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THE SOCIAL CONCEPT IN WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

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Abstract

Women have generally been looked down upon with disdainful contempt. All sorts of strictures have been inflicted upon them, reducing their status to a mere play thing or a slave of man’s whims, a mere chattel to be dumb driven. They have been confined to the hearth and home. The orthodox male-oriented society in India has still not been able to adjust itself to the fresh wave of women’s liberation. But today the time have changed, the Indian woman has cast off her age-old shackles of serfdom and male domination. She has come to her own and started scaling the ladders of social advance with proud dignity. In Vedic India, woman enjoyed an enviable status. She was considered to be a goddess, something like the Greek, Athena, the supreme source of man’s inspiration. She was called ‘Ardhangini’. We hear of women sages and scholars in the vedic age. But the status of women suffered a setback in the Brahmanic age. In the muslim rule, women completely lost their glory, they were relegated into the background, cutoff from the mainstreams of life. This research paper to be discussed about the Entrepreneurship and women Empowerment through Education

Key Words: Women Empowerment, Male Oriented Society, Women Status, Educational Empowerment, Life Skills, Women Liberation.

Introduction

To day, women are busy running in the Election Campaign. The work force is covered with intellectual women who currently hold the CEO positions at large companies which were never held by Indian women in long ago. In our country, women have reached a long way eventually and have discovered a new path for them to come. Women rights are human rights. The concept of feminism is very vogue. Feminist usually deals out balky attention. Women’s right and changes effort to win equality for women have containing women’s suffrage, feminism, women’s property rights, equal opportunity in work and education, and equal pay. Now the future of women is seeking out. Empowerment is the goal we have for our programs and the volunteers, participants, or clients with whom we work. But what is empowerment? How can we recognize it? Evaluate it? Talk about it with others who are interested in empowerment? Our recent literature review of articles indicating a focus on



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empowerment, across several scholarly and practical disciplines, resulted in no clear definition of the concept across disciplinary lines. Many using the term cope with its lack of clear, shared meaning by employing the concept very narrowly, using only their specific discipline or programme to inform them. Others do not define the term at all. As a result, many have come to view “empowerment” as nothing more than the most recently popular buzz word to be thrown into make sure old programs get new funding.

We maintain empowerment is much more than that. Empowerment is a process that challenges our assumptions about the way things are and can be. It challenges our basic assumptions about power, helping, achieving, and succeeding. To begin to demystify the concept of empowerment, we need to understand the concept broadly in order to be clear about how and why we narrow our focus of empowerment for specific programs and projects (specific dimension or level. etc.) and to allow discussion of empowerment across disciplinary and practice lines. Understanding empowerment became a critical issue for us as we grappled with the task of sharing the People Empowering People (PEP) program with Extension faculty across the country.

Women Entrepreneurship and Empowerment

Woman is the builder and molder of a nation’s destiny. Though delicate and soft as a lily, she has a heart, far stronger and bolder than of man.... She is the supreme Inspiration for man’s onward march, an embodiment of love, pity and compassion, she is no doubt, her commanding personality; nevertheless, is given by solmen’ – Rabindranath Tagore.

“Our women have a very great part to play in the progress of our country, as the mental and physical contact of women with life is much more lasting and comprehensive than that of men. Now for nothing was it said that ‘the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world’.” In the apron strings of woman is hidden the revolutionary energy which can establish paradise on this earth.” Women have generally been looked down upon with disdainful contempt. All sorts of strictures have been inflicted upon them, reducing their status to a mere play thing or a slave of man’s whims, a mere chattel to be dumb driven. They have been confined to the hearth and home. The orthodox male-oriented society in India has still not been able to adjust itself to the fresh wave of women’s liberation. But today the time have changed, the Indian woman has cast off her age-old shackles of serfdom and male domination. She has come to her own and started scaling the ladders of social advance with proud dignity.

