

# A Conceptual Study on Issues, Challenges and Ways of Women Empowerment in India

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**Abstract:** *This paper attempts to analyze the state of Women Empowerment in India and highlights the Issues and Challenges of concern with it and ways to empower them. 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. Empowerment of women is essentially the process of upliftment of economic, social and political status of women, the traditionally underprivileged ones, in the society. It is the process of guarding them against all forms of violence. 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:** Women Empowerment, Socio-cultural, Issues, Challenges

## 1. Introduction

In the ancient Indian society women were adored and worshiped as goddesses. However in the middle age, the status of women got down to a great extent. Women are considered in the society only to perform duties like bring up children, caring every family member, and other household activities. There is old and traditional faith of people coming out for years that men are for thy field whereas women are only for the home. Now-a-days, women are breaking all the barriers of social issues and problems against them in the society. Earlier to this women were facing a lot of problems because of male dominated, patriarchal society system, practice of old traditional believes, etc. Women were only responsible to the traditional roles like child bearing and child rearing. In the modern world, where women status has been improved a little while, still they are facing problems. They have to perform both family and professional responsibilities together without the help of their husbands. In some cases, the condition of women becomes more embarrassed when they get tortured by their family members instead of getting help. Sexual harassment is more common at homes as well as in the offices by the family members, relatives, neighbors, friends, boss, etc. They have to suffer a lot in their daily life to nourish their career as well as saving their family relationships.

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. Conceptual Framework

Empowerment refers to policies and measures designed to increase the degree of autonomy and self-determination in the lives of people and in communities in order to enable them to represent their interests in a responsible and self-determined way, acting (again) on their own authority. Empowerment refers both to the process of self-empowerment and to professional support of people, which enables them to overcome their sense of powerlessness and lack of influence, and to recognize and eventually use their resources and chances.

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. 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 specially 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. The term 'empowerment' has till-date not been very explicitly defined and it may be assumed

that based upon context the term may be interpreted contextually & situational. However, in context of women, empowerment essentially refers to a feeling of awareness of one's own situation backed up with the knowledge, skills and information which could enable women to gain higher self-esteem and facilitate their role as decision makers in the current patriarchal society where women have always been subordinate to men. Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social or economic strength of individuals and communities. It often involves the empowered developing confidence in their own capacities.

### 3. Review of Literature

**Ayyappadas (2016)** studies the problem faced by women entrepreneurs. The chief and most troublesome of which is the marketing problem, where men play a dominant role. Particularly, the rural women are worship though they possess indigenous knowledge, talent, potential and resources. But they are bountifully deprived of the legitimate and justifiable opportunity to prove their mettle. The proper choices of business, lack of technical skill and absence of training programs and other problems for women entrepreneurs.

**Manisha and Frehama (2014)** found that elimination of gender discrimination through women empowerment is not a national phenomenon but a global one. Endorsing this view Vike and Kale 2014 proceeds further and assert that the increased frequency and magnitude of participation in the modern technology based entrepreneurship world ensure sustainable development of national economy.

**Duflo E. (2011)** Women's Empowerment and Economic Development, National Bureau of Economic Research Cambridge The study argues that the inter relationships of the Empowerment and Development are probably too weak to be self sustaining and that continuous policy commitment to equally for its own sake may be needed to bring about equality between men and women.

### 4. Objectives of the Study

- 1) To study the Issues and challenges in Women Empowerment in India.
- 2) To analyze the ways for Empowerment of women.
- 3) To exhibits the Government Schemes and support for Women Empowerment.

### 5. Research Methodology

This paper is basically from secondary data. In this paper an attempt has been taken to analyze the issues, challenges and ways of empowerment of women in India. The data used in it is purely from secondary sources such as books, magazines, articles, past studies, research reports etc.

