

Human resource development in west Champaran district in context of women empowerment in India

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Abstract,

The strength of chain is the strength of its weakest link. In a society, women are the weakest links. So that they may be strengthened for strengthening the society as a whole and that is possible only by empowering them. The present paper is an attempt to analyze the status of women empowerment in Darbhanga district using various indicators based on data secondary sources. The study reveals that women of study area are relatively disempowered and they enjoy somewhat lower status than that of men in spite of many efforts undertaken by government. A number of studies have been undertaken on women empowerment at the global level and in India. Some studies dealt on methodological issues, some on empirical analysis and some others on the measures and tools of empowerment. We have presented in this section first some of the important studies which were undertaken at the international level followed by other studies conducted in India. **Keywords:-** Empowerment, Development, indicators, secondary sources, weaker section

Introduction

In the last five decades, the concept of women empowerment has undergone a sea change from welfare oriented approach to equity approach. It has been understood as the process by which the powerless gain greater control over the circumstances of their lives. Empowerment particularly includes control over resources and ideology. According to Sen and Batliwala (2000) it leads to a growing intrinsic capability, greater self confidence, and an inner transformation of one's consciousness that enables one to overcome external barriers. This view mainly emphasizes on two important aspects. Firstly, it is a power to achieve desired goals but not a power over others. Secondly, idea of empowerment is more applicable to those who are powerless- whether they are male or female, or group of individuals, class or caste. Though concept of empowerment is not specific to women, yet it is unique in that and it cuts across all types of class and caste and also within families and households (Malhotra et al, 2002). Women empowerment is also defined as a change in the context of a woman's life, which enables her increased capacity for leading a fulfilling human life. It gets reflected both in external qualities (viz.

health, mobility, education and awareness, status in the family, participation in decision making, and also at the level of material security) and internal qualities.

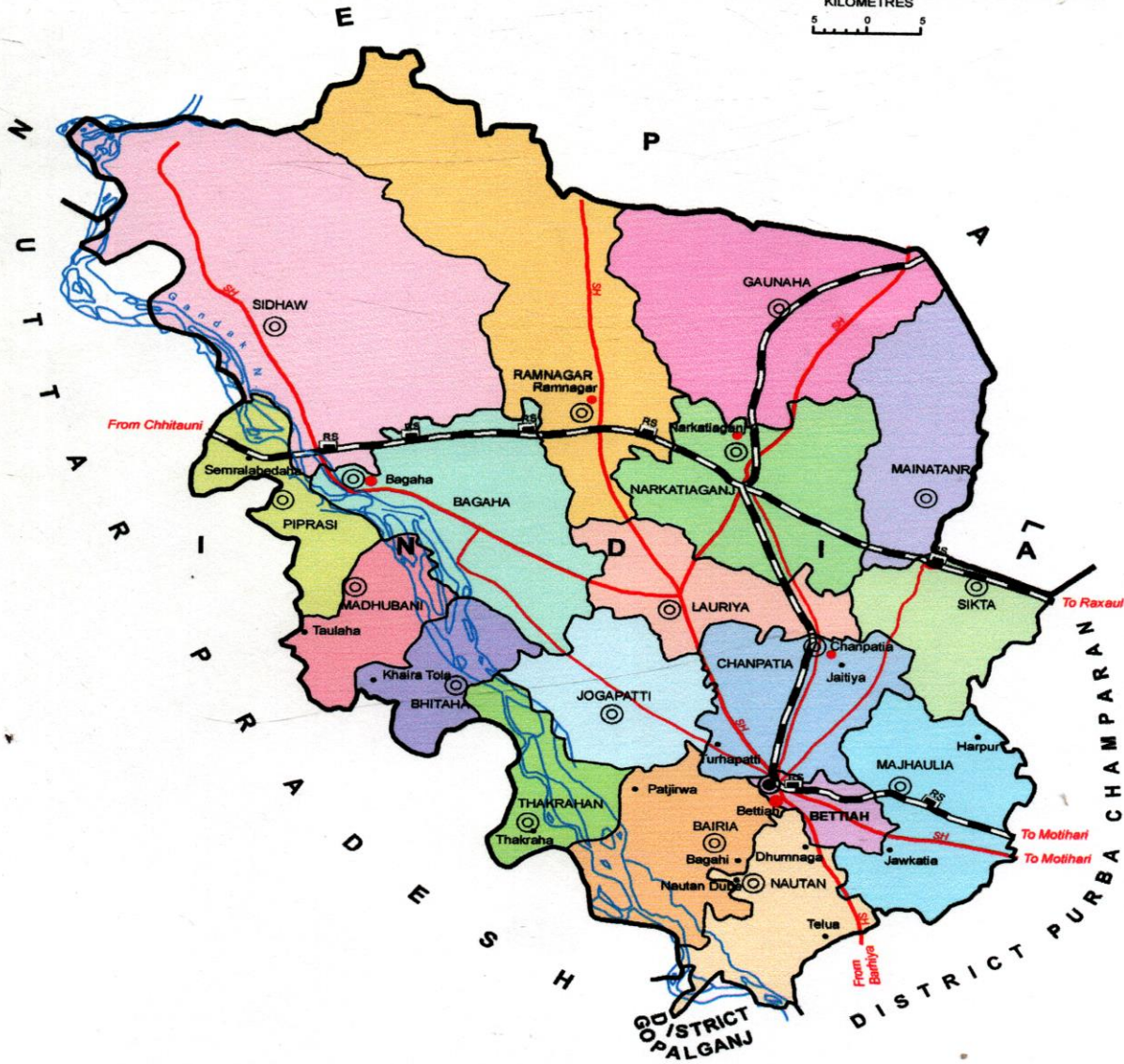
Study Area.

