

Empowering Women in the social context of India: Problems and Possibilities

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ABSTRACT

The main aims and objectives of this article are to explore the nature of empowering women in the social economical and political ground and to know what problems are faced by all concerned and to realize the role of the Government of India in empowering women by eliminating the problems.

Gender discrimination in Indian social system exists from the days of immemorial. Naturally discrimination and injustice to women are very common in India in the third decade of the 21st century. In ancient Indian society the role of men was given importance but on the contrary no importance was given to the women.

However, now we can notice a radical change of the women in Indian society. Like all the developed and developing country, India too is empowering women to bring back them to the mainstream of the society.

It is known to all that the role of women in the progress and prosperity of a nation is not less. It is quite impossible to develop India if we cannot solve the problems related to gender discrimination. Naturally after independence; the social, political and economical aspects of the women were given importance to build a strong nation. Now equal importance is given to them in the fields of education and politics. As a result women literacy rate is increasing day by day and they are working as a decision maker in the various fields of our society. Now in our Indian social system women avail their law abiding rights in marriage, succession, politics, education and so on. Women are strengthening democracy by taking participation actively in national politics.

Keywords : Women Education, Gender Discrimination, Gender Equality, Women Security, Government Initiatives, Women Empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

Gender equality is mentioned in the Preamble of the Indian Constitution. Besides it can be found in the fundamental rights, fundamental duties and in the directive principles. Our constitution has not only provided the women equal rights but also a right to take positive step to remove discrimination. A radical change is noticeable in Indian society in the perspective of women empowerment. Within a democratic framework, our Indian society plays an important role to abolish discrimination by implementing law, making the principal for development, planning and taking so many initiatives.

From women protection/ security to women empowerment, in each level the Government of India has taken many steps. Now the Government of India has not only given emphasis on women empowerment but also paid its attention on how to expand the path of development through the leadership of women. For taking so many initiatives of Government and its principles, women power has become the

cause of the prosperity of the country. Now we can easily understand that there is deep insight related to women empowerment. A lot of excitement has been created by the questions related to the connection of the NGOs in the root level presence and many women movements for the women empowerment.

Yet, we can notice a vivid difference between the objectives mentioned in the constitution, laws, principles and programme and the position of women in reality. Discrimination is still going on in the case of girl-children, women and teen-aged girls. Incident of violence upon women either at home or at our society is very common. Therefore the topic "Empowering Women in the social contexts of India" is very important.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Generally empowering women means controlling a woman's own life; determining own issues; skill acquisition, confidence boost and solving any problem and the capability for self-reliance. So it is the situation/status of the women where they can promote themselves freely/independently and courageously. Women empowerment means ensuring their participation in social, economical and political activities. In other words, we may say that empowering women is a procedure through which gender-discrimination is abolished for the Welfare of the women, establishing equality and creating opportunities for resource extraction.

TYPES OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

(a) Social Empowerment:

Social empowerment is a dedication where equality between men and women is established. Decision making rights are established through the social empowerment.

(b) Political Empowerment :

Political empowerment of the women means active participation of the women in politics. It ensures the right to cast vote, the right to participate in politics, and the right to lead.

(c) Economical Empowerment :

Social and political empowerments are meaningless without economical empowerment. That is why we need to ensure the economical empowerment at first. Through the economical empowerment, equal opportunities in the field of work and equal payment like the men are insured.

(d) Psychological Empowerment:

Through psychological empowerment, women are protected from sexual harassment, exploitation, rape and killing.

(e) Educational Empowerment :

Through educational empowerment women are offered equal opportunities in education to eliminate illiteracy ensuring quality education.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT & CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

Fundamental features of our Constitution are found in the preamble of Indian Constitution. At the very beginning of the Preamble of Indian constitution, the phrase "We the people of India" clearly expresses that each and every Indians are equal irrespective of gender, caste and creed. Apart from this, women empowerment is mentioned in various sections of the Constitution. Those sections are mentioned below-

i) in the Article- 14 of the Constitution it is mentioned that all are equal to the law.

