

HURDLES IN THE PATH OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA: A CRITICAL STUDY

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Abstract: The woman's place has been important since ancient times. The woman is said to be the basic foundation of creation. Women are an important and necessary part of society. The tradition, culture of any nation is related to the women of that nation. The development of society is directly related to the development of women of that society. Without the development of women, the development of man, family and society cannot be imagined. Also, the development of the country and society is considered incomplete. In today's modern society's thinking has developed so much that both physical and mental evils and practices against women have become the norm. Such as satipratha, dowry practice, purdah, feticide, wife burning, sexual violence, sexual harassment at workplace, domestic violence and various other types of discriminatory behavior. All such functions involve physical and mental elements. Crimes or atrocities against women are still increasing. To deal with these, it will be possible to change the minds of old-minded people in the society only through social schemes and sensitization programs. Therefore, this women empowerment has been implemented by the government to make them financially and mentally strong. For the development of women, the government has introduced some schemes like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Ujjwala Yojana, Sukanya Samridhi Yojana and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Yojana etc. The article presented in this context has discussed hurdles in women's empowerment and governmental measures to remove them.

Keyword: women empowerment, social schemes, sensitization programs, gender inequality.

INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality is the main social issue in India in which female male dominance is lagging behind in the country. There is a need to accelerate women empowerment to bring men and women on par. The upliftment of women in all fields should be included in the priority of the nation. The disparity between man and woman gives rise to many problems which can pose as a major obstacle in the development of the nation. It is the birthright of women that they should get equal importance as men in society. To truly bring empowerment, women should be aware of their rights. Not only domestic and family responsibilities but also women should play an active and positive role in every field. They should also know the happenings around them and in the country.

The need for women empowerment arose because India had a gender inequality and a male dominated society since ancient times. Women were pressurized by their own families and society for various reasons and they were subjected to many forms of violence and discrimination in family and society, which is not only seen in India but also in other countries. Wrong and old trends in the society since ancient times for women have been molded into new customs and traditions. To honor women in Indian society, it is a tradition to worship women ladies as mother, sister, daughter, wife, but this does not mean that just by worshiping women, the need of development of the country will be fulfilled. Today, it is necessary that half the population of the country i.e. women are empowered in every field, which will become the basis of development of the country.

Ancient Indian society, along with other discriminatory practices, was the tradition of sati, city brides, dowry, sexual violence, domestic violence, killing of girls in the womb, purdah, sexual exploitation at work place, child labor, child marriage and devadasi system etc. The reason for such malpractices is patriarchal society and male superiority occultism.

Socio political rights (freedom to work, right to education, etc.) were completely banned by male family members. Some bad practices against women were removed by open minded people and great Indian people who raised their voice for discriminatory actions against women. It was because of the continuous efforts of Raja Ram Mohan Roy that the British were forced to abolish the practice of Sati. Later other Indian social reformers (Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Acharya Vinobha Bhave, Swami Vivekananda etc.) also raised their voice and fought fiercely for women's upliftment. To improve the condition of widows in India, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar introduced the Widow Re-Marriage Act 1856 with his continuous efforts.

In the last few years, many constitutional and legal rights have been created and enforced by the government to remove gender inequality and bad practices against women. However, there is a need for constant support of everyone including women to solve such a big topic. Modern society is more aware of the rights of women, as a result of which many self-help groups and NGOs etc. are working in this direction. Women are more open minded and are breaking social bonds to get their rights in all dimensions. However, the crime is going on simultaneously.

The development of any society is directly related to the development of the women of that society. The development of the country and society is incomplete without the development of women. Without the development of women, the development of man, family and society cannot be imagined. For the development of women, the government has introduced some schemes like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Ujjwala Yojana, Sukanya Samridhi Yojana and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Yojana etc.

MEANING OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

The simplest meaning of empowerment is taken from "being full of power". That means to make a woman full of power. It is the action that strengthens women in society. It provides independent ability to perform its work. Its main objective is to connect the

woman with the process of development in such a way that she can take decisions in educational, social and economic fields. From this perspective, empowerment is an attempt to achieve the goals through participation in development and decision making rights. Empowerment in the research study presented refers to the educational, social and economic empowerment and upliftment of rural women.

