

Women Empowerment in India: Rationale and Present State

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Abstract:

Women are considered as goddess in Indian culture. But till today in every sphere of life women have been humiliated like anything in the society. In India many rules and legislation has been made for women since independence but till today a woman is fighting for her fundamental right. Women empowerment is the only way by which it can be possible to give equal status to women in a male dominated society like India. To be empowered, women should come forward and realize that they are not second grade citizen of the society and at the same time also equally capable with men in all aspect of livelihood. In this context, the present study analyses different issues of women empowerment and reasons behind not successful implementation of women empowerment programs in the country. Education, financial independence, equal recognition in work place, change of mind set among men can help to accelerate the process of women empowerment in India.

Key Words: *Western society, Discrimination, Ancient culture, Domestic violence, Mind set.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Women constitute 50 percent of world's population. In paradoxical situation women has been treated as goddess. So far as social status is concerned women in India are not treated at par with men. They are not treated equal with men in all places. Where as in western culture women are at par with men and also considered as equal with men in all walks of life. They are treated equally and enjoy right with men in the society.

In India there is a disproportionate sex ratio which indicates the female population is comparatively lower than male. The Indian women have no right and power to be equal with men like western society. In all walks of life, this gender disability and discrimination are found even today. Having given the status of Goddess at a point of time, women now are being treated like slaves even in 21st century.

In order to see women at par with men, educational, spiritual, and economical strength of women community needs to be ensured. This leads to emergence of the concept 'Women Empowerment'. Women empowerment is a system where women can be involved in building a society and create a political environment to breathe without fear of exploitation, oppression and apprehension. It should be the general feeling that a women, should be equal with in a traditionally men dominated structure.

So far as women empowerment in India is concerned it is heavily dependent on many variables like geographical location, educational status, social status, and age factor. Though policy exist in the national and state as well as local level in many sectors like health, education, economic opportunity, gender based violence political participation, right to work, right to property, etc ,etc but a significant gap has been found between the actual and in practice at the community level. The policy makers also tried a lot to limit this gap day by day.

II. STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIA

Now the status of equality with men for a woman is far away though constitutional and legal provision permit an Indian woman to enjoy unique status of equality with men. This is due to the following grounds:-

1. Back in the days of Mahabharata when Draupadi was forced to be used as a commodity by her husband for playing of games.
2. In history it was a fact that women was made to dance before king and emperors in private and public places for amusement.
3. In traditional Indian culture a female was always dependent on male member of the family and dominated by the male members often.
4. A female member is not authorized to tell in loud voice before the male members in public and social occasions.

5. In traditional joint family structure the elder members of the family consider women is the cause of fault and responsibility.
6. In case of widow woman has no right to mix with either with the male members of the family or with other male members of the society even in social occasions.
7. A woman has very little scope in education ,political, social, economical, and other fields of the society.

The rise of national movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi with the help of other social reformers like Raja Ramohan Ray, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar who were in favor of removing all inequalities on women. Various reform movements pave the way for the liberation of women from social evil and religious taboos. After independence the constitution makers and national reformers has recognized the equal social position of women with men. Accordingly Article-14, Article-15 and Article 42 of constitution of India guarantees equality of sex and grants special favor to women of our country. Though women have achieved a great position and compete with men in the society now but a lot more is necessary in this front to make women at par with men in India.

Objectives of the Study

1. To highlight the necessity of women empowerment.
2. To analyze the factors influencing the women empowerment.
3. Various schemes undertaken by the Government towards women empowerment.
4. To identify the constraints of women empowerment.
5. To offer useful suggestions for women empowerment.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The article is descriptive and analytical in character. An attempt has been made to analyze the conditions for women empowerment in Indian context. According to the need of the article the data utilized are secondary in nature, which are collected from books, journals, magazines, research articles as well as Govt. documents.

NECESSITY OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: Women empowerment in India is just remaining a slogan and its necessity arises due to the following grounds.

