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Empowerment of Women: Challenges and Remedial Measures

Abstract

Thinking on development has shifted repeatedly over the past forty years. So has thinking on women in development. This shift in thinking coincides with a growing concern about the lack of progress observed in improving the quality of life for women viz a viz men over the past few decades. This leads one to suggest that the past shifts in development thinking have not been of much help to women. Women around the world share a common condition; they are not full and equal participants in public policy choices that affect their lives. Nowhere is the gap between de jure and de facto equality among men and women greater than in the area of decision making. The top decision making position remain largely male dominated spheres where women have little influence. The lack of women's participation in political decision making has important consequences. It deprives women of important rights and responsibilities as citizens, and excludes their perspectives and interests from policy making and decision making. Their voices are missing from key decisions on national budgets and setting of government priorities. Their skills and viewpoint often remain unheard, underrepresented or ignored. India as a country is still recovering from years of abuse in the time of the Raj and more years of economic suffering at the hands of the License Raj. It is only now that globalization, liberalization and other socio-economic forces have given some respite to a large proportion of the population. However, there are still quite a few areas where women empowerment in India is largely lacking. This paper is an attempt to enlist the challenges suggested remedied and role of teachers in women education.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Remedial Measures, Rural Women.

Introduction

In today's world, knowledge has become the most important component for economic and social development. Knowledge has become a primary factor for production. Knowledge will lead to better quality, reduced costs, innovative products etc. the world bank recommends that nations concentrate all their efforts on four major areas : education and training, information infrastructures, economics incentive and institutional regime ,and innovation systems.

The benefit of educating a woman helps reduce the gender equality in the family and society. Another benefit is the fact that educating women is the best way of empowering women towards their ability to make decisions and stay in power in the society. Psychologically speaking, women are innately courageous and daring more over, they are also far more firm and focused in setting up goals and succeeding in them. Add to it the fact that they have other psychological qualities like patience, tolerance, passion and commitment to the job they undertake, perseverance, clear understanding of issues, sacrifice if there need be or rather team work, good etiquette, and a love and caring nature. Further women understand the human need better and this leads to better resolution of conflicts and motivation of employees. Studies have shown that women are much more creative than men, yet at the same time innovative and organized. Women by nature are economical and as a result of which do not cause undue wastage of resources and unnecessary expenses. If women are provided with the right access backed by the right governmental policies, they can also impact the well-being of the environment and public health at national level.

A nation's cultural, social and economic development is highly dependent on higher education of women. As a result of which, one can say that spending money on educating women will not go a waste. In fact, it will provide for and improve the economy and development of nations.

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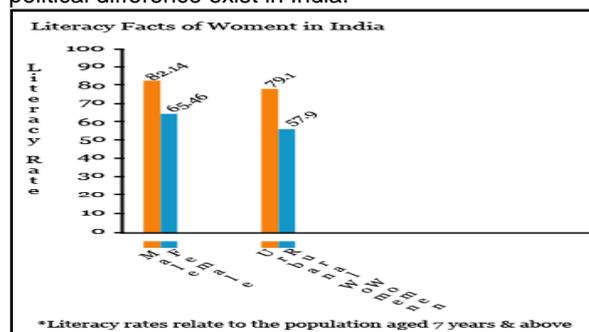
For example, if the nation is aiming at abolishing poverty, they must be at the helm and be involved in policy making and implementation. Because of their basic quality to be economical, they will not only drive the country towards economical self- sufficiency but also development.

Problems for women in India

There are several problems that are currently plaguing the issues of women's rights in India. A lot of hurdles are faced across the country by women, these are contributory factors to the overarching status of women in India. Targeting these issues will directly benefit the empowerment of women in India. A few of these issues are discussed below:

Education Issues

India has grown in every aspect since its independence as far as education is concerned, gender equality remained on the top of the agenda. Too often, women and men live in different worlds— worlds that differ in access to education and work opportunities, in health, personal security and leisure time. With regard to education 82.14% of men above 18 years of age are educated, only 65.46% of adult women are known to be literate in India. The data available from MHRD highlight economic, social and political difference exist in India.



Data Source: Census of India 2011, www.womenempowermentinindia.com

A Study Conducted by the Centre for the Study of Society and Secularism Observed

"In spite of the UN Charter of Human Rights and the provisions of the Indian Constitution, women continue to be victims of exploitation. The view that the future generation of a family is carried on and preserved by boys-only has degraded the position of women in society. Similarly, it is noticed that majority of the women are lacking in the spirit of rebellion. If careful attention is not paid and major steps are not taken, the situation will become extremely critical."

Eradication of illiteracy and educating women. Empowering women is an important end in itself. And as women acquire same status, opportunities and social, economic and legal rights as men, as they acquire the right to reproductive health and the right to protection against gender based violence, human well-being will be enhanced. This step will largely set this entire movement rolling down the hill to crash and break the wall of intolerance, negligence and exploitation.

