

Shakti Yojana and Women Empowerment

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ABSTRACT

Stree Shakti is the Karnataka State Governments' Women's programme strictly focused on empowerment of rural women and making them financially, socially and politically capable. Paper observes that Some sections of the poorest of poor find it difficult to participate in stree shakti programme. Since only 0.07% of women are participated in the district, Care should be taken to make them participate in the programme. Reserve the Stree shakti programme women at least under the govt. sponsored programmes like Anganawadi food supplies. There are a variety of understandings of the term empowerment due to its widespread usage. If empowerment is looked upon in terms of ability to make choices: to be disempowered therefore, implies to be denied choice. The notion of empowerment is that it is inescapably bound up with the condition of disempowerment and refers to the processes by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such ability. Thus, there could be statistical swells indicating improvements in indicators of gender equality, but unless the intervening process involved women as agents of that change, one cannot term it as 'empowerment'. People who exercise a great deal of choice in their lives may be very powerful, but they are not empowered, because they were never disempowered in the first place. Empowerment cannot be defined in terms of specific activities or end results because it involves a process whereby women can freely analyze, develop and voice their needs and interests, without them being predefined, or imposed from above. The assumption that planners can identify women's needs; runs against empowerment objectives. Here we come to know the economic and social condition of women who are under the streeshakti programme, to identify the working of stree Shakti programme and what is the impact of stree Shakti programme on its members.

Keywords: Stree shakti Programme, Gender, Karnataka, Women empowerment

INTRODUCTION

Empowerment is an inspirational concept and defines as a psychological condition of four thoughts of individual such as meaning, competence, choice, and its impact brings the self confident of the individual. Empowerment usually connected with a set of managerial procedures; otherwise, it is a personal capacity to share their power with others. Empowerment means delegation of authority, to make self-decisions and to improve the present condition of the individual. Empowerment leads to initiation, motivation, and tenacity to accomplish tasks. Hence empowerment results in the positive impact on individual life and their performance. Empowerment applies to the country, regime, organization, people, women, and the environment. From all this, women empowerment is an important concept and capable of obtaining their rights, making their own decisions, supremacy, able to manage challenges, improve their economic condition, and overall wellbeing.

Women Empowerment is the progression of women and, accepting and including them in the decision-making process. It also means providing them with equal opportunities for growth and development in society, and disapproving gender bias. Article 15(3) mentions the welfare of women and children and can be stated as "Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children. "Ministry for women and child development has collaborated with Facebook on November 19, 2019, to enhance digital literacy and online safety for women and children in India. The campaign categorized under the Global Literacy Program is named "We Think Digital".

It is widely accepted that the development process in many parts of the world including India had by passed the women. The rural women in particular are marginalized and form the bottom of the development pyramid. Series of policy measures have been initiated and programmes implemented since last three decades after UN's declaration of international women's empowerment.

One key factor for the gap in implementation of laws and policies to address discrimination, economic disadvantages, and violence against women at the community level is the largely patriarchal structure that governs the community and households in much of India.

As such, women and girls have restricted mobility, access to education, access to health facilities, and lower decision-making power, and experience higher rates of violence. Political participation is also hindered at the Panchayat (local governing bodies) level and at the state and national levels, despite existing reservations for women. Women play an integral part in society; without their progress, the overall progress of society comes to a halt. Societies in which women see consistent growth have been known to prosper themselves. It is through the empowerment of women that societies can ensure their growth as well.

The Congress government in Karnataka implemented its flagship scheme, the 'Shakti Scheme' on the 11th of June 2023. It is one of the five guarantee schemes assured by the Congress party in its 'poll manifesto' for the 2023 Karnataka assembly elections. This scheme is the party's promise for the provision of free intra-state transportation facilities, for the women (including 'female students') belonging to all domiciles of the state of Karnataka. The beneficiaries of the scheme also include females belonging to the age cohort of '6 -12 years' and 'transgenders' of all domiciles of Karnataka. The beneficiaries can travel free of cost in all non-luxury buses within the state. The scheme places no limit on 'within-state travel distance'.

