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Q8(c)

Does "economic empowerment" automatically bring about "substantive empowerment" for women ? Briefly describe the main issues in women empowerment in India

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · Sociology GS 2 · 10 marks · Tribal communities in India

Tribal communities in India: Definitional problems; Geographical spread; Colonial policies and tribes; Issues of integration and autonomy.

Core demand of the question

- Does "economic empowerment" automatically bring about "substantive empowerment" for women? Briefly describe the main issues in women empowerment in India
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length

Revision summary

A wage does not automatically mean control of body, mobility or household decisions.

Honour, caste and unpaid care absorb many women's earnings.

Main issues are land, violence, informal work and proxy politics.

Shah Bano-type conflicts show law and community can stall standing.

Substantive empowerment needs voice and rights with income.

Introduction

Economic empowerment is wages, property, and jobs. Substantive empowerment is the power to decide over body, mobility, and voice. The first does not automatically produce the second in India, because kinship honour can absorb a salary.

Body

Why not automatic

- Women may earn in informal and new-middle-class jobs and still hand the wage to in-laws, a **Seed and Earth** household.
- Microcredit and SHGs raise income without ending violence or son preference, which the skewed sex ratio records.
- **Shah Bano** showed that a maintenance claim can be recast as a community insult; economic relief was not the same as equal standing.

Main issues

- Property and land titles still lag statutes.
- Informal work lacks security, as migrant and slum women saw in the pandemic.
- Political office through **panchayat reservation** can be proxy rule by husbands.

- **Caste and minority location split 'women':** a Dalit woman's empowerment issue is also atrocity, not only GDP.

What would link the two

- Law plus organisation plus control of income, in **Ambedkar's** social-democracy sense for half the population.

Flow diagram

Economic wages microcredit -> May raise income
Kinship honour caste -> Blocks substantive power
Body voice property control -> Substantive empowerment
May raise income -> Substantive empowerment

Conclusion

Economic empowerment is necessary and not automatic as substantive empowerment. Main issues are property, unpaid care, violence, informal insecurity, and honour that outlives the pay packet.

Facts & figures

SHGs and microcredit

Income tools that often stop short of household power.

Panchayat reservation

Office without substantive power when women sit as proxies.

Shah Bano

A maintenance victory that became a communal-personal-law storm; economics was not enough.

Seed and Earth

Kinship ideology that can pocket a daughter-in-law's wage.

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