In Vedic India, woman enjoyed an enviable status. She was considered to be a goddess, something like the Greek, Athena, the supreme source of man’s inspiration. She was called ‘Ardhangini’. We hear of women sages and scholars in the vedic age. But the status of women suffered a setback in the Brahmanic age. In the muslim rule, women completely lost their glory, they were relegated into the background, cutoff from the mainstreams of life. They were devitalized and made dependent of men folk. Evil and inhuman ill-practices fostered in the society to deharmonise them; chief among them being the Puradah’ system. ‘Sati’ system, child marriage denial of education and permanent ban on widow re-marriages. The Britishers knew well the supreme value of mother in nation buildings. So they cleverly engaged selfish ‘Pandits’ and ‘Mullahas’ for preaching feminine inferiority. Women were reduced to mere household drudges, in a way, they lived a semi-dead life.



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Women Freedom, Past and Present

With the dawn of freedom our national leaders, Gandhiji, Nehruji and Dr. Rajendra Prasad in particular, began to think seriously about the urgent need of feminine emancipation. They realized the fact that so long as women of India were not uplifted and emancipated and granted equal status with men in all walks of life—political, economic, domestic, educational—India could neither progress nor make any advance. So they provided, for full equality to women in the Constitution. The Parliament enacted the Hindu Code Bill and the Hindu Succession Act, conferring on women the right to personal property and an absolute right to divorce. Now, the Indian women have re-captured their dignity, individuality and respect. They have a franchise, they are free to join any service or follow any profession. Free India has, besides her woman Prime Minister (the late Smt. Indira Gandhi) woman ambassadors women Cabinet Ministers, women legislators, women Governors, women scientists-engineers-doctors, women-generals, women public officers and magistrates. Smt. Vijayalakshmi Pandit created a singular record by becoming President of the United Nations General Assembly.

With the encouragement of co-education, women have cast off the age-old inferiority complex and today they are marching side by side with men-folk in every walk of life. Women are actually proving to be academically better, and socially more active. We come across the results of competitive Examinations. In All India Services, Civil and Police and Indian Universities and we are happily surprised to note that women capture most of the merit seats. They are aware of the fast changing social milieu and they are making sustained efforts to scale the ladders of social progress by dint of zeal and dynamism. They are contributing significantly towards the buildings of modern India. Notwithstanding the remarkable change in the position of women, in free India, there is still a great divergence between the constitutional position and the stark reality of deprivation and degradation. Whatever whiff of emancipation has blown in Indian society, has been inhaled and enjoyed by the women belonging to the rich and upper middle class society in cities. Women belonging to the lower Income group and those belonging to the rural areas are still totally untouched by the winds of change. They have still been living in selfish conditions steeped in poverty, ignorance, superstition and slavery. Despite the passing of stringent laws and Art against Dowry, the monster of dowry is still flagging the lives of thousands of hopeless women every year. Mere legislation cannot emancipate the lot of our women. This needs a radical change in our mental make-up and our social structure. For this, we shall have to foster a social emancipating spirit in our everyday life. The conservative male-chauvinistic attitude shall have to give way to liberalism.

Empowering Women through Education

“Education is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process. Education is important for everyone, but it is especially significant for girls and women. This is true not only because education is an entry point to other opportunities, but also because the educational achievements of women can have ripple effect within the family and across generations. Investing in girls education is one of the most effective ways to reduce poverty. Investments in secondary school education for girls yield especially high dividends.. Girls who have been educated are likely to marry later and to have smaller and healthier families. Educated women, can recognize the



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importance of healthcare and know how to seek it for themselves and their children. Education helps girls and women to know their rights and to gain confidence to claim them. However, women’s literacy rates are significantly lower than men’s in most developing countries.

