

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: A NEED OF PRATICAL APPROACH

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Abstract:

Women empowerment is much discussed subject today. It seems that days of women empowerment have come as many women have come forward and have proved their talent, skill and capacity in promoting the development of various sectors. They have acquired highest positions such as chief ministers, prime ministers and the president of the country. But the actual fact and reality is different. Reality is an illusion. Today in the fields of health, education and job opportunities women are at a great disadvantage. Women still have to face many problems and have to live in miserable conditions. Moreover, they are confined to household duties. People show deep love and respect for women warriors, queens, social workers and thinkers but same love and respect are not given to our women. The present paper aims at discussing women's problem which proves to be hurdles in the women empowerment movement and suggest some steps to make the movement wider.

Women empowerment, a much discussed subject in India, has attracted the attention of the academic world. As a result, seminars and workshops are arranged to ponder over this subject. India has a long heritage of the bravest and proudest women who have contributed their services and bravery in the safety and development of the nation. On the background of the death anniversary of

Lakshmibai, the Rani of Jhansi, and the celebrated Navratri Ustav, it is necessary to meditate over the much discussed subject. Navratri Ustav is celebrated to salute and remind the power of woman. This ustav is a pooja of 'Nari Shakti'. Once upon a time India had witnessed matriarchy. Women had been handling everything including farming. They were at the centre of their families gearing their power for over all development of the families. Though invention of a plough proved to be a turning point in the history of farming, it gave a setback to women community as men took the charge of farming. And there emerged era that confined women in domestic custody. Though our political leaders and the intellectuals have claimed that the women of our country are empowered, the reality is different.

A lot of literature is produced showing the plight of women in and outside families. The 20th century British novelist Margaret Forster has brilliantly etched the domestic confinement of women. Her novels appeal readers as they are set on the background of the world of information and technology. She strongly points out that women have no freedom as they are forced to wrap in house hold duties. It is pity to note that countless women today are still struggling for independence and are yearning for the freedom they want. Raju Shanbhag in his article, Women Empowerment India still behind other nations has pointed out the same thing:

While Lakshmibai risked everything she had for freedom, a large majority of women today are struggling for independence; independence to lead the lives the way they want; the freedom they always yearned for' (11).

The Malala Story has brought the matter of freedom of women before the world. It has proved that there are forces that are working against women empowerment. And in our country the woes of older women are countless. The old houses are the best examples of it. Women, at the early stage of life, are deprived from education and they, at the later stage of life, are deprived of love and home. This picture can be found anywhere in our country, though we claim to be a cultured and developing country.

Renowned social and political reformers dedicated their whole life for raising standard of women's life. Mahatma Jotiba Phule, Savitir Bai Phule, shri Dhondo Keshav Karve and many more began and ran the movement of education for women. Women came forward and learned and obtained the highest positions such as ministers, chief ministers, prime ministers, and the president of the country. But still large number of women is deprived of education. Shanbag in his article has focused on the wide gap between men and women as far as education is concerned:

. . . the gap between men and women is very wide. While 82.14% of adult women are educated, only 65.46% of adult women are known to be literate in India'. (10)

It is the familial system that bars women from having education. Like education, poverty has played a negative role in the lives of women. Poverty leads them towards oppressions. One can easily notice cases of sex trafficking. In Andhra Pradesh it is found that 300,000 women and girls have been trafficked for exploitative sex and just 3000 have been rescued so far. Negligence to health is another reason that deprives women of healthy lives. Many women die during

their pregnancy. In 2009, as many as 78,000 women were died from childbirth complications. On the background of the large population this number may have doubled. Women have not been provided job opportunities as it is expected. Government and so many agencies have taken measures to empower women. Women in our country now have occupied many areas such as education, sports, politics, media, art, culture, information and technology and what not. Moreover, social organizations have undertaken many programmers to protest against alcoholism. Considering that alcoholism promotes violence, these originations have launched anti-liquor campaigns. Feminist activists have fought over the issues like female infanticide, gender bias, women's health, women's safety and women's literacy. In spite of these things it is duty of every citizen as well as government and NGO's to have a more practical approach as far as women empowerment is concerned. Some steps may be taken to take the movement of women empowerment to the grass root level. In a remote and hilly area women are far away from this empowerment. They must be brought in to the mainstream of lives. The facilities of qualitative education, sanitary, medical assistance should be provided to the girls from these areas. Such a type of seminars and workshop may be arranged for such female in their area only. Sitting among the elite class and discussing about the problems of poor and deprived class has become a fashion today. Universities and colleges may tale lead in this matter. The dearth of equipped schools and dispensaries is one of the chief reasons that put women far away from empowerment. There is a need to take steps to concentrate on qualitative education and medical facilities. The fact is that many illiterate women work more than men as far as physical work is concerned. They have been playing a vital role in running their families. If these

women are taught and brought in the mainstream, the fate of the country will be changed. A long run campaign regarding equality may be undertaken and it should be turn in to a mass movement. There is an utmost need to take any thought or movement to the mass and make it a mass movement. Participation of every individual at every level is necessary as it is a national work. Seminars and workshops organized elite class will just provide the information to feel sympathy for illiterate and deprived women. One has to wipe the gap between feeling and doing. To sum up, efforts are being taken to empower women. Countless women have played and are playing a vital role to empower women. They have graced the history of our country. But the condition of an average woman is still far away from the expectations and that has to be improved.

Reference:

Shanbhag, Raju. 'Women Empowerment India Still Way behind other Nations'. *Aseema*. Vol 15. Issue 11. June 2014. P 10-12. Print.