

Women Empowerment in India

Heena

Resource Person
Andaman College (ANCOL)

Abstract

Women empowerment is a debatable subject. At earlier time they were getting equal status with men. But they had faced some difficulties during post vedic and epic ages. many a time they were treated as slave. From early twenty century, their statues have been changed slowly and gradually. Women's empowerment has been an issue of immense discussions and contemplation over the last few decades world wide. This agenda has been on top of the lists of most government plans and programs as well. Efforts have been made on a regular basis across nations to address this issue and enhance the socio-economic status of women. However, it has been observed that most of the policies and programs view empowerment in the economic sense only working in the belief that economic self reliance empowers women ignoring other variables like health, education, literacy etc. Introduction in the history of human development, woman has been as important as a man. In fact, the status, employment and work performed by women in society is the indicator of a nations overall progress. Without the participation of women in national activities, the social, economic or political progress of country will be stagnated. Women constitute half of the humanity, even contributing two-thirds of world's work hours. She earns only one-third of the total income and owns less than one-tenth of the world's resources. This shows that the economic status of women is in pathetic condition and this is more so in a country like India. Women constitute nearly 50% of population, perform two-thirds of the work and produce 50% of food commodities consumed by the country. They earn one third of remuneration and own 10% of the property or wealth of the country.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Gender Equality, Women's Rights, Human Rights

Introduction

Women empowerment can be defined as promoting women's sense of self worth, their ability to determine their own choices, and their right to influence social change for themselves and others. It is closely aligned with female empowerment- a fundamental human right that's also key to achieving a more peaceful, prosperous world. Women's empowerment and promoting women's rights have emerged as a part of a major global movement and are continuing to break new ground in recent years. Women empowerment is about creating high level corporate leadership for gender equality, treat all people fairly at work, respecting and supporting non-discrimination and human rights. Ensure the health, wellbeing and safety of all workers, whether male or female. Promote education, training and professional development for women. Empowerment women is essential to the health and social development of families, communities and countries. When women are living safe, fulfilled and productive lives, they can reach their full potential. women constitute almost 50% of the worlds population but India has shown misappropriate sex ratio whereby females population has been comparatively lower than males.

As far as their social status is concerned, they are not treated as equal to men in all the places. In western societies, the women have got equal right hand status with men in all walks of life. But gender disabilities and discrimination are found in India even today.

Concepts of Women Empowerment

Empowerment is a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional and multi-layered concept. Women empowerment is a process in which women gain greater share of control over resources-material, human and intellectual like knowledge, information, idea 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'. According to the Country Report of Government of India, "Empowerment means moving from a position of enforced powerlessness to one of power".

Objectives of the Study

The present study is an attempt to examine the women empowerment in India. The following are the objectives of the study:

- To examine the conceptual meaning and ways of women empowerment.
- To examine the various schemes launched by the government for upliftment of women status.
- To examine the goals and objectives of government's schemes for upliftment of women empowerment.

Women Empowerment in India

The concept of empowerment flows from the power. It is a vesting where it does not exist or exist inadequately. Empowerment of women would mean equipping women to be economically independent, self-reliant, have positive esteem to enable them to face any difficult situation and they should be able to participate in development activities. The empowered women should be able to participate in the process of decision making. In India, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD-1985) and the National Commission for Women (NCW) have been worked to safeguard the right and legal entitlement of women. The 73rd AND 74th Amendments (1993) to the constitution of India have provided some special powers to women that for reservation of seats (33%), whereas the report of HRD as of March 2002 shows that the legislatures with the highest percentage of women are in Sweden (42.7%), Denmark (38%), Finland (36%) and Iceland (34.9%). In India, "The Panchayati Raj" is the part of the effort to empower women at least at the village level.

The government of India has ratified various international conventions anyushman rights instruments committing to secure equal rights to women. These are CEDAW (1993), the Mexico Plan Action (1975), the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies (1985), Beijing Declaration as well as the Platform for Action (1995) and other such instruments. The year of 2001 was observed as the year of women. During the year, a landmark document has been adopted, the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women. For the beneficiaries of the women the government has been adopted different schemes and programs i.e. the National Credit Fund for Women (1993), Food and Nutrition Board (FNB), Information and Mass Education (IMF) etc.

Reasons for the Empowerment of Women

Today we have noticed different acts and schemes of the central government as well as state government to empower the women of India. But in India women are discriminated and marginalized at every level of the society whether it is social participation, political participation, economic participation, access to education and also reproductive healthcare. Women are found to be economically very poor all over the India. A few women are engaged in services and other activities. So, they need economic power to hand on their own legs on par with men. On the other hand, it has been observed that women are found to be less literate than men. According to 2001 census, rate of literacy among men in India is found to be 76%, whereas it is only 54% among women. Thus increasing education among women is of very important in empowering them. It has also noticed that some of women are too weak to work. They consume less food but work more. Therefore, from the health point of view, women folk who are to be weaker are to be made stronger. Another problems is that workplace harassment of women. There are so many cases of rape, kidnapping of girls, dowry harassment and so on. For these reasons they required empowerment of all kinds in order to protect themselves and to secure their purity and dignity. To sum up, women empowerment can not be possible unless women come with and help to self empower themselves. There is a need to formulate reducing feminized poverty, promoting education of women and prevention and elimination of violence against women.

