



Government Policies for Women Empowerment: An unfinished tale of Development

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Abstract: *Thou, women in today's world have leaped and jumped in terms of their all-round development, but still the inferior status to men continues horrendous at the global level; India isn't out of the side of this phenomenon. Despite the government efforts to bring the women into the main stream through education opportunity and reducing disparities, India experiences intensification of violence against women and girls. The paper would discuss the government policies and programs that are initiated to empower the women in various spheres of social-economic and political life. The researcher's aim is to explore and analyze the consequences that have shaped due to the programs and policies of the government, as well as, to provide suggestions that may help in promoting women altogether in the changing world.*

The paper would trace down in the history of post-independent about the policies that are implemented by the union and the state government of India, and at the same time would also study the impact on the ground. Broadly, it has been found that to a large extent, the initiated programs had a positive impact on the life of women, but contrary to it, there have been feverish consequences and due to negligence in the deployment, there has been a trivial impact on the women's empowerment. Thus, women empowerment needs to be seen as a holistic outcome of processes of socio-political and economical aspects that combine together to harness gender equality, which determine the equal power and opportunity to assess in the field of education, healthcare, economic participation and personal development.

Key Words: *Empowerment, Program & Policy, Socio-economy, Holistic, Gender equality.*

1. INTRODUCTION :

Throughout the history of the world, it was women who continue to come together to break the barriers of male chauvinism, and this they did by offering support to each other. Such groups created resilience, and fostered opportunities for women. The Indian women also embarked upon during the national movement to garner their rights within the organizations as well as in the rule of law. Eventually, the national movement was able to develop consciousness among a vast section of the women to urge for gender equality. That is why, the Indian Constitution enshrined gender equality. Thereby, plans and programs were drawn with the sole aim to empower women in different spheres. But the legitimate question is, how much of these plans are implemented, and even if implemented then what is the outcome?

Definitely, it becomes impossible to approach the challenge without having a clear understanding of empowerment. Obviously, empowerment isn't something that can simply be given, it is an activity of gaining control. And when it comes to women empowerment, it is all about changing existing power relations. In a nutshell, it is about expanding women's power over their own lives. Thereby, it can be said that women empowerment is the progression of women, that includes the girl child also to accept and include them in decision-making process. In other words, providing equal opportunities for growth as well development in society, therefore, ousting any kind of gender biasness. Article 15(3) of the Indian Constitution mentions the welfare of women and children and states that "Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children." Another amendment in the



Constitution called to be 108th Constitutional Amendment Bill, commonly known to be Women's Reservation Bill, turned the table in favor of women to look forward in politics without any competition with their male opponent.

In these contexts, the government and its policies play a significant role, as together both can transform the lifestyle of women. At the same time, the movement of women is equally important, as it pressurizes the government to be more sensitive towards women's issues and their deployment. The amalgamation of both has served significantly and the Indian governments have initiated various schemes and programs for the upliftment of women's condition in different ways. Since the establishment of the Constituent Assembly, women issues remained one of the most oriented besides others. In fact, the UN Secretary-General, Mr. Antonio Guterres has stated that achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls is the unfinished business of our time, and the greatest human rights challenge in our world.

A Glance on the National Policy for the Women's Empowerment- Thou, Constituent Assembly tried every milestone to include women issue into the Constitution of India, in fact, the women and their issues always remain formidable for the members of constituent assembly. But the real thrust was given toward women empowerment from the fifth Five Year Plan, i.e. 1974 onward, there has been a shift in the approach foreseen when the government shifted from welfare to development.

