



DEVELOPMENT AND ENHANCEMENT OF WOMAN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

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Abstract:

Women's rights are not properly being protected in order for women to participate in various the issues of their country but are subjected to abysmal violations. Moreover, women are highly affected by environmental problems, and less emphasis is given to their participation in protecting the environment. The researcher concluded that unless women are empowered and gender equality is achieved so that women can play their role in economic, social, political, and environmental areas, the country will not achieve sustainable development with the recognition of only men's participation in all these areas. The fact that women constitute half the entire population of the country makes empowering them to be an active part of all development initiatives in the country a compelling circumstance.

1.0 Introduction:

The strength of chain is the strength of its weakest link. In a society, women are the weakest links, so that they may be strengthened for strengthening the society as a whole and that is possible only by

empowering them. Nehru said, "Women should be uplifted for the up lift ment of the nation, if a women is uplifted, society and nation is uplifted."1 Women empowerment is critical to the process of development of the community. Empowerment of women is Essential to harness the women labor in the mainstream of economic development According to Swami Vivekan and, there is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of the women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on one wing2 Women have to play an important role in the building up of every economy. Women who form almost one half of the world's population constitute the visible majority of the poor. Women either solely or largely support an increasing number of families. Women experience poverty more than man. When money is given to men, it may not benefit the family but when women manage money, it is found to be better utilized. Projects aiming to improve the living conditions of the poor cannot, therefore be effective unless women participate in their formulation and implementation as contributors as well as



beneficiaries. "Increasing women's capabilities and empowering them is the surest way to contribute to economic growth and overall development

Empowerment:

There was consensus among the participants that "empowerment" has become one of the most widely used development terms. Women's groups, non-governmental development organizations, activists, politicians, governments and international agencies refer to empowerment as one of their goals. Yet it is one of the least understood in terms of how it is to be measured or observed. From the discussion, it was also clear that empowerment can be observed at different levels. The above-mentioned definitions already point to interpersonal relations and institutions as possible sites of empowerment. looks at the individual level when she cites Paz's definition of empowerment as "the ability to direct and control one's own life". But it is clear from presentation that such an individual empowerment of women is attained in relationship to the larger society.

Women empowerment in India:

The word empowerment is defined as the process by which women take control and ownership of their choices. Empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, to greater decision making power and control and transformative action. Empowerment of women signifies harnessing women power

by conscientising their tremendous potential and encouraging them to work towards attaining a dignified and satisfying way of life through confidence and competence as person with self-respect, rights and responsibilities. The core elements of empowerment have been defined as agency (the ability to define one's goals and act upon them), awareness of gendered power structures, self-esteem, and self-confidence. Empowerment as a concept was introduced at the International Women's Conference at Nairobi in 1985. The conference defined empowerment as "A redistribution of social power and control of resources in favor of women. It is "the process of challenging existing power relations and of gaining greater control over the sources of power". Empowerment is a multi-faceted process which encompasses many aspects i.e. enhancing awareness, increasing access to resources of economic, social and political etc."In recent years women empowerment has become a subject of great concern for the nations all over the world especially in poor and developing countries. The impact of globalization is seen eventually on position of women in some form or other in most of the developing countries with the variation of degree. The United Nations has also strived hard in an incredible way to draw the due attention of the World Community on this issue in the past years. In the past, the position of women was miserable in the society and even women were not ready to undertake any assignment



or job due to many reasons like fear, shyness, male dominance in the society and purdah system but time has been changed now. Women of today are not like the early days. Now, they are always ready to come forward and want more economic independence, their own identity, achievements, equal status in the society and greater freedom. And Government of India has provided for Self Help Groups (SHGs) to them so that proper attention should be given to their economic independence through self-employment, entrepreneurial development and wellbeing that ultimately leads to its contribution. SHGs have been emerged as a powerful instrument in order to alleviate poverty and for the empowerment of women in the rural economy.