1. **DECEISION MAKING POWER:-** Male dominated society in India deprives women to make or suggest any decision. It is a general feeling that women are not good decision makers. Till today in traditional society there is a strong belief that all the decisions of women are counter- productive. Hence in family, street, village, and in local community the women cannot take any type of independent decision. It is desirable that women should be empowered to take independent decision.
2. **FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT:-** There are various reasons which deprives a women to move freely. Lack of mobility is one of the reason for which empowerment of women is necessary. A women is not safe to move freely particularly in the night time. Hence it is suggested that women empowerment is necessary in India in order to enable a women to move without any fear like men even in night also.
3. **ACCESS TO EDUCATION:-** Though education is a fundamental right in India most of the women are deprived of that facility right even after seventy years of independence. There is clear line of demarcation between a boy child and a girl child for access of education. Traditional civilization has a belief that more education to girl child will create problem in future. But without education it is impossible for women upliftment. Hence women empowerment is necessary.
4. **ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT:-** The recent data reflects that 13 percent of women are in administrative job, 11 percent are in judiciary, 7 percent are in police, 2 percent are in defense establishment and 22 percent in teaching profession. It indicates the employability of women in general index. It seems to be difficulty for a women to be in a night shift or any type of adverse working situation.
5. **MEDIA EXPOSER:-** Due to male dominated society it is not possible for a women to be expose in public media. A women is not able to put forth her ideas and intention in public media. If it happens it is not acceptable to the society.
6. **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:-** With the growth and development of social living standard domestic violence is a regular feature in each and every family now. Irrespective of educated or uneducated, rich or poor, urban or rural, on the occasion of domestic violence, woman is the worst sufferer. This situation can be reversed if women will be empowered and can look after her in the society.

Besides the above mentioned fact one of the alarming situations for women is crime. In order to protect against crime, the women should be empowered .The following table reflects the crime against women from 2010 to 2014.

Table- 1

Sl. No.	Crime Head	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
1.	Rape	21395	22170	24205	24900	33700
2.	Kidnapping	25740	29790	35760	38260	51880
3.	Dowry Death	8380	8960	8640	8300	7940
4.	Cruelty by In-Laws	89500	94100	99130	106525	118860
5.	Assault on Women	38710	40610	42960	45350	60760
6.	Immoral Traffic	2474	2490	2430	2560	2580

Source: Crime in India

If we analyze the table, it will reflect that the crime against women is increasing year by year in every respect. Though there are strict laws to protect the right of women in our country but due to ill mentality of male dominated society the situation is going bad to worse each year. Hence it is the right time that the women should be empowered in India.

It is also observed that the total crime against women out of all the crimes recorded under Indian Penal Code (IPC) is also a shocking affair in India. Crime against women has a significant share of all other crimes. It indicates the women in India is unsafe and insecure so far her life is concerned. Though there are laws to protect the right of women it is only due to the empowerment condition the women have to suffer a lot during the course of day to day life in the country.

The following table shows the crime against women and all other crimes recorded under India Penal Code (IPC).

Table- 2

Sl. No.	Year	Total Crime	Crime Against Women	% of Total Crime
1.	2010	2121340	203804	9.61
2.	2011	2224830	213580	9.60
3.	2012	2325570	228645	9.83
4.	2013	2387180	244270	10.23
5.	2014	2647720	309540	11.70

Source: Crime in India

The above table indicates that despite of stringent law to protect crime the crime against women is increasing year by year under IPC out of all other crimes in India.

Hence it is absolutely necessary to have women empowerment in our country not only to reduce crime against women but also at the same time the total crime rate can also be reduced to a great extent.

FACTORS INFLUENCE WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: The following are some of the factor which influences women empowerment of our country. If these factors will be positive it can be said that women empowerment can be possible in our country.

1. **GENDER DISCRIMINATION:-** It is one of the major factor which influence women empowerment of our country. India is considered as a male dominated society where women are considered as second grade citizens. On the other hand the ratio between male and female has been reduced to a great extent due to destruction of female fetus. The traditional belief of male child is the successor of the family is an asset and the female child is meant for other family and is a liability. This mentality affects the women empowerment situation in our country.
2. **FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY:-** Most of family responsibility lies with women. It is considered that every good and bad of a family depend on the female member only. From early in the morning to late in the night it the work of the female members to take care of each and every members of the family. More is the family member more is the responsibility with women only. Hence in a joint family the women has no free time even to share her views with other family members. This responsibility should be shared equally by male members of the family in order to make free of women from house hold responsibility.
3. **ABILITY TO BEAR RISK:-** There is a wrong notion that women are emotionally weak so that they are not able to bear any type of risk like men in the society. Female members in the family are not competent enough to bear the risk of the family and the male members sometimes overrule them.
4. **AMBITION FOR ACHIEVEMENT:-** There is general feeling that women less ambitious. This character makes them to be dependent to male in the society. Women are less ambitious in life than

men and have no aim and objective in life. Whether rural or urban, rich or poor, educated or uneducated it is a general feeling that women has no definite aim and ambition in life and they are less conscious for achievement in life.