West Champaran District was carved out of the old Champaran District in the year 1972 as a result of re-organization of the District in the state. The total area of the District is 5228 Sq. Km. and the district is located between 26°16' and 27°31' north latitude and 83°50' and 85°18' east longitude. The district is bounded by Hilly region of Nepal on North, Gopalganj & part of Purbi Champaran District on South, Purbi champaran District on East and Padrauna & Deoria District of Uttar Pradesh on West. The district has 3 Sub-divisions, 18 blocks and 1483 Villages. Agriculture is the main source of income of the people in West Champaran. Some agro-based industries have flourished here and are being run successfully. The places of tourist and historic interest in the districts are Valmilki Nagar (Bhainsalotan), Bank of Triveni (Confluence), Bawangarhi, Bhiknathori, Sumeswer hills, Brindavan, Bhitiharawa Ashram, Nandangarh & Chankigarh, Ashoka Pillar, and Saraiya man.



BIHAR DISTRICT PASHCHIM CHAMPARAN

KILOMETRES
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- BOUNDARY, INTERNATIONAL
- " STATE
- " DISTRICT
- " C.D. BLOCK
- HEADQUARTERS: DISTRICT
- " C.D.BLOCK
- VILLAGES HAVING 15000 AND ABOVE POPULATION WITH NAME
- URBAN AREA WITH POPULATION SIZE:- CLASS I, II, III
- STATE HIGHWAY
- IMPORTANT METALLED ROADS
- RAILWAY LINE WITH STATION, BROAD GAUGE
- RIVER AND STREAM

	Total	Rural	Urban
Area (Sq.Km)	5228.00	5133.60	94.40
Population	3935042	3541877	393165
No. of Villages	1483		
No. of Towns	05		
No. of C.D. Blocks	18		
Distance of District HQ to State HQ 199 Km			

Note:- State Headquarters is also the District & CD Block Headquarters.

OBJECTIVES

- To identify gaps in the empowerment of women.
- Create a national network of public, private and NGO centres for delivering reproductive and child health services free to any client
- To open more child care centres for working women and expand the availability of safe abortion care;
- To use energy saving devices to reduce drudgery of women;
- To identify the ways in which the effects of policies and programmatic interventions to promote women's empowerment have been measured;
- To improve access to sanitation, drinking water, fuel, wood and fodder for women;
- To develop health management and health package at all levels;
- To improve accessibility and quality of maternal and child health care services.
- To organise educational and empowerment programmes for girls and women;
- To conduct and promote experimentations and innovations and research in the problems and programmes of empowerment of rural women;
- To increase awareness in women, for their development to use their talent optimally not only for themselves, but also for the society as a whole
- To develop the skills for self-decision- taking capabilities in women and to allow them to present their point of view effectively in society;
- To create awareness among women to be truly ambitious and to dream for betterment.

