Original Research Paper Economics

GENDER EQUALITY IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

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KEYWORDS :

Over the past decade , gender equality and women empowerment have been explicitly recognized as a key not only to the health of nations, but also to the social and economic development. India's national population policy 2000, has empowering women for health and nutrition as one of its crosscutting strategic themes. Additionally , the promotion of gender equality and empowering of women is one of the eight millennium development goals (MDG) in which India is signatory. Gender equality and women empowerment are two sides of the same coin : Progress toward gender equality requires women empowerment and women empowerment requires increases in gender equality.

Discrimination against women and girls is a pervasive and long running phenomenon that characterizes Indian society at every level. India's progress towards gender equality measured by its position on ranking such gender development index has been disappointing. Despite fairly rapid rates of economic growth.

In the past decade, while Indian GDP (Gross Domestic Product) has grown by around 6%. There has been a large decline in female labour force participation from 34% to 27%. Mens, women wage gap has been stagnant at 50% (a recent survey finds a 27% gender pay gap in white –collor jobs).

Since, gender inequality and women disempowerment occurs in all the different domains in which women and men interact and function, both concepts are multi-dimensional; Consequently, they give rise to large number of potential indicators. Indicators of gender equality / inequality are typically designed to compare the status of women and men on particular characteristics of interest, whereas by Definition, indicators of empowerment / disempowerment tend not to be relative. Instead , indicators of empowerment are designed to measure roles, attitudes, and rights of women and sometimes men.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

There are many articles which ensures rights of women e.g., no discrimination by the state [Article 15(1)] equality of the opportunity (Article 16) etc. Feminist activism picked up momentum in India during late 1970s. Later on many groups and NGOs have been working for the empowerment of women. We are proud that in India, women got voting right much before U.S.A. and some other European countries.

The constitution framers were very much conscious of the problem of women empowerment, hence they ensured that the principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian constitution in its preamble, fundamental duties and directive principles. Moreover, the constitution also empower the states to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. The establishment of national women commission and state women commission were important milestones in the direction of women empowerment in India.

The national policy for the empowerment of women (2001) was an important step taken by the government at the time for accelerating the pace of women empowerment. The policy was aimed at ensuring women empowerment through positive economic and social policies for the full development of women. So that they could realize their full potential. The policy assured women equal access to health care , quality education , participation and decision making in social, political and economic life of the nation. The national policy also aims at strenghthening legal system for eliminating discrimination against women. It also visualises strenghthening partnership with civil society, particularly women organization. States have also taken various measures for empowerment of women.

STRATEGIES FOR WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT

The national document , which the government of India has prepared with intention of promoting women development, highlights the importance of these strategies which are mentioned below.

(I) Obtaining greater political participation of women.
(ii) Income generating schemes for women.
(iii) Increasing female literacy level.

"Empowerment of women and the 73rd constitution amendment"

"The 73rd constitution amendment act 1993" was undertaken mainly to give constitutional status to the "Panchayat Raj System" and to introduce it in India on a uniform basis. Another purpose behind the act was to assure the empowerment of women.

The framers of the 73rd constitution amendment act believed that social and economic status of women could not be improved much without political power. The females in the village need to be given some political power. They should have their share in the decision made about the development of their villages. The new Panchayat Raj is the part of the effort to empower the women at least at the village levels.

CONCLUSION

The main stress should be an equal work and elimination of discrimination in employment. One of the basic policy objectives should be universal education of women, the lack of which tends to perpetuate the unequal status quo. The popular UNESCO slogan should come in handy; Women will have to empower themselves from below in order to compel the government to empower form them above. Further, there is a need for a change of values and behaviour in the society, a need for positive socio-cultural and economic empowerment and above. all the willpower and strong determination of women to join politics . Education can play a vital role in bringing about the desirable behavioural changes among the women and make them well-equipped in terms of knowledge, competence and capacity to deal with different political problems. It may be concluded that women have shifted traditional assumptions about their roles and capabilities. There has been a marked change, and it has been for the better. Many of its benefits, however have yet to touch the majority and all of us continue to experience various forms of gender

discrimination. If laws framed to address the concerns of women are to have a dramatic and positive impact on women lives, they must be sensitive to the social , economic and political dis-empowerment of women throughout the world.

"Educate a man and you educate an individual ; educate a women and you educate a family".

The most important measure of their success should be extent to which they enable women to interpret, apply and enforce laws of their own making incorporating their own voices, values, concerns.

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