The Karnataka Shakti Plan is the lead plan of the Public authority of Karnataka. The super evenhanded behind the send off of Shakti Plan is to enable ladies monetarily by giving them free transport administrations. Under the Karnataka Shakti program, free transport traverse Karnataka is given to all female recipients in the territory of Karnataka. The complementary lift starting with one point then onto the next is substantial just inside the province of Karnataka. Female recipients can benefit complementary lifts under Shakti program just in normal, city, express and planned transports. Ladies don't get free transport administration in AC, AC Sleeper, Non AC Sleeper or extravagance transports. Ladies The recipient can go starting with one spot then onto the next, there is no base mileage limit. The Shakti scheme and the other guarantees are believed to have helped the Congress Party in achieving a clear majority. The 'Shakti' scheme is alleged to be just a poll freebie. Men are complaining that the move has made women ignore their household duties and travel unnecessarily to places of faith and tourist attraction. There is also a strong criticism of the move and its impact on fuel procurement and financial matters. Some are worried about the possibility of a huge hike in travel charges affecting the male passengers. In view of these critical comments there is a need to examine whether the implementation of the Shakti scheme in the state of Karnataka is a justifiable one.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In 1972- Working Women Hostel-To promote the availability of safe and conveniently located accommodation for working women. To provide accommodation to children of working women, up to the age of 18 years for girls and up to the age of 5 years for boys. In 1986-87-Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP)To provide skills that give employability to women. To benefit women in the age group of 16 and above in the country. In-2012-NIRBHAYA-To facilitate safety and security for women at various levels. To ensure strict privacy and confidentiality of women's identity and information. Provision for real-time intervention as far as possible. In 2016- Nari Shakti Puraskar- To strengthen the place of women in society. To facilitate institutions that work towards the progress and development of women in society. In 2016- Mahila E-Haat To facilitate entrepreneurship opportunities online for women. To educate women on various aspects of online selling and helping them establish their venture. In 2017- Mahila Shakti Kendras (MSK) To create an environment for women where they have access to healthcare, quality, education, guidance, employment, etc. To facilitate these opportunities at the block and district level in the country.

Bhagyalakshmi (2004) says that Empowerment of women is a key element to achieve progress in all areas. To have a gender equality there are many conventions, programs and goals to help the women. According to her empowering the women in all spheres that are in decision-making process in social, economic, and culture. There will be programs for training the women in soil conservation, social forestry, dairy development and also allied occupations in agriculture like horticulture, livestock, animal husbandry, poultry and fisheries. They also got a support services like childcare facilities, educational institution, homes for the aged, creches at work place. She also finds that for empowering them they get good education, health, nutrition, sanitation housing etc. to come forward in the society.

Chhabra (1998) in her work entitled "The invisible women workers" mentions about cleaning operations like removal of pebbles, dust and dirt of food grains; crop drying, carrying water and firewood along with household chores and child rearing are done by the farmwomen.

According to her 'invisible workers' provide much of the 'unpaid family labor' in agriculture. Also she found that there is hardly any activity except ploughing in which women are not actively involved; rather contribute more in some activities than the men. Traditionally, women have no definite decision-making role in a majority of family affairs because of dominance of male members in the rural milieu.

Kanakamalini M.A. & Pratheeksha Gopinath (2003) This paper analyzes the socio-economic impact of the Shakti system against the background of various critical comments received since its launch. It examines the decline in female labor force participation in Karnataka and the factors contributing to it. The nature of women's unpaid housekeeping is also taken into account. It looks at two main factors ie. financial dependence and financial security. It highlights various factors that prevent women from moving in public places. Jilly Philippa Joel Premkumar, Sameem Banu, Meenal J (2023) This paper analyzes the benefits and effects of the program "Free bus rides for women in public transport for women to achieve several relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as goal 1.4 (access to basic services), goal 4.3 (equal access to more high education), goal 5.2 (violence against women to eliminate in the public and private sectors), goal 8.5 (decent work) and goal 11.2 (safe public transport) and find out the problems that women face while benefiting from the system.

