

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The present paper is an attempt to analyze the status of women empowerment in India using various indicators based on data 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. Gender gap exists regarding access to education and employment. Household decision making power and freedom of movement of women vary considerably with their age, education and employment status. It is found that acceptance of unequal gender norms by women are still prevailing in the society. More than half of the women believe wife beating to be justified for one reason or the other. Fewer women have final say on how to spend their earnings. Control over cash earnings increases with age, education and with place of residence. Women's exposure to media is also less relative to men. Rural women are more prone to domestic violence than that of urban women. A large gender gap exists in political participation too. The study concludes by an observation that access to education and employment are only the enabling factors to empowerment, achievement towards the goal, however, depends largely on the attitude of the people towards gender equality.

Keywords: Women, Empowerment, Issues, Problems

I. INTRODUCTION

Human Development Report, 1990 said that "The real wealth of a nation is its people. And the purpose of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives. This simple but powerful truth is too often forgotten in the pursuit of material and financial wealth". The question is in development syndrome. where is people and where is woman? Are women enjoying long, healthy and creative lives? If not, who is responsible? Women are called fair sex but always get unfair treatment. A woman's life lies between pleasure at one end and threat of violence at the other. Middle class is the enemy of middle class and that of women. These are some hard questions need to be taken care of when we discuss women empowerment. Women have generally been looked upon with contempt for centuries with various strictures inflicted upon them reducing their status to the mercy of men. They have been confined to hearth and home. But now the perspective of the society has changed and a general thinking to work for the emancipation and empowerment of women is being developed so that they could also contribute in the enhancement and welfare of the society. But their emancipation is not without challenges. Breaking the age old barriers, storming into a predominantly male bastion are something they have to fight for. Even as they are becoming aware about their rights and demands, the violence and crime against women is on the increase. History is the witness that the women had enjoyed a privileged position in ancient India. It is definitely a matter of pride that there existed a culture and them a respectful Living in the social life. However, the woman lost their status with the coming up of Brahminical traditions and with the advent of Islam, they were further pushed into the background. They were left secluded, devitalized and sheltered and these practices slowly turned into customs which have now become traditions. It was in the medieval period that the social evils like female infanticide, child marriage, purdah, Jauhar, Sati and slavery emerged. Such evils and ill- practices were imposed upon them in the name of customs. They were reduced to the mere household obligations and with this the Indian society plunged into abysmal darkness. The Britishers introduced a few measures to raise the status of women in the society and they initiated the legislation to ban the Sati and to limit the child marriage With women's participation in the struggle for India's independence, there us hered a new age and a recognizable future for them in India. Putting aside the veil they came in the forefront of the national movement for India's liberalization. Women represent half the global population and one-third of the work force, they receive only one-tenth of the global income and less than one

percent of world property, and does two-thirds of all working hours. Still, day in and day out, our conscience is shocked by news of the violation of human rights of women. A new chapter was added into the history of women's empowerment with India gaining independence. The norm of their less, unimportant of secondary role to that of men was withdrawn. When the new constitution was formed, the constitution makers took into account the Women's plight and asserted by introducing various measures in the constitution to hold their rightful place in the society. They were given freedom to participate in the social, political, economic and cultural life of the nation.

