



RESEARCH ARTICLE

SOCIO – CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE OF GENDER INEQUALITY : A PLAN FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT BY WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract

Women empowerment and national development are closely related . Due to gender inequality women are considered as socio – culturally devalued gender . But an educationally empowered women played a vital role in national development . This paper shows how an empowered women affects national development and henceforth how much women empowerment is necessary for a country.

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Introduction:-

Men and women are the two wings of our society . If we cut one of the wings of a bird it can't fly . In other words , we can say a weak wing creates hindrance to fly a bird . Same as , a community , a society , a nation cant achieve its highest development without women, a most important component of our human society .

National Development requires skill and capacity. Skill means ability to do something. If the performances or activities of 50%(women) of the total population are blocked then the development of a country must be 50% less. That's why for national development , equal contribution of men and women is very much needed. But the problem is that contribution of women in developing or underdeveloped countries is not considered as an important part and parcel of national development. Our INDIA as a developing country , also is not any exception . The main reason for this notion is gender discrepancy which is deeply embedded in our culture , religion , political , economy and society from late Vedic period.

Indian culture is flavored with religion . The religious structure of the Indian society has given the less importance to women . Our Hindu culture plays a contradictory role towards women . In one hand men worship women as goddess in the form of Durga , Lakshmi, Saraswati on the other hand they want to keep their female counterparts beneath their feet . Our male counterparts always treat their female counterparts like a slave who work hard without any wages.

Gender discrepancy in India reflects multifaceted aspects . It has a deeper impact on India's sex ratio, women's health , their educational achievement , employment opportunities etc which all are the indicators of national development .

In the UN Human Development REPORT'S (2016) Gender Inequality Index , India is at the bottom of the pile at 125th position out of 129 countries . In gender gap Index (World Economic Forum) 2017, it's position is 108th out of 144 countries last year in gender gap index . It has slipped 21 places in one year compared to the 87th position last year in gender gap index . (Sengupta Joyshree , 5th March , 2018)

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Now the time has come to change the attitude towards gender discrepancy and empower the women through education, raising awareness, literacy and training. In this 21st century women empowerment is a necessity for the development of society, since it enhances both the quality and quantity of human resources available for national development.

What is Women Empowerment:

Women Empowerment is a global phenomenon. It means accepting and allowing women to access the opportunities available to them without limitations and restrictions such as in education, profession, life-style, to make life determining decisions through the different problems in society. This puts strong emphasis on participation in political structure and formal decision-making and in the economic sphere, on the ability to obtain income that enables participation in economic decision making. (Wikipedia)

In other words the term "Empowerment of Women" refers to the process of providing power to women to stand up against the control of others and help them to lead a prosperous and a successful life. (Madugalle Ravindra, 3 Nov., 2014)

Women empowerment can be defined in many ways. Such as, Women Empowerment is the process in which women elaborate and recreate what it is that they can be, do and accomplish in a circumstance that they previously were denied.

What is National Development:

The term "National Development" is very broad and comprehensive. It includes all aspects of the development of a nation i.e., political, social, economics etc. It is both qualitative and quantitative.

According to John Vaizey, "National Development is the total effect of all citizens, forces and addition to stock of physical, human resources, knowledge and skill." (Wikipedia)

National Development is the ability of the country or countries to improve the social welfare of the people for example educating the poor and providing facilities, portable water transportation etc. it includes all the aspects of life of an individual or nation, it includes full growth and expansion of industries.

Women Empowerment and National Development:

Women as a socio-culturally devalued gender in Indian society and the facets of valuation or devaluation has a historical perspective. In spite of several constitutional measures or different plans or policies taken by government, till date their social status has not changed. (Mallick, Partha Sarathi March 2019)

According to Amartya Sen, continuing discrimination against women can hinder development. (Esther Duflo December 2011)

The secretary general of the United Nations, KOFI ANNAN has argued that achieving gender equality is a "pre requisite" to achieving the other Millennium Development Goals (MDG), including eliminating poverty, reducing infant mortality, achieving universal education, and eliminating the gender gap in education by 2015 (United Nations, 2005)

So it can be clearly stated that Women's Empowerment and national development are closely related.

Women comprises almost half of the population of every country. Any nation can't progress if it isolates 50% of its population. This is also true for our India, a developing country. Women bring unique talent, ideas and sensibilities to the workplace. So we need women empowerment to truly achieve growth and development.

