



EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN INDIA: THE NEW CHALLENGES AND WAYS FORWARD

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ABSTRACT :

Women's Empowerment has been an issue of immense discussions and contemplation over the last few decades world-wide. This, as an agenda, has been on top of the lists of most government plans & programs as well. Efforts have been made on a regular basis across nations to address this issue and enhance the socio-economic status of women. However, it has been observed that most of the policies and programs view empowerment in the economic sense only working in the belief that economic self-reliance empowers women ignoring other variables like health, education, literacy etc. This article attempts to analyze the status of Women Empowerment in India and highlights the Issues and Challenges of Women Empowerment. Today the empowerment of women has become one of the most important concerns of 21st century. But practically women empowerment is still an illusion of reality. We observe in our day to day life how women become victimized by various social evils. Women Empowerment is the vital instrument to expand women's ability to have resources and to make strategic life choices. Strengthening of ladies is basically the procedure of upliftment of financial, social and political status of ladies, the customarily oppressed ones, in the general public. It is the way toward guarding them against all types of brutality. 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.

KEYWORDS : Women Empowerment, Education, Health, Socio-Economic Status.

I. INTRODUCTION:

In the history of human development, woman has been as important as man. In fact, the status, employment and work performed by women in society are the indicator of a nation's overall progress. Without the participation of women in national activities, the social, economical or political progress of a country will be stagnated. Women constitute half of the humanity, even contributing two-thirds of world's work hours. She earns only one-third of the total income and owns less than one-tenth of the world's resources. This shows that the economic status of women is in pathetic condition and this is more so in a country like India. According to 2011 census, Among total Indian population of 1210.2 million, women constitute 586.5 million. Therefore, "women constitute nearly 50 percent of population, perform two-thirds of the work and produce 50 percent of food commodities



consumed by the country. They earn one third of remuneration and own 10 percent of the property or wealth of the country” (Reddy et al., 1994).

Women empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender or economic strength of individuals and communities of women. Ladies' strengthening in India is intensely subject to a wide range of factors that incorporate land area (urban/provincial) instructive status societal position (standing and class) and age. Arrangements on Women's strengthening exist at the national, state and neighborhood (Panchayat) levels in numerous divisions, including wellbeing, instruction, monetary chances, sex based brutality and political cooperation. Anyway there are critical hole between arrangement progressions and genuine practice at the network level. Strengthening of ladies is basically the procedure of upliftment of monetary, social and political status of ladies, the generally oppressed ones, in the general public. It is the way toward guarding them against all types of savagery. Ladies strengthening includes the structure up of a general public, a world of politics, wherein ladies can inhale without the dread of mistreatment, misuse, anxiety, separation and the general sentiment of oppression which goes with being a lady in a customarily male ruled structure. Women constitute almost 50 percent of the world's population but India has shown disproportionate sex ratio whereby female's population has been comparatively lower than males. As far as their social status is concerned, they are not treated as equal to men in all the places. In the Western societies, the women have got equal right and status with men in all walks of life. But gender disabilities and discriminations are found in India even today. The paradoxical situation has such that she was sometimes concerned as Goddess and at other times merely as slave.

II. CONCEPT OF EMPOWERMENT:

Empowerment is a multi-dimensional process, which should enable women or group of women to realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life (Surekharao and Rajamanamma, 1999). It consists of greater access to knowledge and resources, greater autonomy in decision making to enable them to have greater ability to plan their lives, or to have greater control over the circumstances that influence their lives and free from shocks imposed on them by custom, belief and practice. Generally development with justice is expected to generate the forces that lead to empowerment of various sections of population in a country and to raise their status especially in case of women. Empowerment comes from Women's groups who seek to empower themselves through greater self-reliance. They have right to determine their own choices in life. They also seek to gain control and access to resources. Empowerment is process, which helps people to gain control of their lives through raising awareness, taking action and working in order to exercise greater control. Empowerment is the feeling that activates the psychological energy to accomplish one's goals (Indiresan, 1999).

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Subrahmanyam (2011) compares women education in India at present and past. Author highlighted that there has a good progress in overall enrolment of girl students in schools. The term empowers means to give lawful power or authority to act. It is the process of acquiring some activities of women.

