

Women Role in Sustainable Development in the context of Zeliangrong Society: An analysis

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Abstract

The Sustainable development Goals seek to change the course of the 21st Century, addressing key challenges such as poverty, inequality, and violence against women and girls. Therefore, achieving gender equality and women's empowerment is a standalone goal 5 of the Sustainable development goals. Any real advances in sustainable development cannot be achieved without commitment gender equality and the inclusion of women.

This paper is mainly focused on the need for empowering women to bring about sustainable development. **Objective of the study:** The objective of the paper is to draw upon the role played by Zeliangrong women in bringing about sustainable development and the need for empowering them. **Method:** The present paper is based on normative survey method for thorough and comprehensive study. **Conclusion:** It can be concluded that women share the primary responsibility for nutrition, child care and household management. The Zeliangrong women hold a good social status in spite of being a patrilineal society. Education and economic empowerment of women have significant potential to reduce poverty. Therefore, gender equality and women empowerment is crucial for sustainable development.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Gender Equality, Zeliangrong, Sustainable development.

Introduction:

To achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls is one of the goals of sustainable development. Providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work and representation in political and economy decision making process will fuel sustainable economics and benefit society and humanity at large. Women's economic empowerment refers to the ability for women to enjoy their right to control and benefit from resources, as well as the ability to manage risk and improve their economic status and wellbeing. Improving education for women helps raise their levels of health and nutrition and reduces fertility rates. In particular, education powers women to make choices that improve their own and their children's health and chances of survivals. Further, education empowers women to improve their welfare, including marrying later and having fewer children. Crucially education also increases women's awareness of their human rights, their confidence and their actual ability to assert those rights.

Objective of the study:

The objective of the study present study is to draw upon the role played by Zeliangrong women in bringing about sustainable development and the need for empowering them.

Method:

The present paper is based on normative survey method. The data was collected from secondary sources like books, journals, reports, records, websites, unpublished theses for analysis and study.

Why Women empowerment is important?

1. Under-employed and unemployed: Women population constitutes around 50% of the world population. A large number of women around the world are unemployed. The world economy suffers a lot because of the unequal opportunity for women at workplaces.
2. Equally competent and intelligent: Women are equally competent. Nowadays, women are even ahead of men in many socio-economic activities.
3. Talented: Women are as talented as men. Previously, women were not allowed higher education like men and hence their talents were wasted. But nowadays, they are also allowed to go for higher studies and it encourages women to show their talents which will not only benefit her individually but to the whole world at large.
4. Overall development of society: The main advantage of Women Empowerment is that there will be an overall development of the society. The money that women earn does not only help them and or their family, but it also help develop the society.
5. Economic Benefits: Women Empowerment also leads to more economic benefits not to the individuals but to the society as well. Unlike earlier days when they stayed at home only and do only kitchen stuffs, nowadays, they roam outside and also earn money like the male members of the society. Women empowerment helps women to stand on their own legs, become independent and also to earn for their family which grows country's economy.
6. Reduction in domestic violence: Women Empowerment leads to decrease in domestic violence. Uneducated women are at higher risk for domestic violence than educated women.
7. Reduction in corruption: Women Empowerment is also advantageous in case of corruption. Women empowerment helps women to get educated and know their rights and duties and hence can stop corruption.
8. Reduce Poverty: Women Empowerment also reduces poverty. Sometimes, the money earned by the male member of the family is not sufficient to meet the demands of the family. The added earnings of women help the family to come out of poverty trap.
9. National Development: Women are increasingly participating in the national development process. They are making the nation proud by their outstanding performances almost every sphere including medical science, social service, engineering, etc.
10. Irreplaceable in some sectors: Women are considered irreplaceable for certain jobs.

Result and Discussion:

Zeliangrong society is a patrilineal society but the Zeliangrong women hold a good social status. As equal to man she takes part in every social activity. They are efficient in all the activities- in the field, house chores, jungle works i.e., collection of firewood, rearing up of children and looking after the need of the family. The husband in return always seeks her consent in every decision making.

The women play an important role in domestic affairs. They are given full authority regarding domestic affairs. They can sell or buy handicrafts, shawls and domestic animals except cattle without even consulting their husband. Unmarried women are allowed to enjoy their maiden possessions which are the result of their enterprise by rearing domestic animal, selling shawls etc. Men keep themselves away from the domestic affairs since they consider it below their dignity to indulge in such activities. It is not worthy here that husbands do not make use of any domestic animal without getting prior permission from their wives. In the traditional Zeliangrong Society of bygone days, women were happy with their position in the society they were given adequate protection. It is expected of a man to do all the hard work. Torturing or killing of women and children were considered to be an act of cowardice.

A woman takes a big initiative in religious matter too. They perform Napchamnei and religion rituals. Mathenmei i.e. organization of women initiate all the religious hymns and songs which are dedicated to the Tingkao Ragwang. McCulloch gave a vivid description of the activities of the women in his book 'Valley of Manipur'. "In the grey of the morning, the female of the family are astir, and the village resounds with the blow of the long pestle in the wooden mortar beating out the rice from the husk. These finished breakfast is cooked for both the family and the pigs for the later, the husk is mix with other refuse search the purpose. Breakfast over, which is usually, is about sunrise, the women proceed for water which they fill into bamboo tubes and bring it on their back in baskets. Then they go for firewood collection and what they brought they set about the internal economy of the house that is to see to their husband drink, spinning or weaving or any of the other household occupation".

Zeliangrong women are loyal, co-operative, hardworking, patient, sincere and good. Her initiative in upbringing and caring of children, her role in kitchen, her share of earning of income which supplement the income of her husband, her role in the festivals, her role in helping her husband in house construction, her role in the cultivation of paddy field, her role in performing the ritual function, in the decision making and as a moral booster are worth mentioning.

Zeliangrong society being a patrilineal society, the property is inherited only by the male members. But with the change outlook and due to the influence of the Indian succession law, had provided the right to property for the female too.

Conclusion:

From the above discussion it is clear that in the Zeliangrong Society women plays a very important role in bringing about sustainable development. That women role in social as well as domestic affairs is well recognized and because of which the Zeliangrong Society has been progressing and the status of women have been improved considerably with the advent of Christianity and Western Education.

Main findings:

1. Despite their valuable contributions, Zeliangrong women are not paid back with right of inheritance, authority, leadership, no equal wage etc.
2. Women cannot take a final decision and are considered second in the education system whereas all the male children are given first preference in all the customary as well as social development deals.

3. Zeliangrong women are not allowing ploughing, hunting animals and do carpentry works and all ritual worships but exception to these are also found.

Suggestion:

1. In the Zeliangrong society, parents preferred boys to girls because of the belief that girls are not capable of preserving their ethnic identity. Thus, educating about gender equality is very much crucial.
2. Awareness regarding health, nutrition, childcare need to be given because most of the Zeliangrong women are ignorant about these issues which hinders the development of the society.

Recommendation:

1. Equal opportunity for education, without any gender biased should be encouraged.
2. For the equal development of the society, women should be allowed to take decisions and participate in national developmental process.

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