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31. Women Empowerment: Problems and Prospects

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Introduction

Empowerment is now increasingly seen as a process by which the one's without power gain greater control over their lives. This means control over material assets, intellectual resources and ideology. It solves power to, power with and power within. Some define empowerment as a process of awareness and conscientization, of capacity building leading to greater participation, effective decision making power and control leading to transformative action. This involves ability to get what one wants and to influence others on our concerns. With reference to women the power relation that has be involved includes their lives at multiple levels, family, community, market and the state. Importantly it involves at the psychological level women's ability to assert themselves and this is constructed the 'gender roles' assigned to her specially in a cultural which resists change like India. The questions surrounding women's empowerment the condition and position of women have now come critical to the human rights based approaches to development.).

Objectives of the Study

- 1) To study the human capabilities that draws comparison between cultural.
- 2) To study the qualitatives of women empowerments.
- 3) To study the qualitatives indicators of women empowerment.
- 4) To study the economic, educational and political empowerment of women.

The Cairo conference in (1994) organized by UN on Population and Development called attention to women's empowerment as a central focus and UNDP developed the Gender Empowerment measure (GEM) which focuses on the three variables that reflect women's participation in society - political power or decision-making, education and health. 1995 UNDP³ report was devoted to women's empowerment and it declared that if human development is not engendered it is endangered a declaration which almost become a lei motif for further development measuring and policy planning. Equality, sustainability and empowerment were

emphasized and the stress was, that women's emancipation does not depend on national income but is an engaged political process.

The list of capabilities that, draws is compare between cultural as necessary element of truly human functioning. They include :-

1. Life being able to live to the end of human life of normal length : not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living.
2. Bodily integrity – Being able to move freely from place to place, to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sex satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction
3. Senses, imagination and through – Being able to use the sense, to imagine, think and reason in a truly human way including but not limited to literacy. Being able to use one's mind and imagination protection by freedom of expression.
4. Emotions – being able to have attachments, to love, to grieve to experience longing gratitude and justified anger. Not having one's emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety.
5. Practical Reason – Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about planning of one's life's protected by liberty of conscience.
6. Affiliation – Being able to life with and toward others to have social interactions, to have the capability of both justice and friendship. This would entail freedom of assembly and free speech. Having social bases for self respect and non humiliation, being protected against discrimination on the basis of race, sex sexual orientation religion caste or regain,
7. Other species – Being able to concern with nature.
8. Play – being able to laugh, play and enjoy.

Indicators of Women Empowerment, Qualitative & Quantitative

Qualitative

- 1) increase in self-esteem, individual and collective confidence;
- 2) increase in articulation, knowledge and awareness on health, nutrition reproductive rights, law and literacy,
- 3) increase and decrease in personal leisure time and time for child care;
- 4) increase and decrease of workloads in new programmes;
- 5) change in roles and responsibility in family & community;
- 6) visible increase and decrease in violence on women and girls;

- 7) responses to, changes in social customs like child marriage, dowry, discrimination against widows;
- 8) visible changes in women's participation level attending meeting, participating and demanding participation;
- 9) increase in bargaining and negotiating power at home, in community and the collective;
- 10) increase access to and ability to gather information;
- 11) formation of women collectives;
- 12) positive changes in social attitudes;
- 13) awareness and recognition of women's economic contribution within and outside the household;
- 14) women's decision-making over her work and income.

Quantitative Indicators

- A. **Demographic Trends** - maternal mortality rate, fertility rate, sex ratio, life expectancy at birth, average age of marriage.
- B. Number of women participating in different development programmes
- C. Greater access and control over community resources/government schemes-creche, credit cooperative, non formal education.
- D. Visible change in physical health status and nutritional level.
- E. Change in literacy and enrolment levels.
- F. Participation levels of women in political process Monitorable targets for the Tenth Plan and beyond had certain key issues related to gender.

1) Economic Empowerment : More women than men live in poverty. Economic disparities persist partly because much of the unpaid work within families and communities falls on the shoulders of women and because they face discrimination in the economic sphere

2) Educational Empowerment : About two thirds of the illiterate adults in the world are female. Higher levels of women's education are strongly associated with both lower infant mortality and lower fertility, as well as with higher levels of education and economic opportunity for their children.

3) Political Empowerment : Social and legal institutions still do not guarantee women equality in basic legal and human rights, in access to or control of land or other resources, in employment and earning, and social and political participation. Laws against domestic violence are often not enforced on behalf of women.

4) Stewardship Of Natural Resources : Women in developing nations are usually in

charge of securing water, food and fuel and of overseeing family health and diet. Therefore, they tend to put into immediate practice whatever they learn about nutrition and preserving the environment and natural resources.

Conclusion

Gender equality implies a society in which women and men enjoy the same opportunities, outcomes, rights and obligations in all spheres of life. Equality between men and women exists when both sexes are able to share equally in the distribution of power and influence; have equal opportunities for financial independence through work or through setting up businesses; enjoy equal access to education and the opportunity to develop personal ambitions. A critical aspect of promoting gender equality is the empowerment of women, with a focus on identifying and redressing power imbalances and giving women more autonomy to manage their own lives. Women's empowerment is vital to sustainable development and the realization of human rights for all.

The ability of women to control their own fertility is absolutely fundamental to women's empowerment and equality. When a woman can plan her family, she can plan the rest of her life. When she is healthy, she can be more productive. And when her reproductive rights - including the right to decide the number, timing and spacing of her children, and to make decisions regarding reproduction free of discrimination, coercion and violence - are promoted and protected, she has freedom to participate more fully and equally in society.

The roles that men and women play in society are not biologically determined - they are socially determined, changing and changeable. Although they may be justified as being required by culture or religion, these roles vary widely by locality and change over time.

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