THE OVERVIEW OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to determine the factors affecting women empowerment and the issues faced by them. The paper also reveals the status of women empowerment in India and how factors are affecting the current status of women in India. The chosen factors for this research are status, health, access to education opportunities, exposure to media, decision making power social, freedom of movement, economic and legal rights as men, adopted from past literatures and various reports. The urge for equality on the part of Indian women started getting momentum during the colonial times. Empowering women means one family is moving forward with that one village moves and the nation moves simultaneously. It is found that women in India are not empowered and treated lower status relatively to men. To overcome all the prevalent issues, many efforts have been done by government to empower women at national level across India by implementing various schemes and initiatives. This paper tries to postulates potentialities of women in various fields and initiatives undertaken by Government of India.

Key words: Women, Women Empowerment, Government Initiatives, Empowerment.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Women are the backbone of the society and family will never complete without women. Women constitute almost half of the human race. At present, there is a revolution in the role and status of women throughout the world. Globally, they are breaking away from the traditional and stereotype roles. They have entered into the conventional male dominated society and are doing full justice to their new found roles. Empowering women and removal of

poverty “go hand in hand”. The role of women in modern organizations and as entrepreneurs is of great academic interest (Rani and Sinha, 2016). If women are educated and empowered, her potential power can be utilized for the economic and social development of the nation.

The status of women in ancient India was quite high esteemed however it got deteriorated with the passage of time and mentality of people towards women. Slowly the practice of polygamy, sati paratha, dowry system, female infanticide, etc. became dominated and gave rise to the male dominated country. Great Indian leaders had worked a lot to again raise the status of women in the Indian society. Because of their hard work bad practices against women in the Indian society have been banned to a great extent. Government of India has implemented various effective laws regarding safety and empowerment of the women.

According to the Government of India, "Empowerment means moving from a weak position to execute a power." It is the ability to direct and control one's life. It is a process in which women gain control over their own lives of knowing and claiming their right at all levels of society at the international, local and household levels. Women also bear almost all responsibility for meeting basic needs of the family. Women empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender or economic strength of individuals and communities of women.

Different international treaties and human rights instruments dedicated to providing fair rights for women have been ratified by the government of India. These are CEDAW (1993), the Mexico Action Plan (1975), the Forward-Looking Tactics of Nairobi (1985), the Declaration of Beijing, and the Forum for Action (1995) and other instruments of this nature. The year 2001 was seen as the emperor year of women. A landmark document, 'the National Policy for Women's Empowerment,' was adopted during the year. The government has adopted various schemes and programs for women's beneficiaries, including the National Credit Fund for Women (1993), the Food and Nutrition Board (FNB), Information and Mass Education (IME) etc.

The urge for equality on the part of Indian women started getting momentum during the colonial times. Noted social reformers and national leaders like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Annie Besant, Sarojini Naidu and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar made selfless efforts to create awareness among women about their status and were quite successful in removing various social evils such as sati paratha, child marriage, and polygamy. They also encouraged widow remarriage and women education. The reformers were successful in creating a base for development of women and their strive for equality. In course of time Indian society got transformed from traditional to a modern one. Consequently, women became more liberal and aware of various ways of life. Since they are quite capable of breaking the traditional barriers imposed by the society are now challenging the patriarchal system.

Many scholars had defined it nicely but the main theme of their definition is basically empowerment literally means 'To invest with Power' and Women empowerment can be understood as a “change in the context of a women’s life, which enables her increased capacity for leading a fulfilling human life”.

Batilwala (1998:01) has defined “Empowerment is the process by which the powerless gain greater control over the circumstances of their lives. It includes both control over resources and over ideology. Ultimately it includes a growing intrinsic capability-greater self-confidence and an inner transformation of one's consciousness that enables one to overcome external barriers”.

The UNO (2001: 04) has provided a meaningful conceptual framework of empowerment of women. It states that “Empowerment is defined as the process by which women take control and ownership of their lives through expansion of their choices. It is the process of acquiring the ability to make strategic life choices in a contest where this ability has previously been denied”.

2. RELATED LITERATURES

Entire gamut of literature has centered mainly around conceptual and measurement issues and the constraints to women empowerment. The present study in this respect analyzes the status of women empowerment in India by taking into consideration various dimensions of it such as access to education, decision making power, access to employment, domestic violence, access to employment, exposure to politics, health aspect, women's household decision making power, financial autonomy, freedom of movement, acceptance of unequal gender role, exposure to media, experience of domestic violence, etc., based on data from different sources. To understand the women empowerment issues author has reviewed many literatures and briefly examined the critical areas.

Malik and Courtney (2011) stated in their study that higher education helps in empowerment to women. It also gives the economic independence and enough confidence to stand with the family.