Government Schemes for Upliftment of Women Empowerment in India

To enable the status of women, the government and various NGOs and organization plays an important role to empower to women. There are various central and state governments' initiatives and schemes for the upliftment of women as following:

1. Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao

Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao scheme was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 22nd January, 2015 at Panipat, Haryana. Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao acknowledges the declining of child sex ratio and issues which is related to women empowerment. The main motives of Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao, which is initiated jointly by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, the Ministry of Health of Human Resources Development of India, is focusing on spreading awareness and increase the efficiency of welfare activities for girls in the country. The campaign aims to provide that the girls are born, bring up and educated them without any discrimination and to build up empowered citizens of this country. The campaign is jointly made by national, state, district and community levels to bring together with different stakeholders for accelerated impact.

2. Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana (SSY)

Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana is a small deposit saving scheme of the girl child. It was launched by Prime Minister Narenra Modi on 22nd January, 2015 in Panipat, Haryana. This scheme is a part of the 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' campaign. The bank accounts can be opened at any authorized commercial banks or any India Post Office, the rate of interest was set at 9.1%, but later it was revised to 9.2% in late March 2015 for FY 2015-16, and rate of interest have been revised for 2016-17 to 8.6%. Currently it provides 8.1% and income-tax benefit under section 80(c) of the Income Tax Act 1961. The account can be opened any time after the birth or till she turns 10 years, with a minimum deposit amount of Rs. 250 and a maximum of Rs. 1.5 Lakh in a year. The bank account will remain effective for 21 years from the

date of its opening or till the marriage of the girl after she turns 18 years.

3. Mahila-E-Haat

The government of India launched Mahila-E-Haat in 2016, under the schemes of women and child development. Mahila-E-Haat is an initiative aimed to addressing the needs and desires of women entrepreneurs. It is an online e-commerce site for women where participants can view their goods. As part of Digital India and Stand Up India initiatives, it is an initiative for women in the country. This scheme promote the online phase innovation to help and understand the women in business activities, self-help groups, NGOs and their goods and services. It is open to all Indian women of age 18 years and above, and provides a simple sign-in preparation and assisted installment mode. Everything can be dealt with on versatility with need for any other arbitration. It has claimed admission of 1.7 million guests since its dispatch and highlights over 2,000 items and administrations from over 18 categories across 24 states.

4. Mahila Shakti Kendra

The Government of India has approved Mahila Shakti Kendra scheme for the period of 2017-18 up to 2019-20 to empower the rural women through community participation. The government encourages the Mahila Shakti Kendra scheme for improvement in business activities, efficiency, wellbeing and nutrition for women. It will work through community mobilization and harmonized volunteers with 115 people in each district. This scheme will provide for rural to get privileges through preparation and capacity building. It works at local, regional, state and national levels.

5. Working Women Hostel

The government of India has initiated 'Working Women Hostel Scheme' to promote the availability of reliable and conveniently accommodation for the working women who are living far way their home and doing professional commitments. Under this scheme, the government provides a grant in aid for the construction of new or expansion of existing buildings to advance hostel facilities in cities, towns and also in rural areas. Those working women considered who are be single, separated, divorced, windowed or married but whose husband or family does not reside in the same city/place. Particular preference may be given to women from backward sections of the society. Hostel facilities will be provided to those women who are entitled to gross income does not exceed Rs. 50,000 per month in metropolitan cities, or Rs. 35,000 per month, in any other place.

6. Support to Training and Employment Programme (STEP)

The Support to Training and Employment Programme (STEP) for women was launched by central government in 1986-87. The aims of the STEP programme were to make a great impact on women by upgrading skills for self and wage employment. The activities is envisaged to mobilize women in improving their skills, arranging for productive assets, creating backward and forward linkage, access to wage employment, providing for support services, awareness generation, sensitization of project functionaries, gender sensitization, nutrition education, etc. The STEP pilot was established to supply qualifications for women so that they could take productive employment. It also gives the right qualifications and prepares women to do business. Open to every woman over 16 years of age, it is run directly through an NGO given to an institution/organization.

Conclusion

The concept of women empowerment has become one of the important concerns in the 21st century, not only at national level but also at the international level. It plays a significant role which leads to the positive change and transformation of the existing society. The central and many state governments have done various program and schemes for women empowerment in India. They are ensuring gender equality and women participation in every field. But the government's initiatives alone would not be sufficient to achieve this goal. The individuals and society must take initiatives to create a space in the equality and against gender discrimination. Women have the full rights and opportunities of self-dependent and to participate in politics and decision making process.

References

1. C.N. Rao Shankar. Sociology of Indian Society. S. Chand and Company Ltd, New Delhi, 2005.
2. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_empowerment [Accessed on: 28-February-2021].
3. <https://sdgs.un.org/topics/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment>