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Spiritual paradigm of women empowerment: Myth or reality

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Abstract

Empowerment of any section of a society is a myth until they are conferred equality before law. The foundation of justice, freedom and equality is based on the recognition of the inherent dignity and equal right to all the members of society. Women have always been the centre of Indian family system. If we peep back into the era of political domination of India by foreigners, the women of India suffered most. It was during the latter half of 19th century and early 20th century, social reforms were made to uplift women. The mass participation of women in the movement of freedom struggle can be said as the landmark in the history of women empowerment. From glorious past to rigid and conservative middle age to contemporary modern & global society, women role has constantly gone through a change. She attained the new responsibilities & new role, apart from the typical & traditional role & sub-role she is playing for ages. As women seek to carve out new identities, it is spirituality which remains a source of strength, guidance and wisdom. For women, spirituality is not other worldly. It is as much about the body, relationships & work as it is about soul & spirit. If the woman is not well-equipped with self-awareness and spiritual powers within herself, it is difficult to sustain the confidence that comes with a good education and a good job. The movement of women empowerment can only be completed only when the women will be freed from the enemies within- for freedom from the mental conditioning & beliefs that make women powerless.

Keywords: women empowerment, Myth, reality

Introduction

Women Empowerment

Women's empowerment is a new phrase in the vocabulary of gender literature. This phrase is used in two senses i.e. specific & broad. In a specific sense, women empowerment refers to enhancing their position in the power structure of the society. In a general sense, it refers to empowering women to be self-dependent by providing them access to all the freedoms and opportunities which they were denied in the past only because of their being 'women'.

Empowerment is now increasingly seen as a process by which it means control over material assets, intellectual resources and ideology. It involves power to, power with and power within. With reference to women the power relation has to be involved includes their lives at multiple level-family, community, market and the state.

Women Empowerment in India

The status of women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennia. From equal status with men in ancient times, through the low points of the medieval period, to the promotion of equal rights by many reformers, the history of women empowerment in India has been eventful. In modern India women have adorned high offices in India including that of the President & Speakers of Lok Sabha. The government of India declared 2001 as the year of women's empowerment. The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women was passed in 2001. In 2010, March 9, one day after International Women's Day, Rajya Sabha passed Women's Reservation Bill, ensuring 33% reservation to women in Parliament and State Legislative bodies.

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Spirituality

The word ‘spiritual’ generally reflects the image of ‘saffron robes’ and religious ceremonies. Spirituality is all about awakening the consciousness that we all humans have been gifted with. Spirituality is about wholeness, holiness and alignment with the emotional, intellectual, psychic & physical self. And Women’s spirituality is that which comes of being within the body of a woman. It values life creativity, diversity and the natural cycle that ensure constant change.

Spirituality and Women Empowerment

Self-awareness & spiritual empowerment hold the key to freedom & raising the status of women in the society. If a woman is not well equipped with self-awareness and spiritual power within herself, it is difficult to sustain the confidence that comes with a good education and a good job. That is the reason why it is not uncommon to find well qualified women holding powerful jobs, weakening & losing their self-esteem when faced with a difficult mother-in-law at home or an unreasonable employer at work.

Women have become more assertive in today’s modern world. Thus far, they have begun to become financially empowered and professionally empowered, yet the most important need, for spiritual empowerment, has often been neglected or ignored. If our world is to survive, spiritually empowered women must take their place in helping. Women are powerful, truly powerful, with unique gift to be tuned to walk in both the spiritual world and the mundane. Their roles as caretakers and nurturers have opened their hearts and awareness to many levels of the universe. Their spiritual gifts can be propounded. But with the empowerment, unfortunately, women have begun to lose their understanding of their gifts as they grappled to survive in the callous societies of today. In the process of empowerment their hearts and spirit have become uncertain & lost. They have forgotten who they are. They have forgotten their original instructions as human beings & as women. Thus, the present study is carried out to know the spiritual paradigm of women empowerment whether it is a myth or reality.

Objectives

The study has been undertaken with the objectives to study the women empowerment in relation to spirituality and study the influence of women empowerment on spirituality of women and to find out the significance difference between the attitude of working and non-working regarding spiritual paradigm of women empowerment.

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis has been formulated to test the significant difference between spirituality of working and non-working women.

Methodology

In present 50 women are selected randomly. Out of 50, 25 are working and 25 are non-working women of Kurukshetra district. The investigator collected the required data through self-made questionnaire comprising of 16 questions relating to 4 dimensions i.e. Home, workplace, self & ethics. To find out the influence of women empowerment on spirituality, percentage method has been used. To find the relationship between spirituality & women empowerment ‘Product Moment Co-relation’ has been used.

Results and discussions

1. 43.33% of women believe that family priorities should not be ignored for one’s own interest.
2. 76.66% of women agreed that interest of family and personal interest should be kept at separate ends.
3. 86.66% of women agreed that family needs quality time to be spent with.
4. 43.33% of women do not find any difficulty to manage home while working. 56.67% disagree to the statement and 0.1% was undecided.
5. 83.33% of women agreed that at home or at work place responsibilities should not be ignored at any cost.
6. 100% women agreed to the statement that full dedication in any work is necessary for success.
7. 80% of women were in favour that to do the work efficiently is the only way to get appreciation.
8. 33.33% of women agree that working women prefer their professional interest to the interest of their family.
9. 76.66% of women agreed that along with fulfilling all other responsibilities a woman get time for herself too.
10. 33.33% of women agreed that while living up to other expectations woman has lost her own individuality.
11. 90% of women believe in long lasting relationships.
12. 66.66% of women agreed that the woman has the right to take decisions independently about her and in all family matters.
13. 43.33% of women won’t hesitate to compromise with the values whenever required.
14. Only 20% of women avoid spending time with elder members of the family.
15. 56.66% of women do not find it wrong to interact with the male counter parts of society.
16. 60% of women agreed that old values stand irrelevant in this modern age.

Table 1: Difference between spirituality of working and non-working women.

Mean(X)	Standard Deviation	‘t’ value
X1- 25.8	1.51	0.17
X2 - 26.05	1.52	

Table 1 reveals that ‘t’ value is less than table value therefore hypothesis is accepted. There is no significant difference between the spirituality of working and non-working women.

Conclusion

To conclude it can be said that in the process of modernization, women have become empowered but without losing their values, their ethics and self-consciousness i.e. spirituality. Woman don’t have to be shades of grey, she can stand out and shine bright.

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