5. **SOCIAL STATUS:-** Indian society has been divided into different segments on the basis of caste, religion, economic status, culture ,family background etc . On the basis of this social status, women suffer a lot due to social discrimination. It is a major factor for which women empowerment is necessary in our country.
6. **ATROCITIES ON WOMEN:-** Different forms of atrocities on women like rape, molestation, kicked out, subdued, humiliated, exploitation, use of force, dowry demand, are some of the women atrocities in our society for which the women have to suffer a lot. In urban area this atrocity is proportionately more than in rural areas. As women has no courage to face these type of atrocities it is necessary to empower them so that they can face this with courage.

SCHEMES OF GOVERNEMENT FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: The National movement led by father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi compels the government to make different schemes for women empowerment. The initiative has been taken by the govt. early in 1954. Apart from this, a significant development on women empowerment has been come into practice in the year 1974 by the then prime minister Smt. Indira Gandhi. Since then, different policy and programmers are undertaken by Govt. of India. In order to empower women of our country, our constitution has been changed and amended several times and different welfare schemes has been introduced with an aim and objective of women empowerment. All these schemes are meant to empower women both in local, regional, national and if possible in the international level. Some of the government schemes are mentioned below:-

1. Rastriya Mahila Kosh.
2. Mahila Samridhi Yojana.
3. Indira Mahila Yojana.
4. Training and employment programme for women.(TEP)
5. National mission for empowerment of women(NMEW)
6. Integrated Child Development Services.(ICDS)
7. Integrated Child Protection Scheme.(ICPS)
8. Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Indolence girls.
9. Integrated Rural Development Program me.
10. Prime Minister Rojagar Yojana(PMRY)
11. Women Development Corporation Scheme.(WDCS)
12. Indira Priyadarshini Yojana.
13. Mahila Udyam Nidhi.
14. Mahila Vikas Nidhi
15. Mahila Samiti Yojana.

All the above mentioned schemes of the government work towards development of women of our country. Time to time considering the importance of women empowerment government also changes and amends some of the provisions of constitution for total and rapid implementation of women empowerment schemes in India.

CONSTRAINTS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: There are different constraints which pose a challenge and check the process of women empowerment of our country. The family and social norms of a developing country like India manifest a subordinate status to women. Till today it is the binding believe of Indian society that a male child inherits the family culture where as a female child is meant for other family. Sometimes women internalize the traditional concept of their role in family and society and thus inflicting an injustice on them.

Some of the major challenges of women empowerment are mentioned below:-

1. **EDUCATION:-** Education among women is a serious challenge to be empowered in our country. Though we have achieved a lot in education front since independence but women education is far behind to men education .There is significant gap between men literacy and women literacy. While men literacy id 82.14% at that time women literacy is only 64.4%. The gender bias is higher in higher education system. At the same time women is lagging far behind in professional and specialized education and training by which employability and leadership quality affect a lot in Indian women. Hence it is considered that education to women is the only way out to have women empowerment situation of our country.

2. **POVERTY:-** Since independence poverty is one of the major threat to our nation. Eradication and minimization of poverty is the primary aim of our government and is making continues effort in this front. Though poverty eradication is a national agenda but a larger section of women are exploited due to poverty only. Sometimes it is felt that women are meant for domestic help and can be utilized for men's pleasure only.
3. **HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES:-** This is another threat and major constraint for women empowerment of India. Health of a woman is the paramount for the wellbeing of a family, country and the society as a whole. Malnutrition, maternal health care and health hazards are some of the major health problem in Indian women which deprives her to be empowered. Women are not safe in any of the places now like men. Be it in office, road, market, public places, journey, bus stop, railway , hotels anywhere .Be it in day time or in night time women always feel unsafe in each and every place even in metro cities of our country. Safety measure should be undertaken primarily in order to empower women of our country.
4. **PROFESSIONAL SKILL:-** Indian women are lacking professional skill in working place. Both in government and private places the women in India are far behind than men in professional skill. This inequality poses a big challenge for Indian women to be equal with men hence women empowerment hampers to a great extent.
5. **FAMILY BUDERN:-** In India gender bias in house hold relation is a major threat for women empowerment. It is a feeling in the society that the burden of the family should be shouldered by women only. House hold work, child care, menial works, care of the age old of the family members is the duty of women in the family. Sometimes this burden deprives a woman to be empowered like men in the society.

All these above mentioned constraints and challenges for women empowerment can only be eradicated or minimized only when the women as at a large will come forward and help to self empower themselves. In order to overcome these challenges it is desirable that a women should empower of all kinds in order to protect themselves and can secure their purity and dignity in the society.