Rathore (2017) has illustrated the role and importance of education in upliftment and empowerment of women. The finding of the study states that education helps women in reducing inequalities and improving their status within the society and there is a positive relationship between education and women empowerment.

Venkatarami and Venkatraman (2005) focused on the effects of society and social interactions on women participation. The status of women in India can be empowered with exercising control over decision making both in family matters and in group activities.

Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2001) had an important contribution on the impact of women's leadership on policy decision. The author has found that women were more likely to participate in policy making process if the leader of the village community was happened to be women.

Mahanta (2002) has explained that deprivation of basic human rights as the right to health, education and work, legal rights, rights of working women's, besides issues like domestic violence, are important to highlight in the present era. The policy of political reservation for women in India is still in nascent stage.

Blumberg (2005) illustrated that empowerment of women increased by financial manner would not only the key for gender equality but also to well-being of a nation. This will lead to reduction in corruption, armed conflict and violence against females in the long run.

Karat (2005) had discussed about the political issues with women. The findings of the study revealed that violence against women, their survival, political participation and emancipation were increased with the time.

Panda and Agarwal (2005) focused on the factor like women's property status and spiritual empowerment in the context of her risk of marital violence and opined that if development means expansion of human capabilities, then freedom from domestic violence should be an integral part of any exercise for evaluating developmental progress.

Desai and Thakkar (2007) in their work discussed women's political participation, legal rights and education as tools for their empowerment.

Shariff (2009) has introduced a particular gender equality measure for India that preserves specific circumstances existing in the country in terms of culture. He defined six dimensions available from sample surveys and government reports on which accurate evidence is available. The measurements are literacy, work participation levels, decision-making capacity (women's right to make transactions for everyday household needs and participation in own health care decision-making), resource control (immovable properties and bank accounts), fertility and care (ability to select a modern form of contraception and ensure that their own children are completed with all necessary thousands of contraceptives).

Subrahmanyam (2011) has compared the current and historical education of women in India. The author stressed that the total enrolment of girls in schools has made strong progress. The word empower means granting lawful authority or power to act. It is the method of securing those women's activities.

Rao (2011) has stressed that the wellbeing of women members of the SHG has clearly taken a turn for the better. It clearly indicates that women's health members address health-related concerns of other members and their children among themselves and make them aware of different provisions expressly planned for them by the government.

Doepke & Tertilt (2011) Does economic growth foster female empowerment? This thesis is an observational analysis showing that children benefit from money in the hands of mothers. In order to understand what kind of frictions may give rise to the observed empirical relationship, this research established a set of non-cooperative family bargaining models.

Duflo E. (2011) Women's Advancement and Sustainable Growth at the Cambridge National Office of Economic Research. The study argues that Empowerment and Development's interrelationships are potentially too fragile to be self-supporting and that it might be necessary for continuous political commitment to equality for its own sake to bring about equality between men and women.

Sethuraman K. (2008) The Role of Women's Empowerment and Domestic Violence in the South India Tribal and Rural Society in Child Development and Nutrition. This study paper examines the association between women's empowerment and domestic abuse in rural and tribal societies, maternal nutritional status and nutritional status and development over six months in children aged 6 to 24 months. In rural Karnataka, this longitudinal retrospective research was carried out. India contained topics from tribal and rural areas.

Mishra and Nayak (2010) in their work, they stressed how schooling plays a key role in human growth; the other two elements are actually based on educational development for health and income.

(UNDP 1995). The Report noted that without empowering women overall development of human beings is not possible. Empowerment of the women would automatically bring empowerment of everyone. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said "To awaken the people, it is the women who must be awakened. Once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves". The need for women empowerment is because women are deprived of many things like access to education, decision making power, access to employment, domestic violence, access to employment, social interaction and empowerment, exposure to politics, and health aspect.

All these above issues are important for women empowerment in developing country like India. To provide them a better status, women should be assessed in multidimensional. To cope up with these issues, author has compiled several factors from various literature and concluded in the following table:

Table 1

Factors	Cited by
Access to Education	<i>Malik and Courtney 2011; Mishra and Nayak 2010; Subrahmanyam 2011; Rathore 2017</i>
Social empowerment	<i>Venkatarami and Venkatraman 2005; Mahanta 2002</i>
Access to Employment and Economic Empowerment	<i>Doepke & Tertilt 2011; Desai and Thakkar 2007; Blumberg 2005;</i>
Legal/Decision Making Power	<i>Duflo E. 2011</i>

Political empowerment	<i>Shariff 2009; Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2011</i>
Domestic freedom & Spiritual empowerment	<i>Sethuraman K. ,2008; Panda and Agarwal 2005</i>
Health Aspect	<i>Sethuraman K. 2008; Rao 2011</i>

Source: Author Compilation

1. Access to Education: It includes the training, orientation and academic progress of women. Education is considered as a potential instrument which gives the idea and new thoughts towards necessary skills. Modernization and social change came into existence with the help of access to education (Rathod, 2017). Education plays a vital role in country development as it provides the opportunities in abundance and as a professional role in the society. As per the NSSO 2016, survey, Kerala has highest female literacy and standard of living. Education not only enhances the awareness among women but it also gives the confidence and independence towards a living a good life. As per the Census 2011, we can clearly say that there is a huge gap in literacy rates and school admission. Education is one of the important factors that affects greatly in women's control over economic and societal situation in the family. If any woman is educated then she can go for the skilled job and can earn well. Thus, we can say that education will play a critical role in women empowerment.

