

A REPORT ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

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Abstract

This report attempts to analyze the status of Women Empowerment in India and highlights the Issues and Challenges of Women Empowerment. Today the empowerment of women has become one of the most important concerns of 21st century. But practically women empowerment is still an illusion of reality. We observe in our day to day life how women become victimized by various social evils. Women Empowerment is the vital instrument to expand women's ability to have resources and to make strategic life choices. Empowerment of women is essentially the process of upliftment of economic, social and political status of women, the traditionally underprivileged ones, in the society. It is the process of guarding them against all forms of violence. The study is based on purely from secondary sources. The study reveals that women of India are relatively disempowered and they enjoy somewhat lower status than that of men in spite of many efforts undertaken by Government. It is found that acceptance of unequal gender norms by women are still prevailing in the society. The study concludes by an observation that access to Education, Employment and Change in Social Structure are only the enabling factors to Women Empowerment.

INTRODUCTION AND TYPES OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

“We cannot all succeed when half of us are held back”

-Malala Yousafzai

As Malala has rightly said above, women are equally capable of contributing in every sphere as men are.

Women empowerment is not creating reservations for women in different aspects but it is to treat men and women impartially in every possible sphere of life. A major oppression that the 21st century working women face is of being paid lesser than their male counterparts for the same job profile. Some justify this choice of payment of the employer by saying that most males are the breadwinners in their respective households but contrary to popular belief there are hundreds and thousands and probably even more households in India and worldwide where women are the breadwinners of the family.

Women have constantly proven themselves to be worthy of being treated as equals to men. Women Empowerment has to be practiced in various fields such as in Politics, in the society, in religion and in the economical aspect.

In **Politics**, women wishing to pursue a career in politics find it almost impossible to gain the support of the common man and the government electoral bodies because of the popular belief that women are incapable of undertaking humongous responsibilities as in this case, being a representative of thousands of people and meeting their needs and wishes. Hence, **Political Woman Empowerment** is to make sure that during the polls the candidate's gender or name shouldn't be revealed to the electing body and only their qualification, credentials, achievements and the support that they have obtained through extensive campaigning must be looked at. In a nutshell the election should be made unbiased and the opportunity to take up major political portfolios must be given to women if they have proven themselves worthy of the position with the required expertise.

In the **Social Sphere**, the idea of gender equality has to be promoted in India. Since India is a country wherein women have been portrayed as lesser human beings for several centuries and are still believed to be lesser human beings in the rural parts of India.

“Women are prevented from playing a full and equal role in many faiths, creating an environment in which violations against women are justified,” former President Jimmy Carter noted in a speech last month to the

Parliament of the World's Religions in Australia. Rightly said by Jimmy Carter ,such oppressive norms in religion are a major inspiration for people in an extremely religious country like India to treat women as inferiors.

In the **economic sphere**, females are payed lesser than their mal counterparts for the same job profile as mentioned earlier. Women are also limited to rise to greater posts despite their capability to manage that portfolio because many companies believe that women may not deliver upto the mark.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper is basically descriptive and analytical in nature. In this paper an attempt has been taken to analyze the empowerment of in India. The data used in it is purely from secondary sources according to the need of this study.

CONSTITUTIONAL LAWS FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

The principle of gender equality has been enshrined in the constitution of India, in its preamble, fundamental rights and duties. The constitution of India not only grants them equality but also empowers them. It has tried to advance women in different spheres. India has also ratified various international conventions and human rights instruments committing to secure equal rights of women. Key among them is the ratification of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1993.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS:

Fundamental Rights, among others, ensure equality before the law and equal protection of law; prohibits discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, and guarantee equality of opportunity to all citizens in matters relating to employment. Articles 14, 15, 15(3), 16, 39(a), 39(b), 39(c) and 42 of the Constitution are of specific importance in this regard.

CONSTITUTIONAL PRIVILEGES:

- (i) Equality before law for women (Article 14)
- (ii) The State not to discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them (Article 15 (i))
- (iii) The State to make any special provision in favor of women and children (Article 15(3))
- (iv) Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State (Article 16)
- (v) The State to direct its policy towards securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood (Article 39(a)); and equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Article 39(d))
- (v) The State to direct its policy towards securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood (Article 39(a)); and equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Article 39(d))
- (vi) To promote justice, on a basis of equal opportunity and to provide free legal aid by suitable legislation or scheme or in any other way to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities (Article 39 A)
- (vii) The State to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief (Article 42)

(viii) The State to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Article 46)

(ix) The State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people (Article 47)

(x) To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51(A) (e))

Special Initiatives For Women

National Commission for Women: In January 1992, the Government set-up this statutory body with a specific mandate to study and monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and legal safeguards provided for women, review the existing legislation to suggest amendments wherever necessary, etc.

