



Women Empowerment in India: Issues and Challenges

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Abstract:

Women represent half the global population and one-third of the work force, they receive only one-tenth of the global income and less than one percent of world property, and does two-thirds of all working hours. Still, day in and day out, our conscience is shocked by news of the violation of human rights of women. Such an approach provides the women with a constitutional platform to stand up to men, to raise their voice on issues concerning women oppression, subjugation and related issues and thus in effect, providing them with an identity in an orthodox male dominated socio-political set up, in addition to providing a much needed forum to seek redressal of problems directly affecting them: the true essence of empowerment. The process of empowerment is multi-dimensional and it enables women to realise their full destiny and powers in all spheres of life. A women's empowerment begins with consciousness—perceptions about herself and her rights, her capabilities and her potentials, awareness of how gender and socio-cultural and political forces affect her.

Keywords: Challenges, Issues, Women's empowerment

1. Introduction

Human Development Report, 1990 said that “The real wealth of a nation is its people. And the purpose of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives. This simple but powerful truth is too often forgotten in the pursuit of material and financial wealth”. The question is in development syndrome. where is people and where is woman? Are women enjoying long, healthy and creative lives? If not, who is responsible? Women are called fair sex but always get unfair treatment. A woman's life lies between pleasure at one end and threat of violence at the other. Middle class is the enemy of middle class and that of women. These are some hard questions need to be taken care of when we discuss women empowerment.

Women have generally been looked upon with contempt for centuries with various strictures inflicted upon them reducing their status to the mercy of men. They have been confined to hearth and home. But now the perspective of the society has changed and a general thinking to work for the emancipation and empowerment of women is being developed so that they could also contribute in the enhancement and welfare of the society. But their emancipation is not without challenges. Breaking the age old barriers, storming into a predominantly male bastion are something they have to fight for. Even as they are becoming aware about their rights and demands, the violence and crime against women is on the increase. History is the witness that the women had enjoyed a privileged position in ancient India. It is definitely a matter of pride that there existed a culture and them a respectful Living in the social life. However, the woman lost their status with the coming up of Brahminical traditions and with the advent of Islam, they were further pushed into the background. They were left secluded, devitalized and sheltered and these practices slowly turned into customs which have now become traditions. It was in the medieval period that the social evils like female infanticide, child marriage, purdah. Jauhar. Sati and slavery emerged. Such evils and ill- practices were imposed upon them in the name of customs. They were reduced to the mere household

obligations and with this the Indian society plunged into abysmal darkness. The Britishers introduced a few measures to raise the status of women in the society and they initiated the legislation to ban the Sati and to limit the child marriage. With women's participation in the struggle for India's independence, there us hered a new age and a recognizable future for them in India. Putting aside the veil they came in the forefront of the national movement for India's liberalization. Women represent half the global population and one-third of the work force, they receive only one-tenth of the global income and less than one percent of world property, and does two-thirds of all working hours. Still, day in and day out, our conscience is shocked by news of the violation of human rights of women. A new chapter was added into the history of women's empowerment with India gaining independence. The norm of their less, unimportant of secondary role to that of men was withdrawn. When the new constitution was formed, the constitution makers took into account the Women's plight and asserted by introducing various measures in the constitution to hold their rightful place in the society. They were given freedom to participate in the social, political, economic and cultural life of the nation.

2. Empowerment

‘Empowerment is the process of increasing the authority and responsibility of individuals or groups to make choies and to transtorm those choices in to desired actions and outcomes.’

Empowerment is not a technocratic goal—it is a wholesale political commitment. Achieving it requires a long-term process in which all cultural, social, political and economic norms undergo fundamental change. It also requires an entirely new way of thinking—in which the stereotyping of women and men no longer limits their choices, but gives way to a new philosophy that regards all people as essential agents of change that views development as a process of enlarging the choice of both sexes, just not one.

3. Women Empowerment

Women Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social educational, gender or economics strength of individuals and communities of women.

The World bank says, ‘ Empowerment is the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes.’

Empowerment means women must exercise full participation in decision-making process in all walks of life, and full participation with men in all walks of life, and fully participating with men in finding equitable and practical solutions to issues in family and in society. Apart from this empowerment includes women right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. Equal relationships between women and men in matters of sexual relations and reproduction including full respect for the integrity of the person, require mutual respect, consent and shared responsibility for sexual behaviour and its consequences.