Bhavani Sankara Rao (2011) has highlighted that health of women members of SHG have certainly taken a turn to better. It clearly shows that health of women members discuss among themselves about health related problems of other members and their children and make them aware of various Government provisions specially meant for them.

Doepke and Tertilt (2011) Does Female Empowerment Promote Economic Development?. This study is an empirical analysis suggesting that money in the hands of mothers benefits children. This study developed a series of non co-operative family bargaining models to understand what kind of frictions can give rise to the observed empirical relationship.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To know the need of Women Empowerment.

2. To assess the Awareness of Women Empowerment in India.
3. To offer useful Suggestions in the light of Findings.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

In this article an attempt has been taken to analyze the empowerment of in India. The data used in it is purely from secondary sources according to the need of this study.

VI. PRESENT SITUATION OF WOMEN:

As per the data constrained, being equal to their male counterparts is still a far cry for Indian women. Not only are they marginal as public figures an average Indian woman can hardly call the shots at home or outside. In 2012, women occupied only 8 out of 74 ministerial positions in the union council of ministers. There were only 2 women judges out of 26 judges in the Supreme Court and there were only 54 women judges out of 634 judges in various high courts.

VII. NEED OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:

Reflecting into the “ Vedas Puranas” of Indian culture, women are being worshiped such as LAXMI MAA, Goddess of wealth ; SARSWATI MAA, for wisdom ; DURGA MAA for power. The status of women in India particularly in rural areas needs to address the issue of empowering women. About 66 percent of the female population in rural area is unutilized. This is mainly due to existing social customs. In agriculture and animal care the women contribute 90 percent of the total workforce. Women constitute almost half of the population, perform nearly 2/3rd of its work hours, receive 1/10th of the world’s income and own less than 1/100th the world property. Among the world’s 900 million illiterate people, women outnumber men two to one. 70 percent of people living in poverty are women. As per the 2011 census, lower sex ratio i.e. 940, the existing studies show that the women are relatively less healthy than men though belong to same class. They constitute less than 1/7th of the administrators in developing countries. Only 10 percent seats in World Parliament and 6 percent in National Cabinet are held by women.

VIII. WAYS TO EMPOWER WOMEN:

- a. Changes in women’s mobility and social interaction.
- b. Changes in women’s labour patterns.
- c. Changes in women’s access to and control over resources.
- d. Changes in women’s control over Decision making.
- e. Providing education.
- f. Self employment and self help groups.
- g. Providing minimum needs like Nutrition, Health, Sanitation, Housing etc.
- h. Society should change the mentality towards the word women.
- i. Encouraging women to develop in their fields they are good at and make a career.

IX. REASONS FOR THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN:

Today we have noticed different acts and schemes of the central Government as well as state Government to empower the women of India. But in India women are discriminated and marginalized at every level of the society whether it is social participation, political participation, economic participation, access to education, and also reproductive healthcare. Ladies are seen as monetarily extremely poor everywhere throughout the India. A couple of ladies are occupied with administrations and different exercises. In this way, they need financial capacity to remain individually legs keeping pace with men. Other hand, it has been seen that ladies are seen as less proficient than men. As indicated by 2011 statistics, pace of proficiency among men in India is seen as 82.1 percent, while it is just 65.5 percent among ladies. In this way, expanding instruction among ladies is of significant in enabling them. It has also noticed that some of women are too weak to work. They consume less food but work more. Therefore, from the health point of

view, women folk who are to be weaker are to be made stronger. Another issue is that of the working environment provocation of ladies. There are such a significant number of instances of assault, hijacking of young lady, settlement provocation, etc. For these reasons, they require empowerment of all kinds in order to protect themselves and to secure their purity and dignity. To sum up, women empowerment cannot be possible unless women come with and help to self-empower themselves. There is a need to figure lessening feminized destitution, advancing training of ladies, and anticipation and disposal of viciousness against ladies.