(ii) Reservation for Women in Local Self –Government: The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Acts passed in 1992 by Parliament ensure one-third of the total seats for women in all elected offices in local bodies whether in rural areas or urban areas.

(iii) The National Plan of Action for the Girl Child (1991-2000): The plan of Action is to ensure survival, protection and development of the girl child with the ultimate objective of building up a better future for the girl child.

(iv) National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001: The Department of Women & Child Development in the Ministry of Human Resource Development has prepared a “National Policy for the Empowerment of Women” in the year 2001. The goal of this policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women.

HINDRANCE IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Women's empowerment means giving them the opportunity to utilise their creative selves and take decisions that impact their lives and their family's welfare. A woman will be fully able to utilise her capabilities if she is empowered in all dimensions of society that is economic, social, religious, cultural, political, scientific and international. Though women empowerment appears to be easy and successful, there are a number of obstacles and restrictions which do not allow women to be independent and self-sufficient so easily.

Some major obstacles to women empowerment are:

1) Women have to be dependent on men

They have to look after household chores and they are confined within four walls and their movements are restricted. They are deprived of freedom to make their own decisions as per their wish. They are completely helpless though they may not like to be so.

2) Violence

Men demand the money earned by the woman for spending on alcohol. Most women get beaten up and they face violence regularly. Furthermore, women are considered as object of enjoyment and cohabitation

3) Harmful traditions

Women have to follow traditions, and though she does not like it, she is under an obligation to carry on. This is coupled with the blind faith and traditions. Women are supposed to be more active than men in these activities.

4)Biological reason:

Women have to bear the biological burden of bearing children, feeding them. This puts additional strain on them inhibiting them from pursuing economic or political activities.

5)Historical legacy:

The reason why khap panchayats still hold sway despite their horrible verdicts especially degrading women is India's historical legacy. These extra constitutional institutions are a major factor inhibiting women empowerment. Customs such as sati though not prevalent now but lower versions of it are still prevalent.

6)The various laws:

Laws related to inheritance, divorce, molestation are not that favourable to women. Criminal justice system is still not women friendly. Recent measures recommended by J S Verma committee are helpful. Section 498 of IPC is another weapon for married women.

7)Early marriage:

This practice still continues in various parts of India and it is a major threat to women empowerment as this may even prevent girls from carrying on their education.

NEED FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Equality is something that humans naturally tend to crave. Wherever there is a weaker section of society, he/she/they need empowerment. Especially women because this sector is a major part of the society and yet so unempowered in so many places. Women should get equal opportunities to grow, learn and add to the society in whatever way they feel happy with.

Women need to get empowered on every stage of life because they are being discriminated on several stages. Even in this generation ,inspite of women being empowered,and knowing what's good and bad are being forced to be in limit and not allowed to do such things in which they are interested. There are many countries where women are being suppressed and asked to stay at home all the time and to serve her husband and son. People say women are so much empowered but somewhere or the other side there still some who need our help. And, implementing more empowerment can help to take them out of that situation

For a healthy and balanced society, all segments need to be treated fairly equal and hence development of women empowerment is important.The main advantage of Women Empowerment is that there will be an overall development of the society. The money that women earn does not only help them and or their family, it plays a major role in development of society. Women Empowerment also reduces poverty. Sometimes, the money earned by the male member of the family is not sufficient to meet the demands of the family. The added earnings of women helps the family to come out of [poverty](#) trap. Women empowerment helps women to stand on their own legs, become independent and also to earn for their family which grows country's economy.

CONCLUSION:

Thus, the attainment in the field of income / employment and in educational front, the scenario of women empowerment seems to be comparatively poor. The need of the hour is to identify those loopholes or limitations which are observing the realization of empowerment of women and this initiative must be started from the women

folk itself as well as more importantly policy initiative taken by the state and society. Let us take the oath that we want an egalitarian society where everybody whether men or women get the equal opportunity to express and uplift one's well being and well being of the society as whole.

Women's empowerment is not a Northern concept women all over the world, including countries in South, have been challenging and changing gender inequalities since the beginning of the history. Struggles have also been supported by many men who have been outraged at injustice against women. Women represent half the world's population and gender inequality exists in every nation on the planet. Until women are given the same opportunities that men are, entire societies will be destined to perform below their true potentials. 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.

SUGGESTIONS

Ways to Empower Women

Changes in women's mobility and social interaction

Changes in women's labour patterns

Changes in women's access to and control over resources and

Changes in women's control over Decision making

Providing education

Self employment and Self help group

Providing minimum needs like Nutrition, Health, Sanitation, Housing

Other than this society should change the mentality towards the word women

Encouraging women to develop in their fields they are good at and make a career

Awareness programmes need to be organized for creating awareness among women especially belonging to weaker sections about their rights.

Strict implementation