

A Study on Challenges of Women Empowerment in India

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Introduction:

The term empowerment refers to measures designed to increase the degree of autonomy and self-determination in people and in communities in order to enable them to represent their interests in a responsible and self-determined way, acting on their own authority. It is the process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's rights. Empowerment as action refers both to the process of self-empowerment and to professional support of people, which enables them to overcome their sense of powerlessness and lack of influence, and to recognize and use their resources.

Entrepreneurship is an economic activity of a man. This economic activity of man plays a major role in economic development. At the centre of process, man stands as an organizer of resources, as worker, as the user of goods or services produced. For the socio-economic development of the country the entrepreneurs both men and women should come forward to take various entrepreneurial activities.

Empowerment among women is an indicator of economic independence. Empowerment of women is essentially the process of upliftment of economic, social and political status of women, the traditionally underprivileged ones, in the society. It is the process of guarding 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 exploitation, apprehension, discrimination and the general feeling of persecution which goes with being a woman in a traditionally male dominated structure.

Creating Empowerment:

The prime target of empowerment must be adult women and, in the context of social justice and transformation, they must be low-income adult women. Within this group, authoritarian behaviors by husbands in the home make families and households in general a terrain that serves. The maintenance rather than the transformation of unequal gender relations.

A prerequisite to empowerment, therefore, necessitates stepping outside the home and participating in some form of collective undertaking that can be successful, thus developing a sense of independence and competence among the women. The creation of a small, cohesive group, with which its members may identify closely is paramount. We know that because of the small scale and voluntary nature of these associations many members gain valuable experience and confidence in both leadership and membership tasks. The central activity of the group could vary; it could be literacy activity, income-generation, mutual basic needs support, etc. Whatever the objective, the group activity should be de-signed so that its process and its goal-attainment foster the development of a sense of self-esteem, competence, and autonomy

The objective of women empowerment is to create large-scale awareness with the active participation of women themselves. The terms "Women Empowerment" and "Gender Equality" are not synonymous. One can consider Gender Equality as a provision of equal status for both men and women in terms of opportunities and their patronage. Whereas, women empowerment denotes the act of enabling the suppressed gender to utilize the existing resources without having to perceive it as threat against the already existing gender inequality but to enhance the existing quality of life. Women who at one hand are given an adorable status by worshipping them as goddesses of different names and are also subjected to atrocities of various forms on the other hand. This ironically represents a good example of ambiguity in human nature.

Objectives of the study:

1. To know the need of Women Empowerment.
2. To assess the Awareness of Women Empowerment in India.
3. To analyze the Factors influencing the Economic Empowerment of Women.
4. To study the Government Schemes For Women Empowerment.

Challenges of Women Empowerment

In the simplest words, empowering the women means creating such an environment in which they can take independent decisions for their personal development and the development of society in general. Empowerment is the process by which the women achieve increased control and participation in decision making which in turn helps to achieve equal basis with men in various spheres – political, economical, social, cultural and civil.

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 strive and adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women.

The problem essentially is routed in gender disparity in India. Gender disparity manifests itself in various forms, the most obvious being the trend of continuously declining female ratio in the population in the last few decades. Social stereotyping and violence at the domestic and societal levels are some of the other manifestations.

The underlying causes of gender inequality are related to social and economic structure, which is based on informal and formal norms and practices. Consequently, the access of women to education, health and productive resources is inadequate. Therefore, they remain largely marginalized, poor and socially excluded. There are various issues which poses myriads of challenges towards the vision of Women Empowerment. In social field, women are suppressed domestically and do not enjoy respectable position.

They are not regarded as intelligent and powerful enough as men. Politically they do not participate and even where they do as voter or representative, mostly they are used as rubber-stamps in the hands of their male relative.

Globalization has presented new challenges for the realization of the goal of women's equality, the gender impact of which has not been systematically evaluated fully.

ORGANIZATIONAL PROBLEMS:

The employment of the women in agriculture, traditional industries and in sizeable section of new industries is declining at a very fast rate. The reason is that the adoption of new technological changes requires new skill, knowledge and training. And women in India, who constitute a large share of world's illiterate lacks such skills and knowledge. The studies have also showed that for the same task, women are

paid less than the males. Technological changes in agriculture and industry are throwing out women from the production process

LACK OF PROTECTION OF RIGHTS:

Most of the women are denied the opportunity to protect their own rights. Reddy (2000) aptly mentions that women have always been silent sufferers of discrimination both in the past and also at present. One interesting observation is also that most women right from birth are brought up with the mindset that they are inferior to men and in variably need to accept whatever men dictate. as a result they not only bear the atrocities committed on them but also till directly encourage man to dominate them. They do not assert their rights fearing the consequences. The increasing number of crimes committed against women is an evidence for the lack of opportunity for her to enjoy her life as a human being. It would not be an exaggeration to say that women do not even enjoy half of the rights as man do.

POOR EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES:

In a gender biased country like India; women generally do not get the required educational facilities. As rightly said by Kaushik (1997) to help a woman in distress, it is not adequate to provide them with mere economic assistance. In addition, they should also be provided with adult literacy and education in legal rights. In India, women right from the birth are treated as a property to be disowned at one point of time or the other. Any expenditure on them, especially for education, is considered as a burden. It is often assumed that she only needs to know the means for proper maintenance of the family for which education is not very essential. Unfortunately, most parents concentrate on the expenses than on the girl child's growth. The discriminatory attitudes are observed right from the beginning of the schooling. If women are more educated, it is considered. As a threat to men's self-esteem, most men prefer women who are less qualified than them so that they are more submissive and less argumentative.