Stree Shakthi Programme

The programme was launched by Department of Women and Child Development in Karnataka state during the year 2000-2001. It is strictly focused on empowerment of rural women by making them socially and economically stable.

Going by the concept of self-help groups, the programme formed Stree Shakthi Groups (SSGs) all over the state with the help of Taluk Federations and Anganwadi workers at the village level. Many schemes of financial assistance such as revolving fund, kit materials, incentives to groups for excess savings, funds for incomegenerating activities, interest subsidy at six per cent on the loans, strengthening of block level societies, training for skill development, marketing complex, exhibitions/ marketing melas, awards and mobile vans for the products have been provided through the programme to these women. The beneficiaries of the programme include below poverty line families, landless agricultural laborers", SC/ST women. At present, there are 1.40 lakhs groups functioning in the state and approximately 21 lakhs women members are organized. (Stree Shakthi et al.,)

Scope of the Study

- This study specifies the vision and mission of the Stree Shakthi Scheme concerning Karnataka rural and urban areas. It's prime focus is the uplift of the women in this scheme on economic, social, political, legal, and psychological outlook.
- research attempts to study the opinions and attitudes of the scheme from implementing authorities. Also, to know the overall development of members in this scheme and evaluate the performance of the Stree Shakthi Scheme, overall growth.

Stree Shakthi Scheme-An Overview

In our country, women called "Devi" or "Shakthi" means the empowerment of women. Hence empowerment of women was there from ancient works and culture too. During the forefront of 21st century women, empowerment voices heard everywhere. Women are empowered socially, economically, politically, and legally, and few examples mentioned here:

- Smt. Indira Gandhi, first women Prime Minister in India .
- Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil First women President of India.
- Indira Nooyi First women Chairman of PEPSICO most powerful women in the world
- Kiran Mazumdar Shaw MD & CEO of the Biocon.
- Kalpana Chawla was the first astronaut spacewomen from India.
- Shital Mahajan was the first women in skydiving in India.

Economic growth is the most important and significant factor in the empowerment of women. The Stree Shakthi Scheme (SSS) is a Government of India initiative to help the rural women, specifically those are below the poverty line in the state. This scheme mainly focuses on three parameters, which are well-being, education, and revenue creation in rural areas.

Other Plans

Santhwana

This scheme helps women victims. The primary function of this scheme is providing legal assistance, temporary accommodation; monetary aid facilitate to the women suffered from dowry, sexual harassment, domestic violence, and rape. Santhawana centers are available around the clock with a psychotherapist and three communal employees. The monetary is Rs.2000 to Rs.10000 given to the women who have faced this disaster. Presently 196 centers are functioning across Karnataka to empower the women.

Hostel for Girls

This scheme helps the rural girls to provide education that is dropped out in the villages. They can study from the seven standard or after that through the government recognized academic organizations for both education and hostels. The hostel is well furnished, and can study very well.

Scheme for Construction Working women's hostels (State)

This scheme provides the best accommodation facilitates for working women. The significance of the scheme is enabling the female monetary independent, urban area exposure, and getting a job. Twenty-five lakhs monetary aid is given to authorized NGOs for building a hostel in every district.

Gelati special treatment unit for women

These schemes provide all the services in one umbrella to empower the women. This scheme provides the multispeciality hospital for treatment across all the districts in Karnataka. Further offers psychotherapy, medical facilities, police help, legal assistance.

Stairya Yojana

This scheme offers monetary assistance in specific duration immediately. The scheme provides Rs.25000 to the women who suffered by the fatalities within 24 hours, and the first investigation record booked. They offer a maximum of two lakhs with the medical facility, one lakh for the death due to rape or acid attack.

Kittur Rani Chenamma Award

This award is given to women based on their excellence. To honor this award women has to work for the development aspects from the past five years. Minister will decide to whom to give, and the award will be given in International Women's Day every year. The cash prize is fifty thousand, and the individual will get twenty-five thousand and citation.

