

Role and Position of Women Empowerment: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract:

This paper attempts to analyse the state of women's empowerment through a variety of indicators based on data from secondary sources. Women are known for playing multiple roles effortlessly every day, and are therefore regarded as the backbone of every society. Living in male-dominating societies, women play a wide range of roles, such as caring mothers, loving daughters, and capable colleagues. The best part is that they are fully aligned with the bill in all roles. The study found that women are relatively disadvantaged and have somewhat lower status than men, despite numerous efforts by the government. There is a gender gap in the availability of education and employment. The decision-making power of households and the freedom of movement of women vary considerably depending on their age, educational level and professional situation. We see on a daily basis how women are victims of a variety of social ills. Women's empowerment is the key instrument to strengthen women's ability to access resources and make strategic choices in life. Women's empowerment is essentially the process of improving the economic, social and political situation of traditionally underprivileged women in society. We need to protect them from all forms of violence. It has been proven that women's acceptance of uneven gender norms still prevails in society. The study concludes by observing that access to education, employment and changing social models are only the enabling factors for women's empowerment. The purpose of this document is to discuss and propose measures to address the various issues related to women's empowerment.

Keywords: Women, Empowerment, Education, Employment, Social.

Introduction:

Women's empowerment consists of increasing the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender or economic strength of women's individuals and communities. Women's empowerment in India is highly dependent on many different variables, including geographical (urban/rural) status, social status of education (caste and class) and age. Policies on women's empowerment exist at the national, state and local (Panchayat) levels across many sectors, including health, education, economic opportunities, gender-based violence and political participation. However, there is a substantial gap between policy progress and actual practice at Community level. Women's empowerment is essentially the process of improving the economic, social and political situation of traditionally underprivileged women in society. This is about protecting them against all forms of violence. Women empowerment involves the building up of a society, a political environment, wherein women can breathe without the fear of oppression, exploitation,

apprehension, discrimination and the general feeling of persecution which goes with being a woman in a traditionally male dominated structure. With respect to their social status, they are not treated as men in every place. In Western societies, women have a right and a status equal to that of men in every field. But disability and gender discrimination are ubiquitous. The paradoxical situation is so great that it was sometimes involved as a goddess and sometimes just as a slave. Despite various actions taken by the government after independence and even during British rule, women were not fully empowered. We may be proud of women in India occupying highest offices of President, Prime Minister, Lok Sabha Speaker, Leader of the Opposition or women like Ms. Chandra Kochar occupying highest positions in the Corporate Sector but the fact remains that we still witness dowry deaths, domestic violence and exploitation of women. Female feticide is not an uncommon occurrence. The gender ratio, although improving in the last few years, is still far from satisfactory.

Social Empowerment of Women Under the social empowerment of women steps needs to be

taken to improve the health status of women, reduce maternal mortality especially in the areas which do not have good medical facilities. A programme must be launched to combat the spread of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS and communicable infections/diseases such as tuberculosis. Because women are at high risk of malnutrition, special consideration should be given to the nutritional needs of women at all stages of their life cycle. The country has a serious problem when it comes to women belonging to disadvantaged groups. They are the most exploited lot. The social activist should monitor the atrocities committed against women from weaker sections and help them fight the legal battle for justice. Schemes need to be introduced for helping women who are victims of marital violence, who are deserted and those engaged in sex professions. Awareness programmes must be organised to make women, in particular those belonging to weaker sections, aware of their rights. Government has to be vigilant for ensuring that there is no discrimination against the girl child and her rights are protected. Social stigmatisation such as child marriage, Women's feticide, child maltreatment and child prostitution must be eradicated immediately.

Education and Women Empowerment

Education is an important tool for social transformation. Particular attention should therefore be given to the education of women. Women must be provided with better access to education in the education system. Gender sensitivity must be developed. The dropout rate for girls must be monitored and remedial action taken to verify the dropout rate.

Role of NGOs in Women Empowerment

Governmental Organizations are formal agencies working for the empowerment of women. But this work requires multidimensional approach and hence a large number of voluntary organizations / NGO's have gained increased attention in the field from grass – root level to national & international level. Their role is so impressive because they work zealously and with missionary dedication. The working style of NGO's is open, transparent and personal. So, they are more effective in this

direction. They organize seminaries, conferences and workshops to awaken the masses. Their mass appeal – style contributes to a better understanding of women's rights and of the means to ensure the enjoyment of those rights and the elimination of discrimination. They prepare uneducated women in urban and rural communities for self-employment, which is vital for women's economic empowerment. In short, all these programmes and functions of NGOs contribute to the realization of sustainable community development and therefore to the empowerment of women.