Empowerment Empowerment is the process of increasing the authority and responsibility of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes.' Empowerment is not a technocratic goal—it is a wholesale political commitment. Achieving it requires a long-term process in which all cultural, social, political and economic norms undergo fundamental change. It also requires an entirely new way of thinking—in which the stereotyping of women and men no longer limits their choices, but gives way to a new philosophy that regards all people as essential agents of change that views development as a process of enlarging the choice of both sexes, just not one. 3. Women Empowerment Women Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social educational, gender or economics strength of individuals and communities of women. The World bank says, ' Empowerment is the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes.' Empowerment means women must exercise full participation in decision-making process in all walks of life, and full participation with men in all walks of life, and fully participating with men in finding equitable and practical solutions to issues in family and in society. Apart from this empowerment includes women right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. Equal relationships between women and men in matters of sexual relations and reproduction including full respect for the integrity of the person, require mutual respect, consent and shared responsibility for sexual behaviour and its consequences.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A number of studies have been undertaken on women empowerment at the global level and in India. Some studies dealt on methodological issues, some on empirical analysis and some others on the measures and tools of empowerment. We have presented in this section first some of the important studies which were undertaken at the international level followed by other studies conducted in India. Moser (1993) focused on the interrelationship between gender and development, the formulation of gender policy and the implementation of gender planning and practices. The work of Shields (1995) provided an exploratory framework to understand and develop the concept of empowerment both from a theoretical and practical perspective with a particular focus on women's perception of the meaning of empowerment in their lives. Anand and Sen (1995) tried to develop a measure of gender inequality. Pillarisetti and Gillivray (1998) mainly emphasized on the methodology of construction, composition and determinant of GEM. Bardhan and Klasen (1999) critically examined GDI and GEM as two gender-related indicators of UNDP and argued that there are serious conceptual and empirical problems with both the measures and suggested some modifications to the measures including a revision of the earned income component of the GDI. Accordingly, based on their suggestions UNDP modified the procedure for calculating the GDI since 1999 without mentioning that it was different from previous year's procedure (Bardhan and Klasen, 2000). Similarly Dijkstra and Hanmer (2000) assessed the concept of GDI and pointed out how it suffered from several limitations. According to them GDI conflates relative gender equality with absolute levels of human development and thus gives no information on comparative gender inequality among countries. Using GDI they further constructed a Relative Status of Women (RSW) index and admitted that RSW is also not an ideal measure of gender inequality. The paper was concluded by offering a conceptual framework that provides the basis for an alternative measure of gender inequality

III. CONCEPT OF EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment refers to policies and measures designed to increase the degree of autonomy and self-determination in the lives of people and in communities in order to enable them to represent their interests in a responsible and self-determined way, acting (again) on their own authority. Empowerment refers both to the process of self-empowerment and to professional support of people, which enables them to overcome their sense of powerlessness and lack of influence, and to recognize and eventually use their resources and chances. Empowerment is a multidimensional process, which should enable women or group of women to realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life (Surekharao and Rajamanamma, 1999). It consists of greater access to

knowledge and resources, greater autonomy in decision making to enable them to have greater ability to plan their lives, or to have greater control over the circumstances that influence their lives and free from shocks imposed on them by custom, belief and practice. Generally development with justice is expected to generate the forces that lead to empowerment of various sections of population in a country and to raise their status specially in case of women. "Empowerment comes from Women's groups who seek to empower themselves through greater self-reliance. They have right to determine their own choices in life. They also seek to gain control and access to resources". Empowerment is process, which helps people to gain control of their lives through raising awareness, taking action and working in order to exercise greater control. Empowerment is the feeling that activates the psychological energy to accomplish one's goals (Indiresan, 1999). The term 'empowerment' has till-date not been very explicitly defined and it may be assumed that based upon context the term may be interpreted contextually & situational. However, in context of women, empowerment essentially refers to a feeling of awareness of one's own situation backed up with the knowledge, skills and information which could enable women to gain higher self-esteem and facilitate their role as decision makers in the current patriarchal society where women have always been subordinate to men. Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social or economic strength of individuals and communities. It often involves the empowered developing confidence in their own capacities

Objectives of the Study

1. To know the need of Women Empowerment.
2. To assess the Awareness of Women Empowerment in India.
3. To analyze the Factors influencing the Economic Empowerment of Women.
4. To study the Government Schemes For Women Empowerment.
5. To identify the Hindrances in the Path of Women Empowerment.
6. To offer useful Suggestions in the light of Findings.

IV. 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. V

Obstacles of Women Empowerment

Problems and Need of women Empowerment Since ancient times women are facing problems. Their oppression is persistent and universal and its solutions are complicated. Many prophets of women's emancipation have come and gone, but discrimination against women and violation of human values still persists. Gender issue is basically one that affects women directly or indirectly. In other words, any social evil perpetrated at the cost of women, any law or custom that reinforces and institutionalises women's inferior status in society, or any event or series of events that affects large number of women can be regarded as a gender issue. Gender issues are also those that galvanise large numbers of women into action, any such issues, which catch the attention of women's groups, and subsequently of the media.

- Gender discrimination
- Lack of Women Education
- Female infanticide
- Financial constraint
- Dowry • Low mobility
- Low need for achievement
- Marriage in same caste and child marriage
- Social status
- Family responsibility Atrocities on women ...etc. these are the main responsible factors of problems related women. Women are deprived of Decision making power, Freedom of movement, Access to Education, Access to Employment, Exposure to media.

