EDUCATION- A PATHWAY OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN TAMIL NADU

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ABSTRACT Empowering women is a prerequisite for creating a good nation, when women are empowered, society with stability is assured. Empowerment of women is essential as their value systems lead to the development of a good family, good society and ultimately good nation.

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The empowerment of women is one of the central issues in the process of development of countries all over the world. Tamil Nadu has a glorious tradition of recognizing the importance of empowering women over several centuries. Self reliance as well as speeding womens freedom of selection by themselves. Some adherents consider empowerment as increasing the participation which is one of the factors of facilitating the empowerment. The present article is based on women's empowerment programs and its implementation and utilizations. The paper concludes the details of strategies of womans empowerment in some specific challenges faced by the women according to the effective utilization of empowerment programm by the state Government of Tamil Nadu.

Introduction

Tamil Nadu is geographically the 11th largest state in India with an area of 130,058 square kilometers accounting for 4% of the national area. It has a long coastline extending up to 1000 Kms. Climatically the state falls into a semi –humid and a semi –arid zone. The Literacy is the key for socio economic progress and it is an important indicator for human development. The literacy rate of India grew to 74.04 percent in 2011from 12 percent at the end of British period 1947. India currently has the largest illiterate population in the world and the country stand well below the world average literacy rate of 84%.

The 2011 census shows that 2001 –2011 decadal literacy growth of 9.2 percent, which is slower than the previous decade. Tamil Nadu is one of the most literate states in India. The state performed reasonably in terms of literacy growth during the decade 2001 –2011. According to 2011 Census, Literacy rate in Tamil Nadu has been upward trend and is 80.09 percent as per 2011 population census. Of that, male literacy stands at 86.77 percent while female literacy is at 73.14 percent. In 2011, literacy rate in Tamil Nadu stood at 73.45 percent of which male and female were 83.28 percent and 64.91 percent literate respectively. In actual numbers, total literates in Tamil Nadu stands at 51,837,507 of which males were 28.040,491 and females were 23,797,016. Some districts in Tamil Nadu have a higher literacy rate such as Kanyakumari (91.75%), Chennai (90.18%), Tuticorin (86.16%) ,The Nilgiris (85.20%) and Kancheepuram (84.49%). Dharmapuri is the District has the literacy rate of 64.71 percent and stood first from the bottom. The male literacy rate in Dharmapuri is 69.91 percent and the female literacy rate 60.03 percent. There are 13 Districts in Tamil Nadu have the female literacy rate below 70% namely Dharmapuri, Ariyallur, Villupuram, Krishnagiri, Erode, Salem, Thiruvannamalai, Perambalur, Namakkal, Karur, Dindigul, Pudukkottai, and Theni . In 12 Districts of Tamilnadu, the gender gap is more than 20%.

The broad vision for 11th Five year Plan (2007 - 2012) was aimed " Towards Faster & More Inclusive Growth "after UPA rode back to power on the plank of helping Aam Aadmi (common man)" included several inter related components like rapid growth reducing poverty & creating employment opportunities , access to essential services in health & education, specially for the poor, extension if employment opportunities using National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme, environmental sustainability , reduction of gender inequality and gender gap in literacy etc.

The Indian Constitution of India has conferred and guaranteed equality before law, universal adult franchise and equal opportunities for men and women as fundamental rights under Article 14. The imperative of gender partnership in matters of development has been recognised. In order to give a fillip to empowerment of women and appropriate institutional mechanisms and interventions have been consciously built upon on Education. Separate institutions for women and child development, departments at the Central and State levels, creation of the National Commission for Women (NCW) and also State Commission for Women in several States are some of the important developments for the betterment and prosperity of women.

The launching of Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, Indira Mahila Yojana, Mahila Samridhi Yojana, reserving of one-third of the number of seats in Panchayats and the local bodies are programmes launched with a view to improve and empower women socially, economically and in political frontiers.

Concept of Empowerment of Women:

According to the Country Report of Government of India, "Empowerment means moving from a position of enforced powerlessness to one of power"

Empowerment is a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional and multi-layered concept. Women's empowerment is a process in which women gain greater share of control over resources - material, human and intellectual like knowledge, information, ideas and financial resources like money - and access to money and control over decision-making in the home, community, society and nation, and to gain `power'.

