

A comprehensive retrospective approach to Women Empowerment by study of causes, reasons and remedies and their effects felt after years of their implementation

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Abstract: Women all over the world in the words of Aristotle are treated as “an inferior type of man”. In this type of partial treatment is still seen in many forms. Since the onset of the 20th century much has been said and written about Women Empowerment all over the world. Today even when we are in the 2nd decade of the 21st century there is still much to be done. *“Women empowerment can be defined in very simple words that it is making women powerful so that they can take their own decisions regarding their lives and wellbeing in the family and society. It is empowering women to make them able to get their real rights in the society”*. Further the Government has passed many legislations in reference to women empowerment; both in pre and post-independence era, but much needs to be done. Also a crucial change regarding the status of women cannot be changed unless there is a widespread change in the society’s thinking

Key Words: Women empowerment, Law, Women reservation Bill, Society.

Introduction:

As we all know that India is a male dominated country where males are dominated in every area and females are forced to be responsible for only family care and live in the home including other many restrictions. Almost 50% of the population in India is covered by the female only so the full development of the country depends on the half population means women, who are not empowered and still restricted by many social taboos.

In such condition, we cannot say that our country would be a developed in the future without empowering its half population means women. If we want to make our country a developed country, first of all it is very necessary to empower women by the efforts of men, government, laws and women too.

Visionaries of Women Empowerment:

Socio-political rights (right to work, right to education, right to decide for themselves, etc) for the women were completely restricted by the male members of family. Some of the ill practices against women have been eliminated by the open minded and great Indian people who raise their voices for the discriminatory practices against women. Through the continuous efforts of the Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Britishers were forced to eliminate the ill practice of Sati paratha. Later, other famous social reformers of the India (Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Swami Vivekananda, etc.) also had raised their voices and worked hard for the upliftment of women in Indian society. In India, the Widow Remarriage Act, 1856 was initiated by the continuous efforts of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar in order to improve the conditions of widows in the country.

Retrospective Analysis of Women Empowerment movement:

In the normal way the status of women can be gauged by the exalted and exemplary positions held by women in any country. In India we have had Women President, Prime Ministers, Governors, Chief Ministers and various top positions in the private sector are too held by women. But still in many

statistics status of women whole seen on the rise does very less boost our confidence in getting us where we want to go quickly.

For Example the growth of enrolment of the girls in primary schools is much higher than that of boys; but their dropout rate rates are even higher. This again points out to the need for making enough plans and authorities to put proper measure to ensure that once a girl enters a school it stays in the school to at least complete her primary education. This data also speaks volumes about the need of change in the social perspective to improve women literacy rate.

The Need for Women Empowerment in Indian Perspective.

The need of women empowerment arose because of the gender discrimination and male domination in the Indian society since ancient time. Women are being suppressed by their family members and society for many reasons. They have been targeted for many types of violence and discriminatory practices by the male members in the family and society in India and other countries as well.

Wrong and old practices for the women in the society from ancient time have taken the form of well-developed customs and traditions. There is a tradition of worshipping many female goddesses in India including giving honour to the women forms in the society like mother, sister, daughter, wife and other female relatives or friends. But, it does not mean that only respecting or honouring women can fulfil the need of development in the country. It needs the empowerment of the rest half population of the country in every walk of life.

India is a famous country proving the common proverb like 'unity is diversity', where people of many religious beliefs are in the Indian society. Women have been given a special place in every religion which is working as a big curtain covering the eyes of people and help in the continuation of many ill practices (including physical and mental) against women as a norm since ages.

In the ancient Indian society, there was a custom of sati pratha, nagarvadh system, dowry system, sexual violence, domestic violence, female infanticide, pardapratha, wife burning, sexual harassment at work place, child marriage, child labour, devadashpratha, etc. including other discriminatory practices. All such type of ill practices is because of male superiority complex and patriarchal system of the society.

Legislative Initiatives taken:

In the recent years, various constitutional and legal rights have been implemented by the government of India in order to eliminate ill practices and gender discrimination against women. However, in order to solve such a big issue, the continuous effort of everyone including women is required. Modern society is being more aware about the women rights which results in the increasing number of several self-help groups, NGOs, etc. working in this direction. Women are being more open minded and breaking the societal barriers in order to achieve their rights in all dimensions even after crimes are going side by side.

Some of the acts passed by the Parliament are *Equal Remuneration Act-1976, Dowry Prohibition Act-1961, Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act-1956, Medical termination of Pregnancy Act-1971, Maternity Benefit Act-1961, Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act-1987, Prohibition of Child Marriage Act-2006, Pre-Conception & Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act-1994, Sexual Harassment of Women at Work Place (Prevention, Protection and) Act-2013, etc.* in order to empower women with legal rights.

In order to provide safety to women and reduce crime against women in India, government has passed another act Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Bill, 2015 (especially after Nirbhaya case when an accused juvenile was released). This act is the replacement earlier Indian juvenile delinquency law of 2000 (Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000) in order to reduce the juvenile age from 18 to 16 years in cases of heinous offenses. *But still the most ambitious initiative to*

provide 1/3rd reservation for women in the Parliament is still yet to be passed even though most regional and national parties support this idea.

National Policy for Women Empowerment:

This policy is unique for the fact that it is in this report that the government concedes for the first time that there is a significant male-female deferential in literacy rate. The policy aims to empower women in all arenas:

1. Creating equal Income opportunities.
2. Healthcare
3. Elimination of Dowry and Female infanticide.
4. Eradication of violence against women.
5. Review of the National Education Policy to include gender equality issues

It has also been mentioned that the women participation in public distribution system and the local self-government. Women would be involved in the planning, delivery and distribution of safe drinking water is an example. All these can be managed by women once they are properly empowered by education.

The policy laid down that every department at Centre and State level will ensure equal flow of benefits in physical and financial terms to women and affirm equal access to them on all resources. This would be achieved by reviewing all existing laws, including personal and tribal laws.

Conclusion:

Warren Buffet said *“I was so successful because I only had to compete with only one gender.”* Implying that still in many arenas women do not get what they ought to. Unless we ensure that women are a part of the mainstream we are not only robbing of the rights of women but also undermining our Human resources by keeping approximately half our population in proverbial shackles.

Further putting the complete onus of women empowerment on the government would not be justified. It can be argued that much can be done by the parliament in this area but we should not discount what already has been done by them. Still the Government needs to show the political conviction and social commitment to ensure Women reservation Bill is passed and see to it that the laws, rulings and the Supreme Court judgements are taken into cognizance when framing any new policy or law for Women Empowerment.

Instead of seeking refuge in the empty rhetoric of the government, the platitudes of politicians and reforms behind the barrier of huge files, she must resort to break the bondage of oppression. Her own struggle would provide panacea for myriad evils plaguing her today. She herself must endeavour to reconstruct the dilapidated edifice of her aspirations.

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