According to Pillai JK (1995) - "Empowerment is a multi-faceted active process that enables women to know their full identity and strength. Strength is neither an object that can be transferred or presented in accordance with the objectives. Strength is acquired and once acquired it is necessary to use, preserve and develop it. "

According to the United Nations, there are mainly five reasons for the empowerment of women:

- Arouse a sense of self worth in women
- Giving them freedom to make their decisions and make them aware of their rights
- To give them equal rights as men everywhere and make them a right place in the Constitution
- Freedom to let them work in their own way, whether at home or outside
- To empower women to take forward more social and economic systems and to convey them

NEED FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

The need for women empowerment arose because India had a gender inequality and a male dominated society since ancient times. Women were pressurized by their own families and society for various reasons and they were subjected to many forms of violence and discrimination in family and society, which is not only seen in India but also in other countries. Wrong and old trends in the society since ancient times for women have been molded into new customs and traditions. To honor women in Indian society, it is a tradition to worship women ladies as mother, sister, daughter, wife, but this does not mean that just by worshiping women, the need of development of the country will be fulfilled. Today, it is necessary that half the population of the country i.e. women are empowered in every field, which will become the basis of development of the country.

OBSTACLES IN THE PATH OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

1) Social criteria : Due to old and orthodox ideologies, many areas of India are prohibited from leaving their homes. In such areas, women do not have the freedom to go out of the house for education or employment. They are not allowed to make decisions in family and social matters. In some families, in which women earn more than men, they do not have the right to decide. Living in such an environment, women find themselves inferior to men and fail to change their current social and economic condition.

2) Physical abuse in the workplace : Exploitation in the workplace is also a major obstacle in women's empowerment. Private sectors such as service industries, software industries, educational institutions and hospitals are the most affected by this problem. This creates more problems for women due to the dominance of male prominence in society. In the recent past, there has been a rapid increase in harassment of women in the field of work and there has been an increase of about 170 percent in the last few decades.

3) Sexual discrimination : In India, women are still discriminated against at workplace level. In many areas, women are not even allowed to go out for education and employment. At the same time, they do not have the freedom to work freely or to take family related distractions and are always considered inferior to men in every task. This type of discrimination worsens the social and economic condition of women and also affects the goal of women empowerment in a bad way.

4) Inequality in Payments : Women in India are paid less than their male counterparts, and the problem is even worse in the unorganized sector, especially in places with daily wages. Despite doing the same amount of work for the same amount of time, women are paid far less than men, and such work shows the power disparity between women and men. Women working in the organized sector are paid less than men, despite having the same experience and qualifications as their male counterparts.

5) Illiteracy : Problems such as illiteracy among women and skipping studies in between are also major hurdles in women's empowerment. Although in urban areas, girls are equal to boys in terms of education, but in rural areas they are far behind in this case. The female education rate in India is 64.6 percent while the education rate of men is 80.9 percent. Many rural girls who go to school also miss their studies and they are not able to pass even the tenth standard.

6) Child Marriage : Although in the last few decades, effective decisions taken by the government have reduced the prevalence of child marriage in India to a great extent, but in 2018 a UNICEF report shows that India still has about 1.5 million girls every year. Marriage is done before the age of 18, due to early marriage, the development of women stops and she is not able to become physically and mentally mature.

7) Crimes against women : Serious crimes like dowry, honor killing and trafficking are seen against Indian women along with many domestic violence. However it is quite strange that women in urban areas are more prone to criminal attacks than women in rural areas. Even working women do not use public transport late at night due to their safety. In the true sense, women empowerment can be achieved only when the safety of women can be ensured and like men, they can come freely without any fear.

8) Female feticide : Female feticide or gender-based abortion is one of the biggest obstacles in the path of women empowerment in India. Female feticide refers to feticide on the basis of gender, under which abortion is done without the consent of the mother when the female fetus is detected. Due to female feticide, there has been a huge difference in the sex ratio between women and men in states like Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir. These claims of our women empowerment will not be fulfilled until we can eradicate the problem of female feticide.

9) Domestic violence : Domestic violence is the biggest obstacle in the path of women empowerment. According to an estimate, in India, two out of every five women are victims of domestic violence.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

In India, very few women are able to work as compared to men. The reason of some women who are able to work is because of bad economic conditions of the family. It is also true that women have a negative relationship in marriage and employment. After marriage, women are not allowed to work. Most of the women who are able to work in some way work in agriculture, in which they work with their husbands, fathers or brothers. Very few women are employed in technical, management fields.

