

University Amravati Sponsored
One Day National Conference on

Role of Home Economics in Women's Empowerment

31st January 2018

RESEARCH DEMAGOGUE

SPECIAL ISSUE JANUARY 2018

UGC Approved Journal No.44476 www.vcjournal.net

Impact Factor : 5.210



SOUVENIR
(PROCEEDING BOOK)

Organized by



Department of Home Economics

Bapuraoji Butle Arts, Narayanrao Bhat Commerce & Bapusaheb Patil Science
College Digras, Dist.Yavatmal, (MS) India. Pin Code 445203
(Affiliated to Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University, Amravati.)

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Women's Studies Centre,
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D.V.S.P.Mandal's Digras, Dist.Yavatmal, 445203.

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Issues and Challenges of Women Empowerment in India

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Introduction:

Women empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender or economic strength of individuals and communities of women. Women's empowerment in India is heavily dependent on many different variables that include geographical location (urban / rural) educational status social status and age. Policies on Women's empowerment exist at the national, state and local levels in many sectors, including health, education, economic opportunities, gender based violence and political participation. However there are significant gap between policy advancements and actual practice at the community level.

Empowerment of women is essentially the process of upliftment of economic, social, political, state of women, the traditionally underprivileged ones, in the society. It is the process of guarding them against all forms of violence.

Women empowerment involves the building up of a society a political environment, wherein women can breathe without the fear of harassment, exploitation, apprehension, discrimination and the general feeling of persecution which goes with a women in traditionally male dominated stricture. Women constitute almost 50% of the world's population but India has shown disproportionate sex ratio whereby female's 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 the Western societies, the women have got equal right and status with men in all walks of life. But gender disabilities and discriminations are found in India even today.

Review Of Literature :-

H. Subrahmanyam (2011) compares women education in India at present and Past. Author

highlighted that there has a good progress in overall enrolment of girl students in schools. The term empower means to give lawful power or authority to act. It is the process of acquiring some activities of women.

Duflo (2011) Women's Empowerment and Economic Development. National Bureau of Economic Research Cambridge The study argues that the inter relationships of the Empowerment and Development are probably too weak to be self sustaining and that continuous policy commitment to equality for its own sake may be needed to bring about equality between men and women.

Sethuraman K. (2008) The Role of Women's Empowerment and Domestic Violence in child Growth and Under nutrition in a Tribal and Rural Community in South India. This research paper explores the relationship between Women's Empowerment and Domestic Violence, maternal nutritional status and the nutritional status and growth over six months in children aged 6 to 24 months in a rural and tribal community. This longitudinal observational study undertaken in rural Karnataka, India included tribal and rural subjects.

Objectives Of The Study :-

1. To know the need of Women Empowerment.
2. To assess the Awareness of Women Empowerment in India.
3. To analyze the Factors influencing the Empowerment of Women.
4. To study the Government Schemes For Women Empowerment.
5. To offer useful Suggestions in the light of Findings.

Present Situation Of Women :-

Being equal to their male counterparts is still a far cry for Indian women. Not only are

they marginal as public figures an average Indian women can hardly call the shots at home or outside. In 2012, women occupied only 8 out of 74 ministerial positions in the union council of ministers. There were only 2 women judges out of 26 judges in the Supreme Court and there were only 54 women judges out of 634 judges in various high courts.

According to 2013, UNDP report on Human Development Indicators, all south Asian Countries except Afghanistan, were ranked better for women than India It predicts: an Indian girl child aged 1-5 years is 75% more likely to die than the boy child. A women is raped once in every 20 min and 10% of all crimes are reported. Women from 48% of India's Population, only 29% of the National workforce, only 26% women have access to formal credit.