- ii) in the article -15, it has been said that discrimination should be strictly prohibited irrespective of caste, religion, gender and creed.
- iii) Article -16 guarantees equality of opportunity in the matters of public employment.
- iv) Article -21 includes that each citizen has the right to have personal liberty.
- v) Article-23 prohibits forced -labour even if remuneration is given & human trafficking.
- vi) Article 39-A Mentioned Justice and equity.
- vii) In Article-42, the creation of humane environment in the workplace and taking necessary actions for the obstetrics are mentioned.
- viii) In Article- 44; implementation of 'Uniform Civil Code' all over India has been mentioned.
- ix) Article- 51 A; clearly says that it is our fundamental duty to keep unity and fraternity neglecting caste, race and language difference.
- x) Article 243- D & 243 -T mention the women reservation policy in Panchayat and Municipal Election.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT RELATED TO LEGISLATIONS

- i) The Dowry prohibition Act ,1961.
- ii) National plan of action for the girl child(1991-2000).
- iii) National Commission for Women(1992).
- iv) The protection of women from domestic violence Act,2005.
- v) Maternity Benefit Act of 1961.
- vi) 73rd and 74th amendment to ensure one third participation of women at the grass- root levels.
- vii) The Women's Reservation Bill(2008).
- viii) National Policy for the Empowerment of Women(NPEW).

OBJECTIVES OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

The main aims and objectives of women empowerment are-

- i) Creating such an environment, so that the women can develop products of their own potential.
- ii) Helping the women specially to execute right to justice and independence in reality.
- iii) Creating a situation so that women can take part in the social, political and economical project.
- iv) To ensure equal right and equal opportunities like the men in the fields of health, education, scholarship, job, remuneration and safety and security.
- v) Preventing injustice and violence against women by strengthening the law.
- vi) Removing all the negative attitudes of our society regarding women.
- vii) Considering all the programmes related to development from the perspective of women development.
- viii) Last but not least, we may say that creation of necessary bondage is mandatory for the progress of a society by the Government and society collaboratively.

PROBLEMS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

The meaning of women empowerment is to enjoy the capabilities of self -reliance, right to self-controlling , right to life and livelihood and availing same importance like men. But it is a matter of concern that complete equality has not come till now. The main problems regarding this are mentioned below-

- (1) Patriarchy- In a patriarchal society, men consider girls to be very low in social status. As a result, men always try to dominate women in a patriarchal society. Therefore we notice a gender - discrimination between the men and women.
- (2) Family Bondage- We know that women are naturally fond of their families. As a result, independent thinking and planning their future completely depend on family in many cases. For this reason women are lagging behind men.
- (3) Early Marriage- Child-marriage is still noticed in villages. Personality development and other developments become immature due to child- marriage. Therefore we notice the image of weakness in people's own sense of judgement.
- (4) Economic Barriers - Malnutrition, ill-health and illiteracy due to poverty are very common in our country. Due to poverty women labourers suffer a lot of negligence.
- (5) Casteism - Due to casteism so called upper cast people look down upon the lower caste people. So it obstructs the path of creating equality.
- (6) Gap in male and female literacy rate - We know that women are deprived from higher-education showing many excuses. Therefore difference of literacy rate between girls and boys is easily found. Thus women are deprived from the mainstream of the society.
- (7) Negligence to Women health - No importance is paid properly to women in our society. As a result female- Foeticide, Maternal mortality rate and infant mortality rate are increasing day by day. So it has created a demographic imbalance.

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Government has taken so many initiatives and launched various schemes. So that discrimination between men and women is removed. The schemes are mentioned below.

(A) Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao Scheme: It is one of the best initiatives taken by government of India. It was launched on 22nd January, 2015 by the Prime Minister of India to ensure the survival, safety, security and quality education of the girls.

The objectives of the Beti Bachao beti padhao scheme are ----

- i) Prevention of female infanticide and other methods of sex -selective elimination.
- ii) Safe-guarding the survival and protection of the girl child.
- iii) Promoting education and active involvement of girl child.

(B) Working Women Hostel Scheme: The objectives of this scheme are:

- i) Promoting safe and conveniently located accommodation for working women with child care facilities.
- ii) Support construction and expansion of new and existing hostel buildings.
- iii) Accommodate working women from all background without discrimination.

(C) One Stop Centre Scheme: The objectives of this scheme are:

- i) Support women affected by violence in private and public spaces.
- ii) Provide a range of services under one roof, including medical, legal, psychological and counselling support.

(D) Women Helpline Scheme: It was launched in April 2015, The women helpline scheme aims to provide women who have experienced abuse in either public or private sectors with (24*7) emergency assistance. The government introduced a toll -free number for providing quick and emergency assistance. Women can use this helpline number in every state and union territory across the country.