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

The Government of India runs a number of schemes for women's empowerment. Several schemes are being run by the Ministry of Women and Child Development Welfare and Government of India for the empowerment of Indian women. Some of these main schemes are mentioned below.

Following are the schemes made for women empowerment:

1. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Program:

I. The program was started in Panipat, Haryana on 22 January 2015 with the aim of promoting the survival, protection and education of the girl child.

II. The objective of this program is to make people aware of the declining sex ratio of girls.

III. The overall goal of this program is to prevent discrimination between boys and girls on the basis of gender, as well as to ensure the safety, education and acceptance of each girl child.

2. Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (Sabla):

I. The Central Government sponsored program was started on 1 April 2011.

II. This program is being run under the supervision of the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

III. Under this program, adolescent girls in the age group of 11-18 selected from 200 districts of India are being looked after under the 'Integrated Child Development Project'. Under this program, the beneficiaries are divided into two groups of 11-15 and 15-18 years old.

IV. The benefits to be received under this scheme are divided into two groups: (a) .Nutrition (cooked food is given to girls up to age 11-15) (b). Non-nutrition (girls between 15-18 years of age get iron pills and other medicines).

Welfare schemes launched by the Prime Minister for various sections of society

3. Indira Gandhi Maternity Support Scheme:

I. This maternity benefit program was started on October 28, 2010.

II. The main objective of this program is to provide financial assistance to pregnant and lactating mothers 19 years of age or older till the birth of the first two children.

III. Under this program, the government provides financial assistance of Rs. 6000 in two installments for better care of newborn and lactating mothers.

IV. This program is being run by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

4. Kasturba Gandhi Girls School Scheme:

I. The scheme was launched in 2004.

II. This scheme is being implemented from the year 2004 in all those backward areas where the rural female literacy rate is less than the national level.

III. Central and state governments will contribute 75% and 25% of the expenditure respectively in this scheme.

IV. The main goal of this scheme is to enroll 75% girls belonging to Scheduled Castes / Tribes / Extremely Backward Classes and Minorities and 25% families below the poverty line.

V. The plan mainly focuses on girls who are out of school and whose age is above 10 years.

5. Prime Minister Ujjwala Scheme:

I. The scheme was launched by Prime Minister Modi on 1 May 2016.

II. Under this scheme, poor women will get free LPG gas connections.

III. The main objective of the scheme is to promote women empowerment and protect their health.

IV. Through this scheme, the government wants to increase the role of women in keeping the environment clean by promoting the use of LPG in place of fossil fuels used in cooking in rural areas.

6. Swadhar Ghar Scheme:

I. The scheme was launched in 2001-02.

II. This scheme is being run through the 'Ministry of Women and Child Development'.

III. The scheme aims at the rehabilitation of women free from prostitution, released prisoners, widows, trafficked women, natural disasters, mentally challenged and destitute women.

IV. Under this scheme, facilities like food and shelter for widowed women, legal counseling for divorced women, medical facilities and vocational training for women are provided.

V. Through this scheme, women are given physical and mental strength to resume their lives so that they can stand on their feet.

List of various programs of employment and development in India

7. Training and Employment Program for Women (STEP) :

I. The scheme was started in 1986-87 as a central scheme.

II. This scheme is being run through the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

III. The main objective of the scheme is to make women worthy by developing their skills so that they can get the skills to become self-employed or entrepreneurs.

IV. The main goal of this scheme is to develop the skills of girls / women of 16 years or above.

V. Under this scheme, the grant is not directly passed on to the States / Union Territories and is directly delivered to the institution / organization or even to the NGO.

CONCLUSION

Given the way India has become one of the fastest growing economies, India needs to focus on achieving the goal of women empowerment in the near future. We need to understand this work of women empowerment because it is only through this that gender equality and economic progress can be achieved in the country.

Through the above mentioned schemes it becomes very clear that the government has been making all kinds of efforts for the overall development of women for a long time and this is the reason why many changes are seen in the roles of women in society

today. Today there will hardly be any area where women have not made their presence felt. It is also expected that positive results of Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao, Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Yojana and Rajiv Gandhi Yojana (Sabla) for the empowerment of adolescent girls will come to the fore in future.

Thus, if we want to empower Indian women in the true sense, then we have to remove these obstacles. We should encourage women to move freely and work outside the home. Women should be given freedom to take decisions in all kinds of subjects and women should also have complete control over all kinds of resources. In addition, the government should enact strict laws against domestic violence and harassment on women.

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