



“ WOMEN EMPOWERMENT OF INDIA: SOME ISSUES ”

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ABSTRACT

Women empowerment embraces the whole series of individual, social, economic, political and health empowerment. Women need to be empowered since she is depowered. Even though Vedas and purana's regard women as Goddess 'SAKTHI', She is made to sacrifice her dreams and wishes for the sake of others in the family. Right from birth girl child is not treated equally with boy and gender disparity exists.

Women empowerment is a debatable subject. At earlier time they were getting equal status with men. But they had faced some difficulties during post-Vedic and epic ages. Many a time they were treated as slave. From early twenty century (national movement) their statuses have been changed slowly and gradually. In this regard, we may mention the name of the British people. After then, independence of India, the constitutional makers and national leaders strongly demand equal social position of women with men. Today we have seen the women occupied the respectable positions in all walks of the fields. Yet, they have not absolutely free some discrimination and harassment of the society. A few number of women have been able to establish their potentialities. Therefore, each and every should be careful to promote the women statuses.

KEYWORDS: Empowerment, Micro-finance, Dowry, Association, Entrepreneurs.

I. INTRODUCTION:-

The greatest challenges facing by the world is the continuing poverty and deprivation of a large section of its population. In most of the developing countries the more emphasis is laid on the development of women and their active participation in Self-Help Groups. It is also widely recognized that apart from managing house hold, bearing children, rural women bring income with productive activities ranging from traditional work in the fields of factories or running small and petty business. They have also proven that they can be better entrepreneurs and development managers in any kind of human development activities. Therefore, it is important and utmost necessary to make rural women empowerment in taking decisions to enable them to be in the central part of any human development process. The empowerment of women also considered as an active process enabling women to realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life.

Micro-finance through Self-Help Groups (SHGs) is an important intervention that has enabled millions of poor families to overcome the vicious circle of poverty caused by moneylenders. At the same time it is also believed that the process of change has to be owned by people themselves. This process of

social mobilization is well facilitated through formation of Self-Help groups (SHGs) among the poor. It enables them to come together on a platform for organizing micro credit and also working together on various social and economical issues of priority to them. Therefore, it is important and utmost necessary to make rural women empowerment in taking decisions to enable them to be in the central part of any human development.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:-

The following are the objectives of the present study

1. To know the meaning of Women Empowerment.
2. To study the Need of Women Empowerment.
3. To Examine the Performance of Women Empowerment Programs in India.
4. To know the Indicators of Women Empowerment.
5. To study the Women's Empowerment Opportunities in India.

III. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY:-

The data and information used in this paper is from secondary data, which has been collected from various books, Government reports, Annual reports of NABARD, Journals and Magazines, Newspapers and Various Websites.

IV. MEANING OF EMPOWERMENT:-

The concept of empowerment has been the subject of much intellectual discourse and analysis empowerment is defined as the process by which women take control and ownership of their lives through expansion of their choices. The core elements of empowerment have defined as agency awareness of gendered power structure, self-esteem and self-confidence, with the above brief conceptual understanding of empowerment, what strategies can be used effectively to empower women. In many developing countries one strategy which has been found to be promising is participatory institution building in the Self-Help Groups (SHGs) often coupled with savings and micro credit loans. A closer look at the impact of these schemes on the empowerment of women reveals mixed picture with positive aspects and some limitations.

Empowerment refers to processing the spiritual, political, social or economic strength of individuals and communities. It often involves the empowered developing and confidence in their own capacities. In conclusion, we see empowerment as a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fasters power in people for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society by acting on issues that they define as important.

V. WOMEN IN INDIA:-

Now the women in India enjoy a unique status of equality with the men as per constitutional and legal provision. But the Indian women have come a long way to achieve the present positions. First, gender inequality in India can be traced back to the historic days of Mahabharata when Draupadi was put on the dice by her husband as a commodity. History is a witness that women was made to dance both in private and public places to please the man. Secondly, in Indian society, a female was always dependent on male members of the family even last few years ago. Thirdly, a female was not allow to speak with loud voice in the presence of elder members of her in laws In the family, every faults had gone to her and responsible. Forth, as a widow her dependence on a male members of the family still more increase. In many social activities she is not permitted to mix with other members of the family. Other hand, she has very little share in political, social and economic life of the society.

