

Women Empowerment: A Myth Or Reality

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The concept of woman empowerment started in 1985 in women's International Assembly in Nairobi. In general, women empowerment includes; women's sense of self worth, their rights to have and to determine choice of their own and having rights to access opportunities and resources, having power at control their own lives, both within and outside home and their ability to influence the direction of social change, to create a major just social and economic order nationally and internationally.

It also involves two aspects: on one hand, participating in decision making and planning process and getting a share of power to make decision within political, economic and scientific institution. On the other, scope for networking and co- operation enabling a gender sensitive discourse on sustainability and adoption of an autonomous position. Gender mainstreaming has to be established everywhere, both in term of institution and contents,

Need of Women Empowerment

Today, educated women through their knowledge and understating have exposed the intolerant ancient social tradition rites, rituals etc. their contribution in every area and department is very significant. There is saying, "The hands that rock the cradle, rules the world,"

As lady Platt, head of equal opportunities commission, say , " If a girl is well qualified and prepared to do her homework then the world is her oyster."

Political empowerment: - Women's equality in power sharing and active participation in decision making in politics at all levels will be ensured for the achievement of the goals of empowerment. A reiteration on political empowerment of women could not have come at a better time then on the occasion of international women's day and by none other than Ms. Usha Narayana, the former first lady of India in her people debut as chief guest at the meeting organized by the united national information centre had delivered the keynote address on "women's rights are human rights".

Economic Empowerment of Women: - Women throughout the world play critical role in economic growth & development and their contribution have an impact on households , communities and national economies over the past three decades. Significant improvements have been made in women's status especially in health and education. Since women comprise the majority of the population below poverty line and very often in situation of extreme poverty.

Women & Agriculture :- The programmes for training women in soil conservation, social forestry, dairy development and other occupations allied to agriculture like horticulture, livestock including small animals , husbandry , poultry , fisheries etc are need to be expanded to benefit women workers in the agriculture sector.

Women & Industry: - The important role played by women In electronics, information technology (IT), food processing and agro industry and textiles has been important to the development of these sectors. They would be given comprehensive support in terms of labor legislation, social security and other support service to participate in various industrial sectors.

Social Empowerment of Women: - Social empowerment includes education, health, nutrition, drinking water and sanitation; housing and shelter, environment, science & technology etc. Special attention should be given to needs of women in provision of safe drinking water, sewage disposal, toilet facilities and sanitation within accessible reach of households, especially in rural areas and urban slums.

Education and Gender Equality

Education has been considered as a 'Universal Human Right'. The idea of equality and adequate opportunity to all was highlighted in the universal declaration of human rights, adopted by the general assembly of the United Nations on dec.10th 1948. As a equal to this the principle of "Non Discrimination" and "Right to education". To fulfill the objectives of empowerment and implementation of these two principles equal opportunities should be given to women in education.

"Policies and programs for women empowerment"

The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian constitution in its preamble, fundamental rights, fundamental duties and directive principles.

Within the framework of a democratic policy, our laws, development policies, and plans and programs have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres. From the fifth year plan (1974-78) onwards has been a marked shift in the approach to women's issue from welfare to development.

The national commission for women was set up by an act of parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. The 73rd and 74th amendment (1993) to the constitution of India have provided for reservation of seats in local bodies of panchayats and municipalities for women lay in a strong foundation for their participation in decision – making at the local events.

India has also ratified various international conventions and human rights instrument committing to secure equal rights of women. Key among them is the ratification of Convention on Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1993.

Establishment of national women's fund:-

The organization was established on March 30th, 1993 with the capital of Rs 31 cr. The main objective of this fund is to fulfill the needs of poor women, especially debt related needs of women.

The women's movement and a wide spread network of non- government organization (NGO) which have strong grassroots presence and deep insight into women's concerns have contribution in inspiring for the empowerment of women.

However, there still exists wide gap between the goals mentioned in the constitution, legislation, policies, plans, programmes and related mechanism on the one hand and the situational reality of the status of women in India, on the other. this has been analyzed extensively in the report of the committee on the status of women in India , "Towards equality" 1947 and highlighted in the national perspective plan for women , 1988-2000 , the sharmshaki report , 1988 and the platform of action , five year after an assessment .

Policies, programmes and systems will be established to ensure mainstreaming of women perspectives in all development processes, as catalysts, participants and recipients.

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