A Study on Issues and Challenges of Women Empowerment in India

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to analyze the status of Women Empowerment in India and highlights the Issues and Challenges of Women Empowerment. Today the empowerment of women has become one of the most important concerns of 21st century. From early twenty century (national movement) their statuses have been changed slowly and gradually. The study reveals that women of India are relatively disempowered and they enjoy somewhat lower status than that of men in spite of many efforts undertaken by government. 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. Rural women are more prone to domestic violence than that of urban women. A large gender gap exists in political participation too. The study concludes by an observation that access to education and employment are only the enabling factors to empowerment, achievement towards the goal, however, depends largely on the attitude of the people towards gender equality.

KEYWORDS:

Introduction:
Women empowerment means emancipation of women from the vicious grips of social, economical, political, caste and gender-based discrimination. It means granting women the freedom to make life choices. Women empowerment does not mean ‘deifying women’ rather it means replacing patriarchy with parity. In this regard, there are various facets of women empowerment, such as given hereunder:—

Human Rights or Individual Rights: A woman is a being with senses, imagination and thoughts; she should be able to express them freely. Individual empowerment means to have the self-confidence to articulate and assert the power to negotiate and decide.

Social Women Empowerment: A critical aspect of social empowerment of women is the promotion of gender equality. Gender equality implies a society in which women and men enjoy the same opportunities, outcomes, rights and obligations in all spheres of life.

Educational Women Empowerment: It means empowering women with the knowledge, skills, and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process. It means making women aware of their rights and developing a confidence to claim them.

Economic and occupational empowerment: It implies a better quality of material life through sustainable livelihoods owned and managed by women. It means reducing their financial dependence on their male counterparts by making them a significant part of the human resource.

Legal Women Empowerment: It suggests the provision of an effective legal structure which is supportive of women empowerment. It means addressing the gaps between what the law prescribes and what actually occurs.

Political Women Empowerment: It means the existence of a political system favoring the participation in and control by the women of the political decision-making process and in governance.

Review of literature:
— Malala Yousafzai
There is no denying the fact that women in India have made a considerable progress in almost seven decades of Independence, but they still have to struggle against many handicaps and social evils in the male-dominated society. Many evil and masculine forces still prevail in the modern Indian society that resists the forward march of its women folk. It is ironical that a country, which has recently acclaimed the status of the first Asian country to accomplish its Mars mission in the maiden attempt, is positioned at the 29th rank among 146 countries across the globe on the basis of Gender Inequality Index. There has been amelioration in the position of women, but their true empowerment is still awaited.

Swami Vivekananda, one of the greatest sons of India, quoted that, “There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved, It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing.” Therefore, the inclusion of “Women Empowerment’ as one of the prime goals in the eight Millennium Development Goals underscores the relevance of this fact. Thus, in order to achieve the status of a developed country, India needs to transform its colossal women force into an effective human resource and this is possible only through the empowerment of women.

Empowering women to participate fully in economic life across all sectors is essential to building stronger economies, achieve internationally agreed goals for development and sustainability, and improve the quality of life for women, men, families, and communities.

Objectives of the study:
1. To know the need of Women Empowerment.
2. To assess the Awareness of Women Empowerment in India.
3. To analyze the Factors influencing the Economic Empowerment of Women.
4. To study the Government Schemes For Women Empowerment.
5. To identify the Hindrances in the Path of Women Empowerment.
6. To offer useful Suggestions in the light of Findings.

Research methodology:
This paper is basically descriptive and analytical in nature. In this paper an attempt has been taken to analyze the empowerment of women in India. The data used in it is purely from secondary sources according to the need of this study.

Crime Against Women:
The crimes against women fly directly against orchestrating Women Empowerment in India. A report on the crimes against Women by the National Crime Records Bureau comes up with alarming statistics. The Crime Head Wise details of reported crimes during the
In 2011, the National Crime Records Bureau reported 8,618 dowry deaths. Unofficial estimates claim the figures are at least three times as high.

**Female infanticide and sex-selective abortion**
Female infanticide (killing of infant girls) is still prevalent in some rural areas. Sometimes this is infanticide by neglect, for example families may not spend money on critical medicines or withhold care from a sick girl.

Continuing abuse of the dowry tradition has been one of the main reasons for sex-selective abortions and female infanticides in India.

**Honor killings**
people marrying without their family’s acceptance, and sometimes for marrying outside their caste or religion. Haryana is notorious for incidents of honour killings. In 2010, the Supreme Court of India issued notice in regard to honor killings to the states of Punjab, Haryana, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

**Rape**
New Delhi has the highest rate of rape-reports among Indian cities. Sources show that rape cases in India have doubled between 1990 and 2008.

**Sexual harassment**
The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act came into force in December 2013, to prevent Harassment of women at workplace.

A study by Action Aid UK found that 80% of women in India had experienced sexual harassment ranging from unwanted comments, being groped or assaulted. Many incidents go unreported as the victims fear being shunned by their families.

