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EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN: SPECIAL FOCUS ON RURAL WOMEN

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Abstract:

Women have been neglected throughout the years in every field social and cultural or Economic and when it comes to rural women, the negligence in greater quantity. In order to enhance the condition of women, the government of India is implementing a number of programmes to improve access to Employment, Education, Health, Infrastructure Development, Urban Development Etc. In rural Societies, women empowerment is an imperative issue. For holistic empowerment of women, an inter-sectoral approach has to be adopted which will end Exploitation and Discrimination against women enabling them to develop their full potential to be active participants in Nation-Building, sharing the benefits of Economic growth and prosperity.

KEYWORDS:

Empowerment Of Women, Improve Access To Employment, Education, Health, Infrastructure Development, Urban Development Etc.

INTRODUCTION

“Empowerment with women” is the central issue that has been pervading the development debate after the 80s. Improving their status and empowering them would go a long way in accomplishing egalitarian gender relations in the society. Women who are mainly constrained by their social –structure for their self expression mainly contribute the target of most of development programmes, which aims at bringing them into the mainstream of the development.

The contribution of India under Article 14, says no discrimination against the state whereas Article 15, provides equality of opportunity in employment, maternity relief is also provided to women under the constitution. The government of India has been implementing various programmes through its different departments to bring about women's development and their empowerment.

The Integrated Child Development Programme: This is a flagship programme of department of women empowerment and child development. It provides Aganwadi services, health and nutritional supplements to the infants, also pre and post –natal care for the pregnant and lactating mothers.

Kishori Balika Yojana: The scheme is for adolescent girls in the 11-18 age group who belong to the below poverty level. The scheme provides training to these girls in order to bring about their overall development. Various other programmes includes **Financial assistance for remarriage of widows, Pension Scheme for widows /aged /disabled/homeless, also Financial assistance to destitute widows** etc.

The **Department of Education** has also introduced various schemes like early child care education centre children in the 3-6 age group. **National programme on education for girls at elementary level** to increase the enrolment rates of girls belonging to SC/ST communities at the elementary stage. To make women Economically self – reliant the **Department of Horticulture** introduced special schemes for training women in fruit presentation.

Women self help groups (SHG) India have become a very important vehicle for Economic

empowerment. Currently there are around six-million self-help groups in the country of which 80 percent are women's groups, covering over 97 beneficiaries. Also gender –sensitive budget initiatives have been undertaken to promote the needs of rural women.

Table 1 : Some indicators related to status of Women

Indicators	Male	Female
Literacy Rate (%) Census 2011	82.14	65.46
Maternal Mortality Rate (per 100000 live births) SRS,2009-10		212
Sex Ratio, Census 2011	1000	940
Child Sex Ratio (0-6 Years),Census 2011	1000	914
Workers population Ratios (per 1000)	819	336
MPs in Lok Sabha (%)	89.18	10.82

Compiled

Table 2: Per 1000 distribution of usually employed (ps + ss) by status of employment (Women)

SL.No	Year	Self Employed		Regular Wage		Casual Labour	
		Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
1	2004-05*	637	477	37	356	326	167
2	2007-08**	583	423	41	379	376	199
3	2009-10#	557	423	44	393	399	196

Source: *61st,**64th and #66th rounds of NSSO Surveys

Table 3 : Distribution (per 1000) of usually employed women (principle status) by board industry division

SL.No	Year	Agriculture		Manufacturing		Construction		Others*	
		Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
1	2004-05*	814	147	87	254	17	45	30	147
2	2007-08**	816	129	76	252	23	48	28	150
3	2009-10#	789	118	76	258	42	51	34	139

Source:*61st , **64th and #66th rounds of NSSO Surveys

*Trade ,hotel and restaurant, transport, storage and communications

Weakness

Despite of all these initiative many rural women are still deprived of basic facilities such as food, shelter, health and education. There is lack of proper supervision and weak monitoring mechanism of different development initiatives designed for the empowerment of rural women. Rural women and these belonging to the Dalit, Tribal and nomadic communities remain unaffected. Due to the poverty malnourished women give birth to malnourished children. They are not only over worked and work for the longer hours than their male counterparts but in general are unskilled and thus undertake minor works requiring more labour hours for which they each earns less. The position of women is degrading, the **World Development Report 2012**, says that one-fifth of the married women in India are not involved in spending decisions, even from their own income. Women's ownership and control of property is far less than their male counterparts. However in terms of **Gender Inequality Index (GII)** published by UNDP India has a GII value of 0.61, ranking it 132 out of 148 countries in 2012 Index.

There is no doubt the Indian policy-makers have adopted a very comprehensive framework to

strengthen the position of women in society since independence and also modified their policy-approaches from time to time but still a lot to be done. There is urgent need to rethink as how to expedite the process of women empowerment in a patriarchal and traditional society like India with innumerable obstacles. Very often the traditional beliefs, attitudes and practices which are deeply entrenched in rural women's lives, hinder their empowerment. Therefore women should be socially, politically, economically, psychologically empowered. There should be campaign for the promotion of women rights, including the use of media and with the purpose of increasing knowledge on women rights in public and state institutions, as well as the elimination of all forms of discrimination on the basis of gender. Also the rise of feminist ideas has led to the tremendous improvement of women's condition in recent times. Work should be done for the prevention of violence against women including domestic violence, trafficking etc.

To empower women land and property rights should be in their own names. Married women when faced with marital harassment, have no residential rights in the ancestral property which makes them dependent. The Government of India launched the National Mission on Empowerment of women (NMEW) on International Women's Day in 2010 with the aim to strengthen overall process that promote all round development of women. The mission aims to provide a single window service of all programmes run by the government for women under aegis of various central ministries. So for the development of the nation empowerment of women is the necessary condition.

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