



Need and Importance of Women Empowerment in the 21st Century

Kamal Baruah, Research Scholar,
Gauhati University, Jalukbari, Guwahati, Assam, INDIA

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Corresponding Author :

Kamal Baruah, Research Scholar,
Gauhati University, Jalukbari,
Guwahati, Assam, INDIA

shodhsamagam1@gmail.com

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Need and importance of women empowerment in the 21st century Abstract Women are an integral part of society. Half of the population of the world are women. Women equally contribute to the progress of a society and nation. But most of the time women are neglected and deprived of equal status and opportunities like men in our society.

Abstract

Women are an integral part of society. Half of the population of the world are women. Women equally contribute to the progress of a society and nation. But most of the time women are neglected and deprived of equal status and opportunities like men in our society. Even in the 21st century, in many underdeveloped and developing countries, conditions of women are too pathetic and poor. They are neglected and deprived of economic, educational, political, and social equality and opportunity like men. Women empowerment is a movement to re-establish and strengthen the dignity of women and ensuring the rights and opportunities of women. In the present 21st century, women's empowerment is of utmost importance for the development of society and the nation.

Key Words

Women empowerment, importance, 21st century.

Introduction

Women empowerment is a popular and widely discussed term. In the present world, every nation gives its efforts for women empowerment. The term has been defined and understood in various ways in the academic sphere/ world. From different definitions about women empowerment, one becomes clearly understood that women empowerment is the process of empowering the women who are always discriminated and deprived of opportunities on various grounds (social, economic, educational, political, etc.) in society. The concept of women empowerment was first formally introduced at the United Nations Third World conference held at Nairobi in the year 1985.

Women constitute half of the population of the world. Almost 50% of the populations of all

nations are women. This section of the population contributes equally to the social, economic, and national development of each country. Unfortunately, this section of the population has to face discrimination, social taboos, and domination of male, only because of their gender and remains underdeveloped.

In the 21st century, each nation is interdependent and equal participation of both men and women is necessary for the progress of a country. But still now in most of the underdeveloped and developing countries, women's condition is very pathetic and needs immediate attention. In most developing countries, women have been neglected and deprived of equal facilities and opportunities like men. Still, now different social prejudices and social taboos prevailed that negatively affect the status of women in society. Girl children are killed, don't get nutrition, food, education, economic participation, political participation as a boy or male gets. Both men and women are like the wings of society, if one wing becomes weak how society can fly (progress)? So in this advanced and ultramodern society, special attention to this weaker section of the population is needed and they need to be empowered so that women can get equal rights, opportunity, and integrity in society and cooperate in the progress of society and the nation.

Methodology

The present study is qualitative. Descriptive study method was applied in presenting the article. Secondary data collected from journals, research papers, research articles, books, and websites were used.

Meaning of women empowerment

Women empowerment is a process through which women become stronger and confident. It increases the degree of autonomy and self-determination in women to enable them to represent their interests in a responsible and self-determined way. It refers to making women robust to make them capable to make decisions for themselves. As a concept women empowerment was introduced at the United Nations Third World conference held at Nairobi in the year 1985. It has defined women empowerment as a redistribution of social and economic powers and control of resources in favor of women (Pagare, R. 2017). Keller, B., and D.C Mbwewe, (1991) has defined women empowerment as "a process whereby women become able to organize themselves to increase their self-reliance, to assert their independent right to make choices and to control resources which will assist in challenging and eliminating their subordination". It is a worldwide movement to establish the rights, opportunities, status of every woman on Earth. It is a comprehensive concept with various definitions. Women's empowerment refers to the process of increasing women's access to control over the strategic life choices that affect them and access to the opportunities that allow them fully to realize their capacities. Women's empowerment as an economic, political, and socio-cultural process challenges the system of sexual stratification that has resulted in women's subordination and marginalization to improve women's quality of life (Chen YZ., Tanaka H, 2014). Nalia Kabeer (1999) conceptualized women empowerment as "the process by which women gain the opportunity to make and enact strategic life choices such as choice of spouse or decisions about education and employment".

Need and importance of women empowerment

The need and importance of women empowerment have been discussed and realized both at national and international levels. Now all nations of the world give importance to women empowerment and make necessary plans, policies for it. Now, the empowerment of women has become a prominent necessity for the overall development of human resources and the society of a nation. The need and importance of women empowerment can be understood from the following factors :

(a) Sex ratio

The sex ratio is the number of females as per thousand males. In the countries where there is son preference, girl's mortality rates are higher, it is estimated that there are over 130 missing women because of selective abortion and excess female death (Hannah Ritche and Max Roser, 2019). In many underdeveloped and developing nations, the sex ratio is imbalanced. In developed nations gender or sex ratio is 1060 or more, but in most of the South Asian and developing nations, only 48% of the total populations are women (Human Development in South Asia, 2000). Women empowerment is needed to establish a balanced sex ratio in most of the developing nations including India.

