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Changing Role Of Women In Contemporary Society

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ABSTRACT

Women are crucial facilitators for development. They serve a catalytic role towards realization of transformational economic, environmental and social reformation essential for sustainable development. Women's empowerment is essential not just for the well-being of individuals, families, and communities, but for the overall development of mankind. Over the past few years women's role has changed significantly and is making its greatest impact in our society today. The contribution of women to society was limited and controlled by men few years back, but today women are playing an important role in many important areas. Role of women in the contemporary world has changed at an accelerating rate and she is actively taking part in areas such as Politics, Professional Medicine, Training Jobs, Business and Law. Formerly they were not part of any political, Administrative matter, but they have advanced in many aspects. This paper attempts to analyse the changing role of women in modern India and is based purely on secondary source of data. Various studies shows that although women in modern India have made a considerable progress in every aspects and sphere of life, they still have to struggle against deep-rooted patriarchal mind-set of society. Though Indian constitution grants equal rights and opportunities to women as that of men but they were never been successful to bring a remarkable change in the status of women. Equal footing with men is still an illusion for women because men dominance still prevails in the Indian society.

KEY WORDS: Society, Role, Participation, Discrimination, Dominance.

INTRODUCTION

Women are the embodiment of love, strength, sacrifice and courage. It would be impossible to any country to progress unless and until the women take initiatives for development works. All around the globe, women are an untapped 'resource' to confront poverty and violence and their potential has been very clearly brought to light time and again in challenging circumstances. The role of women in the contemporary world has changed significantly and definitely for better. The changing role of women is passionately debated every day and even women have become more conscious of the inequalities and bias they suffer from. Today women are self-sufficient, well aware and financially independent. They have attained immense success in almost every field, whether it is sports, politics, business or academics. With global issues and challenges, women are now marching side by side with men, in every phase of life. Women's role in India have been changing and women are now emerging from the past traditions into a new era of Globalisation.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To analyse the Changing Role of Women in Contemporary India.

METHODOLOGY

The unit of analysis of the present study is the 'Women in Indian Society'. To analyse the key objectives of this paper exploratory and descriptive design has been adopted. Data was collected from secondary sources which composed of research articles published in journals, magazines, write-ups, gist of policy brief on women, NEWS papers, official documents were referred to determine the impact and provide policy suggestions.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Women in India face lots of challenges and problems throughout their life. They struggle for their freedom and rights from the very beginning of their life. Illiteracy, lack of proper education, foeticide, domestic violence, human trafficking, dowry, rape, sexual harassment at workplace etc., are some of the major issues faced by women in India. Women have to carry out dual responsibilities both family and professional simultaneously without the help of her family members. In some cases, the condition of women becomes more remorseful when they get abused by their family members instead of getting help. Women face sexual harassment both at homes as well as in the offices by their family members, friends, relatives, neighbours, boss, etc. They have to struggle a lot in their daily life to sustain their career as well as balancing their family relationships. When we believe in social modernisation and economic modernisation, the big thing that upsurge is the role of women. A society that does not respect women is under-utilising half of its labour force.

STATUS OF WOMEN DURING ANCIENT INDIA

Women in the Vedic Period were treated with respect and dignity. They played an important role in politics, administration and education. Gargi, Ghosa, Lopamudra and Maitreyi were some of the noted women of Vedic era. Remarrying was also socially acceptable for widows. Later during Vedic period, the prevalence of Devdasi practice emerged in which women were sexually devoted to the gods. During Buddhism and Jainism and period, women's economic and social position deteriorated. They were also prohibited from political participation. Later during Manusmriti number of problems started with the introduction of various restrictions on women's ability to obtain education. Child marriage occupied a prominent place in society where husbands were given status of god during this period. The act of remarrying of widows was strictly declared illegitimate and the act of Sati system rapidly increased in society.

STATUS OF WOMEN DURING MEDIEVAL PERIOD

With the Muslim invasion in the country, the position of women declined further. During this period Purdah system and Polygamy were practiced. During this period women were restrained because of purdah system. Thus the purdah system affected their education. The practice of child marriage resulted in expeditious increase in the number of child widows. The practice of Sati system was encouraged and the widows who did not perform 'Sati' were looked down upon by the society.

