

STUDY ON GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract

Women constitute almost 50% of the world's population. Women empowerment in contemporary Indian society in forms of their work, education, health and media images, in the context of lineage, rule of residence and household chores their participation in social and political activities, their legal status in terms of marriage, divorce and inheritance of property, should be taken into consideration. The principal of gender equality was recognized in the United Nations charter in 1945 and the United Nation declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the majority of development planners did not fully address the role of women in development process. In 1975, the first United Nation conference of women and development was held at Mexico City under the motto, "Equality, Development and Peace". The global conference on women empowerment (1988) highlighted empowerment as the best way of making women partners in development. Thus women empowerment should transcend gender and reach the entire of humanity to determine a matriarchal society supported creative and generative action. Such a social order should be supported on the principles of affection, compassion, nurturing and with a purpose of unifying the forces of nature.

Keywords: *Women Empowerment, Gender Equality, Economic Development, Political Activities.*

Introduction

Women play a crucial role in the social-economic development of a country. But both in the industrially development and less developed countries, women are burdened with cumulative

inequalities as a result of discriminatory socio-economic practices (Beniwal, 2013). An effective remedy for overcome these situation needs to be sought in order to ensure the 'right to equality' in terms of gender which facilitates the empowerment of women. Empowerment of women opportunity, property rights and so on. Historically, the world over, either by law or by custom, the status of women is undermined by asymmetrical power relationships in decision-making, personal and social rights, access to resources and entitlement. Women in many countries still lack rights to inherit property, own land, get education, obtain credit, earn income or work outside home, control their fertility; They are still widely under-represented in involvement in decision-making at the household or social level (Singh, Indrabhusan: and Usha kumara, 2007). Decision-making is the process of empowering women when a woman has decision making power like her counter parts, and then gender equality in the family is maintained. If gender equality in decision-making is established, she can gain power of autonomy over resources, leading her to achieve empowerment.

It is true that for countries, women were treated as less than equal do men in many ways. But now the situation is changed. Women are more empowered to do whatever they need. This means that they have the ability to chose their own destiny, job, vote, and do anything man can do. In this respect, women's empowered has five components; women's sense of self-worth, their right to have and to determine choices, their right to have access to opportunities and resources, their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

Women Empowerment; Ideas, Issues and Possibilities

Historically, the concept 'empowerment' is rooted in social action, developed within grass-roots movements in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s within the contexts of civil rights, the women's movement, gay rights, the incapacity rights movement, and other community-based actions. However, in the present context the term women's empowerment emerged especially through the interaction between feminism and popular education which developed in Latin America in the last century. Thereafter, it intertwined Paulo Freiri's concept of conscientisation with Gramscian idea of participatory and democratic functioning of institutions for creating a more equitable and non exploitative social order (Batliwala Srilatha, 1993). In the eighties feminists observed that women's situation remained unchanged.

Therefore, women's empowerment replaced the earlier terms of women's development in the mid nineties.

Scholars basically in the schools of feminisms incorporated gender subordination and the social construction of gender as fundamental to analyze empowerment. Yet, women's empowerment and gender justice put social transformation at the centre of the agenda of human development and progress which is akin to Gandhian concept of 'Sarvodaya' espoused about nine decades before through Gandhi had related strength to Mosel power in which women stood 'immeasurably superior to men' who could 'take bolder action in non violence'.

Empowerment appears when the outcomes are equal rights and just entitlements during a situation of all round development and reaches a stage where each individual becomes an equal partner in the way to advancement. Thus, the term 'women empowerment' is used in two broad senses i.e. general and specific. In a general sense, it refers to empowering women to be self-dependent by providing them access to all the freedoms and opportunities, which they were denied in the past only because of their being women. In a specific sense, women empowerment refers to enhancing their position in the power structure of the society (Bhuyan, 2006).

An Analysis of Women Empowerment in India

Women empowerment in India is heavily trusted many various variables that include geographical location (urban/rural), educational status, social station (caste and class), and age. Policies on women's empowerment exist at the national, state, and native (panchayat) levels in many sectors, including health, education, economic opportunities, and gender based violence, and political participation. However, there are significant gaps between policy advancements and actual practice at the community level. One key factor for one gap in implementation of laws and policies to deal with discrimination, economic disadvantages, and violence against women at the community and households in much of India. The impact of the patriarchal structure are often seen in rural and urban India, although women's empowerment in rural India is much less visible than in urban areas.

This is of particular concern; since much of India is rural despite the high rate of urbanization and expansion of cities. Rural women, as opposed to women in urban salting, face inequality at much higher rates, and in all spheres of life.

Women's Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

The movement to assure women's Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ESCR) as basic human rights is simply emerging in India. The movement aims to locate women's rights within the larger human rights framework, and by doing so moves faraway from watching women's issues only within the framework of violence against women and reproductive rights. ESCR attempts to seen at the broader issues facing women, namely poverty, housing, unemployment, education, water, food security, trade, etc. While the human rights movement on ESCR is essentially contained at the international policy level, there are emerging social movements round the world.

In the Indian context, projects just like the Programme on Women's Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (PWESCR) for instance, is creating linkages between the international human rights movement and therefore the local articulation of women's rights. PWESCR aims to build a women's rights movement in India that make equality altogether spheres of women's lives. By empowering women economically and socially, ESCR provides for a broader discourse on rights that moves women's rights from a victim centered approach to at least one that cuts across other fundamental human rights issues.

Gender in Feminist Critical Economics

Feminist economics seeks to maneuver beyond a gender disaggregating of roles and activities to stress the facility relations underpinning the gender division of labour (Folbre, 1986; Kabeer 1994). Questions are asked about how social institutions and norms shape or constrain individual 'choices' in ways that perpetuate gender inequalities.

Feminist economics challenges the conceptualization of the gender division of labour in neo-classical microeconomics, particularly 'new household economics', as the outcome of free choices of economic agents specializing according to their innate comparative advantage. From neo-classical perspective, gender differentiation is depicted as generally rational, efficient, and mutually advantages to men and women with women undertaking up paid domestic labour because of their preferences and skills. The neo-classical perspective does not plan to explain how such skill differentiation comes about.

Conclusion

Qualities to be acquired by women to become truly empowered are awareness about risk prevailing home, in work place, in travelling and staying outside home. They should have knowledge about support groups and positive attitudes towards life. They should set goals for future and strive to achieve them with courage.

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