

Women empowerment through education in India since independence

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Abstract

Empowerment means the upliftment of the groups or community socially, economically and politically through various means like political, economic, social and educational participation. In our country Gender equality is, first and foremost, a human right. A woman is entitled to live in dignity and in freedom from want and from fear. Empowering women is also an indispensable tool for advancing development and reducing poverty. Empowered women contribute to the health and productivity of whole families and communities and to improved prospects for the next generation. Gender gap exists regarding access to education and employment. Household decision making power and freedom of movement of women vary considerably with their age, education and employment status. It is found that acceptance of unequal gender norms by women are still prevailing in the society. The objectives of this research paper is to understand the problem and perspective of Women Empowerment, and attempt to analyze the status of women empowerment in India using various indicators like women's household decision making power, legal Policies for Women Empowerment, Role of Judiciary and also Awareness.

Keywords: women empowerment, education, human right

Introduction

In the arena of personal development, empowerment forms an apogee of many a system of self-realisation or of identity reformation. The concept of personal development is seen as important by many employers, with emphasis placed on continuous learning, increased self-awareness and emotional intelligence. Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social or economic strength of individuals and communities. It often involves the empowered developing confidence in their own capacities. Empowerment is both a multidimensional social process and a multidimensional social outcome that involves individuals and groups gaining control over events in their lives and improving their life circumstances.

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Data and methodology

The proposed study mainly is descriptive in nature. It humourlessly based on secondary data and information which is collected from the concerned sources as per need of the research. The relevant books, documents of various ministries/departments and national and international organizations, articles, papers and web-sites are used in this study.

Empowering Women through Education

"Education is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process." ICPD Programme of Action, paragraph 4.2. Education is important for everyone, but it is especially significant for girls and women. This is true not only because education is an entry point to other opportunities, but also because the educational

achievements of women can have ripple effects within the family and across.

Closing the gender gap in education is a development priority. The 1994 Cairo Consensus recognized education, especially for women, as a force for social and economic development. Universal completion of primary education was set as a 20-year goal, as was wider access to secondary and higher education among girls and women. Closing the gender gap in education by 2015 is also one of the benchmarks for the Millennium Development Goals.

Political Empowerment

Throughout much of the world, women's equality is undermined by historical imbalances in decision-making power and access to resources, rights, and entitlements for women. Either by law or by custom, women in many countries still lack rights to: Own land and to inherit property, obtain access to credit, attend and stay in school. Earn income and move up in their work, free from job discrimination. Moreover, women are still widely under-represented in decision-making at all levels, in the household and in the public sphere.

Social Empowerment of Women

Under the social empowerment of women steps needs to be taken to improve the health status of women, reduce maternal mortality especially in the areas which do not have good medical facilities. A programme for checking the spread of sexually transmitted diseases like HIV / AIDS and infections / communicable diseases like T.B. need to be launched.

The problem in the country is serious about the women belonging to disadvantaged groups. They are the most exploited lot. The Social activist should keep a vigil on the atrocities committed on women belonging to weaker sections and help them to fight the legal battle for obtaining justice. Schemes need to be introduced for helping women who are

victims of marital violence, who are deserted and those engaged in sex professions

Empowerment is probably the totality of the following or similar capabilities:

- Having decision-making power of their own
- Having access to information and resources for taking proper decision
- Having a range of options from which you can make choices (not just yes/no, either/or.)
- Ability to exercise assertiveness in collective decision making
- Having positive thinking on the ability to make change
- Ability to learn skills for improving one's personal or group power.
- Ability to change others' perceptions by democratic means

History

In Ancient India

Few texts exist that specifically deal with the role of women an important exception is the *Stri Dharma Paddhati* of Tryambakayajvan, an official at Thanjavur c. 1730. The text compiles strictures on women's behaviour dating back to the Apastamba sutra (c. 4th century BCE). The opening verse goes:

मुख्यो धर्मः स्मृतिषु विहितो भर्तृशुश्रुषानम हि

Women are enjoined to be of service to their husbands.

In spite of these conditions, women often became prominent in the fields of politics, literature, education and religion. Razia Sultana became the only woman monarch to have ever ruled Delhi. The Gond queen Durgavati ruled for fifteen years before losing her life in a battle with Mughal emperor Akbar's general Asaf Khan in 1564. Chand Bibi defended Ahmednagar against the powerful Mughal forces of Akbar in the 1590s. Jehangir's wife Nur Jehan effectively wielded imperial power, and was recognised as the real power behind the Mughal throne. The Mughal princesses Jahanara and Zebunnissa were well-known poets, and also influenced the ruling powers. Shivaji's mother, Jijabai, was queen regent because of her ability as a warrior and an administrator. Tarabai was another female Maratha ruler. In South India, many women administered villages, towns, and divisions, and ushered in new social and religious institutions.

Women in independent India

Though the foundation for political participation of women was laid down during the nationalist movement, there was laid down during the nation movement, there was no follow up or combined effort to broaden the political base by incorporating women into poetical processes after independence. India is the first independent nation that provide right to franchise so that women can participate in decision making process and can raise the voice for their particular interest.