Methodology:-

The present research work based on the observational description and observational rational methods in order to decipher the theme of the research. Various statistical and cartographic methods has applied where ever needed. The present research study based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data collected through personal observation, interview, questionnaires schedule etc. while the secondary data collected from concerned district or block headquarters. Map and diagrams, graphs etc. have been widely used in this research papers.

Discussion:-

As far as India is concerned, the principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Constitution and finds a place in the Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women but also empowers the States to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. The urge for equality on the part of Indian women started getting momentum during the colonial times. Noted social reformers and national leaders like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Annie Besant, Sorojini Naidu and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar made selfless efforts to create awareness among women about their status and were quite successful in removing various social evils such as *sati pratha*, child marriage, and polygamy.

They also encouraged widow remarriage and women education. The reformers were successful in creating a base for development of women and their strive for equality. Since independence, the Government of India has been making various efforts to empower women. In various plan periods, the issues regarding women empowerment has been given priority. From fifth five year plan onwards there has been a remarkable shift from welfare oriented approach of women empowerment to development approach. The National Commission for women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights of women. The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution of India provided opportunity to women to take part in active politics. The year 2001 was declared as the year of women's empowerment for enhancing their status. To achieve the goal, the government introduced different programmes, identified strategies, established different institutions and made various legal provisions. In spite of all these efforts and actions, women in India still lag behind the men. The incidence like early marriage, female feticides and infanticide, dowry, bride burning, rape, molestation, kidnapping etc are very frequent. The record of crime against women indicates an increasing trend (Sharma and Gupta, 2004: 122). The position of women in the country in the social, economic and political fields is by no means equal to that of their male counterparts. Besides low female literacy, there are many other factors that have contributed to gender biasness. National Human Development Report (G.O.I, 2002) brought out information on indices on GDI and GEM. GDI showed marginal improvement during the eighties. GEI increased from 62 per cent in the early eighties to 67.6 per cent in the early nineties. This implies that on an average the attainments of women on human development indicators were only two-thirds of those of men. NFHS-III (G.O.I., 2005-06) collected information on large number of indicators of women empowerment such as relative earnings of wives over their husbands' control over the use of these earnings, participation in household decision making, freedom

of movement, gender role attitude, freedom from domestic violence, etc. Data on some of these indicators of women empowerment are examined and findings are presented in the following paragraphs:

Decision Making Power

Decision making power of women in households is one of the important indicators of women empowerment. It is found that only 37 per cent of currently married women participate in making decisions either alone or jointly with their husband on their health care, large household purchases, purchases for daily household needs and on visiting their family members and relatives. Forty three per cent participate in some but not all decisions and 21 per cent do not participate in any of the decision. As high as in 32.4 per cent cases the decision regarding the purchase of daily household needs is taken mainly by the respondents whereas the decisions like visit to her relatives are in most cases taken alone by husbands or jointly. Decision like major household purchases is taken jointly in most of the cases. A very less number of women alone take this type of decision. About 27 per cent of total respondents take their own health care decision alone. Women's participation rate on household decision making not only varies from rural to urban areas but also gets affected by their background characteristics like age, educational status, husband's education, employment status etc.

Freedom of Movement

Free mobility of women is another indicator of women empowerment. The data reveals that about half of women are allowed to go to the market or to the health facility alone. Only 38 per cent are allowed to travel alone to places outside the village or community. While not all women are allowed to go to these places alone, only a minority are not allowed to go at all. Compared to urban women, rural women have less mobility. Women's mobility is also affected by their background characteristics like age, education, marital status, type of family etc. Employment is associated with greater freedom of movement.

Acceptance of Unequal Gender Role

It is to be noted that even among the most educated women, at least one in three agrees with one or more justifications for wife beating. In rural areas women are generally more agreeable to wife

beating than in urban areas. Agreement is lower among never married women as compared to ever married women.

Access to Education

Women's access to education which is one of the important sources of empowerment can be measured by gender gap in literacy rates and enrolment in different stages of school education. The literacy gap between men and women was as high as 21.7 per cent in 2001. Though the gap was fluctuating from 18.3 per cent in 1951 to 23.9 per cent in 1971, it has been showing a marginal declining trend Since 1981.