Education has Far-reaching Effects

The education of parents is linked to their children’s educational attainment, and the mother’s education is usually more influential than the father’s. An educated mother’s greater influence in household negotiations may allow her to secure more resources for her children. Educated mothers are more likely to be in the labour force, allowing them to pay some of the costs of schooling, and may be more aware of returns to schooling. And educated mothers, averaging fewer children, can concentrate more attention on each child. Besides having fewer children, mothers, with schooling are less likely to have mistimated or unintended births. This has implications for schooling, because poor parents often must choose which of their children to educate. Closing the gender gap in education is a development priority. The 1994 Cairo Consensus recognized education, especially for women, as a force for social and economic development. Universal completion of primary education was set as a 20-year goal, as was wider access to secondary and higher education among girls and women. Closing the gender gap in education by 2015 is also one of the benchmarks for the Millennium Development Goal. Empowerment of women is the key-device to enable them resurrects there status multifariously in the society and reconcile them to share virilities of the fast developing world. It had come out of the consensus arrived at the 40th Session of the UN Commission on Status of Women in New York on March 11, 1996 This device is significant in view of the role that the women can more effectively play in all vital areas the male factor alone is not capable of any effective and reliable performance in socio-economic spheres and a partnership is a must throughout the world in these spheres between men and women to ensure the progress in the right direction. Noteworthy is the fact that there exists car in between the present miserable plight of the women due to the socio economic inequalities that have been persistent throughout the world and the new mandates that require a decisive role of women side by side with the men folk.

Though on Women Empowerment

The Commission has warned all the member states of the UNO that the women concerns are mainstreamed to with the impact of the economic and social changes on families. Eradications of poverty, elimination of gender prejudices discriminations and providing equal opportunities to women to exp their views are essential to check further drift in the socio-economic situations in their respective countries. The commission has stressed this is not just a formality to oblige the women folk with a view of their morale or pacify them. But it is an integral part of empowerment women that they participate in decision making at all levels in all are the critical concerns that were identified in the World Women Conference held in China in 1995. By empowerment of Women is meant that the conferment of power by means of law in all matters affecting gender interests, related to family well-being and socio economic national affairs, providing for participation in decision making in all such matters. As a matter of all such matters that were categorically termed as ‘critical concerns the women in the World Women Conference in China in 1995 were required to be mainstreamed to deal with the impact of economic and social



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changes on families. In eradication of poverty, counter sexism and viol in the global media. It is not India alone where the plight of women is pitiable and status has been depleting and losing day by day, but it is an international phenomenon. Because exploitation of women in the forms of domestic violence, rape and sexual abuse, in one form or other is equally found throughout the world, including the advanced and developed countries of the west.

Economic and Social Status of Women

And this is the main reason that the status of women their plight have grown into an international problem and a concern the Economic and Social Council of the UN, Experts of the economy have arrived at the consensus that so eradication of poverty is concerned, it requires full and equal participation of women in decision-making at all levels for which their empowerment and autonomy are essential prerequisites. It implies legislative administrative measures to give right to women no inheritance ownership, to credit and to natural resources and technology. It is necessitates to promote women’s participation in employment and employment and ensure economic and social protection, unemployment, ill-health, maternity, child bearing, widowhood, disability and old-age. Meanwhile in India, reservation of seats in parliament and legislatures for women is being actively pursued at the Government to offer a political toast to entertain women. Many important court rulings regarding relating to harassment of women at work, maintenance of even if not legally married etc., have made the womenfolk stronger. Many savings and insurance schemes, announced from time to time by the central government and various state government, have helped women to become economically stronger, resulting in their better social status. The constitutional amendment regarding reservation of one-third seats for women at the level of Panchayat has enabled one million women to participate in the decision-making process, right from the grassroots up district level. At the international level, however, the initiatives to improve editions for the women have resulted in the creation of an international legal framework to achieve legal equality by UN bodies are also continually striving to bring about equality by raising public awareness and by a commitment to change long ingrained traditions and attitudes, rich prolong discriminations.

