

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

Sapna Gupta

Research Scholar, IEC University, Baddi, Himachal Pradesh,

Mail Id: anjligupta2908@gmail.com

Abstract:

This paper attempts to analyse the need of Women Empowerment in India and highlights the methods and schemes of Women Empowerment. Empowerment is the main process of social development which can enable women to participate, in the economic, political and social sustainable development of the rural communities. Today the empowerment of women has become one of the most important concerns of 21st century but practically women empowerment is still an illusion of reality. Empowerment of women is essentially the process of upliftment of economic, social and political status of women, the traditionally underprivileged ones in the society. We observe in our day-to-day life how women become victimized by various social evils. Women Empowerment is the vital instrument to expand women's ability to have resources and to make strategic life choices. It is the process of guarding them against all forms of violence. The study is based on purely from secondary sources. Women of India are relatively disempowered and they enjoy somewhat lower status than that of men in spite of many efforts undertaken by Government. It is found that acceptance of unequal gender norms by women are still prevailing in the society. The study concludes by an observation that providing basic facilities and implementing various schemes are enabling factors to Women Empowerment.

Key Words: Women Empowerment, Basic rights, Education, Health, Socioeconomic Status, scheme implementation.

Introduction:

Women empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender economic strength of individuals and communities of women. Women are an integral part of every economy. All round development and harmonious growth of a nation would be possible only when women are considered as equal partners in progress

with men. Women's empowerment in India is heavily dependent on many different variables that include geographical location (urban / rural) educational status social status (caste and class) and age. Policies on Women's empowerment exist at the national, state and local (Panchayat) levels in many sectors, including health, education, economic opportunities, gender-based violence and political participation. Women empowerment enables autonomy and control over their lives. The empowered women become agents of their own development, able to exercise choices to set their own agenda and be strong enough to challenge their subordinate position in the society. Women particularly in rural areas have proportionately least possessions, skills, education, social status, leadership qualities and capabilities for mobilization, which determines the degree of decision making and power, and as a result, their dependence on men increases. They have been confined to the four walls of the household, overburdened with domestic works and controlled of their mobility and personal freedoms by the men of the household since time immemorial. So, they have lagged behind in the fields of education, skill development, employment and as a result, their work is greatly undervalued in economic terms. Empowerment of women is essentially the process of upliftment of economic, social and political status of women, the traditionally underprivileged ones, in the society. It is the process of guarding them against all forms of violence. The empowerment of women include creating awareness and consciousness about situations of women, discrimination of women, rights of women, opportunities to the women and importance of gender equality , organizing a group collectively, group identity and group pressure; capacity building and skill development, ability to plan, to decide, to organize, ability to manage, ability to carry out activities, ability to deal with people and institutions in the world around them, participation in decision making at home, in the community and in the society, and access and control over resources, over means of productivity and over distribution . Empowerment is the process of changing power relations in favour of those at the lower levels of a hierarchy. Empowerment of women implies process by which women's power of self-realization is promoted and reinforced. They develop the capacity for self-reliance out crossing the relationship subordination on account of gender, social and economic status and the role in the family and society. It encompasses the ability to make choices, control resources and enjoy participatory relationship within family and community. To achieve these objectives, empowerment of women also implies their ability to participate in it and also lead social movements to remove obstacles in their progress towards their goal. Women empowerment involves the building up of a society,

a political environment, wherein women can breathe without the fear of oppression, exploitation, apprehension, discrimination and the general feeling of persecution which goes with being a woman in a traditionally male dominated structure. This ensures their full participation in every aspect of social and national development. This participation is necessary to increase the productivity level of women. Thus, women's empowerment would enlarge the choices and productivity levels of individual women and the collective contribution of women groups.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To know the need of Women Empowerment.
2. To study the Government Schemes for Women Empowerment
3. To assess the Awareness of Women Empowerment in India.
4. To identify the misconcepts coming in the way of Women Empowerment
5. To utilize the Govt. schemes properly for the benefit of Women Empowerment
6. To understand the gender discrimination among society.
7. To provide useful suggestions for the development of social balance.

