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## WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH LIBRARIES: SOME PERCEPTIONS

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### ABSTRACT:

*Privilege of access to Information is the turn key of any development. As the hub of information, Libraries play a vital role in empowering women which in turn leads to societal development. Women empowerment is very much necessary to make them self -reliable, economically independent, build positive self -esteem, etc. With the advent of ICT, the society has been changing drastically and to cope up with the paradigm shift women need to be empowered together with the man in order to create a gender equal society where there would not be any biasness. Various International and National initiatives have been undertaken for empowering women in various fields.*



**KEYWORDS:** Women empowerment, Libraries, National & International Initiatives in women empowerment.

### INTRODUCTION

Library is a social institution. Library keeps the society empower and sustainable. Libraries are one of the most important nodal agencies to the community for collecting, preserving, transmitting and securing the widest and most effective use of the recorded knowledge of the society since the dawn of civilization. Library is a channel of communication and librarian is the mediator of communication. To quote S.R. Ranganathan "Librarianship is a noble profession. A librarian derives his joy by seeing the dawn of joy in the face of the

readers who were helped in their search for the right information at the right time". However, with the changing dimension of society there has a paradigm shift of library profession ( i.e. from traditional custodian of recorded knowledge to the knowledge manager in the digital platform). As every profession has both male and female likewise library profession also has male as well as female employees. The librarianship for women seems to be suitable in every aspect. With the advancement of ICT, the information revolution taking place has provided both opportunities as well as challenges to women. Empowerment of women in every

aspect is very much necessary in the present day to acquaint themselves with the changing dimensions of the society and also to face any problems and make themselves self reliable. In India, Government implements various schemes and polices to empower the women in different sector. UGC also provide various guideline to grow up the women in educational field, as education is the turnkey of any development.

### WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:

Women empowerment is an attempt to bridge gender disparity in the developing world. The concept of Women Empowerment was generated from the Third World Countries

and introduced at the International Women's Conference in 1985 at Nairobi, defines it as- "Redistribution of social power and control of resources in favour of women empowerment can be achieved only by thrusting a quantitative and qualitative change, particularly in the field of Education, Health and Employment."

The Routledge International Encyclopedia of Women, defines Empowerment is a process that aims at creating the condition for the self determination of a particular people or group. It is invoked to signify the potential for changes and has been successfully as a means to mobilize people to action. Women Empowerment includes Women awareness of their rights, self-confidence, to have a control over their lives both at home and outside and their ability to bring a change in the society. Empowerment has many elements which depends upon and relate to each others in economic, social, political and personal. (Mariam Sohail, 2014).

The Dictionary of Social Work defines empowerment as the theory concerned with how people may gain effective control over their lives so as to achieve their interests as a group. Women first entered the once male dominated profession in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In India, Ms. Anandibai Prabhudesai was the first woman to be credited as the Superintendent at the children's library in Baroda in the 1930s. The social stereotype clearly reflected that nursing, teaching, social work and later librarianship have been considered as noble professions for women. Some factors such as parental background, career prospects, personal interest, employment prospects, better working environment, job security, etc. motivates women towards the library profession.

The ratio of female and male library profession is 80:20. In the developing countries like India the working women faces various challenges in her life. Working women not only performs official duties, she also manages her household activities. The seven lamps of conduct that are must for librarianship are-

- Impersonal book selection
- Service before self
- Sympathetic behaviour
- Tact
- Industry
- Scholarship

Women are bestowed with the qualities like patience, sympathetic, perseverance, service before self etc. for which the profession of librarianship is most suitable for women. Empowerment is a multi-dimensional process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, decision-making power, control and to transformative action which enable to realize their full identity.

The social programmes like awareness campaigns related to health, hygiene, Sanitation, food and nutrition, education, etc. organised by the library proves to be more effective in women empowerment followed by technological programmes like digital literacy, soft skill, workshops on automation, etc.

### **NEED OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:**

According to Manu Smriti, She is protected by father in her childhood, by husband in adulthood and by son in her old age. Some needs of women empowerment includes:

- To strengthen women
- To make self reliable
- To assist in selection of independent right
- To build up positive self-esteem
- To foster decision making and action
- To make economically independent
- To develop the ability to think critically
- To ensure equal participation in the process of bringing societal change
- To encourage group activities which will bring unity and in turn help in the development of society
- To develop the psychological or behavioural change

- To cope up with the new developments of ICT through training of technical skills.

