

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN INDIA: A REALITY OR A MYTH

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ABSTRACT

Women's' empowerment has become a significant topic of discussion in development and economics. Empowerment of Women can be defined as a multidimensional process which encourages women to realise and achieve their goals in all the spheres of life. It can also be defined as the ability of women to tackle problems and handle responsibilities, to secure their future and to overcome the obstacle. As responsible citizens of India, it is imperative on our part to contribute towards bringing equality between the status of men and women in India. We must ensure that a woman too can enjoy her human rights and fundamental rights with sense of pride, freedom and confidence. A woman's safety is not only her family's responsibility but the states as well. Despite my dangerous work I don't feel afraid but a woman's safety is always threatened. Today the incidence of rape and torture on women is taking precedence so if we are not safe how we can dream of being empowered. The evils of dowry and dowry related deaths is still being reported but it is not plausible for a young girl to remain unmarried to avoid dowry, the younger generation needs to take a stand. The paper is concluded by highlighting the role of literacy for women empowerment and issues of violence and crime against women in India. The researchers try to analyze the present scenario in Indian society with respect to safety and security of women and the major safety steps taken by the government for Women safety. The paper has been prepared on the basis of available literatures. The present research paper reveals that, on one hand, the literacy rate of females have increased considerably over the years but on the other hand, crime against women is increasing every year.

INTRODUCTION

Almost half of the population of the world is constituted by women but the dominance of men and their masculine ideology that they belong to a superior race has denied equal opportunities. The need of women empowerment arose because of the gender discrimination and male domination in the Indian society since ancient time. Women are being suppressed by their family members and society for many reasons. They have been targeted for many types of violence and discriminatory practices by the male members in the family and society in India and other countries as well. In the ancient Indian society, there was a custom of sati pratha, nagar vadhu system, dowry system, sexual violence, domestic violence, female infanticide, parada pratha, wife burning, sexual harassment at work place, child marriage, child labour, devadashi pratha, etc including other discriminatory practices. All such type of ill practices is because of male superiority complex and patriarchal system of the society

Keywords : Women Empowerment; Women Security; Crime; Indian Society; Women Protection

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Empowerment refers to a situation where the powerless gain greater control over resources and ideologies. It has been associated with terms such as autonomy, power, status and agency. The Indian constitution has very clearly given an equal level playing ground to women and has directed authorities to frame rules and regulations to safe guard the right. However, feminist scholars during 1970s as a way to challenge patriarchy, as a radical approach concerned with transforming power relations in favour of women's rights and gender equality It in 1980s (Batliwala, 1993, 2007) and as an individual process of self-transformation during 1990s (Batliwala, 1993; Kabeer, 1994; Rowlands, 1997; Sen, 1997). They highlight the complex reciprocal relationship between women's self-understanding (Kabeer, 1994) and capacity for self-expression (Sen, 1997), as well as women's access to and control over material resources. family, participation in decision making) and internal qualities (self awareness and self confidence) Human Development in South Asia (2000) (Mathew, 2003). United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has been re branded as the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the empowerment of Women.

OBJECTIVES

1. To know the need of Women Empowerment.
2. To assess the Awareness of Women Empowerment in India.
3. To analyze the Factors influencing the Economic Empowerment of Women.
4. To study the Government Schemes For Women Empowerment.
5. To identify the Hindrances in the Path of Women Empowerment.
6. To know the literay rate of India.

METHODOLOGY

This paper is basically descriptive and analytical in nature. In this paper an attempt has been taken to analyze the empowerment of in India. The data used in it is purely from secondary sources according to the need of this study.

TABLE-1 : LITERACY RATE IN INDIA (In percentage)

Year	Persons	Males	Females
1901	5.3	9.8	0.7
1911	5.9	10.6	1.1
1921	7.2	12.2	1.8
1931	9.5	15.6	2.9
1941	16.1	24.9	7.3
1951	16.7	24.9	7.3
1961	24.0	34.4	13.0
1971	29.5	39.5	18.7
1981	36.2	46.9	24.8
1991	52.1	63.9	39.2
2001	65.38	76.0	54.0
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46

Source: Census of India (2011)

Table-1 clearly shows that approximately 82.14% of males are literate as compared to only 65.46% of females. Illiteracy is one of the prime causes for inequality among the

status of men and women in India. Illiterate women are on the mercy of their husband or father. She is completely unaware about the various fundamental rights that constitution has bestowed her as a free citizen of India.

