on the basis of humanitarian consideration. They are Bengal Sati Regulation Act of 1829 and similar Anti-Sati laws in Madras and Bombay, Hindu Widow Remarriage Act 1856, the Hindu Women's Right to Property Act in 1937, (The Muslim Personal Law) the Shariat Act 1937 and the Dissolution of Muslim Marriage Act 1939. After Independence, there have been important changes in legislation and litigation which have facilitated the increased participation of women in

political activities as well as in the socio-economic development activities and the increase appear to be more likely at the lower level than at the highest centre of decision making. After 14 of Indian Constitution says that the state shall not deny to any person equality before or equal protection of the law, Article 15 says that no women can be discriminated against on the ground of sex, Article 15 (3) emphasis that the state shall make special provisions for women and children and Article 16 provide equality of opportunity in the matters relating to employment by the state. In Article 39(a) emphasis that the citizens men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood, in Article 39(d) it says that the state should secure equal pay for equal work for both men and women and in Article 34 it provides that the state shall make provision for securing just and humane for work and for maternity relief. The 73rd and 74th Amendments of Indian Constitution in 1993 are the milestone in the history of india, which provides lot of powers for the local bodies. It paves the way for decentralization, empowers the poor people as well as women. According to these amendments not less than one third of the seats, meant for direct election of members at each tier of Panchayats are to be reserved for women and not less than one third of the seats of chairperson at any level reserved for women.

Solution for Gender Discrimination

Various movements, programmes are being carried out by the Government, voluntary organisations and by lot of social activities for women's development and against the gender discrimination.

- **Education-** Education develops the skills, imparts knowledge, changes the attitude and improves the self confidence. It provides employment opportunity and increase income. Hence educating women is the prime factor to combat gender discrimination and for the upliftment of women. Not only the female, the society must be educated to give equal right for female.
- **Employment-** Employment gives the income and improves the economic position of the women. Employed women are given importance by the family members. Employment gives the economic independence for the women.
- **Economic Independence-** In India, mostly, women in the young age- depends her father, in the middle age- she depends on her husband and in the older age- depends on her son. Women always depend on somebody for her livelihoods hence, independent in economical aspects are imperative for women's development. Economic independence will free the women from the slavery position and boost the self confidence. Economic independence of women also helps in the national economic development.
- **Empowerment-** Empowering women with the help of laws, education and employment will make the society to accept the women as an equal gender like male. Female also has all the potential and empowering women will help to use her full capability and mitigate the economic dependency of women.

- **Self-Confidence-** Due to prolonged suppression, Indian women, an especially uneducated and unemployed women hasn't had the self-confidence. Women need self confidence to fight against all the atrocities against her and to live self esteemed life. Hence, boosting the morale and self confidence of the women, is the key to eliminate the inferior complex of her.
- **Decision Making-** Even in the family as well as in the society the decision making power of women is denied. Mostly males make the importance decision in the family and in the society. This makes women as voice less and destroys herself confidence and she feels less important in the family as well as in the society. So, to end gender discrimination women must empower with decision making power.

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