

Women Empowerment: Some Issues and Challenges

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Abstract: *In the 21st century women empowerment has become the most important concern. The Government of India has announced various plans to empower them. But still very often we come to know about various kinds of violence happened with them. Women empowerment suggests the particular way of life selected by them to live and utilise various resources as per their requirements. Women empowerment is considered as the process through which the backward and downtrodden women come forward. Through women empowerment, women can be empowered in various aspects i.e. economically, socially and politically. Women empowerment provides safety for women against violence. The position of women empowerment is tried to be analysed in this paper. To analyse the position of women empowerment secondary data is used. The current paper focuses on the issues & challenges of women empowerment. As per the available data, it was found that still in India women are not much empowered. Even after declaration of various policies by the government of India, women are much far from men. Due to gender inequality, still they are not having equal position to men. As per the study, it has been observed that to empower women, social structure should be changed, education and employment should be spread widely.*

Keywords: *gender inequality, women empowerment, employment, socio-economic status, education.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

“You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women.”

- Jawaharlal Nehru

All over the world empowerment of women has become the central issue. Around the globe 70 % are women are living in absolute poverty. It is not just that scarcity and want which define poverty for these women. It means for them that rights are denied, opportunities are curtailed and voices are silenced.

Empowerment is a concept which is multi-dimensional and multi-layered. In the process of women empowerment, women are not only having a greater control over financial resources like money and access to money but also a greater control over decision making. As per the country report of the Indian Government, Empowerment means moving to a position of power from that of enforced powerlessness.

Empowerment is rightly defined as “the process by which the powerless gain greater control over the circumstances of their lives.” For a complete social development empowerment of women- social, economic is an unavoidable process. For the economic growth and development of any society, it is necessary to identify women’s capabilities and to empower them.

Women’s rights and issues have always been a subject of serious concern for academicians and policy makers. The role of women has changed in the global society. She is not only a house wife now. She has become one of the earning members of the home. And therefore she needs a grave attention. It is found that still in India gender inequality is there in the society.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

- B.V.L.A. Manga observed that Amartya Sen has observed that in India there are 32 million missing women. Amartya Sen believes ‘gender inequality’ and declining sex ratio increased manifold violence against women.
- D. Padmavathi focused that Women Empowerment must take to the liberation of men from the false value systems and ideologies of oppression. Gender inequality is not purely a matter of familiar relationship. In fact it is an aspect of all spheres of life.
- N. Sreerama Murty observed that formation of SHGs for urban unemployed poor women would avoid the vagaries of money lenders and provide access of credit.
- P. Sree Suddha feels that Women’s rights and issues have always been a subject of serious concern for academicians and policy makers. Horizons have widened for women and she has started entering the domains which were considered to be dominated by men.

- N. Subba Rao and U. Gowrilakshmi have focused on the Indian Constitution. It provides equal rights and opportunities for men and women. It makes provisions to improve the status of women in society.
- J. Sheela observed that antenatal care is significant for motherhood. It is considered to be the direct relationship between health of the mother and the new born baby from the rural maternal health care indicators from selected states of India. It is observed that U.P. is with low provisions of services while Kerala is a state known for superior maternal case.
- R.U.L.N. Ratnakara Rao and V. Krishna Murthy observed that because of poverty, illiteracy and improper medical availability, especially in rural areas women’s overall health status is very critical.
- G. Jaya Lakshmi focused on domestic violence. Domestic violence is not just hitting or fighting an occasional argument. The author lists forms of domestic violence.

2.1.OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To know the importance of Women Empowerment.
- To examine the awareness of Women Empowerment in India.
- To analyse the factors which influence the Economic Empowerment of Women.
- To give a brief picture of programmes taken to improve status of women by Indian and state governments.
- Enumerating important observations regarding schemes and programmes to enhance women empowerment in the country.
- To indicate the obstacles of women empowerment.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This paper is an attempt to analyse the empowerment of women in India. According to the need of this study, the data in this paper is purely taken from secondary sources.