STATUS OF WOMEN IN PRE-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

Several Social activists worked to uplift the condition of women. Raja Rammohan Roy's attempt led to the abolition of the Sati practice and brought a new aspiration and hope to empower women in a positive manner. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's struggle for the improvement in condition of widows led to the Widow Re-marriage Act. Women earlier were under the shadow of a husband, father or son, but now they have established their own identity and are independent.

STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDEPENDENT INDIA

In an Independent India though a number of constitutional amendments were made for women's social, economic and political benefits, yet they were ineffective to bring a revolutionary change in the situation. Women had to play role of a 'good wife' and if a woman ventured out to work, she was seen as a bad woman, going against societal norms. Women were expected to cook food and eat only after the men, with whatever little amount of food was left. This led the way to rampant malnutrition among women, and an extremely poor health status. Women in India gradually started recognising her true potential and has started questioning the rules and regulations laid down for her by the society. As a result, she started breaking rules and gained a respectable position in the contemporary world. Indian women today have outstanding and excelled in each and every sphere of life from social work to travelling space station.

THE CHANGING ROLE OF WOMEN IN INDIA

After independence revolutionary changes has taken place in the status of Indian women. Cultural and Structural changes reduce exploitation of women to a great extent and provided equal opportunities to women in various fields. Now, there is almost no arena left by women which is unconquered. The role of women has changed drastically and they have been able to construct a positive impression in the society. From housewives to CEOs of Multi National Company, the transition can be seen at an accelerating rate. Modernization, Education and the advent of the latest technology have widened hope, aspirations and opportunities for them. They have demonstrated themselves socially, politically and economically in almost every walk of life. Before women were no longer considered fit and strong for military or for other defence forces. Recently, Avani Chaturvedi has set an example and has created a milestone by becoming India's first women fighter pilot, redefining the role of Women in Indian Society.

Today Indian woman is so self-sufficient and self-reliant that she can be easily called a superwoman, struggling manifold fronts single-handedly with dignity. Women have now become fiercely ambitious and are proving their talent not only on the home front, but also in their respective professions. Women in Indian are coming up in all walks of life. They are joining the educational institutions in large numbers. They are entering into all kinds of professions like engineering, medicine, architect, politics, teaching, Designer, Scientist, Business person etc. In the modern days women status was changing from the effect of the education, women participation in all fields and women welfare programmes in five major factors which contribute to the socio-economic changes. Social Legal changes, Educational improvement, Women employment and economic role, National awareness and Participation in political field. So Women's position changed as the social structure, family and lifestyle where they are becoming dual earner in present society. This changing status of women also helps her to become independent in their life by economically, socially due to opportunities of education.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN AS EDUCATORS

The contribution of women in the transformation society from pre-literate to literate is undeniable and irrefutable. Education is key to nation's sustainable development. Research has shown that education can improve agricultural productivity, enhance the status of women, reduce population growth rates, enhance environmental protection, and widely raise the standard of living.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE WORKFORCE

Today, an average women's share in the global labour force is 46 percent. Women's formal and informal labour can transform a community from a relatively autonomous society to a participant in the national economy. Despite significant barriers and obstacles, women's small businesses in rural communities not only can be an extended family's lifeline, but can also form a new economic foundation for future generations. The role of women in the recent years in the urban area and rural workforce has augmented exponentially. The theme for International Women's Day 2019 "Think equal, build smart, innovate for change," was chosen to identify innovative ways to bring about gender equality and the empowerment of women, for building momentum for an effective execution of the new United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN POLITICS

