

A Review on Dalith Women Empowerment in India

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Abstract

Empowerment is the expansion of asserts and capabilities of poor people to participate in negotiate with influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives. Education is one of the important sources of empowering women with the knowledge, skill and self confidence necessary to participate fully in development process. It enhances better socio-economic development. Women empowerment in India is highly dependent on several variables that include caste, class, family background and culture, Geographical location it may be urban or rural and age. The barriers of dalith women empowerment are discrimination in the society, economic disadvantages, religious practices, social believes and violence against women. They are unable to access health and educational services, lack decision making power and face higher level of violence. There is an immediate need for empowering dalith women in present scenario.

Keywords: Dalith women empowerment, education, socio-economic development.

INTRODUCTION

The oxford English dictionary defines empowerment as the action of empowering. The word empower is of French and Latin derivation consisting of the preposition “em” and the noun “power”¹. Empowerment is of intrinsic value it also has instrumental value. Empowerment is relevant at the individual and collective level and can be economic, social or political. The term can be used to characterize relations within household or between poor people and the other actors at global level. There are important gender differences in the causes, forms and consequences of empowerment or disempowerment. Hence there are obviously many possible definitions of empowerment, including rights based definitions. Most definitions focus on issues of gaining power and control over decisions and resources that determine the quality of one’s life. Most also take in to account structural inequalities that effect entire social groups rather than focus only on individual characteristics. The UNICEF women’s equality and Empowerment Frame work emphasizes women’s access, awareness of causes of in equality, capacity to direct one’s own interests and taking control and action to overcome obstacles to reducing structural inequality.(UNICEF2001).The United Nations Development Programs Gender empowerment measure focuses on inequalities in economic and political participation and decision making power and resources(UNDP1995)²Empowerment has been defined as to infuse people with power (Naryana2002 world development report) i.e. access to resources .As expansion in individual agency(Kishore2002). As a power of decision making .e. autonomy (Jojeebby1995)³.Empowerment is the expansion of freedom of choice and action. Our father of nation Mahatma Gandhi be lived that women have to play an important role in politics making it more accountable, transparent corruption free. He wrote in Harijana on 21st April 1946.He emphasized that enrolment of women as voters have imparted to them practical education to bring about a change in them. If they will do this they will purify the present unclean atmosphere⁴.

Jawaharlal Nehru said that “education of a boy is education of one person but education of one girl is the education of entire family⁵.The women of any country has an important contribution in the progress of that country. It is the women who are capable of building such children who may lead the country to the path of progress and prosperity. An educated woman makes the family, society and culture. Manu has therefore rightly remarked that God resides at the places where women are worshiped .By worship of women we do not mean the worship through conventional means but we mean where women are respected proper provision of education made for them and they are given freedom equal to those of men in the society. The out most expansion of women education is necessary for the achievement of all side development of India.⁶

In Indian traditional caste system people are divided in to four groups based on their occupation such as Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vishay and Sudra. There are two more caste groups considered as daliths namely scheduled caste and scheduled tribes, who are living outside the main stream of the society due to their lower socio-economic status and discrimination. Daliths have reminded as culturally, educationally, economically and socially deprived section. In dalith society women are more important than in other social groups, because they work harder and the family management depends on them. A Dalith woman plays a significant role in their cultural, religious, social, economic ways of life and they are considered as a development factor in their family as well as society. But they are still lagging far behind in the different walks of life good health, employment, education, social and political position and empowerment etc.⁷

The idea of women empowerment was introduced at the world women’s conference in 1985.In India the empowering women was focused in the eight year plan(1992-1997) at the grass root level and empowering women through translating the recently adopted national policy for empowerment of women(2001) into action and survival, protection and development of women and children through right based approach was taken care in tenth

year plan(2002-2007).The government of India launched and implemented a number of schemes towards poverty, allegation and women empowerment but it was observed that women in rural areas especially from the poor families could not be benefited. This led to the country to launch mother pregame called Swarna- Jayanthi Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SJGSY).It was launched to provide economic empowerment to the rural especially the women. It was decided in national conference in June2001 to raise the number of SHGS in the country from 5.11lakhs to10lakhs.

According to Rawland, in order to understand the process of empowerment, there is a need to be aware that power can take many different forms. Rawland explains:

a. Power over: Controlling power, this may be responded to with compliance, resistance (which weakens processes of victimization) or manipulation.

b. Power to: Generative or productive power (sometimes incorporating or manifesting as forms of resistance or manipulation) which creates new possibilities and actions without domination.

c. Power with: ‘a sense of the whole being greater than the sum of the individuals, especially when a group tackles problems together’.

d. Power from within: ‘the spiritual strength and uniqueness that resides in each one of us and makes true human. Its basis is self-acceptance and self-respect, which extend, in turn, to respect for and acceptance of others as equals.’⁸

VARIOUS DIMENSSSIONS OF EMPOWERMENT⁹:

According to UNIFEM there are five important dimensions of female empowerment.

1. Educational attainment,
2. Economic participation,
3. Political empowerment
4. Health and wellbeing,
5. Economic opportunity.

METHOD

We collected the data through the study of their literature from the online journals, publications and books.

