

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT- ISSUES AND CHALLENGES BEFORE THE NATION

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Introduction:

After independence of India, the constitution makes and the national leaders recognized the equal social position of women with men. The concept of empowerment flows from the power. From the aspect of empowerment, it is understood that empowerment of women is much wider task to achieve. Therefore, there is a need for the development of all the aspects in a balanced way, otherwise the prospect of empowerment of women will remain a mere illusion rather than to become a tangible reality. In addition state patronage and legitimacy were needed to achieve it speedily.

The constitution of India made a deliberate radical departure from the inherited social system, by granting to women equal social and political status. Constitutional equal status meant that every adult female, whatever her social position or accomplishment had the opportunity to function as a citizen and individual partner in the task of nation building. With the exception of cultural empowerment of women, some of the aspects of women empowerment are given importance such as, full partnership in democracy (political empowerment); the education of girls (social empowerment) the education of gender barriers in empowerment (economic empowerment) and land rights and legal machinery (legal empowerment).¹

Significance of the study: Women empowerment is very essential for the development of the society. A woman in general has been forced to occupy a secondary place in relation to men. Inequality between men and women in the society generates lots of problems which become a big barrier in the way to success of nation. It is the birth right of a woman to get equal value to the men in the society. There is the need to bring empowerment of women and every woman needs to be aware about their rights from their own end. The need for women empowerment is felt because of the status they have in society since the beginning.

Now a day there is a need to redefine the status of women in the society. The constitution of India gives the women status equal to men. Women have the ability to judge for them and take right decisions. To sustain any level of empowerment women have to be educated to be aware of their rights and privileges in a modern society. It is only when they become aware of their status in society that they will be able to take full advantage of the concessions offered to them as a corrective measure. Gender equality implies that in society women and men enjoy the same opportunities, outcomes, rights and obligations in all spheres of life. Educational empowerment of women is more essential in recent days. It means enabling women to grab the knowledge, skills and self confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process. Therefore, this is the significant concept to study in the research manner. And this is why we need to study status and to empower women.

Present Status of women:

The position and status of women in society has been changing since beginning. A woman in olden days had to depend upon her parents, her husband and her sons for the whole of her life. But in recent days the woman broke out the four walls of her house and started to work in every field ahead in life. She is become free as a bird. Now she is not depending on others. Education has raised her status in the society. But it does not meant that she wants to remain alone or unmarried. She likes men's company and to work with them at equal stage. But this is not happening everywhere in all over the society. Many women are living the backward life even today. They are having economically very poor and boys. And that's why there is the slow growth of women's education. And this is the big problem before the nation which is facing in recent time.

There is the significant difference between economically or educationally empowered women and vice versa. Therefore the central and state government is trying to fill up the gap of the same by giving various welfare facilities through the provisions for women empowerment.

Problems Facing Women in the Society:

The total personality of women was obliterated and with historical compulsions of time and the resultant changed the social norms; they came to be treated as second grade human and were to be convinced that this was their ultimate destiny. Result was another long spell of deprivation of economic and social freedom and denial of individual efflorescence followed invariably by maltreatment and repression.

Concept of Women Empowerment:

The concept of women empowerment appears to be the outcome of several important critiques and debates generated but the women's movement throughout the world. The source of women empowerment can be traced to the interaction between feminism and the concept of popular education. Feminist popular educators therefore evolved their own distinct approach, pushing beyond merely building awareness and toward organizing the poor to struggle actively for change.

