

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN THE RURAL AREAS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper is an attempt to analyse the status of women empowerment in India especially in the rural areas. Now a-days the women empowerment has become one of the most important issues of 21st century, but particularly women empowerment in rural areas is still an illusion of reality. Still the life of women's become victimized by various social evils. Empowerment of women is essentially the process of development of economic, social, political and cultural status of women in the society. It is the only way to protect them from all forms of violence and exploitation. The study reveals that the rural women of India are relatively disempowered and they enjoyed somewhat lower status than that of men in spite of many efforts undertaken by the government. It is found that acceptance of unequal gender status by women are still prevailing in the present day society of India. the study concludes that access to education, employment and political participation are only the enabling factors to empowerment of the rural women's.

Key Words: rural women, empowerment, gender, employment, society.

INTRODUCTION: Gender equality and women empowerment are recognised globally as a key element to achieve the progress in all areas of the society. Women empowerment is essentially the process of upliftment of economic, social and political status of women in a society. It is the process of guarding them against all forms of violence. Women empowerment involves the building up a society and a political environment, wherein women can breathe without the fears of oppression, exploitation, discrimination and the general feeling of persecution which goes with being a woman in a traditionally male dominated structure.

LIFE OF RURAL WOMEN IN INDIA

On the one hand women are worshipped as 'LAXMI MAA', without whose blessing work cannot be initiated. On the other hand, crimes against women and girls are increasing day by day. Women constitute about 50% of the world population, but India has shown disproportionate sex ratio where by female's population has been comparatively lower than males. When girls are born in most of the Indian families, they are not welcome, at times even by their mothers. They lament that a son could have been a real asset for the family. India is a country which attained independence in 1947, but the rural-urban divide and the rich-poor divide are still

plaguing India. 68.84% of the Indian population live in village. According to the 2011 census the population of rural women who are literate are 58.8%. There are several issues which are creating difficulties in the lives of women, like rising crime against women, kidnaping, rape etc.

Majority of the Indian rural women carry out multiple jobs from dawn to dusk in and outside their home, which are different from rural men. The inside job includes managing household activities like cooking, sweeping, washing (clothes and utensils), fetching water, collecting fuel wood, making cow dung cakes, feeding the children and all other household chores which are indirect income generating task. The outside jobs include working on their own farm which includes sowing, weeding, cutting grass from field, which needs back breaking employment on wages, and on other income generating activities.

Most of the rural women suffer not only from economic poverty but also from 'information poverty'. Rural women are vital and productive workers in India's national economy. There is statistical bias in under estimating the role of rural women in development. Women work for longer hours than men and contribute substantially to family income still they are not perceived as productive workers. They are silent workers who are struggling to complete her household duties. But still, in the family, many a times she is criticized for being sincere in her job. If the family members had to pay for the whole household work and the free labour she provides in the small agricultural land of the rural families, then her real worth could have been realized. She does this day-in and day-out compromising the family interest, but in a very few families, she gets the respect which she should get.

Constitutional provisions for empowering women in India:

- (a) Equality before law for all the persons of India (Art. 14)
- (b) Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth (Art. 15(1)).
- (c) However special provisions may be made by the state in favours of women and children [art. 15(3)]
- (d) Equality of opportunity for all citizens relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state (Art. 16)
- (e) State policy to be directed to securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood (art. 39(a); and equal pay for equal work for both men and women [Art.39(d)]
- (f) Provision to be made by the state for securing just and human conditions of work and maternity relief (Art 42)
- (g) Promotion of harmony by every citizen of India and renouncement of such practices which are derogatory to the dignity of women [Art. 51A(e)]

- (h) Reservation of not less than one- third of total seats for women in direct election to local government (panchayats and municipalities) [Art. 343(d) and 343(t)].

Government Schemes for the Women Empowerment

There are some Governmental schemes which was help to empower the women

1. Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana
2. Rajib Gandhi National Creche Scheme
3. Nari Shakti Puraskar
4. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme
5. One Stop Centre Scheme
6. Ujjawala Scheme
7. SWADHAR Greh

Despite the various Constitutional provision and Governmental schemes, the expected improvement in the status of women has not been possible yet. Basically the women in rural areas are discriminated and marginalized at every level of the society, whether it is social participation, political participation, economic participation, access to education, and also reproductive healthcare. Women are found to be economically very poor all over the rural areas. A few numbers of women are engaged in service and activities. So they need economic power to stand on their own legs on per with men.

Some Recommendations for Empowering the Rural Women:

- (a) The first and foremost priority should be given to the education to women, which is the grassroots problem. Hence, education for women has to paid special attention.
- (b) Awareness programmes need to be organized for creating awareness among women especially for the rural women.
- (c) Women should be allowed to work and should be provided enough safety and support to work. They should be provided with proper wages and work at par with men so that their status can be elevated in the society.
- (d) Another important effort required for the empowerment of rural women is to bring about an attitude change in both men and women. The feeling that women are meant for household

activities and rearing children needs to be replaced by feeling of equal partnership of men and women.

Conclusion:

Women are the key to sustainable development and quality of life in the family. When women are move forward the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves. It is essential as their thought and their value system 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.

The empowerment of women has become one of the most important issues of 21st century not only at the national level but also at the international level. Only the government initiatives would not be sufficient to achieve this 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 social, political and economic life of the country with a sense of equality.

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