The early twenty century, it was rise of the National Movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi who was in favor of removing all the disabilities of women. At the same time, Raja Ram Mohan Rai, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and various other social reformers laid stress on women's education, prevention of child marriage, withdrawals of evil practice of sati, removal of polygamy etc. The National Movement and

various reform movements paved the way for their liberations from the social evils and religious taboos. In this context, we may write about the Act of Sati (abolish) 1829, Hindu Widow Remarriage Act' 1856, the Child Restriction Act, 1929, Women Property Right Act, 1937 etc.

After independence of India, the constitution makers and the national leaders recognized the equal social position of women with men. The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 has determined the age for marriage, provided for monogamy and guardianship of the mother and permitted the dissolution of marriage under specific circumstances. Under the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956, an unmarried women, widow or divorce of sound mind can also take child in adoption. Similarly, the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 says that any person who gives, takes, or abets the giving or taking of dowry shall be punished with imprisonment, which may extend to six months or fine up to Rs.5000/ or with both. The Constitution of India guarantees equality of sexes and in fact grants special favors to women.

VI. EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN INDIA:-

The concept of empowerment flows from the power. It is vesting where it does not exist or exist inadequately. Empowerment of women would mean equipping women to be economically independent, self-reliant, have positive esteem to enable them to face any difficult situation and they should be able to participate in development activities. The empowered women should be able to participate in the process of decision making. In India, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD-1985) and the National Commission for Women(NCW) have been worked to safeguard the rights and legal entitlement of women. The 73rd & 74th Amendments (1993) to the constitution of India have provided some special powers to women that for reservation of seats (33%), whereas the report HRD as March 2002, shows that the legislatures with the highest percentage of women are, Sweden 42.7%, Denmark 38%, Finland 36% and Iceland 34.9%. In India "The New Panchayati Raj " is the part of the effort to empower women at least at the village level.

The government of India has ratified various international conventions and human rights instruments committing to secure equal rights to women. These are CEDAW (1993), the Mexico Plan of Action (1975), the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies (1985), the Beijing Declaration as well as the platform for Action (1995) and other such instruments. The year of 2001 was observed as the year of women's empowerment. During the year, a landmark document has been adopted, 'the National Policy for the empowerment of women.' For the beneficiaries of the women, the government has been adopted different schemes and programs i.e. the National Credit Fund for Women (1993), Food and Nutrition Board (FNB), Information and Mass Education (IME) etc. The most positive development last few years has been the growing involvement of women in the Panchayati Raj institutions.

The most notable amongst these are Mrs. Protiva Devi Singh Patil, Shila Dixit, Mayawati, Sonia Gandhi, Bindu Karat, Nazma Heptulla, Indira Nuyar (pepsi-co), BJP leader Susma Soraj, railway minister Momta Benarji, 'Narmada Basao' leader Medha Patkar, EX-prime minister Indira Gandhi etc. Women are also involving in human development issues of child rearing, education, health, and gender parity. Many of them have gone into the making and marketing of a range of cottage products-pickles, tailoring, embroidery etc. The economic empowerment of women is being regarded these days as a sine-quo-non of progress for a country; hence, the issue of economic empowerment of women is of paramount importance to political thinkers, social thinkers and reformers

VII. WOMEN EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES :-

The women empowerment program is one of the earliest programs and was initiated in 1988-1989. In the beginning, village wise sanghas were formed and the focus of the program was just to get women to come together and provide them with a common platform to discuss their problem and issues and find collective solutions to them

Later, the program focus expanded to include aspects of organization, savings, leadership, good local governance, environment health, linkage building, tackling issues / problems, etc. So that there was a more

integrated and holistic approach and recognize of women became more in the family and community. SHGs and NGOs are the main integral part of women empowerment.

VIII. PROCESS OF EMPOWERMENT -

For the past several decades, national governments, nongovernmental organizations and international agencies have been aware and concerned about the status of women. Efforts have been made by these bodies to improve women's literacy, nutritional and health levels and enhance their income-earning capacity. Various strategies have been adopted to achieve these ends, with varying degrees of success. Initially it was believed that economic growth would automatically lead to improvement in the status of women. When it was realized that such improvement was not forthcoming, women were made the recipients of numerous schemes specially designed for their welfare. Even these schemes failed to bring about substantial change in the position of women as they did nothing to change the economic, political, social and cultural forces that contributed to their marginalization. In the 1980s and 1990s it was realized that improvement in the status of women (and other marginalized groups) could only be achieved through structural changes in power structures which gives them greater control over their own lives and also the world around them. This, in turn, could only be achieved through empowerment.

