



“GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES AND CHALLENGES OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA”

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ABSTRACT :

Women’s empowerment is an important issue that India needs to deal with on an urgent basis. We are now witnessing a steady improvement in the enrolment of women in schools, colleges and even in profession institutes. The economic empowerment of women is a vital element of strong economic growth in any country. Empowering women enhances their ability to influence changes and to create a better society. Women have proved themselves as equals in many professions as well as proved themselves even better suited than men in some. Women Empowerment is most vital system to strengthen the future of women. It is a systematic approach which needs to develop more seriously. The Government programmes for women development began as early as 1954 in India. At present, the Government of India has over 34 schemes for women operated by different department and ministries. The central and state governments have launched new schemes, policies and programme to empower women. The policy framework injected elements of positive discrimination in ensuring inclusivity in terms of women’s access to health, education and participation. There are several challenges that are plaguing the issues of women’s right. Targeting these issues will directly benefit the empowerment of women in India.



KEYWORDS : Women’s empowerment , strengthen , policies and programme to empower women.

INTRODUCTION :

Women in India are emerging in all sectors, including agriculture, business, politics, medicine, sports and. Women were first inducted into the armed forces in 1992 and have served in a multitude of positions, including fighter pilots, doctors, nurses, engineers, etc. While the issue of women serving in combat roles continues to be a contentious one worldwide, these are instances where Indian women have overcome the glass ceiling in the armed forces. India’s story on women empowerment is not complete without focusing on grassroots initiatives adopted by the Central and State Governments and NGOs. The central and state governments have launched new schemes, policies and programme to empower women. India’s journey on women empowerment and gender equality started when it became a sovereign state in 1947. While visible gains have been made through legal reforms, human development and grassroots initiatives. Over the years, women-centric programmes gained attention, while the focus shifted from welfare to all-round development and finally to empowerment. The policy framework injected elements of positive discrimination in ensuring inclusivity in terms of women’s access to health, education and participation.

Women's empowerment is an important issue that India needs to deal with on an urgent basis. Women's position continues to be secondary in the Indian society and the process of change is extremely slow. This is obvious irrespective of what indicator you take and which area you choose: education, health, political and labour market participation, care work or violence against women – the story remains the same. The recently-released Gender Inequality Index as part of the Human Development Report by UNDP tells an apologetic tale of how India lags behind not only world averages but is also way below the South Asian averages. Men have to be an equal partner in the process of change. A gender equal society also breaks these stereotypes. If our society changes by empowering women, men would lose some power but will also gain some more happiness. In India, the empowerment process has already begun. We are now witnessing a steady improvement in the enrolment of women in schools, colleges and even in profession institutes. Twenty-six laws have been enacted so far to protect women from various crimes.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

1. **Singh & Gupta (2013)** – The authors' conclusion in this paper are - Many women have broken the barriers and we would still witness a lot more. To help women is to help society. And through this journey of women empowerment our nation will achieve its dream. Since 1911, the March 8th is celebrated around the world as International Women's Day. The UN declared an International Women's Day theme for 2013 and it is 'A promise is a promise: Time for action to end violence against women'. Empowerment of any section of a society is a myth until they are conferred equality before law. The foundation of freedom, justice and fraternity is based on the recognition of the inherent dignity and of equal and inalienable rights to all the members of the society.
2. **Kadam & Revankar (2014)** - This paper will highlights on issues of women in Indian context. Women empowerment in India is a challenging task as we need to acknowledge the fact that gender based discrimination is a deep rooted social malice practiced in India in many forms since thousands of years. Formulating laws, legislations and policies are not enough as it is seen that most of the times these laws and policies just remain on paper. The ground situation on the other hand just remains the same and in many instances worsens further. Addressing the malice of gender discrimination and women empowerment in India is long drawn battle against powerful structural forces of the society which are against women's growth and development.
3. **Shettar (2015)** -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 that access to Education, Employment and Change in Social Structure are only the enabling factors to Women Empowerment.
4. **Prathiba (2017)** - This paper attempts to analyze the status of Women Empowerment in India and highlights the Issues and Challenges of Women Empowerment. The study concludes by an observation that access to education and employment are only the enabling factors to empowerment, achievement towards the goal, however, depends largely on the attitude of the people towards gender equality.
5. **Subhashini (2018)** - This paper 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. Women Empowerment is the vital instrument to expand women's ability to have resources and to make strategic life choices. Empowerment of women is essentially the process of upliftment of economic, social and political status of women, in the society. It is the process of guarding them against all forms of violence.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To know the need of Women Empowerment.
2. To study the Government Schemes For Women Empowerment.
3. To assess the challenges for women empowerment in India.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This paper is basically descriptive and analytical in nature. In this paper an attempt has been taken to analyze the empowerment of women in India. The data used in it is purely from secondary sources according to the need of this study.

