



Women Empowerment and Rural Development

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Abstract

Women empowerment and rural development are closely related. In one direction, rural development alone can play important role in driving down gender discrimination, on the other direction empowering women may benefit rural development. This paper highlights the issues and challenges of women empowerment. It also analyses government schemes for women and the relationship between rural development and women empowerment. In the 21st century, there are lots of opportunities for women to grow in economic, social and political sector. The need of the hour is to aware them about their rights.

Keywords – Women Empowerment, Policy Implications, Relationship Between Rural Development And Women Empowerment.

Introduction

In India there are various types of culture, traditions and practices. One side people give great importance and respect to their mothers, sisters and daughters, on the other side Indian people are also famous for treating their women badly both inside and outside their homes. Various kind of discriminating practices like early age marriage, female infanticide, sexual harassment etc. are present in society. In India gender inequality is the main social issues in which women are getting back in the male dominate country. So empowerment of women is very important. Women empowerment can be defined in very simple words as it is making women more powerful. They can make their own decision regarding their lives and inculcating such abilities makes them able to find rightful place in the society. It is a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional and multi-layered concept. It is a process in which women gain greater share of control over human and financial resources like money and access to money. Rural development is deeply linked with women empowerment. Rural Women play a catalytic role towards achievement of transformational, economic, environment and social changes required for sustainable development. Empowering women is important not only for the well being of individuals, families and rural communities, but also for the overall well being of society. So we made an attempt to study rural development and women empowerment in this research paper.

Objectives of the Study

1. To know the need of women empowerment
2. To study the main challenges of women empowerment
3. To study the government schemes for women empowerment
4. To study the relationship between rural development and women empowerment
5. To offer useful suggestions in the light of findings.

Need of Women Empowerment

Reflecting into the 'Vedas Parana' of Indian culture women is being worshipped such as Saraswati maa, goddess of wisdom, Durga maa for power, Laxmi maa, Goddess of wealth. But the status of rural women needs to address the issue of empowering women. About 66% of the female population in rural areas is unutilized. This is mainly due to social restrictions. According to gender gap index 2017, India got 108th rank and overall 0.669 ranks. In education attainment of women India got 112th rank, females over the age 25 with secondary education are 35.3%. Women in labour force are about 28% only. These rankings shows that India has long way to go in women empowerment.

Hindrances of women empowerment

In India gender discrimination is at its peak. Preference for a son over the birth of a girl child is present in almost all societies and communities. The society is more biased on education, nutrition and other opportunities between male and female child. Positions are decided for male and female that which work they do. Poverty is the reality of life for majority women in rural India. It is another factor that poses challenge in realizing women's empowerment. There is huge gap between men and women's education attainment. While 82.14% of adult men are educated, only 65.46% of adult women are educated. Gender bias in higher education as well as in professional education is more dominate. Malnutrition in rural women is very high. A third of women of reproductive age in India are undernourished. Around 80% of the Indian pregnant women suffer from iron deficiency. India contributed 20% of all maternal death during 1992 and 2006. Professional inequality is practiced in employment and promotions. Women face lots of problems in government offices and private enterprises. Household inequality in rural India is also very common. Women are dominated by men in all aspects.

Constitutional Provisions for Empowering Women in India

1. Equality before law for all persons (Article-14).
2. Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race caste, sex or place of birth (Article-15(1))
3. However, special provisions may be made by the state in favor of women and children (Article 15(3))
4. Equality of opportunity for all citizens relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state (Article-16)
5. State policy to be directed to securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood (Article-39(A); (V) equal pay equal work for both men and women (Article-39(d))
6. Provisions to be made by the state for securing just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief (Article-42)
7. Promotion of harmony by every citizen of India and renouncement of such practices which are derogatory to the dignity of women (Article-51 A(e)).
8. Reservation of not less than one-third of total seats for women in direct election to local bodies, viz ; Panchayats and Municipalities(Articles-343(d)and 343(T))

Welfare Schemes for women in India

Under Article 15(3), the constitution of India allows for positive discrimination in favor of women. In addition, the directive principles of state policy 39(a) state that. "The state shall, in particular direct its policy toward securing that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood.

More programmes initiated by the Government of India include

- **Rastriya Mehila Kosh:-** Rastriya mehila Kosh (The National credit fund for women) was created by Government of India in 1993. Its purpose is to provide lower income women with access to loans to begin small businesses.
- **Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme:-** RGN crèche scheme was launched as a central sector scheme in January 2006 to provide day care facilities to children of working and other deserving women belonging to families whose monthly income is not more than Rs.12000/-. The Scheme provides supplementary

nutrition, health care inputs like immunization polio drops, basic health monitoring pre-school education, emergency medicines and contingencies.

- **Mother And Child Tracking System:-**The mother and child tracking system was launched in 2009, helps monitor the health care system to ensure that all mothers and their children have access to a range of services, including pregnancies care, medical care during delivery and immunizations. The system consists of a data base of all pregnancies registered at health care facilities and birth since 1 Dec 2009.
- **Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana Conditional Maternity Benefit Plan :-** IGMBY conditional maternity benefit scheme is sponsored for pregnant and lactating women age 19 and over their first two live births. The program which began in October 2010 provides money to help ensure the good health and nutrition of the recipients as of March 2013. This programme is being offered in 53 districts around country.
- **Priyadarshini :-** Priyadarshini, Initiated in April 2011, is a program that offer women in seven districts access to self help group.
- **Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls Sabla:-** The Rajiv Gandhi scheme for empowerment of Adolescent Girls Sabla is an initiative launched in 2012 that targets adolescent girls. The Scheme offers a package of benefits to girls between the age of 10 and 19. It offers a variety of services to help young women to become self-reliant, including Nutritional Supplementation and education, health education and services and life skills and vocational training.
- **Beti Bachoo Beti Padhao Scheme:-** The scheme aims to address the issues of child sex ratio through a national level strategy focusing on mass campaigns for improving CSR and promote education in 100 gender critical districts through multi-sectoral action.

The objective of the scheme is to

- Prevent gender biased sex selective elimination
- Ensure survival and protection of the girl child
- Ensure education of the girl child

Benefits of government schemes to women

1. Bharatiya Mahila Bank providing a finance to under privileged women who wanted to start their own business up to 20 crores are sanctioned for manufacturing enterprise and this loan must be repaid within 7 year.
2. Orient Mahila Vikas Yojana scheme providing capital to women for starting business. In this case up to Rs 25 lakhs, a collateral is not needed. And this scheme was initiated by oriental Bank of commerce
3. In Udyogini scheme, loans providing up to Rs 1 Lakh to women is aged between 18 to 45 years, 30% of loan sanctioned for widows, destitute, disabled women and women belonging to SC/ST category. Punjab and Sind bank is promoting this scheme .
4. In cont., Kalyani loan scheme for women who involved in agriculture work or engages in retail trading up to Rs 100 lakh loans are sanctioned. Other benefit of this scheme is that there is no processing fee. This was launched and offered by central bank of India.

Conclusion

Thus, the need of the hour is to identify those limitations which became hindrance in women empowerment. Awareness among women about their rights is very essential .The empowerment of women has become one of the most important concern of 21st century not only at national level but also at international level.

To make the schemes successful in empowering rural women, it is very necessary that they should participate in large numbers at village; Tehsil and District level matters and voice their preferences and concerns regarding the implementation of Government schemes. For making their lives successful and meaningful, Indian rural women have also to put in 100 percent initiative. They have to involve in education more and more. Due to awareness, they know about the schemes that Government launch for them and make their life better in rural areas.

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