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Need for empowerment of women

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Abstract

Need to empower women arises due to several reasons? The social attitudes, psychological and cultural climate of the society discriminates against women. The patriarchal social order is so designed that it reinforces and perpetuates subordination of women.

Keywords: women empowerment, psychological climate and cultural climate

1. Introduction

Gender asymmetry is a universal phenomenon. The gender inequality is reflected in the famous formulation of the U.N. decade for women "while women account for half of the world's population, perform two-thirds of its work, receive one-tenth of the world's income and own less than one-hundredth of the world's property". Also, most of the world's poor are women according to the human development report 1195, "poverty has a women's face of 1.3 billion people in poverty, 70% are women".

India has seen a growing recognition of the problems and issues concerning women in the last decade of the last century the widespread efforts and concern with gender inequality culminated in the women empowerment year with the year gone by, the time has come to pause and reflect.

At the outset it is imperative to understand that the need to empower women arises due to several reasons the social attitudes, psychological and cultural climate of the society discriminates against women due to the patriarchal social order, there are major social processes and institutional arrangement which reinforce and perpetuate subordination of women. The value system, which is essentially patriarchal, is passed on from one generation to the other through the process of socialization. That is, inequalities between men and women are taught and learnt. The crucial areas of sexuality, fertility and labour remain in the control of men.

Let us look at some of the census figures which show glaring gender discrimination. According to the 2001 census, the sex ratio (number of women per 1000 men) is 933. The literacy rate is 39.42% for women and 63.86% for men. women's work participation rate, according to the 1991 census, showed that it was 13.99% and men's participation rate was 51.62% women's participation rate in the labour force has been declining. Both in the organized and the unorganized sectors of the economy, be it agriculture, industry or services, women have been contributing substantially and yet their contributions go unnoticed by the family as well as the society. Her work remains 'invisible and underrated.

Against the backdrop of such pervasive gender disparity in India, the declaration of the women empowerment year was a welcome step. It raised the hopes and aspiration amongst women. It has increased participation of women in all aspects of political, social and economic life will lead to the development of the nation as a whole. However it must be mentioned here that these can only be achieved and sustained with affirmative actions towards empowering women.

It was in the mid-1980 that the term empowerment became popular in the field of development especially with reference to women. It has become the key solution to many social problems like high population growth rates, environmental degradation, low status of

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women. Empowerment is defined as a process by which women gain greater control over resources (income, knowledge, information, technology, skill training), challenge the ideology of patriarchy and hence participate in leadership, decision-making process simply put, empowerment will facilitate women to enhance their self-image, become active participants in the process of social change, question injustice and inequality and develop skills to assert themselves. That is, their would gain greater control over their lives though extremely desirable empowerment will not be easily brought about as a lot of social resistance is predicted. The forces against women are multiple and deep-rooted. Also they are systematically organized the demands of the individual woman will not bring lasting changes to be empowered, it is necessary for women to organize themselves organized and collective strength will force the society to acknowledge, respond and accommodate them as best as possible. shramshakti also recognizes the need to organize women to claim their, stating that, "the national commission has observed that the lack of organization in the informal sector is the root cause of the exploitation of women workers --- individually women are not in a position to fight against low and discriminatory wages and exploitative working conditions as they lack bargaining power. Lows will also not be flagrantly violated if workers are organized (GOI 1988:294). However organizing is a slow and continuous process of enabling a group of people to perceive common interests and act collectively the social activists and those in the voluntary organization working with poor women are organizing them in some way or the other. There are several self-help groups which are doing commendable work for the upliftment of women. However it is the changes in the power structure within the however, it is the changes in the household are the most difficult to achieve, record or observe. Women have to negotiate for more 'space' in decision-making at home individually. Women have acted or reacted in different ways- from staying oppressed, tolerating to taking on attitudes of power by and large they confronted; maintained relationship despite severe odds than rejecting them altogether literacy and education, awareness, self-confidence, assertiveness, collective strength partaking in the decision-making process are some of the essential prerequisites of empowerment the objective of empowering women is a monumental one. disadvantages are many and vested interests are at work. However, the efforts towards the same has begun in this, the declaration of the women empowerment year showed optimism. Yet it is important to take stock of the failures, the several rhetorical could not be translated to realities to quote one example at least one hoped that the women's reservation bill would be passed which did not see tangible progress. Since most women have internalized the ideology of male domination since early childhood, they must recognize how it perpetuates oppression awareness and Conscientization of subordination will lead to a culture of resistance amongst them whereby the process of empowerment will truly begin. Last year saw the formal process of the recognition of the problem and the need for women empowerment thoughts, actions, debates on the empowerment issue is being carried on research endeavors and documentation of the voices of women will bring the problem to the fore. It must and will be heard. It is impossible for the nation to march ahead progressively ignoring one half of its population. The process of empowerment is an ongoing one which challenges the patriarchal ideology and will eventually lead to a renegotiation of gender relation. This will be carried

forward by many of us with or without such formal declarations in the wake of the enormity of the problem, every bit will contribute; post difficult choices and severe challenges to the patriarchal social order.

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