

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

In the present Indian context, our society thrives to achieve the ultimate goal of 'Gender Equality'. It is a potential step towards modernisation of India. Gender Equality refers to the state of equality between males, females or the third gender cases, in matters of access to resources and opportunities, including economic participation and decision-making as a potential social component of the nation.

In this context of gender equality, women empowerment is of prime focus today. Women empowerment can be defined as accepting women and their diverse thoughts and ideas- their contributions as a whole towards the national development by upgrading and updating them through provisions of proper education, awareness, literacy, and training.

Economic empowerment allows women to control and benefit from resources, assets, and income. It also helps them to manage risk and improve women's well-being. Women empowerment helps in enhancing the status of women through literacy, education, training and awareness creation.

Proper education is of utmost importance in this context. Women education provides the knowledge and creates awareness of women rights and opportunities today. It trains them to become self-sufficient and self-dependent so as to fight the social evils in the present scenario. Women empowerment helps the society to achieve the objectives of sustainable development of the nation. Several work and educational opportunities paves the way for achievement of Women empowerment. Increased women's access to property inheritance and land rights can be used to empower women economically. This would provide them with better opportunities of asset accumulation, capital, and bargaining power needed to address gender inequalities.

KEYWORDS: *Gender Equality, Women Empowerment, Economic Empowerment, Women Education, Sustainable Development, Political Empowerment, Women Rights, Legal Policies, Cultural Rights.*

INTRODUCTION

Political empowerment, legal policies and regulations attempts to support gender equality and agency for women in both the public and private spheres. As of 2017, the global average of women who hold lower and single house parliament positions is 23.6 percent. If we talk about technological advancements and provision of technical education to women then digital skills can greatly enhance

and expedite women's engagement with local government and increase their decision-making power in their communities.

As a liberal and reformist nation, supporting women's rights and empowerment, we must stop viewing culture only as a barrier and an obstacle to women's rights. Culture is an integral part of diversity that thrives to achieve women's equal opportunities. There is a great need for equal cultural rights for women to be recognized and implemented which would help us to rejuvenate and re-create gender in ways that would rise above women's inferiority and subordination.

The present study deals with women empowerment in the present Indian context in 21st century. This study attempts to examine and study the concept, objectives and importance of women empowerment in the present Indian context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

- U, Koko., (1992) studied on “Empowering People for Health and Family Planning”.
- Panucha, S and Khatik, A., (2005) studied on “Empowerment of Rural Woman”.
- Ganeswamurthy, V.S., (2008) studied on “Empowerment of Women in India—Social Economics and Political”.
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CONCEPT OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Women's empowerment may be defined in several ways, including accepting women's viewpoints or making an effort to seek them, raising the status of women through education, awareness, literacy, and training. It equips and allows women to make life-determining decisions through the different problems in society.

Empowerment of women means developing them as more aware individuals, who are politically active, economically productive and independent and are able to make intelligent discussion in matters that affect them.

FACTORS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNDFW) includes the following factors in its definition of women empowerment:

- Acquiring knowledge and understanding of gender relations and the way in which these relations may be changed.
- Developing a sense of self-worth, a belief in one's ability to secure desired changes and the right to control one's life.

EMPOWERED WOMEN'S CHARACTERISTICS

- Define their attitude, values and behaviours in relation to their own real interest.
- Have autonomy because they claim their freedom from existing male hierarchies.
- Act out roles that challenge male dominance.

- Use their talent to live fulfilling lives.
- Maintain their strength on the face of pressures from the religion and work and contribute towards the empowerment of all women.
- Define their values and formulate their beliefs themselves, they do not derive their sense of being from male authorities nor do they live vicariously through men.

NEEDS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

- Raising self-esteem and self-confidence of women.
- Elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and girl child.
- Enforcement of constitutional and legal provisions and safeguarding rights of women.
- Fostering decision-making and collective action.
- Ensuring women's participation in all walks of life.
- Providing information, knowledge, skills for self-employment.
- Building a positive image of women in the society and recognising their contributions in social, economic and political sphere.

OBJECTIVES OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

- To identify gaps in the empowerment of women, development of children and adolescents.
- Create a national network of public, private and NGO centres for delivering reproductive and child health services free to any client.
- To create an enabling environment through convergence with other programmes.
- To identify the ways in which the effects of policies and programmatic interventions to promote women's empowerment have been measured.
- To develop health management and health package at all level.
- To identify the evidence on how women's empowerment affects important development outcomes such as health, education, fertility behaviour, income levels, etc.
- To organise educational and empowerment programmes for girls and women.
- To increase awareness in women, for their development to use their talent optimally not only for themselves, but also for the society as a whole.
- To create awareness among women to be truly ambitious and to dream for betterment.
- To integrate socio-economic activities with concern for health and environment protection in the light of the rural women culture.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women.

In recent years, the empowerment of women has been recognised as the central issue in determining the status of women. India has also ratified various International conventions and human rights instruments committing to secure equal rights of women. Key among them is the ratification of the

Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1993. The National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women.

The Government of India declared 2001 as the Year of Women's Empowerment (Swashakti). The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women was passed in 2001.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT SCHEMES

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT POLICY 2001 (OBJECTIVES)

- The goal of this Policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women.
- Creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realise their full potential.
- The de jure and de facto enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedom by women on equal basis with men in all spheres—political, economic, social, cultural and civil.
- Equal access to participation and decision making of women.
- Equal access to women to health care, quality education at all levels, career and vocational guidance, employment, etc.
- Strengthening legal systems aimed at elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

INDIAN GOVERNMENT SCHEMES AND POLICIES

- Schemes of National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation
- Integrated Child Development Scheme
- National Rural Health Mission
- Janani Suraksha Yojana
- Integrated Child Protection Scheme
- Swadhar—A scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances
- Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS)
- Antyodaya Anna Yojna (AAY)
- Ujjawala—A Scheme for Prevention of Trafficking and Rescue, Rehabilitation and Reintegration
- Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana(RSBY)
- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
- Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY)—A Conditional Maternity Benefit Scheme
- Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (RGSEAG)—Sabla
- Swayam Siddha
- Scheme for Working Women Hostel
- STEP (Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women)
- Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana
- Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY)
- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN 16TH LOK SABHA

The 16th Lok Sabha has 61 women members, the highest in history. speaker of 16th Lok Sabha is again a woman, Sumitra Mahajan. The present Rajya Sabha has 29 women members. The seven women ministers in the 46-member Council of Ministers have reinforced the new government's agenda of women empowerment. Six of the 23 Cabinet ministers are women, claiming almost a 25 per cent share. Three of them — Smriti Irani (HRD), Nirmala Sitharaman (Commerce and Industry) and Harsimrat Kaur Badal (Food Processing) — are going to hold their maiden portfolios as ministers.

This may raise expectations of India's female population to break the glass ceiling in many other bastions so far dominated by men. Thus road map for women empowerment is there but still we have miles to go on this path of empowerment.

CONCLUSION

Women are an integral part of a society. They play an important role in determining the destiny of a nation. It has been rightly said by **Swami Vivekanand**, "*The Best thermometer to the progress of nation is its treatment of women*". Therefore, due recognition to them in the society and their greater involvement in socio-economic and political affairs becomes all the more important. Every person should come forward to ensure equal status for women in all spheres of life.

Woman is an incarnation of 'Shakti'—the Goddess of Power. If she is bestowed with education, India's strength will double. Let the campaign of 'Kanya Kelavni' be spread in every home; let the lamp of educating daughters be lit up in every heart —**Narendra Modi**.

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