Women Empowerment in India: Issues and Challenge

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Abstract: *Women empowerment has been thoroughly discussed in the last two decades it refers to increasing and improving the social, economic, political and legal strength of the women, to ensure equal-right to the women. Women are significant contributors to the growing economy. Women empowerment is essential for the achievement of sustainable development. The full participation and partnership of both women and man is required in productive and reproductive life. In all parts of the world, women are facing threats to their lives, health and well-being because of being overburdened with work and of their lack of power and influence. The current scenario of women empowerment is very disbalance across the various segment of the society. Literacy plays a crucial role in promoting women's right, achieving empowerment, enhancing overall livelihood and social status of women. Various measures have been taken by ways of enacting laws and implementing policies to empower women, but still there is a big gap that needs to be filled by way of implement more stronger policies and laws and creating an environment of awareness.*

"It is impossible to think about the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is impossible for a bird to fly on only one wing." - ***Swami Vivekanand***

Introduction

Women constitute nearly 50 percent total population of the world, yet they are the biggest excluded category in all spheres of life. They perform 2/3 work, earn only 1/3 of the remuneration and own only 10 percent of the property. Because of traditional bias and gender discrimination, most of the women live in unacceptable conditions of poverty. This is due to the absence of economic opportunities and autonomy, lack of economic resources, and lack of education and health facilities. They have no voice in the development and the decision-making process. Thus, immediate attention is required to ensure equal opportunities and the practical realization of rights through education and empowerment. In the present unit, we are going to discuss the concept of empowerment and, the role of education in empowering women and girls. We also see the need for developing life skills and initiatives of the Government as well as non-governmental organisations in empowering girls and women.

Empowerment

In the term Empowerment, the prefix 'em' to power gives the meaning 'to make',' cause to be'. Thus the word empowerment is defined as to make powerful. The idea of power is at the root of the term empowerment. Power operates in four different ways:

- ➤ **Power over:** Here the power involves a relationship of domination or subordination between individuals or groups.

- ➤ **Power to:** The power gives decision-making authority, power to solve problems and can be creative and enabling.

- ➤ **Power within**: This refers to self-confidence, self-awareness and assertiveness.

- ➤ **Power with:** This power involves people organizing with a common purpose to achieve collective goals.

The kinds of power described above as power to, power with and power within can be developed as alternatives to power over.In other words, Empowerment involves challenging all forms of oppression.

Concept of Women's Empowerment

Women's Empowerment is conceptualized as a process of redistribution of social power and control over resources in favour of women. The resources are categorized into four, namely natural resources such as land, water and forest, intellectual resources such as information, and financial resources such as money and property. In the process of empowerment, women get control over these resources such as information, and knowledge, and human resources such as money and property. In the process of empowerment, women get control over these resources and challenge the power structures that cause their subordination. Thus it enables them to gain greater access to knowledge and fiscal resources, greater autonomy in personal matters, and to share power in domestic and political spheres of life. Empowerment is a dynamic process which aims at women's liberation, freedom of choice and equality in all spheres of life. Ultimately with these, women bring change in their lives.

Problems of Women's Empowerment:

- Social evils and outdated conventions.

- Uneducated countrymen and their disregard for the importance of education.

- Poverty and undeveloped conditions.

- Lack of girls schools and women-teachers.

- Defective curriculum.

- Indifference of government and defective educational administration.

- Wastage.

Way to Achieve Women's Empowerment:

- Changes in women's social mobility and social interaction.

- Offering Education that builds self-opinion of women and self-confidence among them & develops them.

- Changes in women's control over resources, and decision-making.

- Promoting self-employment through beliefs& training.

- Providing least needs like, nutrition, health, sanitation, lean, housing

- Also, society should change the mentality of word women and encourage women to develop themselves.

Legal provisions for Women's Empowerment in India:

- The Indian Succession Act, 1925

- The Child Marriage Restraint Act,1929

- The Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948

- The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955

- The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956.

- The Maternity Benefit Act 1961

- The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961

- The Indian Divorce Act, 1969

- The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act 1971

- Relevant provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973

- Equal Remuneration Act 1976

- Family Courts Act, 1984

- Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986

- The Commission of Sati (Prevention)Act, 1987

- Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

Government initiatives and policies:

After independence, the Government of India appointed several committees and commissions to review the system of education and to recommend suggestions. Based on their recommendations it made various provisions for girls such as free education, free learning materials, scholarships, hostel facilities, transport facilities, appointing female teachers and developing gender-sensitive curricula so on.

The Government formulated two important policies which have a direct bearing on girls' education. They are the National Policy on Education (NPE, 1986) and the National Policy on Empowerment of Women (2001).

Government Scheme for Women Empowerment:

The Centre would implement an umbrella scheme for the protection and empowerment of women at an estimated expenditure of `1,800 crore during the 12th Five-Year Plan. The Union Ministry of Women and Child Development has moved a proposal for this scheme to the Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC).

Conclusion:

India's journey on women's empowerment and gender-equal opportunity started when it became an independent state in 1947. Thus, in short, the Millennium Development Goal on women's empowerment can be realized in India only when traditional practices like female infacticide, dowry deaths, honour killings by khap panchayats, domestic violence, or sexual abuse are eliminated. It is only then that women's empowerment can become a reality.

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