ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN EMPOWERING WOMEN OF TAMILNADU

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ABSTRACT

Empowerment is a Multi-faceted, Multi-dimensional and Multi-layered concept. Empowering women is the central issues in the process of development of countries across the world. Tamil Nadu has a glorious tradition of recognizing the importance of empowering women over several centuries now. For bringing equal development the central and state governments have been implementing many schemes and policies from time to time. Tamilnadu is one of the leading populated states in India vested with its own culture. During Sangam Age women in Tamilnadu were given importance and they played major role in various sectors such as administration, literature and so on. But later they were neglected in the society. Women in Tamilnadu depends men even for their basic livelihoods such as food, clothing and shelter. Although government has adopted several schemes and policies to empower women economically by offering quota in education and employments still women are not empowered and they have been facing various problems in their life. This paper is an attempt to study the women empowerment in Tamilnadu, as to improve women in socially, economically and politically.

KEYWORDS

INTRODUCTION

According to the Country Report of Government of India, "Empowerment means moving from a position of enforced powerlessness to one of power". Women's empowerment is a process in which women gain greater share of control over resources - material, human and intellectual like knowledge, information, ideas and financial resources like money - and access to money and control over decision-making in the home, community, society and nation, and to gain 'power'.

Statement of the Problem

Most of the women in Tamil Nadu are not economically empowered. They are not given equality in various aspects such as economic, political, administration and so on. Economic empowerment is basic for all other aspects of empowerment. Even though women population is one half of the total population in Tamil Nadu, they are not given much importance. To empower them economically government has been implementing many schemes. So, it is necessary to study the status of women and the role of government in empowering women in Tamil Nadu. Hence the following specific objectives are framed.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the status of women over a period of time in Tamil Nadu.
2. To assess the role of Government in empowering women in Tamil Nadu.

Methodology

The study required secondary data for its analysis. They were collected from newspapers, Journals, Magazines, Online sources and various reports. The study used simple percentage as statistical tool. The study had chosen Tamil Nadu as the study area.

Status of women in Ancient Period

A glimpse of empowerment given to women in Pre – Independence Era is vivid through some model heroines like Rani Mangammal, Draupadi, etc..

Rani Mangammal was a popular administrator and is still widely remembered as a maker of roads and avenues, and a builder of temples, tanks and choultries with many of her public works still in use. She is also known for her diplomatic and political skills and successful military campaigns. The capital of Madurai Kingdom during her times was Tiruchy.
Draupadi’s characteristics like individuality, strength, and unyielding determination for both justice and vengeance figure Draupadi as a symbol of empowerment for women.

Key instruments for improving the status of women in India

In later days women were neglected in the society. Women in Tamilnadu depends men even for their basic livelihoods such as food, clothing and shelter. To overcome the problem of women oppression, many welfare legislations were landmarked.

Women’s Welfare Legislations in India that Landmarks Empowerment.

- The Sati Abolition act of 1829.
- The Hindu widow remarriage act of 1856.
- The Hindu women’s Right to property act of 1937.
- The Hindu Marriage act of 1955.
- The Hindu Succession act of 1956.
- The Dowry prohibition act of 1961.
- The equal remuneration act of 1976.

In fact, these measures set the Indian women in a better position as compared to the traditional society.

Status of Women in Contemporary Period

Women Population in Tamilnadu

In the total population of Tamilnadu, women population contributes one half. Even though they are equal in population they are not economically empowered as men. The following table gives the particulars regarding total population, men and women population and the percentage of women population on total from 1961 to 2011 at ten years interval.
Table No. 1 - Women Population in Tamilnadu (in millions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% of Women Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>49.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>49.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>49.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>55.9</td>
<td>49.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>62.4</td>
<td>49.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>35.98</td>
<td>36.16</td>
<td>72.14</td>
<td>49.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 indicates that women population in Tamilnadu increased from 16.8 million in 1961 to 35.98 million in 2011. Women population increased twice during the fifty years. The table also indicated that the percentage of women population is more than 49 per cent during all the years. It was lower during 1981 and 1991 at 49.4 per cent each and the rate of women population was highest during 2011, during such year it was almost one half of the total population.

Table No. 2 - Additional Facts related to women in Tamilnadu

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICULARS</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Urban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex Ratio</td>
<td>996</td>
<td>993</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Women Population</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>48.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Literacy Rate (%)</td>
<td>73.4</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>82.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decadal Change in Population (2001 – 2011) Total (%)</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men (%)</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women (%)</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 showed that sex ratio exist 996 and it was 993 in rural area and 1000 in urban area. The table also indicated that more than 50 percent of women are living in rural area. It showed that female literacy rate was 73.4 per cent in Tamilnadu, but the same was only 65 per cent in rural area, which means 35 per cent of rural women are uneducated. During the ten year period from 2001 to 2011 total population of Tamilnadu increased 15.6 per cent and it was 6.6 per cent in rural area and 27 per cent in urban area. The table showed that the growth rate of female population was higher than male population during the decade. It showed the importance of women in Tamilnadu.