Empowerment can be defined as means of creating a social environment in which one can make decisions and makes choices either individually or collectively for social transformation. In other words empowerment is the process of enabling or authorizing individual to think, take action and control work in an autonomous way. It is the Process by which one can gain control over one's destiny and the circumstances of one's lives. In short, empowerment means individuals acquiring the power to think and act freely, exercises choice and fulfill their potential as their full and equal members of society.²

Women's empowerment has become the significant issue of discussion in development process. Empowerment of women refers to the ability for women to enjoy their right to control and benefits from the resources assets, income and their own time, as well as the ability to manage risks and improve their economic status and their well being.³

Factors Affecting Women Empowerment:

There many things to influence to the empowerment of women. Some of these are: Social legislation, woman education, professional opportunities, reservation policies, political leadership, work participation, human rights act and provisions regarding women, health care facilities, government provisions for women and welfare schemes etc. The human person is considered to be the most important factor in the phenomenon of women empowerment.

The provision of reservation for women basically owes its origin to two important factors, one international, i.e., the worldwide stress on inclusion of women in political decision-making and the other internal, i.e., the organized independent movements of women in India since late 1970. These were the principal impetus underpinning enhancement of the numerical representation of women in high level policy-making structures to transform the traditional notions about gender role in the society, discrimination arising from such notions, injustice and violence.⁴

Economic Empowerment and Gender Equality:

Gender equality in an economic sense requires equal access to resources (credit, market opportunities, education etc.) and equal engagement in all aspects of the economic activity. It is only when the conditions and the terms of the economic activity are the same for both men and women that the returns generated are equal. Moreover, whatever differences exist in market and transaction costs as between the genders must not bias net returns.

Economic Empowerment based on economic activity is a step towards gender equality, but it is not synonymous with it. Nevertheless, the underlying assumption of many interventions targeting women is that engagement in economic activity will translate into economic empowerment.

Empowerment of women is associated with cleaner business and government, and better governance. Specifically, the greater their involvement in public life, the lower the level of corruption, even in countries with the same income, civil liberties, education, and legal institution.

Impact of Education on Women Empowerment:

Education is the key factor for women empowerment, development and welfare. Women's education increases the income of the women and leads to growth in GDP. Educating girls leads to a number of social benefits including many related to women empowerment. Therefore the modern education and facilities have influenced much much in women empowerment. But still rural.⁵

Role of Government in Women Empowerment:

The government has to play an important role in laying down policies aimed at economic development of the women, with great amount of flexibility built in such policies in order to take care of gender differences. The government has some policy formulation for empowerment but they should now weave credit and credit reforms as important components in their programmes. Conscious policies have to be drawn for providing entrepreneurship development to eligible women, especially in areas where there are social taboos coming in the way of taking up self employment/ wage employment.⁶

The government of India made structural provisions to uplift the socioeconomic condition of women through a policy of reservation or protective discrimination. To enable the women to secure professional jobs a number of concessions are given to them; some of these are relaxation in age, payable fee, standard of suitability, experience and qualification, etc.

The National Commission for women has in the last few years introduced several new bills in the parliament from time to time towards eradication of many social evils.

Constitutional Provisions for Women Empowerment:

Constitution of India has made special provisions for the welfare of women. Article 50 of the constitution provides special status and protection of women and to these extents equates them with those who belong to the deprived section of society. The various laws were enacted to raise the social status of women.

After independence all out efforts are being made to promote the welfare of women. The new constitution declared India to be a sovereign Democratic Republic based on four pillars of Justice, Liberty, Equality and fraternity. Article 14 of the constitution confers equal rights on both sexes, through the state could make any special provision for women. Article 14, 15 and 16 relating to Fundamental Rights guarantee to all citizens, irrespective of sex equality before the law, equality of opportunity in matters of public employment. It is in the light of these provisions in the constitution that social legislations have been passed to improve the status of women and rights.

Conclusion:

By this study this is to be examined that the life and conditions of women to assess their status in relation to various changes that are taking place at home and in society. Her role performance, decision making in important family matters and the extent of her participation in various activities, both inside and outside family does matter.

Finally it is to be concluded that the most essential component of women's empowerment is found to be education. It leads to improved economic growth and an awareness of factors that disempowered women. Their professions, political leaderships and risk taking ability also influence on their economic growth and living status.

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