(E) Mahila Police Volunteers Scheme: The Mahila police volunteers scheme was introduced in 2016 by the Ministries of women and child Development and Home affairs in all states and UTs. Mahila Police Volunteers Scheme will act as a public alliance -police to combat crimes against such as dowry harassment, child marriage, domestic abuse and domestic violence. This plan also encourages women to join the police force by fostering a secure atmosphere.

(F) Swadhar Greh: it is one of the Indian Government schemes for women empowerment introduced in 2018. This project's primary goals are to ensure social, economic and health security as well as to offer housing, food and clothes.

(G) STEP(support to training and Employment program for women): From 1986-1987, the Ministry of women and child Development operated the STEP scheme as a " Central sector scheme" in December 2014, it underwent revision. It was designed to give women work security and training in skill development.

(H) Mahila Shakti Kendras: Mahila Shakti Kendra, an initiative for women's empowerment started in India in 2017, is one of the well known schemes for women. It intends to offer women convergent support services at one location. So they can grow their talents, find work and improve their digital literacy

(I) Rajiv Gandhi National Crech Scheme : The Indian Government has established the National Creche Scheme for children of working- mothers to provide several amenities. It was introduced in 2006, this initiative offers working mothers with child care services and promises mothers with child care services and enhance their health and nutrition status.

(J) Ujjwala Scheme: This program was introduced in December 2007, it is an extensive scheme established by the Indian Government to suppress and trafficking and retrieve, treat and reintegrate sexually exploited survivors of human trafficking.

(K) Nirbhaya : Nirbhaya scheme was launched in 2012, It aims to -i)Ensure safety and security for women.ii)Ensure confidentiality of women's identity

(L) Gender Budgeting Scheme: Gender Budgeting Scheme are ultimately politicized declarations as well as fiscal policy mechanisms. Gender-sensitive budgeting analyzes how budgets address the concerns of female and males, regardless of whether the youngstars, adolescents or grown ups.

(M) Janani Suraksha Yojana: Janani Suraksha Yojana is safe Motherhood intervention under the National Rural Health Mission. It is being implemented with the objectives of reducing maternal and infant mortality by promoting institutional delivery among pregnant women.

(N) Nari Shakti Puraskar(2016): Strengthen the place of women in society. Create an assist institutions that work toward women empowerment in society

(O) Mahila E- Haat (2016): Providing online entrepreneurship opportunities for women. Educates women on various aspects of online business.

(P) Kanyashree Scheme: it is one of the notable initiatives taken by the Government of West Bengal, for the women empowerment .It intends to improve the life and the status of the girls by helping economically backward families with cash. So that the girls can continue their education and their family do not arrange their marriage before 18 years because of economic problem. As expected, it has reduce child marriage.

POSSIBILITIES OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

For taking so many initiatives by the Government and progress of the women in our society, Women empowerment is gradually showing its positive aspects. Gender-discrimination between men and women is decreasing. If we want women empowerment in India, the following approaches should be adopted.

1. Review and update current scheme to assess their effectiveness in terms of social indicators.
2. Women led SHGs and cooperative like SEWA should be promoted.
3. Strict implementation of Justice Verma committee's recommendations to prevent violence against women.
4. Make in India should use women to show their potentials.
5. Social security supports should also be expanded to all single women and universalized.
6. Effective implementation of the inter-state migration act and trafficking laws.
7. Provide loans, Infrastructure and market facilities for women's Cooperatives and groups, and marketing of their products.
8. Better education opportunities.
9. Skilling and Financing.
10. Improvement in basic amenities at Rural level.
11. Deconstructing Stereo types.
12. Passage of women reservation bill.

CONCLUSION

Stricter laws are not enough, time bound disposal of justice is essential to prevent crimes against women. Need to address the special needs of single women such as widows, separated, divorced, never-married and deserted women including women-headed households and single women living within households. When we empower the women in a family, we empower the entire household. When we support women's education, we ensure that the entire family is educated. When we facilitate her good health, we help to keep the entire family healthy. When we secure her future we secure the future of the entire home. The National education policy (NEP) 2020, priorities gender equity and envisions ensuring equitable access to quality education to all students.

Women education and Women progress are necessary for the growth and development of future generation. Hope that gender-discrimination will not exist in our country in future for the women empowerment. Empowering women means strengthening the future.

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