Role of International Agencies in Women Empowerment

For the empowerment of women Promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women is central to the work of the United Nations. The UN actively promotes women's human rights and works to eradicate, discourage of violence against women, including in armed conflict and through trafficking. There are various UN agencies working for the empowerment of women like The Commission on the Status of women, The Committee on the elimination of discrimination against women, The Division for the advancement of women, The United Nations Development Fund for women, and recently, the UN Women association is formed which co-ordinates the activities of all the former UN agencies. These international agencies work to ensure that women have a real voice in all governance institutions, from the judiciary to the civil service, as well as in the private sector and civil society. So they can participate equally with men in public dialogue and decision- making and influence the decisions that will determine the future of their families and countries. Women's empowerment has become one of the greatest concerns of the 21st century, not only at the national level, but also at the international level. Efforts by the Govt. are about to achieve gender equality, but government initiatives alone would not be enough to achieve that goal. 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 the Social, Political and Economic life of the Country with a sense of equality.

Literature review

1. **Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2001):** is an important contribution on women empowerment in the context of India. The authors used a policy of political reservation for women in India to study the impact of women’s leadership on policy decision. They found that women were more likely to participate in policy making process if the leader of the village community was happened to be women.
2. **Narayan (2007):** made an attempt to measure women empowerment for different countries and regions by using self-assessed points on a ten steps ladder of power and rights, where at the bottom of the ladder stood people who were completely powerless and without rights and on the top stood those who had a lot of power and rights.
3. **Mishra and Nayak (2010):** in their work emphasized how education plays a central role in human development; as a matter of fact, the other two components— health and income - are dependent on educational development. Education permits a person to inherit the wealth of knowledge amassed over generations. It also makes a person more acceptable and productive. Education increases the chances of fitness and employability. Additionally, education leads to fulfilment. Economists have found that a larger share of increase in productivity is attributable to education of the people. Skill formation, which has quite limited scope to inculcate among the illiterate, is anecessary condition to foster growth. Therefore, literacy and some extent of educational proficiency are of fundamental importance for skill formation. In particular, literacy among the females is of great importance, not only for participation in productive and civic activities, but also for rearing children for a better future.
4. **Duflo E. (2011):** Women’s Empowerment and Economic Development, National Bureau of Economic Research Cambridge. The study argues that the inter relationships of the Empowerment and Development are probably too weak to be self-sustaining and that continuous policy commitment to equality for its own sake may be needed to bring about equality between men and women.

5. **Sethuraman K. (2008):** The Role of Women’s Empowerment and Domestic Violence in child Growth and Under nutrition in a Tribal and Rural Community in South India. This research paper explores the relationship between Women’s Empowerment and Domestic Violence, maternal nutritional status and the nutritional status and growth over six months in children aged 6 to 24 months in a rural and tribal community. This longitudinal observational study undertaken in rural Karnataka. India included tribal and rural subjects.
6. As a result, the literature review above shows that a large number of studies have already been undertaken on women's empowerment and related issues. The entire literature focuses primarily on conceptual and measurement issues and constraints to women's empowerment. The present study in this respect analyzes the status of women empowerment in India by taking into consideration various dimensions of it such as women’s household decision making power, financial autonomy, freedom of movement, political participation, acceptance of unequal gender role, exposure to media, access to education, experience of domestic violence, etc based on data from different sources.

Importance of Women Empowerment

Recently, everyone has been talking about women's empowerment. It is fair to say that empowering women has become a requirement. Women should have the freedom, belief and self-esteem to choose their needs and demands. Gender discrimination is unnecessary and has no value when it comes to women's growth over the past decades. Women are paid less and are treated as cooks and slaves within families, and their real potential is not highlighted. Women's empowerment in India is necessary in order to overcome such situations and give them an independent role in Indian society. Women's empowerment is a vital right of women. They should have the right to make a proportional contribution to society, the economy, education and politics. They are allowed to attend graduate school and receive treatment similar to that received by men.

Objectives of the Study

1. Recognize the need for women's empowerment.
2. Evaluation of women's empowerment awareness in India.
3. Investigate factors influencing women's economic empowerment.
4. Examine governmental programmes for women's empowerment.
5. Identify barriers to women's emancipation.
6. Offer helpful suggestions based on the findings.

Research Methodology

This paper is basically descriptive and analytical in nature. In that document, there was an attempt to analyze India's empowerment. The data used in this study come from purely secondary sources based on the needs of this study.

