
A STUDY ON ISSUE AND CHALLENGES OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT:

Women's Empowerment has been an issue of immense discussions and contemplation over the last few decades world-wide. Women empowerment refers to making women powerful to make them capable of deciding for themselves. Women have suffered a lot through the years at the hands of men. In earlier centuries, they were treated as almost non-existent. As if all the rights belonged to men even something as basic as voting. As the times evolved, women realized their power. There on began the revolution for women empowerment. As women were not allowed to make decisions for them, women empowerment came in like a breath of fresh air. It made them aware of their rights and how they must make their own place in society rather than depending on a man. It recognized the fact that things cannot simply work in someone's favour because of their gender. In fact, the status, employment and work performed by women in society is the indicator of a nation's overall progress. Without the participation of women the social, economic or political progress of a country will be stagnated. But the economic condition of women is very pathetic and this is more so in a country like India.

Keywords: Women, Empowerment, Issues, challenges

INRODUCTION

In the ancient Indian society women were adored and worshiped as goddesses. However in the middle age, the status of women got down to a great extent. Almost every country, no matter how progressive has a history of ill-treating women. Women are considered in the society only to perform duties like bring up children, caring every family member, and other household activities.

What Does Women Empowerment Mean?

Women Empowerment is the process that creates power in women to live a happy and respectable life in a society. Women are empowered when they are able to access opportunities

in a variety of fields such as in education, profession, lifestyle, etc., without any limitations and restrictions. It includes raising their status through education, awareness, literacy and training. It also includes the authority to take decisions. When a woman makes a crucial decision, she feels empowered.

Women's empowerment is the most crucial point for the overall development of a country. India is amongst the countries which are not safe for women. There are various reasons for this. Firstly, women in India are in danger of honor killings. Their family thinks its right to take their lives.

In addition, domestic violence is a major problem in India. The men beat up their wife and abuse them as they think women are their property. More so, because women are afraid to speak up. Similarly, the women who do actually work get paid less than their male. Moreover, the education and freedom scenario is very regressive here. Women are not allowed to pursue higher education, they are married off early. The men are still dominating women in some regions like it's the woman's duty to work for him endlessly.

Need for Women Empowerment

History says that women were ill-treated. The Sati Pratha in the ancient times to the girl child abortion in the present scenario, women continue facing such violence. Not only this, heinous crimes against women such as rape, acid attack, dowry system, honour killing, domestic violence, etc., are still happening in India.

Out of the total population, 50% of the population should consist of women. However, due to female foeticide practices, girl child numbers are decreasing sharply in India. It has also impacted the sex ratio in India. The literacy rate in girls is very low. Most of the girls are not even provided with primary education. Moreover, they are married early and made to raise children and shoulder only household work. They are not allowed to go out and are dominated by their husbands. Women are taken for granted by men as they are considered their property. Even at the workplace, women are discriminated against. They are paid less for the same work as compared to their male counterparts.

Steps to Empower Women:

Women can be empowered in various ways. It can be done through government schemes as well as on an individual basis. At the individual level, we should start respecting women and start giving them opportunities equal to men. We should promote and encourage them to take up jobs, higher education, business activities, etc.

The Government has come up with various schemes such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Yojana, Mahila-E-Haat, Mahila Shakti Kendra, Working Women Hostel, Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, etc. to empower women. Apart from these schemes, we as individuals can also empower women by abolishing social evils like the dowry system, child marriage. These small steps will change the situation of women in society and make them feel empowered.

Issues and Problems faced by Women in India:

There are various issues and problems which women generally face in the society in India. Some of the problems are mentioned and described below:

1. Selective abortion and female infanticide :It is the most common practice for years in India in which abortion of female fetus is performed in the womb of mother after the fetal sex determination and sex selective abortion by the medical professionals
2. Sexual harassment: It is the form of sexual exploitation of a girl child at home, streets, public places, transports, offices, etc by the family members, neighbors, friends or relatives.
3. Dowry and Bride burning. It is another problem generally faced by women of low or middle class family during or after the marriage. Parents of boys demand a lot of money from the bride's family in the name of dowry.
4. Disparity in education: The level of women education is less than men still in the modern age. Female illiteracy id higher in the rural areas. Where over 63% or more women remain unlettered.
5. Domestic violence it is like endemic and widespread disease affects almost 70% of Indian women according to the women and child development official. It is performed by the husband, relative or other family member.

6. Child Marriages Early marriage of the girls by their parents in order to be escaped from dowry. It is highly practiced in the rural India.

7. Inadequate nutrition in the childhood affects women in their later life especially women belonging to the lower middle class and poor families.

8. Low status in the family It is the abuse or violence against women.

9. Status of widows: Widows are considered as worthless in the Indian society. They are treated poorly and forced to wear white clothes.