Objectives:

- To exchange experiences in promoting the empowerment of women through different educational programmers, both formal and non-formal;
- to discuss the theoretical issues arising from the practice of the education of women;
- to develop research designs on women's education and empowerment for possible collaboration in selected areas; and a definition of and a conceptual framework for understanding women's empowerment;
- an indicative list of indicators and processes or mechanisms of empowerment; and
- Initial proposals/recommendations for future action focusing on effective procedures and mechanisms of empowerment

2.0 literature review:

[1] **Chandra P., Parida and Anushree Sinha (2010)** Power means having the capacity and the means to direct one's life toward desired social, political and economic goals or status. Power means control over material assets, intellectual resource and ideology. In Webster's English Dictionary, the verb empowers means to give the means, ability and authority. Empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process that helps people to gain control over their own lives and in their society, by acting on issues that they consider as important. Empowerment occurs within sociological, psychological and economic spheres and at various levels such as individual, group and community and challenges our assumptions about the status-quo, asymmetrical power relationships and social dynamics. Empowerment implies a state of mind and attitude of a person. It is a process through which people or communities increase their control or mastery of their own lives and the decision that affect their day-to-day life.

[2] **Deshpande Anjali,(2005)** Empowerment means to make one powerful or to equip one with the power to face



challenges of life, to overcome the difficulties, handicaps and inequalities. Empowerment is an active multi-dimensional process, which would enable women to realize their full identity and powers - in all spheres of life. It would consist in providing greater access to knowledge and resources, greater autonomy in decision making, greater ability to plan their lives, greater control over the circumstances that influences their lives and freedom from the shackles imposed on them by custom, belief and practice. Empowerment does not mean setting women against men. Indeed, it means making both men and women realize their changing roles and status and develop a consensus for harmonious living in the context of an egalitarian society.

[3] Sehrawat R.K. (2011)"At the individual level, participation in crucial decision making process, ability to prevent violence, self confidence and self-esteem, improved health and nutrition conditions, etc. are the major indicators. At the community levels, the important indicators are existence of women's organizations, increased number of women leaders, involvement of women in designing development tools and application of appropriate technology etc. At the national level, the indicators are awareness of her social and political rights, adequate representation in legislative bodies, integration of women in particular in national development plans etc. Improvement in economic status gets

reflected in improved social, political and cultural status of women. Self-confidence and self-esteem of women proceed simultaneously with their empowerment. In brief, all indicators can be classified into two broad categories namely visible and invisible indicators. Amongst visible indicators, mention could be made of women's representation in parliaments.

[4] Sitalakshmi S.(2002), interventions that can take place to address the issues of attitude and mind sets of men and women of the community and also of the functionaries of the government - the bureaucracy, police and judiciary is media campaigns. A sustained campaign through the print, electronic and folk media is necessary on various issues related to empowerment of women, health and nutrition, laws, value of the girl child, violence against women etc. Non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations and self-help groups can be very effective in the process of empowerment through participatory communication. Participatory communication can help women to change their attitudes, behaviors and styles of communication.

[5] Sharma Arpita(2011) Empowerment is a complex term and may be measured in terms of Women's freedom to shape their lives, their control over resources, their access to basic facilities, their level of political participation, their ability to take their own decisions and their ability to remove hindrances in their path to progress.



Self -help groups of women have been found to be very effective grassroots institutions in facilitating access for women to means of development be it information, financial and material resources or services. The 'self-help group' mode should be encouraged, so that the groups become dynamic change agents in bringing about empowerment and socioeconomic development of women. Organizing women into self-help groups marks the beginning of a major process of empowering women by strengthening their capacity for collective decision making and entrepreneurship development.

3.0 Methodology:

The importance of doing participatory and action research was underscored. It was considered important to organize workshops to train grassroots women to conduct participatory research where they could develop skills to critically analyze their existing conditions. This will facilitate their organizing for collective action. While participatory research was considered to be important, it was recognized that traditional quantitative research was also necessary. The guiding principle, however, was to share the results with the women in a language and manner that was understandable to them. Research as a strategy would therefore entail

- disseminating information
- producing and disseminating information leaflets regarding women's rights

- referring to women in all national and UN statistics
- collecting oral history of women
- documenting and analyzing successful and failed programmers of the women's movements

Empowerment has become a widely used word. In spheres as different as management and labor unions, health care and ecology, banking and education, one hears of empowerment taking place. The popular use of the word also means that it has been overextended and applied in circumstances that clearly do not involve much power acquisition beyond some symbolic activity or event.