2. Social Empowerment: It includes "better status in the family, freedom for marriage, right to property, social mobility, social freedom, family welfare, social transformation and gender equity." Thought and value systems leads to development of society, a good family and ultimately a better country. The women empowerment has been facing certain serious challenges, which are outcome of some certain evil norms and attitude such as child labour, child marriage, illiteracy, superstition, partial attitude of the parents, female feticides, etc. and in such a situation women empowerment is an urgent necessity. In order to promote women's empowerment, it is necessary to create an environment that will allow women to participate in educational programs and share the benefits.

3. Access to Employment or Economic Empowerment: It includes ownership and control of research right to property, employability, improvement in the standard of living, fulfilment of basic needs, entrepreneurship development and improvement of bargaining power of women. If women are employed or earning then it will empower her in decision making and controlling the situations better than before. As per the Nayak & Mahanta, 2011 found that women are not paid as much the men are paid for the same work. The main reason behind this might be dependency towards family. They are obliged to do household work together with the job. So most of the employers are not recruiting them and if they recruit also they pay less salary. To overcome this situation, women empowerment is much needed.

4. Legal and Household Decision Making Power: It includes the includes constitutional protection, fundamental rights, protection against gender-based discrimination, women specific laws, women courts and other safety measures. The household work plays an affecting role in decision-making power of any women. Therefore, domestic violence comes into the picture and that makes them step back. Many scholars have stated in their study about the physical and sexual violence against the women. This should be stopped and legal power should be exercised against the unlawful activities. These activities will stop when there will be specific laws against it. prevention and punishment of sexual harassment at workplace, protection of workers in the organised and unorganised sector and strict enforcement of relevant laws such as Equal Remuneration Act and Minimum Wages Act will be undertaken. Legal and decision-making power inside and outside the house is very much important for any women. Thus, we can say that it is also one of the critical factors in women empowerment.

5. Political Empowerment: It includes political reservation, political participation and political leadership development of women. In traditional way of voting, it was there that women are not allowed for voting or present their views but nowadays they are treated as the part of the decision. The seminal 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Bills, 1992 by the Center and its adoption by the State, was the most significant milestone in the path of women's empowerment. 1/3rd seats for women in the Panchayat raj and civic bodies were reserved for the Constitution Amendment acts. In political empowerment, electoral politics-related practices such as voting, lobbying, holding party office and contesting elections are defined. The involvement of women in India today ranges from peace and good governance campaigns to demonstrations against dowry, rape, domestic abuse, food adulteration, price hikes, etc. (Desai et al, 2007). These makes them empower and they will take independent decision not for their family but also for the society in future times.

6. The Spiritual Empowerment: It includes emancipation from superstitions, misbelieves, customs, traditions and unhealthy practices that safeguard the interest of women. As our destiny continues to manifest, you will get busier, but the root of all dominance is the strength you have in Heaven. You need a (superior) divine seat to maintain the other (lower) seats you have in life. Emancipation from superstitions, misbeliefs, rituals, habits and unhealthy behaviours that protect women's rights requires moral emancipation.

7. Health Aspect: It includes food, nutrition, health, sanitation, life expectancy and growth. Empowering women means that women usually gain a great deal of power and authority over their own lives and social status. The most significant element of female empowerment is wellness. It also involves wellbeing as a holistic aspect of which there is an expression of multiple roles they play as husbands, sisters, health care providers in the family both in the changed scenario, as well as in the changed scenario.

Besides low female literacy, there are many other factors that have contributed to gender biasness. The World Economic Forum (2005), in its first gender gap study placed India at 53rd position among 58 nations, which shows a significant gap in male and female achievements. Since 1990, in its various Human Development Reports, the UNDP has placed India at a very low level of development with regard to the position of women in terms of various indicators, such as adult literacy, gross enrollment, the share of seats in parliament and the professional and technical positions held by women.

3. EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN INDIA

The principle of empowerment derives from power. Where it does not exist or occurs inadequately, it is vesting. Women's empowerment will mean equipping women to be economically autonomous, self-reliant, to have a strong appreciation that would enable them to confront any challenging circumstance, and to be willing to engage in development activities. In the decision-making process, motivated women should be allowed to be included.