Understanding Women Empowerment

Empowerment is a construct shared by many disciplines and arenas: community development, psychology, education, economics and studies of social movements and organisations, among others. How empowerment is understood varies among these perspectives. In recent empowerment literature, the meaning of the term empowerment is often assumed rather than explained or defined. Rappoport (1984) has noted that it is easy to define empowerment by its absence but difficult to define in action as it takes on different forms in different people and contexts. Even defining the concept is subject to debate. As a general definition however, we suggest that empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power (that is, the capacity to implement) in people, for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important. We suggest that three components of our definition are basic to any understanding of empowerment. Empowerment is multi-dimensional social, and a process. It is multi-dimensional in that it occurs within sociological, psychological, economic and other dimensions. Empowerment also occurs at various levels, such as individual, group, and



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community. Empowerment, by definition, is a social process, since it occurs in relationship to others. Empowerment is a process that is similar to a path or journey, one that develops as we work through it. Other aspects of empowerment may vary according to the specific context and people involved, but these remain constant. In addition, one important implication of this definition of empowerment is that the individual and community are fundamentally connected.

Interconnection of Individual and Community

Wilson (1996) pointed out that recently, more researchers, organizers, politicians and employers recognize that individual change is a prerequisite for community and social change and empowerment (Speer and Hughey, 1995; Floring and Wandersman, 1990; Chavis & Wandersman, 1990). This does not mean that we can point the finger at those with less access to power, telling them that they must change to become more like “us” in order to be powerful/successful. Rather, individual change becomes a bridge to community connectedness and social change (Wilson, 1996). To create change we must change individually to enable us to become partners in solving the complex issues facing us. In collaborations based on mutual respect, diverse perspectives, and a developing vision, people work toward creative and realistic solutions. This synthesis of individual and collective change (Wilson, 1996; Floring & Wandersman, 1990; Speer & Hughey, 1995) is our understanding of an empowerment process. We see this inclusive individual and collective understanding of empowerment as a goal. It is in the critical transition, or interconnection, between the individual and the communal, or social, that programs such as ours. People Empowering People, programs such as ours. People Empowering People can be invaluable for people and communities.

What need to be done?

The People Empowerment People (PEP) program uses the definition of empowerment to connect research, theory, and practice. The Connecticut PEP programme builds on theory of critical adult education developed by Friere (1970), Horton (1989), and others. PEP focuses on the strengths of people, providing opportunities and resources for people to gain experiences and skills while they also gain control over their lives. Underlying this process is mutual respect between participants, facilitators, advisory committee members, and others involved in the program. PEP opens to participants the recognition of their own values and beliefs and encourages expression of their own issues as they define them. The focus is on the connection between individual action and community action, encouraging individual change through training sessions and discussions, and supporting community action through participants’ efforts to change their communities. While we cannot give people power and we cannot make them “empowered,” we can provide the opportunities, resources and support that they need to become involved themselves. In conclusion, we see empowerment as a multidimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It s a process that fosters powers in people for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society by acting on issues that they define as important. In PEP as in Extension we strive to teach people skills and knowledge that will motivate them to take steps to improve their own lives – to be empowered.



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Summing Up

India, the subcontinent, is indubitably a great country of miscellaneous cultures, traditions, religions, castes and geographical characteristics. However, India is even known for its sobriquet ‘male-chavuinistic nation’. It’s ‘Bharath Maatha’ who is inturn a woman that serves as the mother of every Indian. While such a woman looks after every Indian child, women in general are simply being disregarded at the dominant men’s best. Men ought not to forget the fact that ‘men’ are in ‘Women’. Women are no less than men in India in any sector. Women are not what they really were. Some decades ago, women were limited to the kitchen. Today, Indian women have made their presence felt virtually in every field. Women have ultimately come out of their ‘sari’ image and entrap the nation by dint of their hard work and power. Women Empowerment is in fact the ability of women to exercise full control over one’s actions. Empowerment of women in India is conspicuous by many live examples. But is that all? Are only those women empowered? If not, how about rest of the Indian-Women world? Are the common women vested with powers to drive the nation? These above questions, if posed to our so called leaders would simply be parried. Women have become marionettes in the hands of them.

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