Protection of Women from Domestic violence Act, 2005 Rule 2006

This act gives the actual protection for the women in the Judicial and Indian Constitution. Aimed at real execution, the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 Rules, 2006 came to existence on the 26th, October 2006. The act executed in Karnataka from June 2007.

Stree Shakti Programme

Stree Shakti is the Karnataka State Governments' Women's programme strictly focused on empowerment of rural women and making them financially, socially and politically capable. This programme launched by Women Child Welfare Department of Karnataka State in October 2000.

Vision of Stree Shakti programme

Empowerment of rural women and making them financially and socially capable. Mission of Stree Shakti programme is to make rural women self dependent by organizing 20 lakh women into one lakh self help groups. Economic strength is considered as the basis of social, political and psychological power in society. The main causes for women's low status are; Low Economic Status, Lack of access to education, training, credit and business. Being in the unorganized sector of the economy, restricted mobility, and lack of opportunities to express their abilities and leadership qualities, because women's economic position is weak, women are viewed more as liabilities than assets. Hence the empowerment of usual women is the need of the hour.

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DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In the current times, women are seen in public places but a majority of them work as low-wage workers, working as garment factory workers, sanitation contact labourers, helpers, cleaners and domestic workers. A woman's entry into public place is restricted by the following factors

- Economic dependence on male members

- Unequal share of household work
- Unequal sharing of caring and nurturing work
- Security reasons owing to non-availability of male escorts
- Position in the lowest rungs of hierarchy and power inequalities. With all these barriers her mobility almost ceases to exist. Her worldly knowledge never expands. She cannot comprehend or manage activity in 'public spaces'. She behaves either aggressively or in a subdued manner.

In many homes, a woman is subjected to domestic violence or physical abuse and has to stay in the same house with security issues as she doesn't have her own money to leave the house immediately. The work she does is never valued or monetized. Earning members of the family are usually treated better and cared for. A woman's invaluable work of nurturing and caring is considered her social and familial obligation. She has to be under the obligation of a male member of the family. This dependence keeps her under the pressure of burdening herself with more service to her family. Unless there is a change in power hierarchies no major change can happen. But atleast the 2000 rupees that she would get from the Gruhalakshmi scheme will help cover her minor expenses and enable her financially. This newly acquired financial independence and access to public spaces would definitely bring about little changes in the financial and social domains.

This paper comes to the conclusion that this scheme would aid in the improvement of women's mobility more than the scheme's intended increase in women's labour force participation in the state. Economists observe that it is difficult to correlate between free travel and labour force participation (Aravind, 2023). This statement is substantiated by the fact that the increased flow of women passengers in buses in Karnataka, after the launch of Shakti scheme, was directed more towards religious places than work places. In many homes, a woman is subjected to domestic violence or physical abuse and has to stay in the same house with security issues as she doesn't have her own money to leave the house immediately. The work she does is never valued or monetized. Earning members of the family are usually treated better and cared for. A woman's invaluable work of nurturing and caring is considered her social and familial obligation. She has to be under the obligation of a male member of the family. This dependence keeps her under the pressure of burdening herself with more service to her family. The impact of SSP the Government of Karnataka state initiative in contributing to significant improvement in the living conditions of marginalized women who joined the government programme. The Government implemented SSP with the aim to make the beneficiaries socially and economically stable. Thus, SSP has been instrumental in bringing about a change in the life-styles of women in Karnataka state to an extent. It has awakened the entrepreneurial spirit among some of these marginalized women and has taken them to the next level of subsistence. Despite all these efforts women stepping out and taking up more and more income-generating activities is limited. Government may think marginalized women, adopt vestibule training facilities to impart better and greater skills and mobile training facilities for women who cannot leave families/nursing infants. The present study focuses only on the life-style changes in members of SSP. Further, a comparative study between non-members and members of SSP across different taluks could be undertaken with a larger sample size to get a broader picture of life-style transformation.

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