Today, we saw women chief ministers, women presidents, leaders of various political parties, well-established businessmen, etc. Women are also interested in the topics of child rearing, schooling, hygiene, and gender parity in human development. Many of them have gone through a number of cottage products-pickles, tailoring, embroidery, etc.-making and selling. These days, women's economic empowerment is considered a sine-quo-none of development for a nation; thus, the question of women's economic empowerment is of utmost importance to political thinkers, social thinkers and reformers.

Today, at every point of life and at every level of society, women are still discriminated against and opposed. Women are observed to lack financial wellbeing, social engagement with politics, and job-based schooling. Empowerment is very necessary in the process of rising women's physical, social and political status. Women account for approx. 50% and have equal

citizenship and status, but in India they face lower social status and gender inequality. Therefore, many projects and actions for the upliftment of women have been initiated by state and central government and enable them to stand equally in present-day India. In recent years, the most positive development has been the increasing involvement of women in the institutions of the Panchayati Raj. At the village council level, there are many elected female representatives.

Women all over India are found to be very poor economically. In services and other activities, a few women are engaged. So, they need economic power to stand on their own legs on par with men. On the other hand, it has been found that females are less literate than males. The literacy rate among men in India is found to be 76 percent, according to the 2001 census, while it is only 54 percent among women.

Recognizing the need to include women in different development initiatives, the Government of India, through programmes and schemes, has implemented many affirmative steps to put them into the mainstream of development. Every government and time to time governments has launched several plans and schemes has been implemented for the women empowerment by The Government of India. The women empowerment schemes and plans are written following:

- Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao
- Training and Employment Program for Women
- Central Social Welfare Board
- Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana
- Short Stay Home for Women and Girls
- Swadhar
- Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls
- Rashtriya Mahila Kosh
- Swayam Siddha Yojana
- One Stop Centre Scheme
- Women Helpline Scheme
- Mahila Police Volunteers
- UJJAWALA
- Nari Shakti Purushkar
- Mahila-E-Haat

After evaluating the details, it is found that household decision-making power and the freedom of movement of women differ greatly with age, education and jobs. More than ever, a widow or divorcee has the right to travel, whether married or never married. Similarly, in society, the acceptance of unequal gender norms by women themselves often prevails. More than half of women assume that for some particular reason, beating a wife is acceptable, such as not cooking well, not properly taking care of households and children, shelter from sex with a husband, contempt for in-laws, etc. This mindset does not differ greatly, however, with age or household composition, but decreases dramatically with education and places of residence. It is observed that gender differences remain in all cases when investigating women's access to education and jobs. There is a wide gender disparity in literacy and girls' enrollment is below 50 per cent at all levels of schooling. Similarly, fewer than 50% of women are working and a large percentage of women are not paying for their jobs.

Cash earnings regulation varies with age and place of residency in urban areas and schooling, but does not differ substantially with the composition of households. In contrast to men, women's media visibility is also lower. The history of domestic violence among women indicates that violence is not reduced by age. Rural women are more vulnerable than urban women to domestic violence. With respect to women's political participation, it is observed that there is a wide gender disparity in voting and women make up less than 10% of the overall membership in Lok Sabha. This is because most women lack the required degree of financial stability, literacy, positive personality, ability to make their own choices, support for the home, etc. Therefore, we see that these mutually interdependent variables strengthen one another and place women in a disadvantageous role compared to men. Various limitations are often defined to achieve the optimal degree of empowerment. Poverty, social norms and family structure, lack of knowledge of legal and constitutional requirements, etc. are important among them.

Women are becoming more aware of themselves. Their health, education, career, work and duties to family, to society. They take part in this process. In each region and demonstrating their great interest in each field. Finally, after many years of difficult struggle, they get their own Rights to go ahead on the right path. In this manner, The Rights India's government has started so many schemes for Women's Empowerment. The most valued agenda was this topic and was placed on top of the lists of government policies and plans of several countries. In order to resolve this dilemma and improve the legal, cultural, and economic status of women, attempts have been made across nations on an orderly basis.

Women all over India are considered to be very weak economically. To sum up, it will not be possible to encourage women until women come with them. And support themselves to self-empower. There is a need to express the elimination of feminized poverty, the advancement of women's education and the prevention and elimination of Women's brutality. Perhaps the only way to motivate women is by getting them into the forefront of growth. Only when they are endowed with income and property to stand on their feet and build their identity in society can women's empowerment be concrete and successful

4. CONCLUSION

It is found that women in India are not empowered and treated lower status relatively to men. To overcome all the prevalent issues, many efforts have been done by government to empower women at national level across India by implementing various schemes and initiatives. This paper tries to postulates potentialities of women in various fields and initiatives undertaken by Government of India.

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