The empowerment of women is one of the central issues in the process of development of countries all over the world. Tamil Nadu has a glorious tradition of recognizing the importance of empowering women over several centuries now. The contribution of writers and social reformers has been well documented. The Government of India has made Empowerment of Women as one of the principal objectives of the 9th Five Year Plan (1997-2002) was prepared under United Front Government focussed on "Growth With Social Justice & Equality" and also declared 2001 as the year of 'Women's

 Empowerment'
Education of Women:
 Education is a potent remedy for most of the ills of the society. Education is the main instrument for transformation in any society. The economic and social returns to education for women are substantial. By educating its women, a country can reduce poverty, improve productivity, ease population pressure and offer its children a better future. A `*package approach*' is required for developing female education in Tamil Nadu. There is a wide disparity between male and female literacy rates in the State of Tamil Nadu . The literacy rate for Tamil Nadu in 2011 has increased to **80.33 %** from 73.45 % returned in the 2001 Census. Among the males, **86.81%** are literates whereas among the females the rate is 73.86%. The differences in the levels of literacy between males and females was significantly higher in rural areas than in urban areas. This indicates that specific intervention may be required for developing the literacy rates of the female population especially (less privileged classes) in rural areas.

The following table depicts the literacy rate of Tamil Nadu (Rural-Urban) 2011

Literacy rate (Female) State of Tamil Nadu (Rural-Urban) 2011.

Category	Year	Rural			Urbn		
		Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Literates	2011	2475 2447	13771 878	10980 569	276606 69	145427 17	131179 52
	2001	2031 9498	11835 689	84838 09	202050 47	109739 73	923107 4
Growth Rate Literates	(2001 -2011)	21.82	16.36	29.43	36.9	32.52	42.11
Literacy rate	2011	73.8	82.08	65.52	87.24	91.82	82.67
	2001	66.21	77.15	55.28	82.53	88.97	75.99
Gender Gap in Literacy		16.5 6			9.16		

Source: Director of Census operation, Tamil Nadu 2011**.**

Strategies Adopted by Government of Tamil Nadu for Women Empowerment:
 Education was recognised that the main obstacles to among women. Taking into account this fact, the Government of Tamil Nadu have framed various policies, designed specific interventions and implemented many programmes to eradicate poverty and to provide education to the vulnerable sections of the society .

Periyar EVR Nagammai Scheme:
Periyar EVR Nagammai Free Education Scheme has been implemented in the State from 1989-90 to women students irrespective of caste, creed and community to encourage their education and to reduce dropout rate. During 2005-06, 8936 women students were benefited under this scheme. In 2006-07, a sum of Rs.65.00 lakhs has been allocated for this scheme.

Entrepreneurship Awareness Programme (EAP):
In order to empower women, Science city has been organising Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP) and Entrepreneurship Awareness Programme (EAP) to out the talents of women and to make them stand on their own feet. To ascertain the status of women scientists, Science city has embarked upon the task of creating a data-base of women scientists in the entire State of Tamil Nadu. To encourage the women scientists, Science city has instituted Life Time Achievement Award and Young Women Scientist Awards. During 2005, five women scientists were awarded the Young Women Scientists Award.

Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women:
Tamil Nadu Corporation for development of women was established in 1983 which aims at the socio-economic empowerment of women. As a prelude, the Corporation is implementing the Mahalir Thittam among poor rural women to promote saving habits, nurture entrepreneurial skills and aptitudes, promote exposure to banking transactions and to free them from the clutches of local moneylenders. The scheme is being implemented in partnership with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Banks. Under the scheme, SHGs are formed and monitored through NGOs affiliated with the Tamil Nadu Corporations for Development of Women, Ltd.

Self Help Groups:
Self Help Groups are small homogenous groups consisting of 12-20 women from BPL families voluntarily organised to promote savings. They are self-managed groups of poor women which primarily came into existence to mobilise financial resources through their own savings and lend the same amongst themselves to meet the credit needs of their members. The specific objectives of SHGs are to: improve saving habits among women; increase the total family income; fulfill the economic needs through self-employment of women; utilise bank loan and government welfare schemes; help the members to escape from the clutches of moneylenders; and mobilise financial resources.

Conclusion
Empowerment is a process of acquiring knowledge and awareness which enable them to move towards life with greater dignity and self- assurance. In fact, an empowered women is a nations strength. Education to women is the most powerful instrument of changing their position in the society. Education also brings about reduction in inequalities and also acts as a means to improve their status within the family. Tamil Nadu is the first state across India to achieve the target fixed for the Sakshar Bharat Programme by producing 17.26 lakh neo-literates. Tamil Nadu is the fore front in executing the programme, with the highest literacy rate of 80.3%. This programme is focused on Women Education which has got a major boost after the programme was launched in the year 2009.

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