- Later, in 1990, emphasis was given to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women when the National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament.
- Later, in the same decade 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) to the Constitution of India paved the way for reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women; though reservation in state assembly and Parliament still awaited.
- The 22nd century has remained a golden time period for women in thriving schemes and their implementation, but at the same time the last two decades would also be remembered for the vulnerable and heinous crimes against women and girl children. Second decade of 22nd century witnessed a series of schemes for the women empowerment which are as follows-
 - In 2012, Nirbhaya Scheme was enforced to facilitate safety and security for women at various levels; to ensure strict privacy and confidentiality of women's identity and information; and Provision for real-time intervention as far as possible.
 - The year 2015, laid the foundation of two very important schemes- Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and secondly One-Stop Center scheme. The first scheme was to prevent gender-biased selective elimination, ensuring survival and protection of the girl child and to ensure education of the girl child. The second scheme was to provide support and assistance to women affected by violence, to facilitate or assist in filing FIR and to assist psycho-social support and counseling to women and girls.
 - The next year i.e., 2016 observed women empowerment schemes like women Helpline and UJJAWALA Schemes. Wherein WHS was to provide toll-free 24 hours telecom service to women affected by violence, facilitate crisis and non-crisis intervention, and to provide information about the appropriate support services, government schemes, and a program available to the women affected by violence. While UJJAWALA was for the prevention of women and children's trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation, and to provide rehabilitation service by providing basic amenities.
 - Mahila Shakti Kendra (MSK) came into existence in 2017 to create an environment for women where they could access healthcare, education, employment etc. at the block and district level.
 - In 2018, the government initiated SWADHAR Greh with sole motive to cater primary needs like shelter, food, clothing, medical treatment and care for women and to provide women with legal aid and guidance.
 - The other crucial constitutional status given to women was the reservation of thirty-three percent of the seats in Panchayat Raj institutions.

These are a few samples of the schemes initiated by the government of India to boost the women's confidence as well as to guide them for their subtle changes. Apart from the schemes, the women's movement and a wide-spread network of NGOs also made their contribution to inspire the empowerment of women. However, despite the initiated schemes, it has been stated into Shram shakti report, (1988)- there still foreseen a wide gap between the goals enunciated in the Constitution, legislation, policies, plans, programs on one hand and the reality of the status of women in India is on other side of the coin.



Goal and Objectives of the initiated Policies by Government of India- The main focus of the mentioned policies is to empower the women, earnestly while this would lead women toward advancement and development in all spheres of life i.e., Political, Social, cultural and most importantly in economic sphere. The policies would also strengthen legal systems to eliminate all forms of discrimination and evil practices that are against women. The policies will definitely help in imparting equal access of quality education, employment, health and safety measures, security in all sphere i.e., from domestic violence to sexual and physical harassment at their working place etc. Indeed, the policies regulated to promote and safeguard women will enhance worth some because of the legal judicial system, empower them in decision making,

For instance, initiative taken by the judiciary system along with participation of community and religious leaders, the policies would be encouraged upon to bring changes in personal law (late has been promoted by the government in the case of Shariyat Kanoon or Right in the Property for women of their parental family) has somewhat broken the shackles of patriarchal system. Elimination or reforms in such dogmatic laws will certainly slowed down the discrimination against women.

The significant criteria for the upliftment of women are equality in power sharing and active participation in decision making. Therefore, all measures are required to be taken to guarantee full participation in decision making at every level, i.e., the legislative, executive, judicial, corporate, statutory bodies etc. Further, to strengthen women's empowerment, reservations and quotas in higher legislative bodies is a must.

Indeed, the FIFTH FIVE YEAR PLAN (1974-78) laid the mosaic in the form of policy changes by bringing amendments in the Constitution and thereby, implementation of new schemes. In the process, the Government initiated an educational scheme, so that more and more girls come closer to school and skill development programs, the women merely not remain dependent on their male partner, but financially stand on their own.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

The term empowerment refers to a situation where the powerless gets an opportunity to enthrall greater control over resources. This term is associated with autonomy, power, status and agency. Prof. Seema Singh and Dr. Anita Singh (2020), while analyzing the Indian Constitution revealed about inheriting equal level of playing ground for the women in the Constitution. Seventies was the decade when feminist scholars challenged patriarchy, and urged for the women's right and gender equality.

Mokta (2014), proposes five dimensions that are Cognitive, Psychological, Economic, Political and Physical to garner empowerment. These dimensions are prescribed for the following parameters-

- Raising self-confidence in women.
- Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and child girl.
- To enforce the Constitutional and legal provisions and safeguarding rights of women.
- To establish a positive image of women in the society and further recognize their contributions in the social-political-political sphere.
- Fostering the traditions of decision-making and collective action among the women.
- To ensure women's participation in all walks of life.
- Providing information, knowledge, and skill for self-employment.

While Schuler and Hashemi (1994), were on the point that empowering women economically associated with higher levels of physically mobility, economic security, free in decision-making, legal and political awareness etc. whereas, Mabsout (2011); Yount et al., (2019); Hindin (2000); Basu and Koolwal (2005); Upadhyay et al. (2014), extended the thought of Schuler and Hashemi by linking with the self-confidence, financial confidence, attitude, toward the gender norms, participation in social groups and collective action.