If a woman becomes empowered then a constructive change or development must happen in every sphere of life as well as nation also.

Women Empowerment and Education:

Education is the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self confidence to participate fully in the development process.

An educated woman bring changes in her family regarding children's education , their career , savings , keeping balance between income and expenditure rather than a educated man . The appeal or impact of an educated woman on family , community , society , policies is much more effective than an educated man .

Education provides women valuable skills ,knowledge , training , competency which make them empowered. It is historically proved that empowered women are responsible for developing dutiful, responsible , conscious future generations who are the assets of country for national development . Education for women also removes 'Female foeticide' from our society.

Birth Control:

Population explotion now-a-days becomes a subject of massive headache to the country. If it is not controlled immediately then the basic needs would not be provided for all in near future. And the obvious result is the decreased growth of national development .

To get rid of this situation birth control is very much important . An educated or empowered woman is very much aware of this fact and they have one or two children because they take the decision about child birth .

Health:

Citizen with poor health may also create hinderance in the development of a nation . Empowered women take care their own health , children's health , maintaining their immunization programme (part of a national development). An educated women also aware of the infectious diseases like HIV , AIIDS . Education of a woman reduces the rate of Maternal Mortality , Infant and child Mortality .

Economical Development/Reduce Poverty:

Through education and training, a woman turns into human resource. And all of we know that any kind of resource helps in national development.

Having empowered women in a country means great reduction in dependance rates , increased household purchasing power resulting into an improved standard of living adding on the taxes that the Govt. in each country collects which is then invested back into better services to the tax payers women inclusive. The further leads to independent decision making regarding career, job selection, education, health, investment, savings and rights which gradually reduces the poverty lines and strengthen the economy.,the most important determinant of national development.

This fact supports the immense need for empowering women. When a woman gets socially, psychologically, economically and politically empowered, she builds the family, community, and nation too and becomes a role model for the children and others. Hence, it makes for smart economics and better society to empower woman.

Women Empowerment and Sustainable Development:

Sustainable development is one of the important determinants of national development. Achieving sustainable development properly accelerate national development. Sustainable development depends on the equitable distribution of resources for today and for the future. It can't be achieved without gender equality. Women's empowerment is a key factor for achieving sustainable economical growth, social development and environmental sustainability.

In Rio, Women were considered 'major group' whose involvement was necessary to achieve sustainable development . Today there is a growing imphasis on 'mainstreaming' –integrally incorporating women's concern's and participation in the planning , implementation and monitoring of all development and environmental management programe to ensure that women benefits. The UN system is in the process of mainstreaming a gender perspective in its work.

The fourth world conference on woman held in Beijing in September 1995 , emphasized that empowerment , full participation and equality for women are the foundations for peace and sustainable development .

Indigenous women have a special relationship to natural resources . Thus cultures and practices promote a balanced respectful use and preservation of natural resources so that future generations can meet their needs .

Empowered women play an important role in promoting sustainable development through their concern for the quality and sustainability of life present and future generations (DR. ARVIND KUMAR 13,5,2012)

Govt's Role In This Field:

Passing so many years after independence, an Indian woman is still deprived of her thoughts. In addition to this there is a demographic difference. Most of the aroma of liberation is enjoyed by the urban women but not by her rural counterparts.

Realizing the significance of women empowerment in the field of national development our Govt. of India has taken all the necessary steps to empower the women but something is still lacking and creating a gap between the constitutional gap and the reality.

Conclusion:-

From the above discussion it can be concluded that eradication of gender inequality and women empowerment are very much important for achieving national development. Mindset or attitude of the people especially men towards women must change.

Hence 'Women Empowerment' in modern India cannot take place until women come together and decide to self-empower themselves. In this regard progressive and resourceful women in the society need to come forward to help their less privileged sisters in as many ways as possible. This shall help us reap the seeds for real empowerment in modern India and accelerate the national development too high.

Last of all roadmap for women empowerment is there but still we have miles to go on this path of empowerment for the national development in true sense. We hope that in coming years ahead women empowerment will prove its worth. Women are an integral part of a society. It has been rightly said by SWAMI VIVEKANANDA, 'The best thermometer of the progress of nation is its treatment of women.'

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