DISCUSSION

COSTITUTIONAL SAFE GUARDS¹⁰

The founding fathers of our constitution desired to secure Justice, political, social and economic for all citizens. They realized that the inequitable forces embedded in the socio economic system and also political organizations, had resulted in deprivation and disadvantages for the poor and weaker sections of the society. So it is necessary to provide specific safeguards in the constitution for the scheduled castes and scheduled Tribes. These people due to tradition, circumstances were the most deprived, weak and vulnerable among the various sections of society. The various safe guards and protective measures sought to ensure for them freedom from exploitation, all-round development and social injustice. These safe guards help them to form part of the main stream of the society. These safeguards can be classified as fallow.

1. Education and cultural safeguards

Article 15(4) empowers the state to make any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens (or) SCs&STs.This provision was added to the constitution through the constitution. (First Amendment) Act 1951,which emended several articles, This provision has enabled the state to reserve seats for SCs &STs in educational institutions including technical, engineering, and medical colleges.

Article 29(1).provides that “any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India(or) any part of their of having a distinct language ,script (or) culture of it own shall have the right to conserve the same.

2. Social safeguards

Article 17 Untouchblity is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of “Untouchbility” shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law. There are two important legislations relating to this article (viz) the protection of civil rights Act 1955. The scheduled castes and the Scheduled tribes (prevention of Atrocity) Act, 1989. Article 23 prohibits traffic in human beings and beggar and other similar forms of forced labour and provides that any contravention of this provision shall be an offence, punishable in accordance with law.

Article 24provides that no child below the age of 14 years shall be employed to work in any factory (or) mine (or) engaged in any other hazardous employment. There are central and state laws to prevent child labour. This article is significant for SCs &STs too as a substantial portion, if not the majority of child labour engaged in hazardous employment belong to SCs &STs.

3. Political safeguards

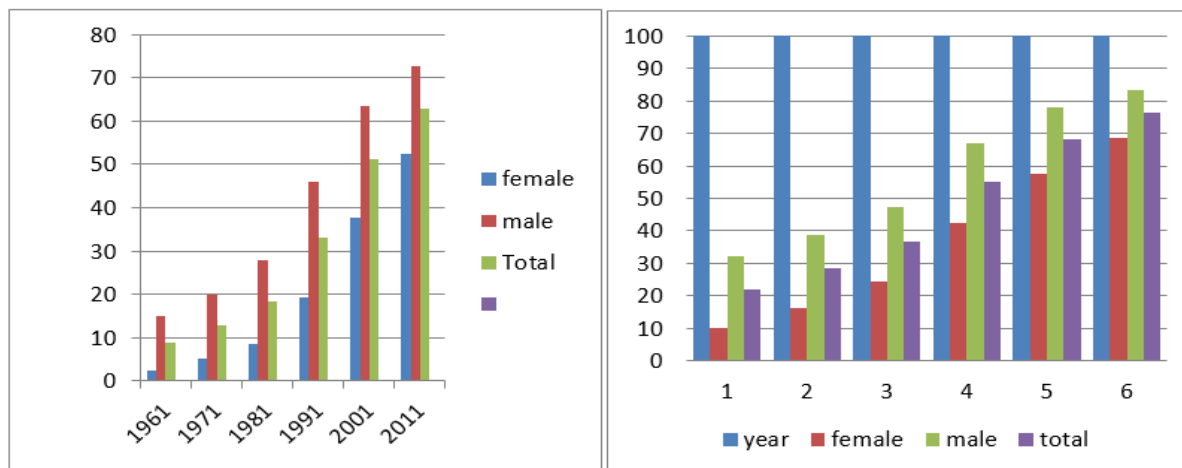
Article 164(1) provides that in the state of Bihar, Madhyapradesh and Orissa there shall be a minister in- charge of tribal welfare of the scheduled castes and backward classes (or) any other work. Article 330 provides for reservation ion of seats for SCs &STs in the Lokasabha.Article332 provides reservation of seats for SCs & STs in the state vidhana Sabah

CONCLUSION

Dalith women empowered are a challenging issue in the present scenario. They are economically, educationally and socially backward when compared to other social groups. The literacy rate of dalith women is very low compare to the general population.

Literacy Rates of sc by sex and Rural-Urban Distribution¹¹

Literacy Rates of sc by sex in Rural and Literacy rates of sc by sex in urban



Literacy Rates of sc by sex in Rural

Literacy rates of sc by sex in urban

Source: Census of India, Office of Registrar General, India

As per Population Census of India 2011, the Literacy rate of India has shown as improvement of almost 9 percent. It has gone up to 74.04% in 2011 from 65.38% in 2001, thus showing an increase of 9 percent in the last 10 years. It consists of male literacy rate 82.14% and female literacy rate is 65.46%. It indicates that female literacy rate improvement is low till today.

Suggestions and recommendations to strengthen and empower dalith women's are following

1. Establishment of new residential institutes like schools junior and degree colleges for girls students.
2. Supporting the dalith students with special scholarships, fellowships, hostel facilities, and remedial coaching.
3. The central government, state government and voluntary organizations should frame programs and policies for the empowerment of dalith women.
4. Government should strengthen the laws particularly for dalith women with special reservations.
5. Government has to bring awareness among dalith women about their rights and provisions in the law.
6. Government has to frame strict laws against discrimination and violence.

Among strategies for women empowerment, Government policies such as 73 and 74th amendment of Indian Constitution, Reservation policies, concessions, social legislation and enactment of certain acts were found be very important. However, the effect of such strategies failed to reach the target due to various bureaucratic and systemic failures.

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