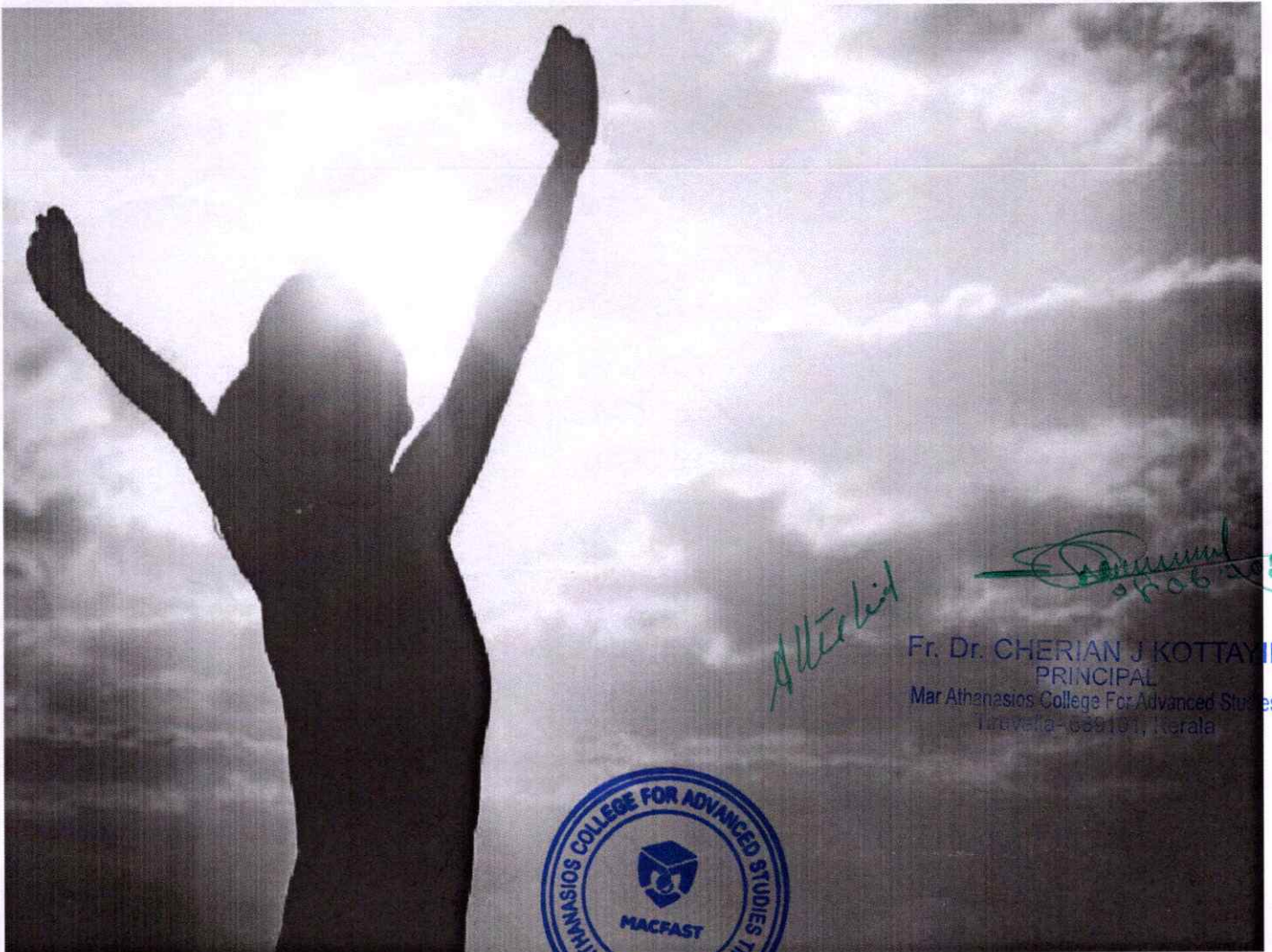


Women Empowerment- Awakening of a New Era

Dr. Tazyn Rahman



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Achieving Sustainable Development through Women Empowerment

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ABSTRACT

Today we are facing a crisis with regards to poverty and the huge chunk of women population at the bottom of pyramid without having adequate education and employment. We have to find out a feasible solution that allows us to grow and regenerate as humans in a sustainable manner. To achieve a sustainable society, it is imperative to consider the importance of a variety of social concerns such as social equity and justice, and notion of freedom, etc. along with environmental and economic factors. For achieving sustainability at all sections of society, the need of the hour is a clear focus on empowering women who constitute the foundation of a typical Indian family.