Access to Employment

Employment and cash earnings are more likely to empower women if women make decisions about their own earnings alone or jointly with their husband rather than their husband alone and if these earnings are perceived by both wives and husbands to be significant relative to those of the husbands. Table 9 in this connection shows the extent of women's control over earnings on the basis of background characteristics like age, education, place of residence, household structure, etc. It is seen that women's control over cash earnings increases with age. In the age group 15 - 19 years only 17.7 per cent women alone take decision about the use of their cash earnings as compared to 28.3 per cent in the age group 40-49 years. Similarly husband mainly takes such decision in case of 20 per cent women in the age group 15-19 years in comparison to 12.7 per cent in the age group 40-49 years. Influence of other person in making such decision decreases with the increase in age of respondents. It varies from 18.6 per cent in the age group 15-19 years to as low as 0.4 per cent in 40-49 age groups. Place of residence also affects women's control over their cash earnings. Education is one of the important factors that affects greatly in women's control over earnings Household structure has an important role to play in affecting women's financial empowerment.

Exposure to Media

per cent of women are exposed to media as compared to 88 per cent in case of men. Twenty nine per cent of women do not have access to media regularly. Since it is an important source of empowerment, greater proportion of women without having access to media reflects the relatively disadvantageous position of women in relation to men with regards to empowerment.

Domestic Violence

It is observed that extent of violence is not lessened by age. In the age group of 15-19 years, 22.5 per cent women experienced physical or sexual violence in India as compared to 39 per cent in the age group 40-49 years. Both types of violence are higher for ever married women than for never married women. Almost 40 per cent ever married women experienced physical or sexual violence as against 16.9 per cent never married women.

Political Participation

Women's political participation is one of the important issues in the context of empowerment. In conventional analysis it means activities related to electoral politics like voting, campaigning, holding party office and contesting election. But in broader sense it encompasses all voluntary actions intended to influence the making of public policies, the administration of public affairs and the choice of political leaders at all levels of government. Political interventions by women of India today range from movement for peace and good governance to protest against dowry, rape, domestic violence, food adulteration, price rise etc.

Elected Women Members

Many factors are responsible and decisive in the election of women candidates such as literacy, financial position, liberal family background, support of other members of the family, strong personality etc. Since most of the women lack access to these, few women get tickets and even fewer get elected from this handful of women candidates.

Constraints to Women Empowerment

There are several constraints that check the process of women empowerment in India. Social norms and family structures in developing countries like India, manifests and perpetuate the subordinate status of women. One of such norms is the continuing preference for a son over the birth of a girl child, which is present in almost all societies and communities. Poverty is the reality of life for the vast majority of women in India. It is another factor that poses challenge in realizing women's empowerment. Lack of awareness about legal and constitutional provisions and failure in realizing it, is another factor that hinders the process of empowerment.

Conclusion

Various indicators of women empowerment are analyzed using the data from various sources while discussing women's present status in the study area. The main emphasis is 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 by using indicators like percentage of women voters and women MPs. However, this attitude is not varying much with age or household structure but decline sharply with education and places of residence. While studying women's access to education and employment it is found that gender gap exist in both the situations. A large gender gap in literacy exists and participation of girls at all stages of education is below 50%. Similarly less than 50% of women are employed and a significant portion of them are not paid for their work. However, having access to employment does not mean that women have full control over their earnings. Fewer women have final say on how to spend their earnings. Regarding women's political participation it is found that large gender gap exists in voting and less than ten per cent of total member in Lok Sabha are Women. This is because most of the women lack desired level of financial autonomy, literacy, strong personality, own decision making capacity, family support etc. Thus we see that these mutually interdependent factors reinforce each other and put women in a disadvantageous position relative to men. Various constraints in achieving the desired level of empowerment are also identified. Important among them are poverty, social norms and family structure, lack of awareness about legal and constitutional provision etc. Generally speaking the women of India are relatively disempowered and they enjoy somewhat lower status than that of men. In spite of so many efforts undertaken by government and NGOs the picture at present is not satisfactory. Mere access to education and employment can only help in the process of empowerment. These are the tools or the enabling factors through which the process gets speeded up.

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