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN:

Empowerment is defined as - the enhancement of assets and capabilities of diverse individuals and groups to engage, influence and hold accountable the institutions which affect them empowerment of women is the prerequisite to transform a developing country into a developed country. Women empowerment generally has five components - women's sense of self worth; their right to have the power of control their own lives, both within and outside home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a just social and economic order nationally, internationally and universally. Empowerment of women could only be achieved if their economic and social status is improved. This could be possible only by adopting definite social and economic policies with a view of total development of women and to make them realize that they have the potential to be strong human beings.

Educational attainment and economic participation are the key constituents in ensuring the empowerment of women. The economic empowerment of women is a vital element of strong economic growth in any country. Empowering women enhances their ability to influence changes and to create a better society. Other than educational and economic empowerment, changes in women's mobility and social interaction and changes in intra-household decision making are necessary. They equal to men in all aspects. Women are more perfectionists in the power to create, nurture and transform. Today, women are emerging as leaders in growing range of fields like aeronautics, medicine, space, engineering, law, politics, education, business one can just name the profession and they are there, all that needed in today's world in their empowerment.

Women have proved themselves as equals in many professions as well as proved themselves even better suited than men in some. The situation for the changing role of Women is improving fast. Women are educated; they have achieved great stature in all industries. Bureaucracy, sports, media, women have become a familiar sight. A modern woman has indeed risen above the past nations, about her inferior status. She fears no authoritative men; she strives to stand parallel to men and is independent. Education has given women enlightenment and a vision. They have realized that they aren't mere puppets in the society but a pillar without which the foundation of society is incomplete.

Women Empowerment is most vital system to strengthen the future of women. It is a systematic approach which needs to develop more seriously. This process has been further accelerated with some sections of women becoming increasingly self-conscious of their discrimination in several areas of family and public life. They are also in a position to mobilize themselves on issues that can affect their overall position. Empowerment would become more relevant if women are educated, better informed and can take rational decisions. A woman needs to be physically healthy so that she is able to take challenges of equality. The status of women empowerment cannot be visualized with single dimension rather multidimensional assessment in terms of various components of women's life and their status would bring a clear conception.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:

Improving the status of women advances their decision-making capacity at all levels in all spheres of life. This, in turn, is essential for the long- term success of population programmes. The Government of India has taken measures to promote the fulfillment of women's potential through education, skills development

and the eradication of illiteracy for all girls and women without discrimination of any kind. Government has taken necessary measures to ensure universal access, on the basis of equality between women and men, to appropriate, affordable and quality health care for women throughout their life cycle. Some of the most noteworthy programmes introduced by the Government of India in the last few years have been thoughtfully crafted and covers a lot of ground towards the upliftment of women. There are many such schemes that have been introduced and are well-intentioned are - Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao, Sukanya Samridhi Account, Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, Mahila Haat, Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers, Maternity Benefit Scheme, Women's Helpline 1091. Government policies had significant impact in bringing transformation in society. In the long run, policies like these will eventually bring changes in the condition of women. Different policies address different needs which are the essence of initiatives like these. As women's concerns include a range of aspects, it would be more appropriate if the government comes up with more policies. One of the weaknesses of these endeavors is the execution or implementation mechanism. These mechanisms are frequently hampered by unclear mandates, lack of adequate staff, training, data and sufficient resources, and insufficient support from national political leadership.

