

Issues and Challenges of Women Empowerment

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Introduction :- Women's empowerment is the process of empowering women. It may be defined in several ways, including accepting women's viewpoints or making an effort to seek them, raising the status of women through education, awareness, literacy, and training. Women's empowerment equips and allows women to make life-determining decisions through the different problems in society. They may have the opportunity to redefine gender roles or other such roles, which in turn may allow them more freedom to pursue desired goals. Empowerment is process, which helps people to gain control of their lives through raising awareness, taking action and working in order to exercise greater control. Empowerment is the feeling that activates the psychological energy to accomplish one's goals. The term 'empowerment' has till-date not been very explicitly defined and it may be assumed that based upon context the term may be interpreted contextually & situational. However, in context of women, empowerment essentially refers to a feeling of awareness of one's own situation backed up with the knowledge, skills and information which could enable women to gain higher self-esteem and facilitate their role as decision makers in the current patriarchal society where women have always been subordinate to men. Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social or economic strength of individuals and communities. It often involves the empowered developing confidence in their own capacities. Women's empowerment can be defined to 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. Women's empowerment is really needed in the societies. It's so important for women self-esteem and also for societies. Empowering women is to give women the right. Women can have equal right to participate in education, society, economy and

politically. 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.

Issues of Women Empowerment :-

1. Sexual harassment : It is the form of sexual exploitation of a girl child at home, streets, public places, transports, offices, etc by the family members, neighbors, friends or relatives.

2. Dowry and Bride burning : It is another problem generally faced by women of low or middle class family during or after the marriage. Parents of boys demand a lot of money from the bride's family to be rich in one time. Groom's family perform bride burning in case of lack of fulfilled dowry demand. In 2005, around 6787 dowry death cases were registered in India according to the Indian National Crime Bureau reports.

3. Domestic violence : Many studies have reported about the prevalence of the violence and have taken a criminal-justice approach, but most woman refuse to report it. These women are guaranteed constitutional justice, dignity and equality but continue to refuse based on their socio-cultural contexts. As the women refuse to speak of the violence and need help, they are also not receiving the proper treatment.

4. Child Marriages : Early marriage of the girls by their parents in order to be escaped from dowry. It is highly practiced in the rural India. According to UNICEF's "State of the World's Children-2009" report, 47% of India's women aged 20-24 were married before the legal age of 18, rising to 56% in

rural areas. The report also showed that 40% of the world's child marriages occur in India.

5. Disparity in education : The level of women education is less than men still in the modern age. Female illiteracy is higher in the rural areas. Where over 63% or more women remain unaltered. Women education percentage is low in India especially in the rural areas because they are discouraged for higher education like professional and technical education.

6. Status of widows : Widows are considered as worthless in the Indian society. They are treated poorly and forced to wear white clothes.

7. Gender discrimination : Women are considered as weaker section of the society than men and given less importance. Girls' children are becoming real victims of the discrimination. There are also discrimination of power and work between men and women because of the patriarchal system families in India. Gender discrimination affects women in the areas like nutrition, education, health, care, decline of female population, job, public life, etc.

8. Inadequate Nutrition : Inadequate nutrition in the childhood affects women in their later life especially women belonging to the lower middle class and poor families.

Challenges of Women Empowerment:

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. Inequality and Morality : 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.

Conclusion :- Women's empowerment is not a Northern concept women all over the world, including countries in South, have been challenging and changing gender inequalities since the beginning of the history. These struggles have also been supported by many men who have been outraged at injustice against women. Women represent half the world's population and gender inequality exists in every nation on the planet. Until women are given the same opportunities that men are, entire societies will be destined to perform below their true potentials. The greatest need of the hour is change of social attitude to women. The attainment in the field of income / employment and in educational front, the scenario of women empowerment seems to be comparatively poor. The need of the hour is to identify those loopholes or limitations which are observing the realization of empowerment of women and this initiative must be started from the women folk itself as well as more importantly policy initiative taken by the state and society. Let us take the oath that we want an egalitarian society where everybody whether men or women get the equal opportunity to express and uplift one's well being and well being of the society as whole. 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.

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