Poverty

More than one third of the country's population lives below poverty line. The inequality in the distribution of wealth in the country is increasing, 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. They also face conditions such as rigid authoritarian spouse control, violence at home, unsafe community environments that limit their physical mobility. Under these conditions, participation is fraught with obstacles and only a few will find it possible to become available for participation.

Health & Safety

The health and safety concerns of women are of prime concern for the wellbeing of a country, as they are important in gauging the empowerment of women in a country. However, there are alarming concerns where maternal healthcare is concerned. One in 35 women dies of pregnancy-related complications in India. Today, due to the burgeoning population of the country, that number is sure to have multiplied considerably. The main causes of maternal mortality are:-

1. Obstructed Labour
2. Anemia
3. Sepsis
4. Unsafe Abortion
5. Hemorrhage
6. Toxemia

Although, there are several programmes that have been run by the Indian Government and several NGOs' are also working in the country, yet there is a wide gap that exists between those under protection and those not. Poverty and illiteracy add to these complications with local quacks giving ineffective and harmful remedies to problems that women have. The empowerment of women begins with a guarantee of their health and safety.

Suggested Remedial Measures for Improving the Status of Women in Indian Society

The following views can be considered for bringing phenomenal change in the plight women's education and empowerment in India:

1. Increase of Enrolment of Girls Students

Efforts from government side, parents and society side should be initiated for enrolment of girls in educational institutions keeping in view the less enrolment of girls students which poses obstacles for development and prosperity of future generations of women. High drop-outs among girls especially in rural areas, slums and tribal areas should be firmly checked by Government at central level as well as at state level. Voluntary organizations can play important role to realize zero drop-out.

2. Action against Child Labour

Administrative measures should be taken for the relieving of children from bondage, bonded Child labour and Child labour practice must be abolished with strict action. The children should be sent into schools with suitable defense social mechanism.

3. Bridging the Gap

The educational authorities with the help of local community can help to bring the girl children to the main stream of education and development at every level including family and community.

4. Helping the Poverty Stricken Families

Services can be provided to strengthen the income of poverty stricken families thereby to

enable the families to send their children to schools and colleges without much financial difficulties. The NGOs', local community and Government can develop the suitable mechanism for strengthening these families.

5. **Family Responsibility**

Every Indian family irrespective its socio-cultural and economic background can take it a challenge to bring up their girl children as dignified human being with empowerment in physical, mental, economic and social dimensions of life.

6. **Providing Necessary Facilities to the Poor and Needy**

The Mid-day meal scheme and other educational supportive services like free text books, Note books, Fee uniforms, Free Bicycles, Free bus, scholarships Free bus pass and so on should be done in all states and union territories to lift up the literacy level among girls

7. **Organizing Awareness Programmes**

Mass awareness programmes and social welfare measures with support of public, political parties, NGOs and government agencies must be organized for awareness regarding the exiting social evils like dowry, child marriage, caste system and other practices. All these evils deprive rights of education for children belonging to poor and underprivileged families and communities.

8. **Role of Media in Changing Society Attitude**

Showing a good and positive image about girls and women in general in the society by giving focus for such advertisements and news would help in changing the society 's attitudes towards girls and their roles to treat every girl or woman as human being with self respect and dignity. So electronic media can play a vital role.

9. **Role of Government**

Government, voluntary sector and philanthropic organizations and individuals should come forward to provide free education for poor girls and provide free hostel facilities for girls studying in schools and colleges in every state of India. This will certainly encourage children of poor families to pursue good and higher education without much impediments

10. **Empowering Women**

To empower women in India without double standard mind should be the top agenda of Government officials, policy makers, political parties and others should have adequate political will. Only then a nation can prosper.

11. **Efficient Vigilant System**

The law enforcing machinery should be made really effective with efficient monitoring vigilant system to implement the constitutional and legislative provisions and administrative measures to assure free and compulsory education for all children of this nation without any gender discrimination.

Conclusion

The lack of women's participation in political decision making has important consequences. It deprives women of important rights and

responsibilities as citizens, and excludes their perspectives and interests from policy making and decision making. Their voices are missing from key decisions on national budgets and setting of government priorities. Their skills and viewpoint often remain unheard, underrepresented or ignored. India as a country is still recovering from years of abuse in the time of the Raj and more years of economic suffering at the hands of the License Raj. It is only now that globalization, liberalization and other socio-economic forces have given some respite to a large proportion of the population. However, there are still quite a few areas where women empowerment in India is largely lacking. To truly understand what women empowerment is, there needs to be a sea-change in the mind-set of the people in the country. Not just the women themselves, but the men have to wake up to a world that is moving towards equality and equity. It is better that this is embraced earlier rather than later, for our own good.

We have many schemes, many programs for the purpose of women empowerment at every stage of administration, all we need is a good system and agencies for the implementation of these policies and programs. And if we can build up that system, if we can implement these programs then the goal of women empowerment can be achieved very easily through these programs.

Swami Vivekananda once said "**arise away and stop not until the goal is reached**". Thus our country should thus be catapulted into the horizon of empowerment of women and revel in its glory.

We have a long way to go, but we will get there someday. We shall overcome.

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