4. Obstacles of Women Empowerment

4.1 Problems and Need of women Empowerment

Since ancient times women are facing problems. Their oppression is persistent and universal and its solutions are complicated. Many prophets of women’s emancipation have come and gone, but discrimination against women and violation of human values still persists. Gender issue is basically one that affects women directly or indirectly. In other words, any social evil perpetrated at the cost of women, any law or custom that reinforces and institutionalises women’s inferior status in society, or any event or series of events that affects large number of women can be regarded as a gender issue. Gender issues are also those that galvanise large numbers of women into action, any such issues, which catch the attention of women’s groups, and subsequently of the media.

4.2 Gender discrimination

- Lack of Women Education
- Female infanticide
- Financial constraint
- Dowry
- Low mobility
- Low need for achievement
- Marriage in same caste and child marriage
- Social status
- Family responsibility

Atrocities on women ...etc. these are the main responsible factors of problems related women. Women are deprived of Decision making power, Freedom of movement, Access to Education, Access to Employment, and Exposure to media.

5. Way to Achieve Women Empowerment

- Changes in women's mobility and social interaction.
- Providing Education that builds a self image and self confidence among them & develops their ability to think.
- Changes in women's control over resources, decision making.
- Promoting self employment through credits & training.
- Providing minimum needs like, nutrition, health, sanitation, lean, housing.
- Also the society should change the mentality of word women and encouraging women to develop herself.

The process of empowerment is multi-dimensional and it enables women to realise their full destiny and powers in all spheres of life. A woman's empowerment begins with consciousness—perceptions about herself and her rights, her capabilities and her potentials, awareness of how gender and socio-cultural and political forces affect her. Political empowerment, economic development and social upliftment of women are necessary and desirable to fight myriad forms of patriarchal domination, and discrimination at every stage. In fact, women's empowerment is central to the achievement of the triple goals of equality, development and social justice. And for that political participation is needed.

6. Low Related Women Empowerment

- The Maternity Benefit Act 1961
- The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
- Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986
- The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987
- Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005
- Equal Remuneration Act 1976
- The Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948
- Relevant provisions of Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973
- Family Courts Act, 1984
- The Indian Succession Act, 1925
- The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act 1971
- The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929
- The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955
- The Indian Divorce Act, 1969

7. Scheme of Government for Women Empowerment

The Centre would implement an umbrella scheme for protection and empowerment of women at an estimated expenditure of `1,800 crore during the 12th Five Year Plan. The Union Ministry of Women and Child Development has moved a proposal for this scheme to the Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) .

- Protection of Women from Domestic Violence (PWDV) Act, 2005.
- National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW)
- Projects of One Stop Crisis Centres (OSCCs) in urban areas
- Schemes for Economics Empowerment
- Swa-Shakti
- Swayamsiddha
- Swawlamban Programme
- Support to Training and Employment Programme (STEP)
- Support Service
- Construction of Working Women Hostels
- Creches
- Relief, Protection and Rehabilitation to Women in Difficult Circumstances-Swadhar, Compensation to Rape Victims.
- Institutional Services
- State Homes
- Service Homes
- Working Women's Hostels
- Vocational Training Centres
- Regional Tailoring Centres
- Craft Training Centres
- District Crafts including Tailoring Centres
- Women Technical Training Institute (WTTI)
- Centrally Sponsored Schemes
 1. Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP)
 2. Training for Rural Youth for Self-Employment TRYSEM)
 3. Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA)
- Integrated Rural Development Programmes (IRDP)
- Training for Rural Youth Self-Employment (TRYSEM)
- Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA)
- Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY)
- Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY)
- Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK)
- Swarnajayanthi Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY)
- The Velugu Programme
- Indira Kranti Patham

8. Conclusion

A Vital need of the current age is to reform the social values and status of women. Society without women consider as body without heart. By providing same opportunities and importance then only gender equality maintained. With these the good values and level of family, society and ultimately nation raised. The best way of empowerment is perhaps through inducting women in the mainstream of development. Women empowerment will be real and effective only when they are endowed income and property so that they may stand on their feet and build up their identity in the society. The most important measure of their success should be the extent to which they enable women to interpret, apply and enforce laws of their own making, incorporating their own voices, values and concerns.

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