Research Methodology:

This paper is basically descriptive and analytical in nature. In this paper an attempt has been taken to analyse the empowerment of women in India. The data used in it is purely from secondary sources according to the need of this study. Present Situation of Women in India, being equal to their male counterparts is still a far cry for Indian women. Not only are they marginal as public figures average Indian women can hardly take decisions at home or outside. In the last census 2011 sex ratio of India is 940 and literacy rate among women are 65.46% as compared to the men 80%. The literacy rate and sex ratio in India has always been matter of concern because in both the cases our women population is behind the race with respect to male population.

Why Need of Women Empowerment?

The status of women in India particularly in rural areas needs to address the issue of empowering women. About 66% of the female population in rural area is unfertilized. This is mainly due to existing social customs. In agriculture and Animal care the women contribute 90% of the total workforce. Women constitute almost half of the population,

perform nearly 2/3 of its work hours, receive 1/10th of the world's income and own less than 1/ 100th the world property. In the past “Vedas Purana” of Indian culture, women were being worshiped such as LAXMI MAA, goddess of wealth; SARSWATI MAA, for wisdom; DURGA MAA for power. Among the world's 900 million illiterate people, 70% of people living in poverty are women. Lower sex ratio i.e., 933, only 10% seats in World Parliament and 6% in National Cabinet are held by women. The existing studies show that the women are relatively less healthy than men though belong to same class. They constitute less than 1/7th of the administrators and managers in developing countries. Young girls are considered as a big burden in the family. Rape cases are increasing in the modern times which force us to take an initiative about the security of the female population.

Ways to Empower Women:

- Providing education in every field
- Change in women's control over Decision making
- Providing women police stations for their complaints
- Changes in women's mobility and social interaction
- Providing separate hospitals for their check-up Changes in women's labour patterns
- Providing separate schools/colleges for their safety
- Providing equal rights
- Providing separate transport system
- Changes in women's access to and control over resources
- Self-employment and self-help group
- Providing minimum needs like Nutrition, Health, Sanitation and Housing
- Providing equal opportunity in sports and other activities
- Encouraging women to develop in their fields they are good at and make a career

Government Schemes for Women Empowerment:

Government of India implemented various poverty alleviation and rural development programmes. These programmes have special components for women empowerment. At

present, the Government of India has over 37 schemes for women operated by different department and ministries. The implementation of these programmes/schemes is monitored specifically with reference to coverage of women.

Some of these are as follows: -

1. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)
2. Mahaila Samkhya being implemented in about 9000 villages.
3. (Aajeevika) and the Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY).
4. Scheme for Gender Budgeting (XI Plan).
5. SIDBI's Mahila Udyam Nidhi Mahila Vikas Nidhi.
6. NGO's Credit Schemes.
7. Crèches/ Day care centre for the children of working and ailing mother.
8. National Mission for Empowerment of Women.
9. Rastria Mahila Kosh (RMK) 1992-1993
10. Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescence Girls (RGSEAG) (2010).
11. Swalamban.
12. Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP).
13. Integrated Child Protection scheme (ICPS) (2009-2010).
14. Swadhar.
15. Swayasjdha.
16. National Banks for Agriculture and Rural Development's Schemes
17. Khadi and Village Industries Commission.
18. Hostels for working women.
19. Ujjawala (2007).
20. Working Women's Forum
21. Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY) October,1993.
22. Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP).

23. Swa Shakti Group.
24. Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers.
25. Short Stay Homes.
26. Women's Development Corporation Scheme (WDCS).
27. Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY) 199517.
28. Dhanalakahmi (2008).
29. Women Entrepreneur Development programme given top priority in 1997-98.
30. Mahila Samiti Yojana.
31. SBI's Sree Shakti Scheme.
32. Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY) 199517.
33. Indira Mahila Kendra.
34. Indira Priyadarahini Yojana.
35. Prime Minister's Rojgar Yojana (PMRY).
36. Beti padao beti bacho yojana.

