



Different Types of Challenges in Women Empowerment

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Abstract: *'WOMEN EMPOWERMENT' refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender or economic strength of individuals and communities of women. Women's empowerment in India is heavily dependent on many different variables that include geographical location (urban / rural) educational status social status (caste and class) and age. 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. Women empowerment involves the building up of a society, a political environment, wherein women can breathe without the fear of oppression, exploitation, apprehension, discrimination and the general feeling of persecution which goes with being a woman in a traditionally male dominated structure.*

"There is no chance of the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on one wing."

– Swami Vivekananda.

Key Words: *Women's Empowerment, Upliftment, Violence.*

1.0 Introduction:

"Women are the largest untapped reservoir of talent in the world."

-----Hillary Rodham Clinton

Reflecting into the "Vedas Purana" of Indian culture, women are being worshiped such as LAXMI MAA, goddess of wealth; SARSWATI MAA, for wisdom; DURGA MAA for power. The status of women in India particularly in rural areas needs to address the issue of empowering women. About 66% of the female population in rural area is unutilized. This is mainly due to existing social customs. In agriculture and Animal care the women contribute 90% of the total workforce. Women constitute almost half of the population, perform nearly 2/3 of its work hours, receive 1/10th of the world's income and own less than 1/100th the world property. Among the world's 900 million illiterate people, women outnumber men two to one. 70% of people living in poverty are women. Lower sex ratio i.e. 933, the existing studies show that the women are relatively less healthy than men though belong to same class. They constitute less than 1/7th of the administrators and managers in developing countries. Only 10% seats in World Parliament and 6% in National Cabinet are held by women. Women constitute almost 50% of the world's population but India has

shown disproportionate sex ratio whereby female's population has been comparatively lower than males. As far as their social status is concerned, they are not treated as equal to men in all the places.

2.0 Why We Need Women Empowerment:

“We do not need magic to transform our world. We carry all of the powers we need inside ourselves already.”

--- J.K.Rowling

In India women are discriminated and marginalized at every level of the society whether it is social participation, political participation, economic participation, access to education, and also reproductive healthcare. Women are found to be economically very poor all over the India. A few women are engaged in services and other activities. So, they need economic power to stand on their own legs on par with men. Other hand, it has been observed that women are found to be less literate than men. According to 2001 census, rate of literacy among men in India is found to be 76% whereas it is only 54% among women. Thus, increasing education among women is of very important in empowering them. It has also noticed that some of women are too weak to work. They consume less food but work more. Therefore, from the health point of view, women folk who are to be weaker are to be made stronger. Another problem is that workplace harassment of women. There are so many cases of rape, kidnapping of girl, dowry harassment, and so on. For these reasons, they require empowerment of all kinds in order to protect themselves and to secure their purity and dignity. To sum up, women empowerment cannot be possible unless women come with and help to self-empower themselves. There is a need to formulate reducing feminized poverty, promoting education of women, and prevention and elimination of violence against women.

3.0 Challenges:

Social norms and family structure in developing countries like 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 in present in almost all societies and communities. The society is more biased in favour 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 with an exception of Meghalaya. 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.

There are several challenges that are plaguing the issues of women's right in India. Targeting these issues will directly benefit the empowerment of women in India.

3.1 Education:

While the country has grown from leaps and bounds since independence where education is concerned, the gap between women and men is severe. While 82.14% of adult men are educated, only 65.46% of adult women are known to be literate in India. The gender bias is in higher education, specialized professional trainings which hit women very hard in employment and attaining top leadership in any field.

3.2 Poverty:

Poverty is considered the greatest threat to peace in the world, and eradication of poverty should be a national goal as important as the eradication of illiteracy. Due to this, women are exploited as domestic helps.

3.3 Health and Safety:

The health and safety concerns of women are paramount for the wellbeing of a country and is an important factor in gauging the empowerment of women in a country. However there are alarming concerns where maternal healthcare is concerned.

3.4 Professional Inequality:

This inequality is practiced in employment and promotions. Women face countless handicaps in male customized and dominated environs in Government Offices and Private enterprises.

3.5 Morality and Inequality:

Due to gender bias in health and nutrition there is unusually high mortality rate in women reducing their population further especially in Asia, Africa and China.

3.6 Household Inequality:

Household relations show gender bias in infinitesimally small but significant manners all across the globe, more so, in India e.g. sharing burden of housework, childcare and menial works by so called division of work.