### ROLE OF LIBRARY IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT :

- **Utilisation of library:** From the past to the present ,the statistics of growth of literacy rate is increasing by decades. Now most of the women are educated and literate. This transition leads to the mere utilisation of resources that are available in the library.
- **Unbiased education:** The main motive of a library is to provide “right education to the right user at the right time”. There is no gender discrimination in libraries while providing knowledge to them which strengthens women to attain their intellectual right.
- **Self -help and self-independent:** Libraries provide all sorts of information to common people basically those belonging to the rural areas. These informations and guidelines can assist them to invent or to create new innovations for their livelihood as well as help in societal development.
- **Provide special space for women:** In some libraries there are specialized collections related to the domain of womens studies, so that user can access the required information according to their convenience and can utilise that section for their advantage.
- **Economic Expansion:** Basically Public Libraries proffer various services ,techniques and methods to economical and social pathology
- **Extension services:** Another service initialised by libraries (mainly public libraries) is the extension service,whose target audience are the common people.Some of the forms of ExtensionServices include:
  - Awareness Programmes: These programmes help in making common people aware of the ongoing processes.Most of the inhabitants of remote area are not aware of the current library services and recent developments of IT and its application in different fields of library operation. Moreover, library renders awareness campaign on subjects like Current issues, special Government schemes for Rural people, new innovations, etc. Library further generate information specially for the awareness of women-centric projects regarding the health, hygiene and sanitation issues, food & nutrition, education etc.
  - Community Skill development programme:It includes workshops, digital literacy, soft skills, entrepreneurship, etc. Such skill development programmes are helpful for rural women to cope up with the changing dimension of the society and help to acquaint with the technological aspects.
- **Informal and Lifelong Learning Education:** As most of the women are home makers, they have tremendous personal as well as social pressure for which they might not be able to complete their formal education. Public Libraries provide lifelong learning or informal education which helps to fulfil their dream of being educated and which in turn helps in societal development. There is no deadline and no burden for gaining new thoughts, ideas and knowledge.

### NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES FOR EMPOWERING WOMEN:

From ancient past to present, women have played the key role in the development of society.

Women have contributed in the development of various sectors like agriculture, health, education, science and technology, etc. Hence improvement of women’s status in respect to social, economic, and political condition is very much essential for the achievement of sustainable development. Many international and national organizations are working for the empowerment of women around the world such as-

- Global Information Internship Programme (GIIP) of United States provides support to civil society group by promoting their access to information technology resources. In the GIIP, women’s empowerment working group strives to empower women by providing IT development services to other women’s empowerment organizations. Such type of work strengthens the networks between women around the globe. They are committed to improve various aspects like access to health services, economic empowerment, social equality, autonomy and violence against women of all kinds, land rights and political representation through informational technology, content research, software skills, computer hardware installation and networking.

- IFLA's sustainable development goal 5 is the gender equality. Goal 5 is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Libraries support gender equality. It provides safe meeting spaces, programmes for women and girls on rights and health, and ICT and literacy programmes support women in developing their entrepreneurial skills.
- Uganda - The National Library of Uganda offers training on ICT for female farmers, providing access in local languages to weather forecasts, crop prices, and even support to set up online markets. Such type of programmes help in the upliftment of economic condition of women through technology skills.
- Nepal - READ's (Rural Education and Development) Information and Resource Centre's Capacity-building initiative helps women and girls in attainment of insights and take control of their own lives. The women empowerment programme includes workshops and seminars on gender equality, women's rights, health, violence against women and various other issues of the day-to-day life. The library reassures women to sign on for the women's group like the SHG, which meets once a month in a separate section of the library where its members freely discuss on various topics. Practical courses are also given to women like literacy and numeracy, English language, ICT, entrepreneurship skills and hands on classes in making goods for sale. READ Centres across the country also offer training programmes on life skills, health, digital literacy and technology.
- The launch of *Women Watch*, an internet gateway on the advancement and empowerment of women by UN on the International Women's Day, March 8 1997 is a laudable initiative in this regard. This site provides up-to-date information regarding the initiatives taken by UN in upliftment of women's status in the entire world.
- The Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Women and Child Development, had circulated the National Policy for empowerment of women 2001 for implementation. The goal of this policy was to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women encouraging active participation of all stakeholders for achieving its goals.

Former President of India, Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil, gave away Stree Shakti Puraskar for the year 2008 and 2009 to eminent personalities drawn from diverse fields and launched the National Mission for Empowerment of Women on the occasion of International women's day on 8<sup>th</sup> of March 2010.

### CONCLUSION:

Library and society is interlinked with each other. Libraries can be the catalyst agent in the development of society as well as the women empowerment. Libraries provide various kinds of information sources and services to enhance the credibility women empowerment. Libraries also play a vital role in decision making process by enriching women with proper information for taking right decision at right time. Informal education and training of women is considered an important contrivance for empowering women. Libraries can also create awareness about the new global trends and communications development to make them aware about the happenings around the world. In a male dominating society, man is the primary householder and source of income of a family. In the present day context this stereotype concept has been broken through women empowerment. "A women becoming financially independent doesn't equate to 'I don't need a man'. It just means she brings more to the table. Instead of being a financial burden, she becomes a value addition. Her success does not take away from his success. The pie they share just becomes bigger."- Arese Ugwu.

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