Women in Tamilnadu have been facing various problems. Some key problems are discussed below.
Challenges of women in Tamilnadu

1. **Low literacy rate**

   Education is the base for all development and awareness. The rate of literacy of women in Tamilnadu is 73.86 percent, whereas men’s literacy rate is 86.81 percent. There was a gender gap in literacy to the extent of 12.95 percent.

2. **Low employment**

   Compared to men, women in Tamilnadu have lower employment. As per the census of 2001, nearly 31% of total work participated were women.

3. **Crime against women**

   The main challenge faced by women in Tamilnadu is crime against them. The number of crimes against women was 5333 in 2009 and the same was 6127 in 2010. It showed an increase of 15% over the year.

4. **Political participation**

   The rate of political participation of women in Tamilnadu is very poor. Even though they participate in politics, their powers and independence are restricted informally.

5. **Self employment**

   All the population of our country cannot be given employment either by Government or private. So, self employment is an alternative way to empower them economically. Women entrepreneurs both in small and large scale organizations are very less in Tamilnadu. More than these challenges, they have been facing many other challenges also.

Women Empowerment in Tamilnadu

The Government of Tamilnadu has implemented many schemes to empower women and uplift them economically and socially.

Our Constitution has conferred and guaranteed equality before law, universal adult franchise and equal opportunities for men and women as fundamental rights. The imperative of gender partnership in matters of development has been recognised, in order to give a fillip to empowerment of women and appropriate institutional...
mechanisms and interventions have been consciously built into the development design.

**Strategies Adopted by Government of Tamil Nadu for Women Empowerment**

It was recognised that the main obstacles to empowerment has been the low level of educational attainments as well as poverty among women. Taking into account this fact, the Government of Tamil Nadu have framed various policies, designed specific interventions and implemented many programmes to eradicate poverty and to provide education to the vulnerable sections of the society.

**Education of Women**

Education to women is the most powerful instrument of changing their position in the society. Education also brings about reduction in inequalities and also acts as a means to improve their status within the family. In order to encourage education of women at all levels and to dilute gender bias in the provision and acquaintance of education, schools, colleges and even universities were established exclusively for women in the State. To bring more girl children, especially from marginalized BPL families, into the main stream of education, Government has been providing a package of concessions in the form of free supply of books, uniform, boarding and lodging, clothing for hostilities, mid-day meals, scholarships, free by-cycles and so on. The Mother Teresa Women University has been established for the development of Women Studies and to encourage higher education among women and their social mobility.

**Periyar EVR Nagammai Scheme**

Periyar EVR Nagammai Free Education Scheme has been implemented in the State from 1989-90 to women students irrespective of caste, creed and community to encourage their education and to reduce dropout rate. As per the scheme those students’ whose parental annual income is less than Rs.24,000/- are exempted from payment of tuition fees in under - graduate courses. During 2005-06, 8936 women students were benefited under this scheme. In 2006-07, a sum of Rs.65.00 lakhs has been allocated for this scheme.

**Free Coaching Exclusively for Women Students**

To encourage and enable the women students to appear for the IAS/IPS examinations, the Government established two free coaching centers –one at Queen Mary’s College, Chennai and the other at Arulmigu Meenakshi Government College for Women, Madurai. In each center, 60 women students are being given free coaching. During the current year, the government has provided a sum of Rs.1.00 lakh for implementing this scheme.
Entrepreneurship Awareness Programme (EAP)

In order to empower women, Science city has been organising Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP) and Entrepreneurship Awareness Programme (EAP) to bring out the talents of women and to make them stand on their own feet. Further these programmes are carried out in order to ascertain the status of women scientists, Science city has embarked upon the task of creating a data-base of women scientists in the entire State of Tamil Nadu. Science City has instituted Life Achievement Award and Young Women Scientist Awards with an intention to encourage the women scientists to actively participate in various research and development programmes. During 2005, five women scientists were awarded the Young Women Scientists Award.

Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women

Tamil Nadu Corporation for development of women was established in 1983 which aims at the socio-economic empowerment of women. As a prelude, the Corporation is implementing the Mahalir Thittam among poor rural women to promote saving habits, nurture entrepreneurial skills and aptitudes, and promote exposure to banking transactions and to free them from the clutches of local moneylenders. The scheme is being implemented in partnership with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Banks. Under the scheme, SHGs are formed and monitored through NGOs affiliated with the Tamil Nadu Corporations for Development of Women, Ltd.

Self Help Groups

Self Help Groups are small homogenous groups consisting of 12-20 women from BPL families voluntarily organised to promote savings. They are self-managed groups of poor women which primarily came into existence to mobilise financial resources through their own savings and lend the same amongst themselves to meet the credit needs of their members. The specific objectives of SHGs are to:

- Improve saving habits among women
- Increase the total family income
- fulfil the economic needs through self-employment of women
- Utilise bank loan and government welfare schemes
- Help the members to escape from the clutches of moneylenders; and
- Mobilise financial resources.

Capacity Building and Skill formation

In order to improve the entrepreneurial ability and skill of the women, Government has been imparting various types of training designed to promote self and wage employment.
Skill Up-gradation Training Programme

Provision of skill training to women in SHG has been given recognition so as to enable them to start their own income generating activities. The duration of the training and the cost depends on the nature of the trade selected by the members. Till March 2006, 60957 women have been provided skill training. The Government have proposed to train another 23000 women in 2006-07.