X. CHALLENGES:

There are several constraints that check the process of women empowerment in India. Social norms and family structure in developing countries like India, manifests and perpetuate the subordinate status of women. One of the norms is the continuing preference for a son over the birth of a girl child which in present in almost all societies and communities. The society is more biased in favor of male child in respect of education, nutrition and other opportunities. The root cause of this type of attitude lies in the belief that male child inherits the clan in India with an exception of Meghalaya. Women often internalize the traditional concept of their role as natural thus inflicting an injustice upon them. Poverty is the reality of life for the vast majority women in India. It is another factor that poses challenge in realizing women's empowerment. There are several challenges that are plaguing the issues of women's right in India. Focusing on these issues will straightforwardly profit the strengthening of ladies in India.

- **Education:** While the nation has developed from a far cry since freedom where instruction is concerned, the hole among ladies and men is extreme. While 82.14 percent of adult men are educated, only 65.46 percent of adult women are known to be literate in India. The gender bias is in higher education, specialized professional trainings which hit women very hard in employment and attaining top leadership in any field.
- **Poverty:** Poverty is viewed as the best danger to harmony on the planet, and destruction of neediness ought to be a national objective as significant as the annihilation of lack of education. Because of this, ladies are abused as residential makes a difference.
- **Health and Safety:** The wellbeing and security worry of ladies are vital for the prosperity of a nation and is a significant factor in measuring the strengthening of ladies in a nation. Anyway there are disturbing concerns where maternal social insurance is concerned.
- **Inequality:** This inequality is practiced in employment sand promotions. Women face countless handicaps in male customized and dominated environs in Government offices and Private enterprises.
- **Morality:** Due to gender bias in health and nutrition there is unusually high mortality rate in women reducing their population further especially in Asia, Africa and china.
- **Household Inequality:** Household relations show gender bias in infinitesimally small but significant manners all across the globe, more so, in India e.g. sharing burden of housework, childcare and menial works by so called division of work.

XI. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

1. Globalization, Liberalization and other Socio - Economic powers have given some break to a huge extent of the populace. Nonetheless, there are still a significant number zones where ladies strengthening in India is to a great extent lacking.
2. There should be an ocean – change in the attitude of the individuals in the nation. The ladies themselves, yet the men need to wake up to wake up to a world that is moving towards fairness and value. It is better this is grasped sooner than later to our benefit.
3. Poverty and lack of education add to these intricacies. The strengthening of ladies starts with an assurance of their wellbeing and security.
4. In order to create a sustainable world, we must begin to Empower Women.

XII. SUGGESTIONS:

1. The first and foremost priority should be given to the education of women, which is the grassroots problem. Hence, education for women has to be paid special attention.
2. Awareness programmes need to be organized for creating awareness among women especially belonging to weaker sections about their rights.
3. Women should be allowed to work and should be provided enough safety and support to work. They should be provided with proper wages and work at par with men so that their status can be elevated in the society.
4. Strict implementation of Programmes and Acts should be there to curb the mal-practices prevalent in the society.

XIII. CONCLUSION:

Thus, the attainment in the field of income / employment and in educational front, the scenario of women empowerment seems to be comparatively poor. The need of the hour is to identify those loopholes or limitations which are observing the realization of empowerment of women and this initiative must be started from the women folk itself as well as more importantly policy initiative taken by the state and society. Let us take the oath that we want an egalitarian society where everybody whether men or women get the equal opportunity to express and uplift one's well being and well being of the society as whole.

Women's empowerment is not a Northern concept women all over the world, including countries in South, have been challenging and changing gender inequalities since the beginning of the history. These struggles have also been supported by many men who have been outraged at injustice against women. Women represent half the world's population and gender inequality exists in every nation on the planet. Until women are given the same opportunities that men are, entire societies will be destined to perform below their true potentials. The greatest need of the hour is change of social attitude to women. "When woman moves forward the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves". It is essential as their thought and their value systems lead the development of a good family, good society and ultimately a good nation. The most ideal method for strengthening is maybe through enlisting ladies in the standard of improvement. Ladies strengthening will be genuine and viable just when they are invested pay and property with the goal that they may remain on their feet and develop their character in the general public. The Empowerment of Women has become one of the most important concerns of 21st century not only at national level but also at the international level. Government initiatives alone would not be sufficient to achieve this goal. Society must take initiative to create a climate in which there is no gender discrimination and women have full opportunities of self decision making and participating in social, political and economic life of the country with a sense of equality.

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