### 6. Issues and Challenges faced by Women in India

There are various issues and problems which women generally face in the society in India. Some of the problems

are mentioned and described below:

#### 1) Selective abortion and female infanticide

It is the most common practice for years in India in which abortion of female fetus is performed in the womb of mother after the fetal sex determination and sex selective abortion by the medical professionals.

#### 2) Sexual harassment

It is the form of sexual exploitation of a girl child at home, streets, public places, transports, offices, etc by the family members, neighbors, friends or relatives.

#### 3) Dowry and Bride burning

It is another problem generally faced by women of low or middle class family during or after the marriage. Parents of boys demand a lot of money from the bride's family to be rich in one time. Groom's family perform bride burning in case of lack of fulfilled dowry demand. In 2005, around 6787 dowry death cases were registered in India according to the Indian National Crime Bureau reports.

#### 4) Disparity in education

The level of women education is less than men still in the modern age. Female illiteracy rate is higher in the rural areas.

#### 5) Domestic violence

It is like endemic and widespread disease affects almost 70% of Indian women according to the women and child development official. It is performed by the husband, relative or other family member.

#### 6) Child Marriages

Early marriage of the girls by their parents is in order to be escaped from dowry. It is highly practiced in the rural India.

#### 7) Inadequate Nutrition

Inadequate nutrition in the childhood affects women in their later life especially women belonging to the lower middle class and poor families.

Some of the major problems modern women are still facing mentioned below:

#### 1) Violence against women:

Women are getting affected by the some sorts of violence almost every day which is disrupting the society. Women are being victims of violence at huge level day by day because of increasing crimes against women (according to the report of Crime Record Bureau of the Central Home Ministry). Woman is getting kidnapped at every 44 minutes, raped at every 47 minutes, 17 dowry deaths every day, etc. They may face violence within the family (dowry related harassment, death, marital rape, wife-battering, sexual abuse, deprivation of healthy food, female genital mutilation, etc) or outside the family (kidnapping, rape, murder, etc).

#### 2) Gender discrimination

Women are considered as weaker section of the society than men and given less importance. Girls' children are becoming real victims of the discrimination. There are also discrimination of power and work between men and women because of the patriarchal system families in India. Gender discrimination affects women in the areas like nutrition, education, health, care, decline of female population, job, public life, etc.

**3) Problems of female education**

Women education percentage is low in India especially in the rural areas because they are discouraged for higher education like professional and technical education.

**4) Problems related to unemployment**

Women are getting more problems in searching their suitable work. They become more prone to the exploitation and harassment in the work areas.

**5) Boss Intentionally**

They are given more work and hard tasks by their boss intentionally. They have to prove their devotion, seriousness and sincerity towards work time to time.

**6) Unbearable Conditions**

Women uneducated are more prone to divorce and desertion by their husbands on any stage of life. They have to live whole life with fear of divorce. In some cases they have to finish their life because of unbearable conditions.

**7) Increasing Dowry system**

Dowry system is another huge women problem in the society which is increasing day by day. Women are ill-treated, man-handled, disrespected, tortured and suffer other cruelties (violence, murder and suicide) because of the lack of dowry at the time of marriage. It causes degradation of women status to a great extent.

**7. Ways and means to empower women**

- Changes in women's mobility and social interaction
- Changes in women's labour patterns
- Changes in women's access to and control over resources and
- Changes in women's control over Decision making
- Providing education
- Self employment and Self help group
- Providing minimum needs like Nutrition, Health, Sanitation, Housing
- Other than this society should change the mentality towards the word women
- Encouraging women to develop in their fields they are good at and make a career

**8. Government schemes and support for women empowerment in India**

There are multiple government schemes to support and guide the rural women through various entitlements, which has also helped them to come together to form Self Help Groups (SHGs). Schemes like Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana supports more than 50 million small business owners, a majority of whom (78 per cent) are women. These SHGs with enterprising women help a community at large to explore business ideas, gain access to resources (human, intellectual and financial) to begin their venture and explore means to expand these as well. Mahila Shakti Kendra is another scheme that aims to empower rural women with opportunities for skill development, employment, digital literacy, health and nutrition