**Why need of women empowerment:**
The most famous saying said by the Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is “To awaken the people, it is the women who must be awakened. Once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves”. In India, to empower the women, first it needs to kill all the demons killing women’s rights and values in the society such as dowry system, illiteracy, sexual harassment, inequality, female infanticide, domestic violence against women, rape, prostitution, illegal trafficking and other issues. Gender discrimination in the nation brings cultural, social, economic and educational differences which push country back. The most effective remedy to kill such devils is making women empowered by ensuring the Right to Equality mentioned in the Constitution of India.

Giving priority to the gender equality facilitates women empowerment all over the country. To get the high level goal of women empowerment, it should be promoted from the childhood in each and every family. It needs women to be strong physically, mentally and socially. Since the better education can be started at home from childhood, the upliftment of women needs healthy family to bring a holistic development of the nation. Still in many backward areas, there is a trend of early marriage and childbirth because of the poverty, insecurity and illiteracy of the parents. In order to empower women various steps have been taken by the government to prevent violence, social separation, gender discrimination and abuse against women.

108th Constitutional Amendment Bill (also called Women’s Reservation Bill) was passed to reserve one-third of the seats for women only in the Lok Sabha to make them actively involved in every area. In other fields also the seats for women have been reserved for their active participation without any limitation and competition. Various mass campaigns need to be organized in the backward rural areas to make them aware about the real values of...
women and all the facilities available by the government for their bright future. They need to be promoted for the survival and proper education of female child to really bring the dream of women empowerment come true.

Why Women Empowerment is Important?
1. Under-employed and unemployed:
2. Equally competent and intelligent:
3. Talented:
4. Overall development of society:
5. Economic Benefits:
6. Reduction in domestic violence:
7. Reduction in corruption:
8. National Development:

**Women Empowerment Schemes**
1. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme
2. One Stop Centre Scheme
3. Women Helpline Scheme
4. UJJAWALA : A Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of trafficking and Rescue, Rehabilitation and Re-integration of Victims of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation
5. Working Women Hostel
6. Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme For the Children of Working Mothers
7. Ministry approves new projects under Ujjwala Scheme and continues existing projects
8. SWADHAR Greah (A Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances)
9. Revision under IGMSY in Accordance with National Food Security Act, 2013 in Xlth Plan
10. Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP)
11. NARI SHAKTI PURASKAR
13. Awardees of Rajya Mahila Samman & Zila Mahila Samman
14. Archived Maternity Benefit Programme
15. Mahila police Volunteers
16. Mahila E-Haat

**Challenges:**
There are several challenges that are plaguing the issues of women’s right in India. Targeting these issues will directly benefit the empowerment of women in India

**Education:** While the country has grown from leaps and bounds since independence where education is concerned, the gap between women and men is severe. While 82.14% of adult men are educated, only 65.46% of adult women are known to be literate in India. The gender bias is in higher education, specialized professional trainings which hit women very hard in employment and attaining top leadership in any field.

**Poverty:** Poverty is considered the greatest threat to peace in the world, and eradication of poverty should be a national goal as important as the eradication of illiteracy. Due to this, women are exploited as domestic helps.

**Health and Safety:** The health and safety concerns of women are paramount for the wellbeing of a country and are an important factor in gauging the empowerment of women in a country. However there are alarming concerns where maternal healthcare is concerned

**Professional Inequality:** This inequality is practiced in employment sand promotions. Women face countless handicaps in male customized and dominated environs in Government Offices and Private enterprises.

**Morality and Inequality:** Due to gender bias in health and nutrition there is unusually high mortality rate in women reducing their population further especially in Asia, Africa and china.

**Household Inequality:** Household relations show gender bias in infinitesimally small but significant manners all across the globe, more so, in India e.g. sharing burden of housework, childcare and menial works by so called division of work.

**Findings of The Study**
1. There are several Government programmes and NGOs in the Country, there is still a wide gap that exists between those under protection and those not.
2. Poverty and illiteracy add to these complications, The Empowerment of Women begins with a guarantee of their health and safety.
3. Empowerment of Women could only be achieved if their economic and social status is improved. This could be possible only by adopting definite social and economic policies with a view of total development of women and to make them realize that they have the potential to be strong human beings.
4. In order to create a sustainable world, we must begin to Empower Women.

**Suggestions**
1. The first and foremost priority should be given to the education of women, which is the grassroots problem. Hence, education for women has to be paid special attention.
2. Awareness programmes need to be organized for creating awareness among women especially belonging to weaker sections about their rights.
3. Women should be allowed to work and should be provided enough safety and support to work. They should be provided with proper wages and work at par with men so that their status can be elevated in the society.
4. Strict implementation of Programmes and Acts should be there to curb the mal-practices prevalent in the society.

**Conclusion**
“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 best way of empowerment is perhaps inducting women in the mainstream of development. Women 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. 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. Government initiatives alone would not be sufficient to achieve this goal. Society must take initiative to create a climate in which there is 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:**