Reasons for the Empowerment of Women:

Government of India took so many initiatives to empower the women in India. But women 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 India. A few women are engaged in services and other activities. So, they need an equal economic power to stand side by side to the men. There are so many cases of rape, kidnapping of girl, dowry harassment and so on. For these reasons, they require empowerment of all kinds in order to protect themselves and to secure their purity and dignity. Other hand, it has been observed that women are found to be less literate than men. Thus, increasing education among women is of very important in empowering them. A big proportion of women in rural India are physically so weak who work more than the food they consume. This discrimination needs address the empowerment of weaker section of the society to make them powerful and respectful. Another problem is

that workplace harassment of women. To sum up, women empowerment cannot be possible unless women come with and help to self-empower themselves. There is a need to formulate reducing feminized poverty, promoting education of women, prevention, and elimination of violence against women and creating the basic assets to empower the women population of the nation.

Conclusion:

From the study we concluded that in the present scenario the condition of the Indian women is not as good as it should be and there is a need to accomplish such steps which will help to accommodate the rights and the basic needs of women population. Thus, the attainment in the field of income, employment and in educational front, the scenario of women empowerment seems to be comparatively poor and needs to be check. Because with the empowerment of women, the elimination of gender discrimination and the creation of a balance of power between men and women will not only be beneficial to women, but society as a whole shall benefit politically, economically and culturally. The greatest need of an hour is change of social attitude to women. “When women move forward the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves”. It is essential as their thought and their value systems lead the development of a good family, good society and ultimately a good nation. The Empowerment of Women has become one of the most important concerns of 21st century not only at national level but also at the international level. Society must provide equal opportunity to both of the sexes for the upliftment of society and for the well-being of society as a whole. Women represent half the world's population and gender inequality exists in every nation on the planet. Until women are given the same opportunities that men are, entire societies will be destined to perform below their true potentials. The best way of empowerment is perhaps through inducting women in the mainstream of development. Government initiatives alone would not be sufficient to achieve this goal because 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. Society must take initiative to create a climate in which they can get the proper benefit from the schemes made by Government for the women development. There should be 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.

References:

1. Dandikar, Hemalata. (1986). Indian Women's Development: Four Lenses. South Asia Bulletin, VI (1), 2- 10. Delhi.
2. Kabeer, Naila. (2003). Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought. London, Verso, Pp-69-79, 130-136.
3. Sharma, S.L. (2000). Empowerment without Antagonism; A Case for reformulation of Women's Empowerment Approach, Journal of Indian Sociological Society, Vol.49, No.1, Delhi, India.
4. Peters, M., & Marshall, J. (1991). Education and empowerment: Postmodernism and the critique of humanism. Education and Society, 9(2).
5. Handy, F., & Kassam, M. (2004). Women's empowerment in rural India. Paper presented at the ISTR conference, Toronto Canada.
6. Lennie, J. (2002). Rural women's empowerment in a communication technology project: some contradictory effects. Rural Society, 12(3), 224-245.
7. Christabell, P.J., (2009). 'Women Empowerment through Capacity Building – The Role of Microfinance', Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi.
8. Annapurna Nautiyal, Himanshu Bourai. (2009). 'Women Empowerment in Garhwal Himalayas: Constraints and Prospects', Kalpaz Publications, Delhi.
9. Uma Devi (2000). 'Women's Equality in India – A Myth or Reality', Discovery Publishing House, New Delhi.
10. Harriet B. Presser, Gita Sen, (2003). 'Women's Empowerment and Demographic Processes', Oxford University Press, New York.
11. Dr. Dasarati Bhuyan (2006). “Empowerment of Indian Women: A challenge of 21st Century” Orissa Review.
12. Kishor, S. and Gupta, K. (2009). Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in India, NATIONAL FAMILY HEALTH SURVEY (NFHS-3) INDIA, 2005-06, International Institute for Population Sciences, Deonar, Mumbai.