IX. INDICATORS OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Quantitative indicators are most often used to measure women's access to resources and the potential outcomes of women's use of resources. Typical quantitative indicators of women's access to resources are the number of girls and women in education, literacy levels, patterns of property ownership, employment outside the home, restrictions on women's movement, gender-sensitive laws, membership of civic organisations and women's levels of self-confidence. Indicators of the outcomes of women's exercise of agency often include those such as control/influence over household decisions or assets, more equitable division of household tasks, increases in the number of women voting, in public office or in leadership positions, improvements in child or maternal mortality rates, increased use of contraception and lower fertility rates, levels of violence against women, or the number of favourable decisions for women in disputes involving land claims (see Alsop and Heinsohn (2005) for a detailed set of possible indicators).

The particular research question, site and participants should guide the choice of indicators to measure women's empowerment. Appropriate indicators will depend on the domain and level of empowerment being examined. However, as socio-cultural norms are a key determinant of women's access to power, studies must collect data on social attitudes and behaviour at the community and wider social levels, as well as on women's individual characteristics and views, if they are to measure and properly understand women's empowerment (Taylor and Perezniето, 2014).. The most appropriate data-collection methods will also depend on what is being measured, but common methods include using existing data sets (e.g. national household surveys, human development indicators, or the Polity IV dataset of political regime characteristics),¹³ surveys, key informant interviews and focus group discussions (Alsop and Heinsohn, 2005).

X. WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN INDIA:-

The empowerment of marginalized women through education, advocacy of rights, and the creation of vocational opportunities is essential to the sustained growth of the Udaipur and Jodhpur regions. To read about Women's Empowerment issues in India, Interns, volunteers, and donors work with FSD to provide support for women's empowerment programs that,

1. Create village self-help groups in which women independently establish financial institutions that manage profit-making programs.
2. Help a Women's Empowerment Project that provides training for members, holds quarterly meetings, and provides vocational support.

3. Educate the public about women's issues to ensure that local women receive equal opportunities and compensation, while promoting gender sensitivity.
4. Assist an organization's Community Action for Safe Motherhood Program, which provides training and ongoing technical support to NGOs on community-based information and service for adolescents.
5. Assess the success of past women's leadership programs and make suggestions for improvements.
6. Assist projects that focus on mobilizing local women to protect natural resources by controlling farmland development, composting, and preserving water.
7. Establish workshops that introduce microenterprises to those in tribal communities; help provide skills training to increase levels of employment and reduce migration; and empower women to create their own income-generating activities.

XI. SUGGESTIONS FOR THE EFFECTIVENESS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:-

1. Involvement in women's mobility and social interaction.
2. Modification in working are and organization.
3. Participation into each and every sphere of life.
4. Utilization in recourses.
5. Support and exposure from legislative and constitutional side.
6. Suitable coordination between women empowerment and globalization.
7. Creation of convenient environment for women's at working places.
8. Social and education empowerment for women.
9. Avoidance and presentation to sexual harassment and domestic violence related issues.
10. Coordination in administrative and political reformation process.
11. Entrepreneurship application for equal participation at workplace.
12. Supportive and positive role of media about women empowerment.
13. Health related issues of girls and women.
14. Participation in endowments and ownership of assets.
15. Access to credit, inputs and extension services, training, etc.
16. Provision to employment, wages and terms of employment, and bias in division of labour and work burden.
17. Permission to household, community and state resources: particularly food, education and health.

As per the constitutional provisions, all women's should get food, water, shelter, clothing, health facilities, employment support and services for the convenient survival

*** CONCLUSION:-**

The concept of empowerment of women aims at rectifying such misperceptions and generate an environment where women will have the psychological potency to overcome the discrimination's simultaneously it is directed to transform the prejudiced norms guiding the society. The psychological domain is strengthened by physical capabilities and empowerment includes social, economic, legal and political dimensions. It is a process of transforming one's life situation by giving control over the environment external as well as internal

The main stress should be on equal work and elimination of discrimination in employment. One of the basic policy objectives should be universal education of woman, the lack of which tends to perpetuate the unequal status quo. The popular UNESCO slogan should come in handy: **educate a man and you educate an individual; educate a woman and you educate a family.**

Women Empowerment is the vital instrument to expand women's ability to have resources and to make strategic life choices. It is the process of guarding them against all forms of violence. The study is based on purely 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. It is found that acceptance of unequal gender norms by women are still prevailing in the society. The study

concludes by an observation that access to Education, Employment and Change in Social Structure are only the enabling factors to Women Empowerment.

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