Government Schemes for Women Empowerment

Government programmes for women's development began as early as 1954 in India, but actual participation did not begin until 1974. At present, the Government of India has over 40 schemes for women operated by different department and ministries. Some of these are as follows;

1. Rastriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) 1992-1993
2. Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY) October, 1993.
3. Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY) 1995.
4. Women Entrepreneur Development programme given top priority in 1997-98.
5. Mahila Samakhyas being implemented in about 9000 villages.
6. Swayasjdha.
7. Swa Shakti Group.
8. Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP).
9. Swablamban (2016).
10. Crèches/ Day care centre for the children of working and ailing mother.
11. Hostels for working women.
12. Swadhar.
13. National Mission for Empowerment of Women.
14. Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) (1975),

15. Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescence Girls (RGSEAG) (2010).
16. The Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers.
16. Integrated Child Protection scheme (ICPS) (2009-2010).
17. Dhanalakhami (2008).
18. Short Stay Homes.
19. Ujjawala (2007).
20. Scheme for Gender Budgeting (XI Plan).
21. Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP).
22. Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM).
23. Prime Minister's Rojgar Yojana (PMRY).
24. Women's Development Corporation Scheme (WDCS).
25. Working Women's Forum.
26. Indira Mahila Kendra.
27. Mahila Samiti Yojana.
28. Khadi and Village Industries Commission.
29. Indira Priyadarahini Yojana.
30. SBI's SreeShakti Scheme.
31. SIDBI's Mahila Udyam Nidhi Mahila Vikas Nidhi.
32. NGO's Credit Schemes.
33. National Banks for Agriculture and Rural Development's Schemes
34. Bati Bachaobati Padhao Scheme (2015)
35. Women Helpline Scheme (2016)
36. One Stop Centre Scheme (2015)
37. Nari Shakti Puraskar (2016)
38. Mahila Shakti Kendras (2017)
39. Mahila Police Volunteers (2016)

The efforts of the government and its different agencies are usefully complemented by non-governmental organizations which play an equally important role in facilitating women's empowerment. Despite concerted efforts by governments and NGOs, there are some shortcomings. Of course, we have come a long way to empower women, but the road ahead is tough and challenging.

Summery and Findings

Various indicators of women's empowerment are analysed using data from various sources as well as discussing the current status of

women in India. The main emphasis given to the indicators like women's household decision making power, financial autonomy, freedom of movement, women's acceptance of unequal gender roles, exposure to media, access to education, women's experience of domestic violence etc. Women's political participation is also analyzed using indicators such as the proportion of women voting and women parliamentarians. After analysing the data, it is found that the decision-making power of households and the freedom of movement of women vary considerably with age, education and employment. The free movement of widows or divorced persons is more than ever a married woman or a married woman. In the same way, we find that in society, the acceptance of unequal gender norms by women themselves still predominates. More than half of the women believe that wife beating is justified for any of the specific reasons like not cooking properly, not taking proper care of household and children, refuge to have sex with husband, showing disrespect to in-laws etc. However, this attitude does not vary much depending on age or household structure, but it decreases significantly depending on education and place of residence. While studying women's access to education and employment it is found that gender gap exists in both the situations. There is a significant gender gap in literacy and girls' participation in all stages of education is less than 50 per cent. As well, less than 50% of women are employed and a significant proportion are not compensated for their work. However, access to employment does not mean that women have complete control of their incomes. Fewer women have the last word about how they spend their income. Control over cash earnings increases with age and with place of residence in urban areas and education, but not vary significantly with household structure. Women's exposure to media is also less relative to men. Women's experience of family violence demonstrates that violence is not diminished by age. Rural women are at higher risk of domestic violence than urban women. As far as women's political participation is concerned, there is a significant gender gap in voting and less than ten per cent of all Lok Sabha members are women. This is because most women do not have the desired level of financial self-sufficiency, literacy, strong

personality, decision-making ability, family support, etc. As a result, we see these interdependent factors mutually reinforcing and placing women at a disadvantage relative to men. A number of obstacles to achieving the desired level of empowerment are also identified. These include poverty, social norms and family structure, lack of awareness of statutory and constitutional provisions, etc. In general, Indian women are relatively destitute and have a slightly lower status than men. Despite numerous efforts by the government and NGOs, the present situation is unsatisfactory. Till then we cannot say that women are empowered in India in its real sense.

Conclusion

Based on this study, we concluded that women's empowerment is critical to Indian economy's growth. Now it is cleared that only literacy is not the ultimate solution to curb this problem but women should be highly educated to know their rights and duties and should be able to use their rights as per the need. Govt. Launched different programmes to tackle issues of women's empowerment. Perhaps the best way to empower women is through their inclusion in the development process. Women empowerment will be real and effective only when they are endowed income and property so that they may stand on their feet and build up their identity in the society. Women's empowerment has become one of the greatest concerns of the 21st century, not only at the national level, but also at the international level. Government initiatives alone would be insufficient to achieve this objective. 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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