On the contrary to other authors, Giriyappa (1997), focused his studies on the challenges faced in women empowerment. He analysed the women empowerment with the level of discrimination and effectiveness of decision-making by women in different rural enterprises and thereby he able to conclude that mainly female headed households were effective in decision in respect of work mobility, schooling, healthcare, employment generation and social participation in low status family. While the feminist scholar Batliwala (1993 and 2007) raised the voice in favour of women's right and gender equality to challenge patriarchy to transform women's condition. She embarks upon the rights given to women by the Indian Constitution.

Dr. Rashmi Rani Agnihotri and Dr. Malipatil, K. S. (2017), emphasis on the need for a fresh and capable environment, so that women could make right decisions in every sphere. According to them, government and private institutions are supporting women in their cause through various programs. They stressed on the need to empower



women, and to do this, essentiality was felt to do away with ill practices in the form of patriarchy and male chauvinism that exist even in the present society.

Prof. Seema and Dr. Antra. S (2000), expressed the decade of Nineties to be an impertinent phase for women empowerment throughout the world as most of the world conference highlighted towards seizing the opportunities, more concern was given on the issues like reproductive and sexual rights, violence against women and gender inequality.

3. METHODOLOGY:

The study is based on the secondary data source which reveals necessary information about the women Empowerment Schemes that has been promoted and implemented by the state and union government of India. The resources collected from various books, journals, articles, internet and the government gazette were used for the related topic. The article mainly comprises the condition of women and further focuses on the government policies that play vital role in the upliftment of the women's statutory from the dismal condition to cheerful hopes.

The researcher intensified his study around government policies that includes education, social practices, role of the politics and women's participation, and participation of women in decision making decisive bodies that include social, political and administrative.

4. RESULTS:

Despite the government and constitutional efforts to empower women in all walks of life and among all the strata through new laws and policies, and rigorously implementation of welfare schemes to uplift women, yet something is missing out, and that reveals about the drastic condition in which women are forced to live. The researcher examines and focuses on the design and implementation of those policies that determine and promote a future work to empower women. The paper focuses on six key features where government policies can make a great impact upon the lives and dignity of the women.

- Equal pay for the work of equal value.
- Prevention and elimination of all sought of violence and harassment at the workplace as well as within the house.
- Promoting women's equal representation in leadership, whether those be in politics, society or in administration.
- Allocation of more budget in the works that are related to the subjects of women welfare.
- To create a harmonious work culture for men and women both, exploitation should be discouraged.
- Encouraging women's education and employment must be encouraged.

Thou, the government efforts are rigorous as well in the right direction, but undoubtedly more efforts are required to uplift the condition of women and nourish the half section of the world to feel proud of themselves.

The past few years where India maintained a stable ranking (112), but the gap is larger which is yet to be bridged. India is facing decline in wage equality for similar work, the scenario has become more haunting especially in the Post COVID-19, India continues to rank third lowest in the world on the issue of health and survival, out of the 153 countries, India is only the country where economic gender is larger than compare to political gender gap. But contrary to these issues, India also witnesses some records of success, especially it has succeeded in closing the education gender gap. In fact, due to the government policies and schemes, more and more girl students are enrolling themselves despite the odd circumstances.

5. CONCLUSION :

Certainly, women empowerment is to empower the women to make their own decisions for their personal freedom; to make them independent in all aspects of life i.e., from mind, thoughts, rights, decisions etc. by crossing over the obstacles imposed by the society and family. In fact, women's empowerment is essential for the bright future of the family, society and all countries.

Women and girls represent half of the world's population, and therefore they are half of its potential and user of the resources as well as producer. It means that gender equality is an essential part to achieve peaceful societies. Further, it is equally true that empowering women spurs productivity and economic growth of a country or society. Therefore, it is of great importance to end the multiple forms of gender discrimination and secure quality education and health, economic resources and participation in the political arena for both women and men. Perhaps, equal opportunity to access employment and playing a decisive role in decision making will fulfill them with confidence to stand for their rights and will definitely go ahead to struggle against all kinds of male chauvinism and patriarchal values that exist in society.



Finally, we can conclude that women's role in the national economy is a must for the development of the economy, and for this women empowerment in all fields is essential. A positive attitude from government, society and family members will surely garner the efficiency of women in all paths of life. Efforts to educate women will definitely influence the women's role and participation in the development of India, and will make them more powerful and independent.

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