4.0 Hindrances of Women Empowerment:

The main Problems that were faced by women in past days and still today up to some extent:

1. Gender discrimination	Absence of ambition for the achievement
2. Lack of Education	Social status
3. Female Infanticide	Dowry
4. Financial Constraints	Marriage in same caste and child marriage (still existing)
5. Family Responsibility	Atrocities on Women (Raped, Kicked, Killed, Subdued, humiliated almost daily.)
6. Low Mobility	
7. Low ability to bear Risk	
8. Low need for achievement	

Need for Women Empowerment: Women are deprived of

Decision Making Power	Access to Employment
Freedom of Movement	Exposure to Media
Access to Education	Domestic Violence

5.0 Methods of Empowerment:

5.1 Economic empowerment

Economic empowerment increases women's agency, access to formal government programs, mobility outside the home, economic independence, and purchasing power. Policy makers are suggested to support job training to aid in entrance in the formal markets. One recommendation is to provide more formal education opportunities for women that would allow for higher bargaining power in the home. They would have more access to higher wages outside the home; and as a result, make it easier for women to get a job in the market. Strengthening women's access to property inheritance and land rights is another method used to economically empower women. This would allow them better means of asset accumulation, capital, and bargaining power needed to address gender inequalities. Often, women in developing and underdeveloped countries are legally restricted from their land on the sole basis of gender. Having a right to their land gives women a sort of bargaining power that they wouldn't normally have; in turn, they gain more opportunities for economic independence and formal financial institutions.

5.2 Political empowerment:

Political empowerment supports creating policies that would best support gender equality and agency for women in both the public and private spheres. Popular methods that have been suggested are to create affirmative action policies that have a quota for the number of women in policy making and parliament positions. As of 2017, the global average of women who hold lower and single house parliament positions is 23.6 percent. Further recommendations have been to increase women's rights to vote, voice opinions, and the ability to run for office with a fair chance of being elected. Because women are typically associated with child care and domestic responsibilities in the home, they have less time dedicated to entering the labour market and running their business. Policies that increase their bargaining power in the household would include policies that account for cases of divorce, policies for better welfare for women, and policies that give women control over resources (such as property rights). However, participation is not limited to the realm of politics. It can include participation in the household, in schools, and the ability to make choices for oneself. Some theorists believe that bargaining power and agency in the household must be achieved before one can move onto broader political participation.

5.3 Social Empowerment:

Social Empowerment refers to the enabling force that strengthens women's social relations and their position in social structures. Social empowerment addresses the social discriminations existing in the society based on disability, race, ethnicity, religion, or gender. A multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power in people for use in their own lives, their communities and in their society, by acting on issues they define as important.

5.4 Educational Empowerment:

An educated mother is a one thousand fold superior to a mere lecturer. Education creates self-confidence, self-esteem, self-sufficiency to a person. It brings light of hope; increases social, political, intellectual, cultural and religious consciousness; broadens the length of mind; removes all kinds of bigotry, narrowness, superstition and enhances fellow-feeling, tolerance etc. It helps in growing an individual's intellectual horizons, wellbeing and potential for empowerment. Without proper education to all children including girls, gender empowerment is not possible.

5.5 Psychological Empowerment:

Through psychological empowerment women not only transgress the traditional and patriarchal taboos and social obligations, they also transform their selves and subjectivities. When women join educational institutions, political parties or decision-making bodies; hold white color jobs, take decisions and travel different places; occupy land and wealth they feel psychologically powered and build their self-confidence, recognize their self-worth and take control of their own income and body. This joining in any institution and occupation gives them opportunities to see and to know more of the world than those who have stayed behind at home. This also gives them mental strength, and makes them firm, tough and hardworking.

6.0 Measurement and Assessment:

Women empowerment can be measured through the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), which shows women's participation in a given nation, both politically and economically. GEM is calculated by tracking "the share of seats in parliament held by women; of female legislators, senior officials and managers; and of female profession and technical workers; and the gender disparity in earned income, reflecting economic independence". It then ranks countries given this information. Other measures that take into account the importance of female participation and equality include: the Gender Parity Index or the Gender-related Development Index (GDI).

The Gender-related Development Index (GDI) is a way in which the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) measures the inequality between genders within a country. Some critique of this measurement is that, because GDI calculations rely solely on the achievement distribution between males and females of a population, GDI doesn't measure gender inequality; rather, it measures absolute levels on income, education and health.