Why Need Of Women Empowerment? :-

Reflecting into the "Vedas Purana" of Indian culture, women is being worshiped such as LAXMI MAA, Goddess of wealth:

- 1) Rastria Mahila Kosh (RMK) 1992-1993,
- 2) Swayasjdha.
- 3) Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY) October, 1993
- 4) Swalamban
- 5) Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY) 1995
- 6) Swa Shakti Group
- 7) Swa Shakti Group
- 8) Dhanalakahmi (2008)
- 9) Short Stay Homes
- 10) Ujjawala (2007)
- 11) Working Women's Forum.
- 12) Indira Mahila Kendra.
- 13) Indira Priyadarahini Yojana,
- 14) SBI's Sree Shaki Scheme
- 15) Women Entrepreneur Development programme given top priority in 1997-98.
- 16) Mahila Samakhya being implemented in about 9(KK) villages.
- 17) Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women(STEP).
- 18) Women's Development Corporation Scheme (WDCS)s

SARSWATI MAA, for wisdom: DURGA MAA for power. The status of women in India particularly in rural areas needs to address the issue of empowering women. About 66% of the female population in rural area is

unutilized. This is mainly due to existing social customs. In agriculture and Animal care the women contribute 90% of the total workforce. Women constitute almost half of the population, perform nearly 2/3 of its work hours, receive 1/10th of the world's income and own less than 1/ 100th the world property. Among the world's 900 million ill iterate people, women outnumber men two to one. 70% of people living in poverty are women. They constitute less than 1/7th of the administrators and mangers in developing countries. Only 10% seats in World Parliament and 6% in National Cabinet are held by women.

Ways To Empower Women :

- Changes in women's mobility and social interaction
- Changes in women's labour patterns
- Changes in women's access to and control over resources and
- Changes in women's control over Decision making
- Providing education
- Self employment and self help group
- Providing minimum needs like Nutrition, Health, Sanitation, Housing
- Other than this society should change the mentality towards the word women
- Encouraging women to develop in their fields they are good at and make a career.

Government Schemes For Women Empowerment :-

The Government programmes for women development began as early as 1954 in India but the actual participation began only in 1974. At present, the Government of India has many schemes for women operated by different department and ministries. Some of these are as follows;

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 economically very poor all over the India. A few women are engaged in services and other activities. So they need economic power to stand on their own legs on par with men. 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 problem is that workplace harassment of women. There are so many cases of rape, kidnapping of girl, dowry harassment, and so on. For these reasons, they require 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.

CHALLENGES :-

There are several challenges that are plaguing the issues of women's right in India Targeting these issues will directly benefit me empowerment of women in India.

- **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.

- **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.

- **Health and Safety :** The health and safety concerns of women are paramount for the wellbeing of a country and is an important factor in gauging the empowerment of women in a country. However there are alarming concerns where maternal healthcare is concerned.

- **Professional Inequality :** This inequality is practiced in employment sand promotions. Women face countless handicaps in male customized and dominated environs in Government Offices and Private enterprises.

- **Morality and Inequality :** 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.

- **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.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY :-

- 1) Globalization. Liberalization and other Socio - Economic forces have given some respite to a large proportion of the population. However, there are still quite a few areas where women empowerment in India is largely lacking.
- 2) There needs to be a sea - change in the mind set of the people in the country. Not just the women themselves, but the men have to wake up, to wake up to a world mat is moving towards equality and equity. It is better that this is embraced earlier than later for our own good.

- 3) There are several Government programmes and NGOs in the Country, there is still a wide gap that exists between those under protection and those not.
- 4) Poverty and illiteracy add to these complications. The Empowerment of Women begins with a guarantee of their health and safety.
- 5) Empowerment of Women could only be achieved if their economic and social status is improved. This could be possible only by adopting definite social and economic policies with a view of total development of women and to make them realize that they have the potential to be strong human beings.
- 6) In order to create a sustainable world, we must begin to Empower Women.

SUGGESTIONS :-

- 1) The first and foremost priority should be given to the education of women, which is the grassroots problem. Hence, education for women has to be paid special attention.
- 2) Awareness programmes need to be organized for creating awareness among women especially belonging to weaker sections about their rights.
- 3) Women should be allowed to work and should be provided enough safety and support to work. They should be provided with proper wages and work at par with men so that their status can be elevated in the society.
- 4) Strict implementation of Programmes and Acts should be there to curb the traditional-practices prevalent in the society.

CONCLUSION :-

Thus, 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 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.

When women move forward the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves. It is essential as their thought and their value systems lead the development of a good family, good society and ultimately a good nation. The best way of empowerment is perhaps through inducting women in the mainstream of development. Women empowerment will be real and effective only when they are endowed income and property so that they may stand on their feet and build up their identity in the society.

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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