Some of the major problems modern women are still facing are mentioned below:

1. Violence against women: Women are getting affected by the various violence almost every day which is disrupting the society. Women are being victims of violence at huge level day by day because of increasing crimes against women (according to the report of Crime Record Bureau of the Central Home Ministry). Woman is getting kidnapped at every 44 minutes, raped at every 47 minutes, 17 dowry deaths every day, etc. They may face violence within the family (dowry related harassment, death, marital rape, wife-battering, sexual abuse, deprivation of healthy food, female genital mutilation, etc) or outside the family (kidnapping, rape, murder, etc)

2. Gender discrimination: Women are considered as weaker section of the society than men and given less importance. Girls' children are becoming real victims of the discrimination. There are also discrimination of power and work between men and women in families of India. Gender discrimination affects women in the areas like nutrition, education, health, care, decline of female population, job, public life, etc.

- Problems of female education: Women education percentage is low in India especially in the rural areas because they are discouraged for higher education like professional and technical education.

- Problems related to unemployment: Women are getting more problems in searching their suitable work. They become more prone to the exploitation and harassment in the work areas

- Increasing Dowry system: is another huge women problem in the society which is increasing day by day. Women are ill-treated, man-handled, disrespected, tortured and suffer other

cruelties (violence, murder and suicide) because of the lack of dowry at the time of marriage. It causes degradation of women status to a great extent.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

Poverty Eradication

Since women comprise the majority of the population below the poverty line and are very often in situations of extreme poverty, given the harsh realities of intra-household and social discrimination, macro-economic policies and poverty eradication programmes will specifically address the needs and problems of such women. There will be improved implementation of programmes which are already women oriented with special targets for women. Steps will be taken for mobilization of poor women and convergence of services, by offering them a range of economic and social options, along with necessary support measures to enhance their capabilities.

Other supportive measures would be taken to ensure adequate flow of credit through financial institutions and banks, so that all women below poverty line have easy access to credit.

Women and Economy

Perspectives of Women's will be included in designing and implementing macro-economic and social policies by institutionalizing their participation in such processes.

Their contribution to socio-economic development as producers and workers will be recognized in the formal and informal sectors .and appropriate policies relating to employment and to her working conditions will be drawn up.

Globalization

Globalization has presented new challenges for the realization of the goal of women's equality. Where Benefits of the growing global economy have been unevenly distributed leading to wider economic disparities, the feminization of poverty, increased gender inequality through often deteriorating working conditions and unsafe working environment especially in the informal economy and rural areas. Strategies will be designed to enhance the capacity of women and empower them to meet the negative social and economic impacts, which may flow from the globalization process.

SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

The Government of India runs a number of schemes for women's empowerment. A number of 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.

- 1) Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Yojana
- 2) Women's Helpline Scheme
- 3) Ujjwala Scheme
- 4) Support to Training and Employment Program for Women (Step)
- 5) Mahila Shakti Kendra
- 6) Reservation for women in Panchayati Raj schemes

Health

A holistic approach to women's health which includes both nutrition and health services will be adopted and special attention will be given to the needs of women and the girl at all stages of the life cycle. The reduction of infant mortality and maternal mortality, which are sensitive indicators of human development, is a priority concern. Measures will be adopted that take into account the reproductive rights of women to enable them to exercise informed choices, their vulnerability to sexual and health problems together with endemic, infectious and communicable diseases such as malaria, TB, and water borne diseases as well as hypertension and cardio-pulmonary diseases. The social, developmental and health consequences of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases will be tackled from a gender perspective. To effectively meet problems of infant and maternal mortality, and early marriage the availability of good and accurate data at micro level on deaths, birth and marriages is required. Strict implementation of registration of births and deaths would be ensured and registration of marriages would be made compulsory.

Nutrition

the high risk of malnutrition and disease that women face at all the three critical stages viz., infancy and childhood, adolescent and reproductive phase, focused attention would be paid to meeting the nutritional needs of women at all stages of the life cycle. For educating woman. Widespread use of nutrition education would be made to address the issues of intra-household imbalances in nutrition and the special needs of pregnant and lactating women. Women's participation will also be ensured in the planning, superintendence and delivery of the system.

Rights of the Girl Child

All forms of discrimination against the girl child and violation of her rights shall be eliminated by undertaking strong measures should be taken within and outside the family. Discrimination of girl child should be eradicated to project a positive image of the girl child... There will be special emphasis on the needs of the girl child and to make investments in the areas relating to food and nutrition, health and education, and in vocational education for girl child.

Legislation/act

Some of the Acts passed by Parliament to empower women with legal rights are – Equal Remuneration Act 1976, Dowry Prohibition Act 1961, Immoral Trade (Prevention) Act 1956, Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act 1987, Prevention of Child Marriage Act 2006, Sex Testing Techniques (Controller and Prevention of Misuse) Act 1994, and Sexual Exploitation of Women at Workplace Act 2013.

Conclusion:

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

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