Entrepreneurship Development Training Programme for Women (EDP)

EDP training is conducted by TNCDW to expose the SHG women to various business opportunities and to motivate them to start economic activities. Up to March 2006, the Corporation has trained 6,34,991 women in co-ordination with other Government departments such as Rural Development, Agriculture, Industries and Commerce, Backward Classes, TAHDCO, Slum Clearance Board, etc. In 2006-07, 22000 more SHG women will be provided EDP Training by TNCDW Some Ways society Benefit from Women's Empowerment. Here are at least some ways that women's empowerment could change things.

1. **Women Are Much Better At Dealing with Certain Problems**

There are some social problems that only women can really solve. The clearest example is overpopulation. For years governments tried all kinds of programs to reduce excessive birth rates that were undermining the economic well-being of their countries. But none of these top-down programs worked. The only thing that has worked has been the empowerment of women. In countries where women have gained in education, economic opportunity, and legal rights, the birth-rate has gone down to a manageable level.

There are other issues like this. Many problems appear to be of concern only to women. However, when women become empowered enough to work out a solution to those problems, everyone around them benefits. On questions of family health, child development, family income, and a whole range of issues the ability of women to act on their own with a full-range of social rights at their disposal makes it easier for them to use their ingenuity to solve the problem. In these situations the whole family benefits - as well as the rest of society.

2. **Protecting Women's Rights Is the Key to Protecting Everyone's Rights**

Protecting women's rights around the world is essential, because it is one of the keys to dismantling repressive regimes and institutions. All totalitarian ideologies, all repressive governments, and all fundamentalist religions - no matter what their creed or belief - share one characteristic: they all try to keep women in their place. This has been true of fascists, communists, and hereditary regimes, and it's been true as well of the
more fundamentalist versions of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and other religions. These are almost always male-dominated institutions in which women have little or no voice. Usually, they are run by a bunch of older men (like me), sitting around talking to each other. They become echo-chambers in which the viewpoint and needs of women are never heard.

It's often hard to figure what is cause and what is effect in these situations: Do fundamentalist regimes repress women's rights because they are authoritarian, or do they become authoritarian in order to keep women in their place? Either way it's more than just a problem for the women involved. It's also a big problem for the rest of us who have to live with the harm that such repressive institutions and governments can unleash on the world.

If reform is going to come to these types of institutions, it probably needs to start with a focus on women's empowerment. Unless women's rights are addressed head-on, it's too easy for authoritarian and traditionalist institutions just to give lip-service to reform and then slip back into their old ways. There will always be cultural-relativists who will argue that we should back off from supporting women's empowerment in such instances, because the second-class treatment of women "is the way they do things in their society." The only way to counter that argument is to point out that any system built on the suppression of half of its members is simply not entitled to much deference.

The suppression of women is what keeps many fundamentalist regimes going, and it's the empowerment of women that will ultimately make the difference in changing them. So whenever I hear of a group of women fighting somewhere to get their rights - whether it's teenagers trying to go to school in Pakistan, Saudi women fighting for the right to drive a car in Saudi Arabia, or Nuns on the Bus in America trying to have their voices heard - I have to think they are ultimately fighting a fight for me and everyone else.

3. **Women's Empowerment Is Good For the Economy and the Environment**

Women's empowerment benefits us all, because it's important for the economy. Countries that have opened up education to women and brought them into the work force do much better economically than countries that keep women suppressed, and many of those women work in environmentally-friendly occupations. It's no surprise that countries that suppress women and deprive them of an education are more economically backwards than others, because leaving one-half of your population uneducated means that you created have a drastically inferior work force.
4. Women Can Provide Critical Insight at Important Moments

There are many important, pivotal events in human history where the addition of an empowered group of women might have made a difference - and possibly avoided tragedy.

The best example is the basic argument behind lending to women is that they are not only good credit risks but are less likely to misuse the money and are more likely to share the benefits with the entire household. In addition to the economic benefits, it is argued that women’s increasing role in the household economy will lead to their empowerment. During the past few decades microcredit has enjoyed tremendous growth and there is great hope that such programs will contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

CONCLUSION

The study has brought to limelight the role of women in economic, political, administration and so on.

In administration sphere the number of women workers now engaged in shops, various services and modern professional occupations, building industry, etc, is quite significant. Almost 70% of the agrarian households have one or more women members so engaged. The statistics on income shows that it has increased faster than farm income over the past two and a half decades. Today 64% of households’ income derives from the non-farm sector, that is, the secondary and tertiary sector of the economy. In 1980, this proportion was only 34%.

In political sphere the women political representation in local government has no doubt received a rather spectacular “jump-start” with the massive entry of 33% of the seats including the positions of president and vice-presidents. It is a process of learning the game of politics in which training and resources play an important role. It helps women act in public spheres and express issues of concern. In the Panchayat women may learn to interact across caste and gender and discover what people from other backgrounds are thinking. Actual participation and learning from other is the critical “mass” that is needed for women to have an impact in governance.

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