3.1.PRESENT SITUATION OF WOMEN:

Most of the Indian women belong to the traditional and religiously orthodox families. The 73rd and 74th amendments (1993) were intended for reservation of seats for women in panchayats and municipalities. They began a new era of women participation in the decision making in municipalities and panchayats. However, still the reality is that though women are given reservation at the local bodies, at most places the real power remains in the hands of their husbands. Additionally government machinery often interferes in their decision making. Women equality and empowerment is still a thought or vision which has a long way to go. Men dominated society will not easily accept gender equality. It is very important to educate women and train them. Women leaders should be given more and more power so that they can bring about a change.

Crime against Women:

Crime Head	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Assault on women with intent to outrage her Modesty	40413	38711	40613	42968	45351	70739	82235	82422	85332	87924	90039	89292
Kidnapping & Abduction : Total	22939	25741	29795	35565	38262	51881	57311	82999	66544	68735	75333	73844
Rape	21467	21397	22172	24206	24923	33707	36735	34651	39068	33658	33977	32260
Insult to the Modesty of Women	12214	11009	9961	8570	9173	12589	9735	8685	7356	7652	7035	7169
Immoral Traffic (P) Act	2660	2474	2499	2435	2563	2579	2070	3038	3189	2278	2089	1845
Indecent Representation of Women (P) Act	1025	845	895	453	141	362	47	40	39	28	22	23
Cruelty by Husband or his Relatives	81344	89546	94041	99135	106527	118866	122877	113403	110434	107458	104165	126575
Dowry Prohibition Act	5555	5650	5182	6619	9038	10709	10050	9984	9683	10375	13275	13674
Dowry Deaths	8172	8383	8391	8618	8233	8083	8455	7634	7628	7838	7277	7162
Importation of Girls from Foreign Country	67	48	36	80	59	31	13	6	7	5	9	3
Attempt to commit Rape							4234	4437	5732	4372	4157	4038

Abetment of Suicide of Women							3734	4085	4485	5467	5266	5088
Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act							426	468	437	639	580	554
Total Crime Against Women	195857	203804	213585	228650	244270	309546	337922	351852	339934	336429	343224	361527

Source: data.gov.in & ncrb.gov.in

As shown in the above table different kinds of crimes have been happened against women in India every year and the total number of crime against women have been increased constantly. The data also depicts that still in India women are not safe and could not live their lives independently. They are unable to take their own decisions regarding their lives.

3.2. NEED OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:

Women occupy an important place in the socio-economic fabric of the society. They constitute one half of the segment of pluralism in India. According to 2001 census, women form over 48.2 % against a total population of 1027 million of whom 51% live in rural area. More than 73% of rural women belong to small and marginal farmers and 27% live in below the poverty line. Despite their vast numerical strength, women occupy a marginalized position in society because of several socio-economic constraints. The overall female-male ratio for all ages rose slightly from the 1991 figures of 927/1000 to 944/1000 in 2016. Although women constitute 50% of India’s population, perform two-thirds of the work and produce 50% of the food commodities consumed by the country, they earn only one-third of the remuneration and 10 % of the property or wealth of the country. Empowerment is an active, multi-dimensional process that enables women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life. Women have to empower themselves. This means that they have to understand the causes of the existing inequality of women in all sectors-economic, social, political, legal and educational and take the initiative to change their status.

3.3. STATUS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:

The Government of India focused on the Empowerment of Women in the Ninth Five Years Plan (1997-2002). It also declared 2001 as the year of ‘Women’s Empowerment’. Our constitution has guaranteed equality before law and equal opportunities for men and women as fundamental rights. It has been accepted that for development, women contribution is inevitable. Many programmes are launched to empower women not only socially and economically but also politically.

3.4. HINDRANCES OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:

The following problems are considered as obstacles which women are still facing.