Corporate, Government and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) are looking for new concepts and methods to operate so that true development happens to the people at grass root levels of the society. International Association for Human Values (IAHV), an international humanitarian and educational non-governmental organization founded in 1997 in Geneva by H.H. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, maintains special consultative status with the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations and works with its sister organisation, the International Art of Living Foundation in five main areas related to sustainable development through empowerment of people. This paper is an exploratory case study on some of the activities initiated by IAHV specifically on empowering women to attain sustainable development solutions in a progressive world.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Women Empowerment, Human Values, IAHV

1. Sustainable Development

1.1 Introduction to Sustainable Development

The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), in 1987, brought out its seminal report on "Our Common Future" which defines "sustainable development" as a process of development that 'meets the needs of the present generations without comprising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (WCED, 1987)

UNDP Report (1994) explains, 'Sustainable development is development that not only generates economic growth but distributes its benefits equitably; that generates environment rather than destroying it; that empowers people rather than marginalizing them. It gives priority to the poor, enlarging their choices and opportunities and providing their participation in decisions affecting them. It is development that is pro-poor, pro-nature, pro-jobs, pro-women and pro-children' (Srivastava 1998).

According to Barbier (1987), "sustainable development" is one which is directly concerned with increasing the material standard of living of the poor at the grass root levels which could be quantitatively measured in terms of increased food, real income, educational services, health care, sanitation and water supply, emergency stock of food and cash etc. and only indirectly concerned with economic growth at the aggregate national level. In specific, "sustainable development" aims at reducing the absolute poverty of the world's poor through providing long lasting and secured livelihoods that minimize resource depletion, environmental degradation, cultural disruption and social inability. It is no longer just about planting trees or giving free food and clothes to the poor.

1.2 Development and Empowerment

Despite the achievements of the last three decades, the present concepts of sustainability and sustainable development are clearly inadequate to drive the transitions necessary to adapt human relations with the rest of the biosphere for the future. Something new is needed in order to raise the



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A Study on the Issues and Challenges of Women Empowerment with a Special Reference to Kerala State

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Abstract

Women empowerment is the transformation or strengthening the women community and moulding them to hold the key roles in the society. Women empowerment indicates a transformation from a position of disempowerment to a position of one to be empowered. But in reality it is the need of the hour to analyze whether the women are really empowered, if not it is primarily to discuss the reason for the setback in attainment of self-empowerment. This study titled "A study on issues and challenges with a special reference to Kerala" attempts to answer the need, hindrance and challenges faced in the state with regard to women empowerment. This study also facilitates to analyze the factors influencing the economic empowerment of women, available government schemes for women empowerment and the trivialities in the path of empowering the women community. Reprehensible utilization of educational qualification, Gender discrimination, financial constraints, family responsibility, low mobility and the ability to bear risk are the major concerns faced by the women population in Kerala. The suggestions put forward as the result of this study are, the first and foremost priority should be given to the education of women, the state need to address the lack and improper utilization of education of women, awareness programs on women's right need to be organized in association with both governmental and non-governmental agencies, the state should make sure that the women are safe, and there should be a work life balance and there should be strict implementation of programmes and acts to curb the mal-practices prevalent in the society.

"To be liberated women must feel free to be herself, not in rivalry to man but in the context on her own capacity and personality" Indira Gandhi

Introduction

Women empowerment is profoundly depend on many variables which include the geographical location, both urban and rural, educational grade, social condition and age. The policies for women empowerment are made in considering the national, state and local levels in many sectors, including health, education, economic opportunities, gender based violence and political participation. Conversely there are significant gap between policy advancements and actual practice at the community level. Women empowerment is the actual outcome of the upliftment of economic, social and political status of women in the society. Thus in other words empowering a woman engages the changes made in the edifice of a society, a political environment, wherein women can breathe without the fear of oppression, exploitation, apprehension, discrimination and the general feeling of persecution which goes with being a woman in a traditionally male dominated structure. Women constitute almost 50% of the world's population but India has shown disproportionate sex ratio whereby female's population has been comparatively lower than males. As far as their social status is concerned, they are not treated as equal to men in all the places. In the Western societies, the women have got equal right and status with men in all walks of life. But gender disabilities and discriminations are found in India even today. The paradoxical situation has such that she was sometimes concerned as Goddess and at other times merely as slave.



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3. The state should make sure that the women are safe, and there should be a work life balance.
4. Strict implementation of Programmes and Acts should be there to curb the mal-practices prevalent in the society.

Conclusion

The greatest need of the hour is change of social attitude to women. "*When women move forward the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves*". It is essential as their thought and their value systems lead the development of a good family, good society and ultimately a good nation. The best way of empowerment is perhaps through inducting women in the mainstream of development. Women empowerment will be real and effective only when they are endowed income and property so that they may stand on their feet and build up their identity in the society. The Empowerment of Women has become one of the most important concerns of 21st century not only at national level but also at the international level. Government initiatives alone would not be sufficient to achieve this goal. Society must take initiative to create a climate in which there is no gender discrimination and women have full opportunities of self-decision making and participating in social, political and economic life of the country with a sense of equality.

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