(b) Literacy and education

In most of the developing and underdeveloped nations (eg..India, Bangladesh, Pakistan) education is not facilitated equally between boys and girls. As compared to males, females do not get enough opportunities and deprived of education. The global female literacy rate is 82.7 percent as compared to 90.0 percent of males. In developing nations like India, the male literacy rate is 80.9 percent, as against female literacy rate 64.6 percent (Census of India, 2011). In most nations, while educating a boy is considered as an investment for future economic returns, women's education is supposed to be a waste of money by parents. Today in this world of knowledge, no nation can dream about development without education, without skilled manpower. Women have to be given equal educational scope and opportunities as a male gets.

(c) Economic empowerment

In most of the underdeveloped and developing nations, women are deprived of economic equality. Huge discrimination has been observed between men and women based on their gender. Women's economic participation rate between ages (25-55) is 63 percent compared to men's 94 percent, the gender pay gap is estimated at 23 percent, women's global unemployment rate has recorded 6.2 percent against 5.5 percent of men (U.N Women, 2018). Men and women get a different amount of money for doing the same work/task. Women are allowed less economic participation in developing countries and mostly engaged in informal sectors. Women equally contribute to the GDP of a nation like men. Women empowerment changes the present scenario of women by providing equal economic opportunity to women as men are provided. She becomes economically independent in life.

(d) Women's status in society

Still now, in many developing nations, a girl child is supposed to be unlucky and a burden on the family killed even before birth. Girls are provided less care and nutritious food as compared to the boy child by their parents in rural and underdeveloped areas. Many social taboos and misbeliefs are there that discriminated against girls because of her gender and blocking the progress. Child marriage, forceful marriage, dowry death, patriarchy are social evils that stopped women's development and tried to make women servants of others. Women's empowerment is needed to establish their rights and to live with dignity and with respect in society.

(e) Women's participation in the decision-making process and political activities

As compared to developed nations, women are less likely to participate in decision making, political activities in poor and developing countries. As women constitute the half population of a nation's opinion, the participation of these populations is necessary for the development of a nation. Women are given less scope and active participation in the decision-making process in male-dominated societies. In South Asia, only 7% parliamentary seats are there for women with 9 % cabinet members, 6% judiciary held by women and only 20% of women members are in local government (HDISA, 2000) Women's demand and voices remain neglected. Women's political participation is very low.

(f) Crime against women

Rape, acid attack, dowry death, human trafficking, sexual harassment in the workplace, are common threats faced by all the women in most of the third world, and developing countries. Women are insecure and they are not allowed to go out at night alone. Women empowerment makes provision to make a free society where women and men can live with equal status, freedom, and without a victim of crime.

Women Empowerment in India

Traditionally Indian women's position has been one of the general subordination to men. Women have been considered as the weaker sex and given subordinate status in Our Hindu society. It has been believed by Hindu society that women should be protected by her father in her childhood, by her husband in her adulthood, and by the child in her old age (Sahay, S. 1998). Almost 50% of the total population of India are women and the full development of India is impossible without equal participation in this population. But the scenario had tremendously changed during India's struggle for independence. Women participated and played an active role which changed the ongoing weaker image of women/girls from the minds of people in India. During that period various revolutionary steps were taken to provide security and get rid of evil practices from society.

The Indian government has initiated various plans and programs to foster women's empowerment in the country. The year 2001 has been observed as the women empowerment year in India to encourage the women empowerment. Different central and state governmental programs were implemented to develop the state of women. Schemes like Beti Bachao Beti padhao, Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahayog Yojana (IGMSY), One-Stop center scheme for Women (OSC) have been working for women empowerment from various perspectives

Discussions

In the 21st century, though in most of the developed nation's women's condition is very good and progressive, but in many underdeveloped and developing nations lagging in the development of women. In this century no country can achieve full progress without quality and efficient human resources. Both men and women's active participation is needed for social, economic, political, and other development. Women empowerment has been observed as a revolution to raise voice for women and ensure the progress of women. United Nations declared the year 1975-1985 as the year of women to empower the women. Women empowerment has been realized as the need of the hour by all the nations of the world.

Conclusion

Empowerment of women is a global movement. In the 21st century, equal development of both men and women has been considered essential for the progress of society and the nation. Women contribute equally to the development of a nation. Women of underdeveloped and developing nations mainly face social, economic, educational, political discrimination because of her gender and remained isolated and underdeveloped. In India after independence steps have been taken to strengthen the women section of the country. In India, women empowerment has been given importance and different programs and policies have been implemented to achieve the purpose. Women empowerment has brought positive changes in women's status by providing all types of facilities, opportunities like men. Women's empowerment can be the way to re-establish the status and lost dignity of women in the world.

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