Genesis and growth of shags in India:

SHG's originated in the year 1975 at Bangladesh by Mohammed Yunus. In the eighties, it was a serious attempt by the Government of India to promote an apex bank to take care of the financial needs of the poor, informal sector and rural areas. And then, NABARD took steps during that period and initiated a search for alternative methods to fulfill the financial needs of the rural poor and informal sector. NABARD initiated in 1986-87, but the real effort was taken after 1991-92 from the linkage of SHGs with the banks. In other words, the Self Help Group (SHG) in India has come a long way, since its inception in 1992. The spread of SHGs in India has been phenomenal. It has made dramatic progress from 500 groups in 1992 (Titus 2002) to some 16, 18,456 groups that have taken



loans from banks. About 24.25 million poor households have gained access to formal banking system through SHG-bank linkage programmer and 90% of these groups are only women groups (NABARD2005). The NABARD (2006) homepage declares that more than 400 women join the SHG movement every hour and an NGO joins the Micro-Finance Programmed every day. There are also agencies which provide bulk funds to the system through NGOs. Thus organizations engaged in micro finance activities in India may be categorized as Wholesalers, NGOs supporting, SHG Federations and NGOs directly retailing credit borrowers or groups of borrower. The spread of the SHGs is highly concentrated in the southern part of the country with very few in the north and the east. Over half a million SHGs have been linked to banks over the years but a handful of States, mostly in South India, account for almost 60%.

Effective approach to women empowerment:

One has to believe that the progress of any nation is inevitably linked with social and economic plight of women in that particular country. Empowerment by way of participation in SHG can bring enviable changes and enhancement in the living conditions of women in poor and developing nations. The underlying principle of SHG is to provide to the poorest of the poor and to achieve empowerment. Self Help Group (SHG) is a process by which a large group

of women (10 – 20), with common objectives are facilitated to come together voluntarily to participate in the development activities such as saving, credit and income generation thereby ensuring economic independence. SHG phenomenon definitely brings group consciousness among women, sense of belongingness, adequate self-confidence. In fact, what she cannot achieve as an individual, can accomplish as a member of group with sufficient understanding about her own rights, roles, privileges and responsibilities as a dignified member of society in par with man. When she becomes a member of SHG, her sense of public participation, enlarged horizon of social activities, high self-esteem, self-respect and fulfillment in life expands and enhances the quality of status of women as participants, decision makers and beneficiaries in the democratic, economic social and cultural spheres of life. In other words, we can say that SHG is an effective instrument to empower women socially and economically which ultimately contributes in the overall development of the country like India wherein still large segment of women population are underprivileged, illiterate, exploited and deprived of basic rights of social and economic spectrum.

Characteristics of Women Empowerment:

- Women empowerment processes certain characteristics, they are the following:
- Women empowerment is giving power to women; it is making



women better off. Women empowerment enables a greater degree of self-confidence and sense of independence among women.

- Women empowerment is a process of acquiring power for women in order to understand her rights and to perform her responsibilities towards oneself and others in a most effective way.
- Women empowerment gives the capacity or power to resist discrimination imposed by the male dominated society.
- Women empowerment enables women to organize themselves to increase their self-reliance. 6. Women empowerment provides greater economy to women.
- Women empowerment means women's control over material assets, intellectual resources and ideology.

4.0 Results and discussions:

To achieve empowerment through education, several concepts must be introduced at appropriate levels. When referring to primary and secondary schooling, empowerment should enable girls to develop the knowledge and skill to nullify and counter Sexual stereotypes and conceptions of masculinity and femininity that

limits the social potential of women. Empowering girls should mean offering them courses with content that not only attack current sexual stereotypes but also provide students with alternative visions of a gender free society. Gender and women studies programmers have made it possible for student to gain a greater understanding of how gender forces operate in society. These programmers influenced the development and discrimination of new theoretical and methodological approaches dealing with the nature of gender, national development and social change.