The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women in 2001 laid out goals and guiding principles for the

empowerment of women:

- 1) Creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential;
- 2) 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;
- 3) Equal access to participation and decision-making of women in social, political and economic life of the nation;
- 4) Equal access of women to healthcare, quality education at all levels, career and vocational guidance, employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security and public office, etc.
- 5) Strengthening legal systems aimed at elimination of all forms of discrimination against women;
- 6) Changing societal attitudes and community practices by active participation and involvement of both men and women;
- 7) Mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development process;
- 8) Elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and the girl child; and
- 9) Building and strengthening partnerships with civil society, particularly women's organizations.

The Centre would implement an umbrella scheme for protection and empowerment of women at an estimated expenditure of Rs.1800 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)
  - Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY)
  - The Velugu Programme
  - Indira Kranti Patham

## 9. 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.
- 5) Gender Discrimination must be Checked-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.
- 6) Educational Factor-Education is the most vibrant factor of advancement and growth. It is the only significant tool for anticipating women empowerment in India & human resource development. 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.
- 7) Education is the initial line of defense for women who withstand life-imperiling circumstances that traditional

lifestyle perpetuates. It motivates a sense of supervision over personal fortune. In addition to this, it unlocks the door to preferences that are not confined by tradition. With a meaningful education, the women's status strides beyond the restrictions of motherliness. Advancement of education of women and girls allots to the postponement of their marriage timing and the ensuing constriction in the volume of their families.

- 8) Priority should be plopped on enrolment along with retention of the girl child in basic formal schooling and non-formal education via incentive methods like a supply of textbooks free of cost, midday meals, school bags, science kits, uniform, scholarship, residential and hostel facilities as well as the expulsion of gender discrimination in the curriculum. Education will go an extended way in making women familiar with their legal and personal rights and make them battle for their privileges, which will direct to protecting their rights mentioned in the Constitution.
- 9) Mass Media is Bringing the Transformation-The mass media is responsible for playing a significant function to project and propagate associated issues, most specifically about women empowerment in India. The numerous programmes pertaining to women's prestige revealed the mass media enable her husband to behave toward her wife with loads of honor and respect. He can remake his attitude and assist her in the domestic domain to reduce stress and anxiety. The mass media performs a crucial role in repairing the attitude and way of conversation of husband and other family members towards women.
- 10) Steps Regarding Implementation of Women Development Programme along with Numerous Acts-Training programme based on action at the village or in rural parts of India along with vocational programmes and the growth-oriented entrepreneurship development programmes must be organized to make women self-reliant after becoming self-employed by enhancing their efficiency and capacities in making prompt decisions. It's extremely important to check cases related to female feticide & infanticide by prohibiting the sex determination of child that is yet to take birth via the Regulation & Prevention of Misuse Act 1994 as well as PNT ACT (Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques Act) other rulings correlating to marriage, succession, divorce, adoption, dowry and moral safety or protection against sexual harassment needs to be implemented for serving the goal of women empowerment in India.
- 11) Changes in Women's Attitude-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. Women must know that opportunities will not reach their laps. They would have to determine ways to create them. They should fight back to rebuild their prominent position in Indian communities and societies. They must flourish hard to carry out their rights and maintain justice & equality in society. They need to work vigorously for the entire elimination of poverty, dowry-ills, illiteracy, and productive implementation of all programmes and laws related to

women.

## 10. Conclusion

The most important need of the present time is to reform the social values and status of women. Society without women consider as body without heart. By providing same opportunities and importance to women may get gender equality maintained. 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.

Women's empowerment is valuable for the development and advancement of the family, community as well as the nation. Hence, it must be a leading concern of the Indian Government to bring women into the fore of the development strategy by empowering them via numerous development-oriented schemes.

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