WORK PLACE HARASSMENTS:

Work place harassments are also found to be more common among women. They are not given the due importance that they deserve. It is often noticed that women put in greater amount of efforts in both domestic and non-domestic activities. However, unfortunately, most of women's efforts goes unnoticed as the major chunk of the activities they perform are important but economically unproductive, for instance: the household chores. Ironically when men get a break from their paid works, women's workload automatically multiplies as she needs to provide the required comforts to the supposedly tired men, apart from her routine activities. At the same time if a woman prefers to take up a paid work, then again she is paid less than what a man is paid, though the kind of efforts both of them put in remains the same. Both in organized and unorganized sectors women's potentials are not utilized to the full capacity.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:

Women are the greatest victims of various forms of domestic violence. A home is a place where a woman spends most of her time W a day. Hence, it is also a place she is subjected to maximum harassment. It is a place when to meet the demands of every one adequately. She is often burdened with a lot of household chores that exerts most of her energy. There are instances where women are merely treated as objects of entertainment. They are the victims of all sorts of physical, verbal and emotional violence. Dowry harassment is one of the biggest culprits in ruining the domestic peace for women.

RAPE

Young girls in India often are the victims of rape. Almost 255 of rapes are of girls under 16 years of age. The law against rape is unchanged from 120 years. In rape cases, it is very torturing that the victim has to prove that she has been raped. The victim finds it difficult to undergo medical examination immediately after the trauma of assault. Besides this, the family too is reluctant to bring in prosecution due to family prestige and hard police procedures.

Empowerment of Women:

Social, Economic and political empowerment of women: are central to considerations of personal independence and self esteeming. To this end employment and entrepreneur opportunities. Would go a long way in making a woman self-reliant.

Social Women Empowerment:

A critical aspect of social empowerment of women is the promotion of gender equality. Gender equality implies a society in which women and men enjoy the same opportunities, outcomes, rights and obligations in all spheres of life.

Economic and occupational empowerment:

It implies a better quality of material life through sustainable livelihoods owned and managed by women. It means reducing their financial dependence on their male counterparts by making them a significant part of the human resource.

Political Women Empowerment:

It means the existence of a political system favoring the participation in and control by the women of the political decision-making process and in governance.

Educational Women Empowerment:

It means empowering women with the knowledge, skills, and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process. It means making women aware of their rights and developing a confidence to claim them.

Legal Women Empowerment:

It suggests the provision of an effective legal structure which is supportive of women empowerment. It means addressing the gaps between what the law and what actually occurs.

Why Need of Women Empowerment? Reflecting into the “Vedas Purana” of Indian culture, a woman is being worshiped such as LAXMI MAA, goddess of wealth; SARSWATI MAA, for wisdom; DURGA MAA for power. The status of women in India particularly in rural areas needs to address the issue of empowering women. About 66% of the female population in rural area is unutilized. This is mainly due to existing social customs. In agriculture and Animal care the women contribute 90% of the total workforce. Women constitute almost half of the population, perform nearly 2/3 of its work hours, receive 1/10th of the world's income and own less than 1/ 100th the world property. Among the world's 900 million illiterate people, women outnumber men two to one. 70% of people living in poverty are women. Lower sex ratio i.e. 933, the existing studies show that the women are relatively less healthy than men though belong to same class. They constitute less than 1/7th of the administrators and managers in developing countries. Only 10% seats in World Parliament and 6% in National Cabinet are held by women.

Some good Prospects

Let's talk about some of the good policy steps taken by our government in the area of women empowerment.

Firstly, the move to reserve one-third seats in the parliament for women could probably be the oldest and biggest step taken by Indian government in the area of women empowerment. The bill, if passed would result in more than 180 seats in the lower house occupied by women compared to less than 30 occupied currently.

Secondly, to provide integrated social empowerment of women, the government initiated a scheme called as "Swayamsidha" in 2001 which helps them in establishing self-reliant Women's self help groups (SHG's) the objective is to achieve all-round empowerment of women by ensuring direct access and control over resources. It helps in creating confidence and awareness among the members of SHGs regarding health, nutrition, education, hygiene and economic upliftment. A number of rural women have already been benefited through this scheme and this project is one of the long term strategic initiatives taken by the government in the area of women's empowerment.

Following are some plans for the women development and empowerment

Indian government is always few rebel and conscious about women development. Time to time different schemes and plans has been implemented for the success of women.

1. Mahila cosh yojana: This is first plan started for especially rural women of India in which self employment, stress on msme and supplementary occupation are the most priority factors.

2. Training and employment programme for women (TEPW): To build up the confidence, economically strong and for enhancing the productivity are the main targets of this plan.

Conclusion

“When women move forward the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves” It is essential as their thought and their value systems lead the development of a good family, good society and ultimately a good nation. The best way of empowerment is perhaps through inducting women in the mainstream of development. 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. Also traditional attitude has to change regarding women.

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