

Women Empowerment and Place of Women in Indian Society: A Study

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Abstract

India is a country with a population of over one billion people. Even after completing eleven five-year plans and five-year plans, India is beleaguered with several problems. "The status of women indicates the character of the country" said Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. The social standing of any society is determined by the social status of the women. It rises and falls with them. Women have played a key role in the evolution of mankind. But everywhere in the world women are accorded a lower status than men. Their empowerment is still an illusion of reality. The present paper analyzes the level of empowerment and the place of women in Indian society.

Keywords

Empowerment, Security, Women, Gender, Inequality, Role, Status

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Introduction

The goal of development is to raise the standard of living in all its aspects with a view to changing the quality of life of the people. No meaningful development could be made neglecting the better half of the family women who bear and rear the children and manage most of the household affairs. Society, politics and economics are interrelated. One influences the course of others. So it is easily understood that if women have no right on the social and political platform, who will take the lead to claim economic rights for them. Regarding deprivation of economic rights many examples can be cited.

Few topics today consume the attention of researchers in social sciences, governments, planning groups, social workers and reformers as the problems of women do. Approaches to the study of women's problems range from the study of gerontology to psychiatry and criminology. But one important problem relating to women which has been greatly ignored is the problem of violence against women. Violence towards women in the context of marriage becomes more significant when a husband who is supposed to love and protect his wife beats her. For a woman, being battered by a man whom she trusted most becomes a shattering experience. The violence can range from slaps and kicks to broken bones. They have been victims of verbal, psychological, religious, sexual, emotional and economic abuse. In the Indian culture, we rarely hear of a wife reporting a case of battering to the police. She suffers humiliation in silence and takes it as her destiny. Even if she wants to revolt, she cannot do it because of the fear that her own parents would refuse to keep her in their house permanently after the marriage.

Empowerment of Women

Empowerment of women may be taken to mean strengthening women's position in the socio-political power structure of the society. But empowerment in this sense cannot be achieved without strengthening women's position in the existing economic system. This means creating both more social opportunities and capacities for women so that they can participate in an effective and significant manner in the functioning of the economic system of the society. While these provide necessary conditions for women's empowerment, the targeted outcome of such empowerment is supposed to be the creation of conditions that would enable women to play decisive roles in the family and society equally with their male counterparts, so that the question of oppressions, discrimination, injustice, deprivation and degradation for women as a group would turn to be totally irrelevant.

The source of empowerment should not remain confined to the domain of governmental machinery alone. Empowerment will remain a distant dream unless

the governmental programmes on empowerment are combined with a change in the social attitude and a re-reading of women's position. There is a need to change the self-perception of women as the second sex or a weakling who needs the protection of the male members of the family no matter what their age may be his age. Self-confidence and self-reliance are essential conditions for empowerment, which no superimposed programs can inculcate in them. In the realization of this inner strength, lies actual empowerment.

Review of Literature

Trilok Singh (2012) *Studies in Women and Gender Issues*. Gender discrimination and sexuality are very complicated issues in a contemporary society. Women feel isolated and uncomfortable because of gender inequality. These gender-based differences affected the mental health of women; also, many women are viewed by men as just sex objects rather than as real human beings.

Manish Bahl (2007) *Violence on Women by Men*. The lack of physical power leads to general timidity in women. During the Middle Ages, cruel and inhuman treatment was meted out to them. The women sacrificed everything including their lives. The higher the sacrifice, the higher the salvation became a motto for women. In reality, women rarely had an identity apart from that given to them as wives, mothers and daughters.

Bedabati Mohanty (2005) *Violence Against Women*. In this book the status of women in the Indian society is mainly discussed. Violence and atrocities against women, dowry problems (deaths) in the present-day society are a major area of debate. Its growing dimension is creating serious problems for the society. The plight of poor women who are unable to digest the torture, yet are not able to raise their voice against it. The economic and social aspects of the people involved in the crime have been analyzed to find out the possible causes and offer suggestions for the elimination of such crimes from the society.

Objectives of the Present Research Study

The objectives of this paper are to examine (a) to what extent the roots of gender inequality roots have penetrated into different aspects of human life, (b) how far the gender inequality is affecting our development programmes and (c) how this inequality and discrimination can be minimized?

Research Methodology

Methodology of the study is as important as the study itself; the investigator should have a clear idea about the theme of the research topic. The present research study depends upon primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected

through personal discussions. The secondary data is gathered through different types of books. The previous research articles have also been used for the collection of secondary data.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The majority part of the research work depends upon secondary data. In-depth structured, semi-structured one-on-one elite interviews have not been conducted in this study.

Conclusion

Women are the sufferers at the hands of men all over the world. The fact remains that the paths of women are still beset with several difficulties. Violence against women is largely a manifestation of their lower status in the society. Women intend to bear responsibilities of in-house activities like handling home, health, husbandry, health care, hospitality, hubby and hoards. They are naturally efficient in taking care of nutrition, nurturing and nourishment of each and every member of the family, group or the community. As they play the key role in forming a family they very often contribute to unpaid labor and do not expect social justice. Females have more tolerance, patience, docility and ability to adjust, power of bearing, rearing and steering and sacrifice as compared to the male counterpart. Participation of women in different activities is essential for the socio-economic development of our country. Participation leads to empowerment of women, which generates self-respect, self-confidence, self-discipline and self-sufficiency. Self-help groups will help the women to come out of social limitations such as superstition and a dormant role in the decision-making.

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