Way to Achieve Women Empowerment

- Changes in women's mobility and social interaction.
- Providing Education that builds a self image and self confidence among them & develops their ability to think .
- Changes in women's control over resources, decision making.
- Promoting self employment through credits & training.
- Providing minimum needs like, nutrition, health, sanitation, lean, housing.
- Also the society should change the mentality of word women and encouraging women to develop herself.

The process of empowerment is multi-dimensional and it enables women to realise their full destiny and powers in all spheres of life. A woman's empowerment begins with consciousness—perceptions about herself and her rights, her capabilities and her potentials, awareness of how gender and sociocultural and political forces affect her. Political empowerment, economic development and social upliftment of women are necessary and desirable to fight myriad forms of patriarchal domination, and discrimination at every stage. In fact, women's empowerment is central to the achievement of the triple goals of equality, development and social justice. And for that political participation is needed.

Low Related Women Empowerment

- The Maternity Benefit Act 1961
- The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
- Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986
- The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987
- Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005
- Equal Remuneration Act 1976
- The Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948
- Relevant provisions of Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973
- Family Courts Act, 1984
- The Indian Succession Act, 1925
- The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act 1971
- The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929
- The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955
- The Indian Divorce Act, 1969

Scheme of Government for Women Empowerment

The Centre would implement an umbrella scheme for protection and empowerment of women at an estimated expenditure of `1,800 crore during the 12th Five Year Plan. The Union Ministry of Women and Child Development has moved a proposal for this scheme to the Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) . Protection of Women from Domestic Violence (PWDV) Act, 2005. National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW). projects of One Stop Crisis Centres (OSCCs) in urban areas. Schemes for Economics Empowerment - Swa-Shakti - Swayamsiddha - Swawlamban Programme - Support to Training and Employment Programme (STEP) Support Service - Construction of Working Women Hostels - Creches - Relief, Protection and Rehabilitation to Women in Difficult Circumstances—Swadhar, Compensation to Rape Victims. Institutional Services - State Homes - Service Homes - Working Women's Hostels - Vocational Training Centres - Regional Tailoring Centres - Craft Training Centres - District Crafts including Tailoring Centres - Women Technical Training Institute (WTTI) - Centrally Sponsored Schemes

1. Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP)
2. Training for Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM)
3. Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA)
4. Integrated Rural Development Programmes (IRDP)
5. Training for Rural Youth Self-Employment (TRYSEM) –
6. Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA)
7. Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY)
8. Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY)

9. RashtriyaMahilaKosh (RMK)
10. Swarnajayanthi Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) - The VeluguProgramme - Indira Kranti Patham

Issues and Problems faced by Women in India

There are various issues and problems which women generally face in the society in India. Some of the problems are mentioned and described below:

1. **Selective abortion and female infanticide** It is the most common practice for years in India in which abortion of female fetus is performed in the womb of mother after the fetal sex determination and sex selective abortion by the medical professionals.
2. **Sexual harassment** It is the form of sexual exploitation of a girl child at home, streets, public places, transports, offices, etc by the family members, neighbors, friends or relatives.
3. **Dowry and Bride burning** It is another problem generally faced by women of low or middle class family during or after the marriage. Parents of boys demand a lot of money from the bride's family to be rich in one time. Groom's family perform bride burning in case of lack of fulfilled dowry demand. In 2005, around 6787 dowry death cases were registered in India according to the Indian National Crime Bureau reports.
4. **Disparity in education** The level of women education is less than men still in the modern age. Female illiteracy is higher in the rural areas. Where over 63% or more women remain unlettered.
5. **Domestic violence** It is like endemic and widespread disease affects almost 70% of Indian women according to the women and child development official. It is performed by the husband, relative or other family member.
5. **Child Marriages** Early marriage of the girls by their parents in order to be escaped from dowry. It is highly practiced in the rural India.
6. **Inadequate Nutrition** Inadequate nutrition in the childhood affects women in their later life especially women belonging to the lower middle class and poor families.
7. **Low status in the family** It is the abuse or violence against women.
8. **Women are considered as inferior to men** So they are not allowed to join military services.
9. **Status of widows** Widows are considered as worthless in the Indian society. They are treated poorly and forced to wear white clothes.

V. CONCLUSION

A Vital need of the current age is to reform the social values and status of women. Society without women consider as body without heart. By providing same opportunities and importance then only gender equality maintained. With these the good values and level of family, society and ultimately nation raised. 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 most important measure of their success should be the extent to which they enable women to interpret, apply and enforce laws of their own making, incorporating their own voices, values and concerns.

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