India has a culture where generally man is considered as the head of the family and his decision is considered as the final one. This culture is making the status and condition of women more miserable. Table-1 highlights that the literacy rate of women was very low as compared to their male counterparts before independence. It can be judged by the fact that the literacy rate of women has risen from 0.7% to 7.3% during the first five decades of the 20th century, while the literacy rate of men have risen from 9.8% to 24.9% during the first five decades of the 20th century. After India attained independence, the literacy rate rose substantially for men as well as women. Post independence the literacy rate for men has increased almost three and half times, from 25% in 1951 to 82% in 2011 whereas for women it has increased by almost four times, from 16% in 1951 to 65% in 2011. From the above table, it can be concluded that, still there is a significant difference between the literacy rate of men and women in India we need to change our mindset to bring equality in education for men and women. The higher rate of illiteracy is leading to dependence of women on men and because of this they take a back seat in the family. The lack of education opportunities is the prime cause for women's exploitation as they are not even aware about their fundamental rights bestowed by the constitution of India. Only literacy can help women to understand the constitutional and legislative provisions of India that are made to strengthen them.

Thus, it is extremely vital to provide education to women and encourage them to handle the responsibilities in the family along with men on all the forefronts. There is an important role of education in empowering women and helping them in accomplishing their goals in all the spheres of life.

Government Schemes For Women Empowerment

The Government programmes for women development began as early as 1954 in India but the actual participation began only in 1974. At present, the Government of India has over 34 schemes for women operated by different department and ministries. Some of these are as follows;

1. Rastria Mahila Kosh (RMK) 1992-1993
2. Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY) October, 1993.

Proceedings of DGHE, Haryana approved National Seminar on Gender Sensitive Issues and Women Empowerment

3. Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY) 1995.
4. Women Entrepreneur Development programme given top priority in 1997-98.
5. Mahila Samakhya being implemented in about 9000 villages.
6. Swayasjdha.
7. Swa Shakti Group.
8. Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women(STEP).
9. Swalamban.
10. Crèches/ Day care centre for the children of working and ailing mother.
11. Hostels for working women.
12. Swadhar.
13. National Mission for Empowerment of Women.
14. Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) (1975),
15. Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescence Girls (RGSEAG) (2010).
16. The Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers.
17. Integrated Child Protection scheme (ICPS) (2009-2010).
18. Dhanalakahmi (2008).
19. Short Stay Homes.
20. Ujjawala (2007).
21. Scheme for Gender Budgeting (XI Plan).
22. Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP).
23. Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSEM).
24. Prime Minister's Rojgar Yojana (PMRY).
25. Women's Development Corporation Scheme (WDCS).
26. Working Women's Forum.
27. Indira Mahila Kendra.

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28. Mahila Samiti Yojana.
29. Khadi and Village Industries Commission.
30. Indira Priyadarahini Yojana.
31. SBI's Sree Shaki Scheme.
32. SIDBI's Mahila Udyam Nidhi Mahila Vikas Nidhi.
33. NGO's Credit Schemes.
34. National Banks for Agriculture and Rural Development's Schemes

The efforts of government and its different agencies are ably supplemented by nongovernmental organizations that are playing an equally important role in facilitating women empowerment. Despite concerted efforts of governments and NGOs there are certain gaps. Of course we have come a long way in empowering women yet the future journey is difficult and demanding.

Conclusions

The status of women in modern India is a sort of a paradox, on one hand she is at the peak of ladder of success; on the other hand she is mutely suffering the violence afflicted on her. Two Indian women Kalpana Chawla and Sunita Williams have made their mark in the whole universe by flying to space; still women education receives little attention in India, especially in rural areas. As compared with past women in modern times have achieved a lot but in reality they have to still travel a long way. Women have left the secured domain of their home and are now in the battlefield of life, fully armoured with their talent. They had proven themselves, but as education is concerned, the gap between women and men is severe. While 82.14% of adult men are educated, only 65.46% of adult women are known to be literate in India. An illiterate women is at the mercy of her husband or father, she also does not know that this is not the way of life for women across the world.

Violence against women in its various forms is a violation of human rights, the very nature of which deprives women of their ability to enjoy fundamental freedoms. It is a serious obstacle to equality between women and men and perpetuates inequality. Violence against women intersects with multiple forms of discrimination. While violence against women is universal, its manifestations and women's personal experiences of it are

shaped by factors such as economic status, race, class, religion, etc. Violence against women remains hidden in the culture of silence. Thus, it can be concluded that, though there has been a substantial increase in the literacy rate of women post independence but still there is a huge gap between the literacy rate of men and women in India and it's all because of the mindset that we have for a girl child in our society. As far as safety of Women is concerned the data over the years shows that all the crimes are on an increasing.

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