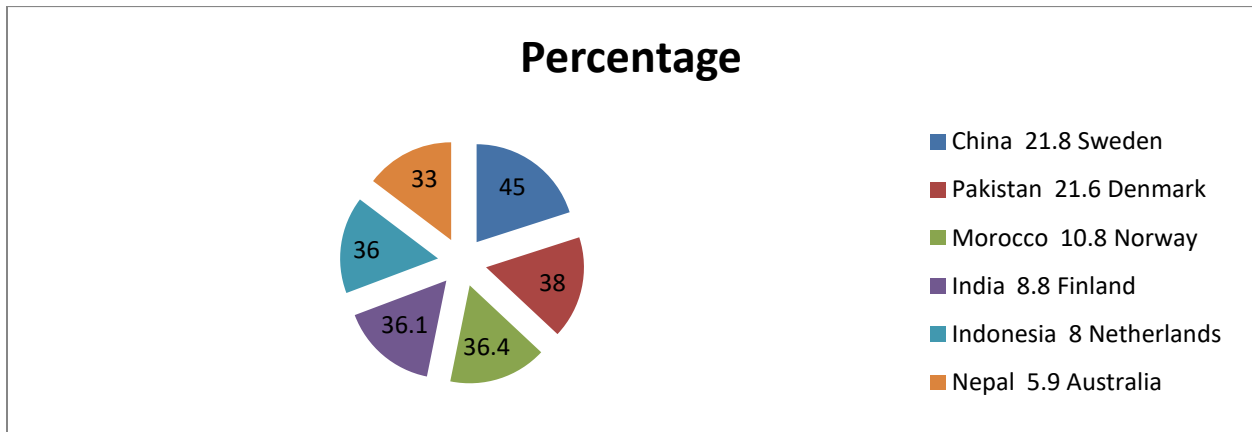
Science and Technology :- Science and technology can be effectively used to ease women's work load inside and outside the house involving them as equal partners, recognizing their knowledge, experiences and the significant role they can play in sustainable development with organized orientation and training, there is a great potential for empowering women with appropriate and sustainable technologies. Research findings have shown that with the aid of appropriate developmental programmer's women as mother can become effective agents of change in eradicating poverty in current generation and preventing the transmission to the next generation.

Table 1 parliament of a few developed and developing countries

Developing countries	Percentage	Developed countries	Percentage
China	21.8	Sweden	45.0
Pakistan	21.6	Denmark	38.0



Morocco	10.8	Norway	36.4
India	8.8	Finland	36.1
Indonesia	8.0	Netherlands	36.0
Nepal	5.9	Australia	33.0



Economic Perspective of Empowerment of Women:-

Women's participation in income generating activities is believed to increase their status and decision making power, with employment. The economic contribution is related to their status and role in the family and in the society. If a woman is not economically self-dependent, she can never claim an equal status with man. The problem of poverty cannot be tackled without providing opportunities of productive employment to women. Even where there is a male earner, women's earnings form a major part of the income of poor households. Moreover, women contribute a large share of what they earn to basic family maintenance than men; increases in women's income translates more directly into better child health, nutrition and family well being.

Women's participation in the labour force also brings about changes in awareness and altitudes, which may be have long term benefits such as to health and education programmes, reduction in birth-rate, thrift and savings etc. Economic independence of women will create far reaching social changes and prove as necessary weapon for them to face injustice and discrimination.

Conclusion:

SHGs have been identified as a way to alleviate poverty and women empowerment. And women empowerment aims at realizing their identities, power and potentiality in all spheres of lives. But the real empowerment is possible only when a woman has increased access to economic resources, more confidence and self-motivation, more strength, more recognition and say in the family matters and more involvement



through participation the concept of empowerment of women means psychological sense of personal control in the persons, domestic, social and political realms. It is a process by which one is authorized to think, act and control resources in an autonomous way. The most critical component of women's empowerment is found to be education. It leads to improved economic growth, low fertility rate, health and sanitation and an awareness of factors that disempowered women. Work participation rate and political participation also grows in women's education. The expansion of the market economy and industrialization and globalization brought increased inequalities, resulting in lose of livelihoods, erosion of natural resources and with it decreased women's access to water, fuel, fodder and traditional survival resources. It also brought new forms of exploitation-displacement, tourism, sex trade and retrenchment to mention a few.

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