7.0 Role of Education:

It is said that education increases "people's self-confidence and also enables them to find better jobs and they can work shoulder to shoulder with men". They engage in public debate and make demands on government for health care, social security and other entitlements". In particular, education empowers women to make choices that improve their children's health, their well-being, and chances of survival. Education informs others of preventing and containing the disease, and it is an essential element of efforts to reduce malnutrition. Furthermore, it empowers women to make choices that can improve their welfare, including marrying beyond childhood and having fewer children. Crucially, education can increase women's awareness of their rights, boost their self-esteem, and provide them the opportunity to assert their rights.

8.0 The Internet Use to Empower Women:

The growing access of the web in the late 20th century has allowed women to empower themselves by using various tools on the Internet. With the introduction of the World Wide Web, women have begun to use social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter for online activism. Through online activism, women are able to empower themselves by organizing campaigns and voicing their opinions for equality rights without feeling oppressed by members of society. For example, on May 29, 2013, an online campaign started by 100 female advocates forced the leading social networking website, Facebook, to take down various pages that spread hatred about women.

In recent years, blogging has also become a powerful tool for the educational empowerment of women. According to a study done by the University of California, Los Angeles, medical patients who read and write about their disease are often in a much happier mood and more knowledgeable than those who do not. By reading others' experiences, patients can better educate themselves and apply strategies that their fellow bloggers suggest. With the easy accessibility and affordability of e-learning (electronic learning), women can now study from the comfort of their homes. By empowering themselves educationally through new technologies like e-learning, women are also learning new skills that will come in handy in today's advancing globalized world.

9.0 Government Schemes and Programs to Empower Women:

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao -To eliminate female foeticide and to promote education for girl children.

STEP (Support to training cum Employment for women) – To increase the self-reliance and autonomy of women by enhancing their productivity & enabling them to take up income generation activity.

SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan) – For girl child education. It lead to increase in the Gender Parity Index (GPI).

The National literacy Mission or Saakshar Bharat – Literacy of women. Literacy is the critical instrument of women’s empowerment.

National Rural Health Mission – Educating women on health care. It has resulted in the decline in fertility rates, Maternal mortality rates (MMR), Infant mortality rates (IMR).

SHG (Self Help Groups) – For economic development in women by giving micro finances. **GB (Gender budgeting)** –Identifying the felt needs of women and re-prioritizing and increasing expenditure to meet these needs.

NMEW (National Mission for Empowerment of Women) –To ensure economic & social empowerment of women.

Swayamsidha scheme – To ensures total development of women.

Swadhar scheme – Basic necessities to marginalized women & girls.

Kishori Shakti Yojana – Empowerment of adolscent girls.

Mahila Samridhi Yojana – For women empowerment.

Maternity Benefit Scheme – Payment of Rs.500/- to pregnant women for the first two births only if the woman belongs to BPL (Below Poverty Line) category.

Rastriya Mahila Kosh – To provide micro loans for women.

Scheme for working women hostel – To promote availability of safe & conveniently located accommodation for working women.

Development of women & children in Rural Areas (DWCRA)– Creation of groups of women for income generating activities on self sustaining basis.

SABLA– Empowerment of adolescent girls.

10.0 Provision in Indian Constitution for Women Empowerment:

Article 14 – Equality before law – Provides equal legal protection for women.

Article 15(3) – Special provisions for women.

Article 16 – Equal opportunities for all citizens in public employment irrespective of caste, sex, religion.

Article 23 – Prohibits traffic in human beings & forced labor.

Article 39 – The citizen, men & women equally have the right to an adequate means of livelihood

Article 40 – 1/3 rd of seats in panchayats shall be reserved for women.

Article 42 – State shall make provisions for just and humane working conditions & maternity relief.

Article 44 – Uniform civil code for the citizens throughout the territory of India to safeguard women from laws of religion.

Article 51 A (e) – One of the duties of every citizen is to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of woman.

11.0 Suggestion:

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.

12.0 Conclusion:

“When women move forward the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves”. It is essential as their thought and their value systems lead the development of a good family, good society and ultimately a good nation. 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 Empowerment of Women has become one of the most important concerns of 21st century not only at national level but also at the international level. Government initiatives alone would not be sufficient to achieve this goal. Society must take initiative to create a climate in which there is no gender discrimination and women have full opportunities of self decision making and participating in social, political and economic life of the country with a sense of equality.

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