- Gender discrimination
- Lack of education
- Female infanticide
- Lack of awareness for achievements
- Social status
- Dowry
- Financial crisis
- Family responsibility
- Child marriage
- Caste barriers
- Low mobility
- Low ability to bear risk
- Atrocities on women

3.5. GOVERNMENT SCHEMES FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:

The Government of India in order to give a fillip to empower women socially, economically and politically, it has launched many programmes like

- Rashtriya Mahila Kosh
- Indira Mahila Yojna
- Mahila Samridhhi Yojna

- Mahila Samakhya
- Women Entrepreneur Development Programme
- Swa-Shakti Group
- Hostels for Working Women
- Dhanalakshmi Yojna
- Ujjwala
- Indira Mahila Kendra
- Indira Priyadarshini Yojna
- Prime Minister's Rojgar Yojna
- Women's Development Corporation Scheme
- State Bank of India's Shree Shakhi Scheme
- SIDBI's Mahila Udyam Nidhi
- Different NGO's Credit Schemes

3.6. CHALLENGES:

India is at 93rd in the 174 countries in gender empowerment. It had only 8.01 % percent women in the last parliament. The proportion of administrators and managers is only 2.3 %. While the professional and technical workers are only 20.5 %. During all stages of her life women suffers injustice and discrimination on gender basis. There are so many challenges that women are still facing. Some of them are as follow:

- Domestic violence: It is still wide spread and is also associated with dowry.
- Social injustice: A larger number of urban and sub-urban Indian women are still crying for social justice.
- Poverty: Poverty is the greatest threat in front of the world. Several plans are made to eradicate the poverty at national as well as international level. It is considered the biggest obstacle in eradicating illiteracy.
- Household inequality: The role and responsibilities of women has been increased now a days as they shows the financial responsibilities also.
- Professional inequality: The increase in gender disparity in wages is also quite marked as it results from the employment of women in different and lower paying activities. They are exploited at various levels.
- Education: Still in India in education, especially in higher education, there is a severe gap between male and female, which highlights the gender biased society.
- Health & Safety: It is very necessary for a woman to be physically healthy so that she is able to take challenges of equality. However, the condition is not quite satisfactory and most women are lacking in it especially in the rural areas. They do not have proper access to basic health resources and have inadequate counselling. And the result is an obvious increasing risk of unwanted and early pregnancies, HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases.

3.7. CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA:

- Equality of all persons before law (Article 14)
- Not to discriminate on the grounds of sex, religion, caste, race or place of birth (Article 15(I))
- However, women and children can be benefited with special provisions (Article 15(3))
- Equal opportunities to be given to all citizens for employment or appointment to any office under the state (Article 16)
- It is to be secured that for livelihood men and women get equal rights (Article 39(a))
- Equal pay equal work (Article 39 (d))
- Maternity relief (Article 42)
- Reservation for women in election of local bodies like Panchayats and Municipalities (article 343(d) and 343 (T))

4. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

- After independence, many changes have been done, especially for women, but still there are some spheres where women need to be empowered.
- Despite over 50 years of independence, the literacy level is low in India, especially in case of women.
- There are several government programmes implemented to develop and empower the women. But still a greater number of them have been deprived and subjected to exploitation.
- There are many NGOs activated to empower women but many women are not aware with these.

- The women's struggle for equality and freedom and undesirable social customs and traditions must take a leap forward for empowering women.
- By education they can be aware for their health and safety.

5. SUGGESTIONS:

- To empower the women, it is very necessary to give priority to the women's education because it is the basic problem in India.
- Awareness programmes should be organized to bring awareness among women about their rights.
- Equal work equal wages policy should be applied to elevate the status of women in the society.
- All government programmes and constitutional Acts should be implemented strictly.
- Total attitudinal change needs to be there in the country toward the education. There should be no discrimination in the girl child's education by parents.
- The mind-set of people needs to be altered.
- Non-government activity should be promoted.

6. CONCLUSION:

Swami Vivekanand had said, "That country and that nation which doesn't respect women will never become great now and nor will ever in future." And to make India a great nation, we must work towards giving women their much deserved rights and status. There is a need for changing the mind-set of men dominated society so as to give equal rights as enshrined in the constitution. Special attention should be given to women. Additionally employment opportunities should be increased with the help of special financial intermediaries. Economic exchange among women entrepreneurs should be increased.

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