The women's reservation bill

The current minimum reservation of one-third positions in panchayats for women was introduced by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment in 1992. Introducing the bill for this amendment, the then minister of state for rural development had said, we have provided for at least one-third of the total seats at every level. Considering the fact that

women constitute nearly half the population, even this reservation can be considered inadequate; but the honourable members will agree that it is significantly more than what has been attempted so far in most of the states (Lok Sabha Debates 1992) [6]. Some states including Bihar pass a bill in their state legislation from 33% reservation to 50%. Resultantly the representation of women in rural democracy crosses 50%.

The 64th Amendment Bill proposed "as nearly as may be 30%" reservation in favour of women in the membership of panchayats at all the three levels, in the seats reserved for the sc/st as well as in the total seats. In the former it mandated reservation of one seat for women if this reservation was of only two seats. It did not provide for reservation in the post of the chairperson, leaving such reservation in favour of sc/sT/women to the state legislature's discretion. The V P Singh government, which took over the reins from the Congress in 1989, prepared another draft bill and made it "not less than one-third" in membership by rotation, but there was still no reservation for the post of chair person. When the Congress came back to power in 1991 it made the reservation for women "not less than one-third" and also included the positions of chairpersons in the 73rd Amendment.

In 1993, a constitutional amendment was passed in India that called for a random one third of village council leader, or pradhan, positions in gram panchayat to be reserved for women. There is a long-term plan to extend this reservation to parliament and legislative assemblies. Its opponents consider this preferential treatment of women in India as discrimination against them in admissions to schools, colleges, and universities

The proposed legislation to reserve 33.3 percent seats in Parliament and state legislatures for women was drafted first by the H D Deve Gowda-led United Front government. The Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha on September 12, 1996. Though it has been introduced in Parliament several times since then, the Bill could not be passed because of lack of political consensus

The Women's Reservation Bill or The Constitution (108th Amendment) Bill, 2008, is a lapsed bill in the Parliament of India which proposed to amend the Constitution of India to reserve 33% of all seats in the Lower house of Parliament of India, the Lok Sabha, and in all state legislative assemblies for women. The seats were proposed to be reserved in rotation and would have been determined by draw of lots in such a way that a seat would be reserved only once in three consecutive general elections.

The Rajya Sabha passed the bill on 9 March 2010. However, the Lok Sabha never voted on the bill. The bill lapsed after the dissolution of the 15th Lok Sabha in 2014.

Legal Provisions and National Policy for the Empowerment of Women

According to McLeod, the concept Empowerment 'derives from Latin word 'potere' which means "to be able". From the view of sociological aspect, empowerment is a multidimensional, multi-tiered and multifaceted concept. The term empowerment has different meanings in different socio-cultural and political contexts. According to country report of Government of India, Empowerment means moving from a position of enforced powerlessness to one of power

India, which is a conglomerate of diverse ethnic, linguistic and geographical features, today is at the stage of a paradigm change in its growth and its position in the world. However, India is even known for its sobriquet 'male-chauvinistic nation'. Indian myths describe our country as 'Mother India' who is a woman that serves as the mother of every Indian. While such a woman looks after every Indian child, women in general are simply being disregarded at the dominant men's best.

The need for Women Empowerment was felt in India long back. Raja Rammohan Roy, the religious, social, and educational reformer and the maker of Modern India 'demanded inheritance property rights for Women, gave tremendous effort to abolish the defunct custom Sati', the Hindu funeral practice. Key figure of Bengali Renaissance, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, championed the uplift of the status of women in India. Jyotirao Phule, Pearicharan Sarkar etc also fought for uplift of women. Later, Mahatma Gandhi had announced at the Second round table conference that his aim was to establish a political society in India, in which women would enjoy the same rights as men and the teeming millions of India would be ensured dignity and justice-social, economic and political.

Women and education in India

The importance given to education as an essential instrument of nation building process by leaders of the national movement from 19th century is not surprising since a comprehensive review of the entire education system was undertaken after independence. The first major step taken by leaders in the Nehruvian era (1947-64) was establishing a university education commission (UEC) headed by dr. Radhakrishnan. It is very significant that the commission devoted a full chapter to women's education, discussing various dimensions. However, the views of all male commission on women's roles appeared to have advanced little beyond the views held a few decades ago. The first five year plan (1951-56) realised the significance of the problems of education for women and the need to adopt special measures to solve them.

Suggestion and conclusion

In spite of the various measures taken up by the government after Independence and even during British rule the Women haven't been fully empowered. We may be proud of women in India occupying highest offices of President, Prime Minister, Lok Sabha Speaker, Leader of the Opposition or women like Ms. Chandra Kochar occupying highest positions in the Corporate Sector but the fact remains that we still witness dowry deaths, domestic violence and exploitation of women. The female foeticide is not an uncommon phenomenon

Gender equality and women's empowerment are human rights that lie at the heart of development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Despite the progress that has been made, six out of ten of world's poorest people are still women and girls, less than 16 percent of the world's parliamentarians are women, two thirds of all children shut outside the school gates are girls and, both in times of armed conflict and behind closed doors at home, women are still systematically subjected to violence. Women empowerment connotes —Economic Empowerment which implies a better quality of material life through sustainable livelihoods owned

and managed by women, "social empowerment" which means a more equitable social status for women in society,

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