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES/PROGRAMMES FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:

The Government programmes for women development began as early as 1954 in India. At present, the Government of India has over 34 schemes for women operated by different department and ministries. Some of these are as - Crèches/ Day care centre for the children of working and ailing mother, Dhanalakhami, Hostels for working women, Indira Mahila Kendra, Indira Mahila Yojana, Integrated Child Development Services, Integrated Child Protection scheme, Integrated Rural Development Programme, Khadi and Village Industries Commission, Indira Priyadarahini Yojana, Mahila Samakhya being implemented in about 9000 villages, Mahila Samiti Yojana, Mahila Samridhi Yojana, National Banks for Agriculture and Rural Development's Schemes, National Mission for Empowerment of Women, NGO's Credit Schemes, Prime Minister's Rojgar Yojana, Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescence Girls, Rastria Mahila Kosh, SBI's Sree Shakti Scheme, Scheme for Gender Budgeting, Short Stay Homes, SIDBI's Mahila Udyam Nidhi Mahila Vikas Nidhi, Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women, Swa Shakti Group, Swadhar, Swalamban, Swayasjdha, The Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers, Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment, Ujjawala, Women Entrepreneur Development programme, Women's Development Corporation Scheme, and Working Women's Forum.

CHALLENGES:

Women's empowerment is a process of personal and social change, taking place over interlinked and mutually reinforcing psychological, political, social and economic domains, and through which women individually and collectively gain power, meaningful choices and control over their lives. Women's ability to succeed and advance economically and the power to make and act on economic decisions is core to the understanding of a number of development institutions. There are several challenges that check the process of women empowerment in India. Social norms and family structure in 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 is 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. 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 the factor that poses challenge in realizing women's empowerment.

The problem of gender discrimination has affected the pace of women empowerment in India. Gender discrimination in all realms of action must be checked. Women must be furnished with a resort to take an active part in decision making at every level and direction procedures to attain the motive of

empowering women. They need to get due admiration and prominence, which they rightfully earn on merit basis in society to accomplish their fate.

Education is the most vibrant factor of advancement and growth. It is the only significant tool for anticipating women empowerment in India. It gives light to the possibilities for access to employment and making a livelihood, which in twirl revivify economic empowerment to women. In order to join the community of developed countries, people should understand the value and importance of women's education and, thereby, put combined efforts to make India on the progressive track. Education makes the individual conscientious, enabling them to comprehend, interpret, criticize, and eventually transform their atmosphere. It results in the accession of abundances of skills that heighten a person's enthusiasm and her proficiency to shape life in a better form.

Women should empower themselves by becoming to be aware of their oppression, indicating initiative, and confiscating chances to bring a shift in their status. Empowerment must come from within the soul. Women need to empower themselves by bringing a major change in their attitude. There are several challenges that are plaguing the issues of women's right. Targeting these issues will directly benefit the empowerment of women in India.

CONCLUSIONS:

Women's empowerment is an important issue that India needs to deal with on an urgent basis. We are now witnessing a steady improvement in the enrolment of women in schools, colleges and even in profession institutes. The economic empowerment of women is a vital element of strong economic growth in any country. Empowering women enhances their ability to influence changes and to create a better society. Women have proved themselves as equals in many professions as well as proved themselves even better suited than men in some. Women Empowerment is most vital system to strengthen the future of women. It is a systematic approach which needs to develop more seriously. The Government programmes for women development began as early as 1954 in India. At present, the Government of India has over 34 schemes for women operated by different department and ministries. The central and state governments have launched new schemes, policies and programme to empower women. The policy framework injected elements of positive discrimination in ensuring inclusivity in terms of women's access to health, education and participation. There are several challenges that are plaguing the issues of women's right. Targeting these issues will directly benefit the empowerment of women in India.

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