TOWARDS WOMEN EMPOWERMENT(SUGGESTIONS) Considering“ Veda” “Puran” and “Upnishad” of Indian culture, woman is considered and worshiped as Laxmi for wealth, Saraswati for wisdom, Durga for power etc. But now women and their power is a serious concern particularly in rural India and according to the father of nation Mahatma Gandhi, India lives in villages. Hence women empowerment is the prime concern for both state as well as the central government. Considering the importance of women empowerment here are some of the suggestions which can pave the way for women empowerment of our country.

1. **CHANGE THE SOCIAL INTERACTION PROCESS:-** It should be taken into granted that woman is a equal partner of men in the society. Equal status should be provided to women in social interaction process. At the same time mobility of woman should be at par with man and there should be no restriction for woman in the society for movement from one place to other. A woman should be free like man to move in local, regional, national and international arena with dignity and purity. This system can bring a change in attitude of both men and women which can pave the path of women empowerment in India.
2. **ACCESS AND CONTROL OVER RESOURCES:-** It can be suggested that a change should be made in access to the property and control over resources by women in the family. Though the law and legislation authorized a women to enjoy equal status with man in the family but practically it is not so for a woman member. Hence it is desirable to empower women in property of the family and access over the property like man member of the family.
3. **DECISION MAKING POWER:-** Even today it is felt that a woman is not authorized to take an independent decision for her and for the family as whole. Due to lack of decision making power the men consider women as inferior in the society. It is suggested that the women should be allowed to take decision of her own and if possible to take decision for the family members. Scope should be provided to the woman to participate in decision making process of the family as well as for the society.
4. **PROVIDE EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT:-** It is said that literacy eradicates poverty and illiteracy welcomes poverty. As per 2010 census the literacy rate among men was 76% while among women it was 52% only. This is an alarming situation for which education should be provided to each and every woman in the country to make them employable. On the other hand the employment condition of women in India is very serious. Most of the rural women are confined to house hold work and in urban areas only 22% of women are employable. Skill based education and professional training should be provided to women of our country so that they can compete with other country for employment. Then only the woman can be empowered.

5. PROVIDE HEALTH CARE FACILITY:- This is the primary requirement of our country in women empowerment situation. Both in rural and urban areas most of the women are suffering from various harmful deceases. This is due to women suffers from ill health, mal-nutrition, bad sanitation facility, In order to consider the genuine problem of the women in India, the government has provided basic facilities like good sanitation, healthy environment, ideal housing condition, so that women empowerment can be possible.
6. CHANGE OF MINDSET:- It is desirable the society should change the mind set towards women. In a male dominated society like India the attitude of the people should change by considering women as the equal partner of men. The contribution of women towards growth and development is no way less than men. A women is no way inferior to men in the society and this positive attitude among men will make women empowered in our country.

IV. MAJOR FINDINGS

The following are some of the major findings of the study.

1. It is required to change the mind set of people in India for women. The man should feel that the world is moving towards equality and equity. Hence women empowerment will bring prosperity for the coming generation.
2. There are several programmers and schemes made by the government both in central and state level for women empowerment in our country. But the implementation of those schemes should be monitored in regular intervals so that the gap can be reduced.
3. Illiteracy, poverty, ill health and safety measures are some of the complications should be redressed in order to achieve total women empowerment in our country.
4. Economic and social status of the woman can be improved by formulating clear-cut economic and social policy by which the woman can be realized that they are not inferior to man in the society. This status improvement in woman can bring women empowerment.
5. Women empowerment is not necessary fact for our country but it is a must for sustainable development of a nation . So let us start to empower women from now for our secure future.

V. CONCLUSION

Some of the conclusions are mentioned below.

1. The need of the hour to identify those drawbacks like income, employment, education, social status, and mid set of the people in order to empower woman in India.
2. The policy makers should ensure that the women empowerment policy can make an egalitarian society where there should be equal opportunity for both men and women.
3. Though woman constitutes 50% of total population the gender in equality exist in our country. The need of the hour is to change the social attitude of women and provide equal opportunity with men for their empowerment.
4. Each and every citizen of our country should take into granted t hat when women move the family will forward, the village will move the nation will forward and ultimately the society will be developed. This situation will arise only when women will be inducted into mainstream of development.
5. Women empowerment will be successful and effective when each and every women will be educated with income and property in order to ensure that they stand on their own feet to build up t heir identity in the society.
6. It is a concern in 21st century that women empowerment cannot be possible by the policy of the government alone. The society should create an environment where a woman have equal opportunity of self decision making, active participation in social economical and political life of the country with a sense of equality.
7. Last but not the list it can be concluded that women empowerment can be materialized only when the mindset of the men will be changed for women in the society that “ WOMEN IS EQUALLY POTENTIAL WITH MEN”.

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