The term 'political participation' of women has a very extensive meaning. Political participation not only is connected to 'Right to Vote', but simultaneously relates to participation of women in the decision-making process, political activism, political consciousness, etc. Women in India participate in voting, actively seek and campaign for position in government position, public offices and political parties more than men. To fight against gender inequality in politics, the Indian Government has initiated reservations for women in local governments. Women's equal participation and leadership in political and public life are essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. There is established and growing evidence that women's leadership in political decision-making processes are improving. Women in India have demonstrate political leadership even in the most politically contentious environments and by championing various issues of gender equality, such as the elimination of gender-based violence, maternity leave and childcare leave, pensions and electoral reform. Women historically have faced greater barriers than men and held the positions of president, prime minister, as well as chief ministers of various states.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SPORTS

Women for the last few years have been making a revolution in India in the field of sports. Indian sport has witnessed a massive rise in the number of women athletes at the Global level at the turn of the millennium. Karnam Malleswari of India for the first time won a bronze at the 2000 Sydney Olympics in weightlifting.

Since then, Mary Kom, PV Sindhu, Saina Nehwal and Sakshi Malik and most recently, Mirabai Chanu, PV Sindhu and Lovlina Borgohain in Tokyo have brought Olympic laurels to the country. India's performance at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics was its best ever, and we saw maximum participation across sporting events. Out of the seven medals won by India, women bagged three medals a performance which can now be the springboard towards even greater success for Indian women athletes on the global stage. The grit and determination shown by the women athletes will create a strong foundation for more women from the country to participate and excel in sports.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

The increased participation of women in science and technology has escalated the talent pool in India. It has been proven multiple times that women are no less than men in the field of science and technology. There are myriads of examples that highlight the contribution of women in their respective fields. Some of the women who have excelled in the field of Science and technology are Janaki Ammal, a cytogeneticist and botanist by profession who did research on thousands of plant species. Anna Mani, an Indian physicist and Meteorologist made a significant contributions in research on solar radiation, wind energy, and ozone brought her global acclamation. Tessy Thomas, Director General of Aeronautical Systems in DRDO became the Project Director for the development of Agni IV and V missiles. Kalpana Chawla, the first women of Indian origin to go to space. Shakuntala Devi, was an Indian mental calculator popularly known as ‘Human Computer’ had extraordinary power of doing complex mathematical operations within a few seconds.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN BUSINESS

Women entrepreneurs have been making a significant impact across several industries in the Indian economy. During the Shakti National Conference 2023 the Union Minister for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Shri Narayan Rane stated that, “women entrepreneurs in India play a significant role in advancing the economic growth of the country and women owned business are now growing significantly.” In India some of the women entrepreneurs are Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, founder and chairperson of Biocon India, the first Indian company to produce and export enzymes to the United States and Europe. Falguni Nayar, founder and CEO of Nykaa and lifestyle and retail company is the most popular businesswoman in India. Aditi Gupta, an alumna of National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad was concerned and intrigued about the stigma around menstruation. Shaikh Razia, a microbiologist has started Bastar foods, a business venture which engaged local tribal. Chayaa Nanjappa, founder and managing partner of Nectar Fresh, a social enterprise engaged in sourcing and processing natural honey, she is the vision, strength and spirit behind the success of the brand. Sairee Chahal, founder and CEO of SHEROES an online ecosystem exclusively for all women from college fresher to stay at home moms to find support with regard to employment and entrepreneurial opportunities and community support and interactive platforms. Pabiben Rabari, founder of one of India’s first Women Artisan Enterprises, she is known for her Artisan brand Pabiben.com.

CONCLUSION

Women has crossed many milestones in the journey of liberation and has indeed come a long way. Over the last few decades she have struggled very hard and faced many challenges, but still she is unable to be successfully and establish her own identity. Today’s women are embellished with patience and perseverance, which has helped them to achieve the pinnacle of success. She has now become an instrumental in bringing about social change in India. Earlier, women’s role was limited to household course, she was seen only as housewives who were confined to cooking, cleaning and taking care of their family. Today along with managing tough clients at office, they successfully multitask at home too. Women are more determined and have a unique decision making approach and analyse the pros and cons even at senior leadership level and at times are in a better position than men. Empowering women is a fundamental right of women and is the most effective tool for development of society. Women are definitely redesigning the future of the world.

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