

A STUDY ON FACTORS THAT PLAYS AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT- IN INDIA

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Abstract: Women's Empowerment has been an issue of immense discussions and contemplation over the last few decades world-wide. Women Empowerment in India is a challenging task as we need to acknowledge the fact that gender based discrimination is a deep rooted social malice practiced in India in many forms since thousands of years. The malice is not going to go away in a few years or for that matter by attempting to work at it through half-hearted attempts.

Efforts have been made on a regular basis across nations to address this issue and enhance the socio-economic status of women. However, it has been observed that most of the policies and programs view empowerment in the economic sense only working in the belief that economic self-reliance empowers women ignoring other variables like health, education, literacy, social status, etc.

The paper aims to highlight the Issues and challenges faced by Women in various walks of her life from different spheres of the society to maintain her identity and self-respect especially in India.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Education, Social System, Challenges.

Introduction: World is moving towards Globalization and Liberalization at fast pace with no differentiation or disparities at any level but, still Women empowerment is a debatable subject especially in India.

The origins of the concept of empowerment go back to the civil rights movement in the USA in the 1960. It has since then been interpreted differently and filled with new meanings and is today used in such different sectors as business, social work, development discourse and by advocates of very different political agendas.

Empowerment of women would mean equipping women to be economically independent, self-reliant, have positive esteem to enable them to face any difficult situation and they should be able to participate in development activities. The empowered women should be able to participate in the process of decision making.

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.

Historical Background: The status of Women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennium. In early Vedic period Women enjoyed equal status with men. Rigved & upnishads mention several names of women sages and seers notably Gargi & Maitrey. However later the status of women began to deteriorate approximately from 500 B.C., the situation worsened with invasion of Mughals and later on by European invaders.

After independence of India, the constitution makers and the national leaders recognized the equal social position of women with men. The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 has determined the age for marriage, provided for monogamy and guardianship of the

mother and permitted the dissolution of marriage under specific circumstances. Under the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956, an unmarried women, widow or divorce of sound mind can also take child in adoption.

The real change came after independence. Constitution of India guarantees equality to women (Article 14). There are other articles too which ensure rights of women e.g. no discrimination by the state [article15(1)] equality of opportunity (Article16) etc. Feminist activism picked up momentum in India during later 1970's. Later on Many groups and NGO's have been working for the Empowerment of women. We are proud that in India Women got voting right much before USA and some other European country. The National Commission for Women, set up in 1992 covers issues relating to safeguarding women's rights and promotion of their empowerment. The Commission works for review of laws, intervention in specific individual complaints of atrocities and sexual harassment of women at work place, and remedial actions to safeguard the interest of women. The scheme of Balika Samriddhi Yojana (BSY) was launched in 1997 with the specific objective to change the community's attitude towards the girl child.

The most positive development last few years has been the growing involvement of women in the Panchayati Raj institutions. There are many elected women representatives at the village council level. At present all over India, there are total 20, 56, 882 laces Gaon panchayat members, out of this women members is 8, 38, 244 (40.48%), while total Anchalik panchayat members is 1, 09, 324, out of this women members is 47, 455, (40.41%) and total Zilla parishad members is 11, 708, out of this women members is 4, 923 (42.05%).

The National Policy for the Empowerment of women (2001) was an important step taken by the Government of the time for accelerating the pace of women empowerment. The policy was aimed at ensuring women empowerment through positive economic and social policies for the full development of women. So that they could realize their full potential. The policy assured equal access to women to health care, quality education, participation and decision making in Social, Political and Economical life of the nation.

Recently the Government has launch a scheme **Sukanya Samridhhi Scheme** as part of a part of the present government's "Beti Bachao - Beti Padhao" initiative and was launched on January 22, this year.

Need And Importance Of The Study: Women play an important role in all the fields of life. Women contribute directly and indirectly for the economic development. Empowering women is the only solution for all questions.

Objective Of Study:

The study has following objectives:

1. To study the status of women and efforts made in past and present.

2. To study the role of Government in empowering women.

Methodology: For the preparation of this paper secondary data is used.

Analysis:

Why is there still a Need For Women Empowerment?

Inspite of the various measures taken up by the government after Independence and even during British rule the Women haven't been fully empowered because of Social factors dominating the society. The ground reality is deprivation, degradation and exploitation of women specially women from rural areas and those belonging to deprived sectors of the society. And one of the most important issues is increase in rate of crime against women.

1. **Crimes against Women:** The crimes against women fly directly against orchestrating women empowerment in India. A report on the crimes against women by the National Crime Records Bureau comes up with some alarming statistics:-

I No.	Crime Head	Year 2006	Year 2007	Year 2008	Year 2009	Year 2010	Year 2011	Year 2012	Percentage Variation in 2012 over 2011
1	Rape (Sec. 376 IPC)	19,348	20,737	21,467	21,397	22,172	24,206	24,923	3.0
2	Kidnapping & Abduction (Sec. 363 to 373 IPC)	17,414	20,416	22,939	25,741	29,795	35,565	38,262	7.6
3	Dowry Death (Sec 302/304 IPC)	7,618	8,093	8,172	8,383	8,391	8,618	8,233	-4.5
4	Torture (Sec. 498-A IPC)	63,128	75,930	81,344	89,546	94,041	99,135	1,06,527	7.5
5	Molestation (Sec. 354 IPC)	36,617	38,734	40,413	38,711	40,613	42,968	45,351	5.5
6	Sexual Harassment (Sec. 509 IPC)	9,966	10,950	12,214	11,009	9,961	8,570	9,173	7.0
7	Importation of Girls (Sec. 366-B IPC)	67	61	67	48	36	80	59	-26.3
8	Sati Prevention Act, 1987	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	-100.0
9	Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956	4,541	3,568	2,659	2,474	2,499	2,435	2,563	5.3

A total of 2,44,270 incidents of crime against women (both under IPC and SLL) were reported in the country during the year 2012 as compared to 2,28,650 in the year 2011 recording an increase of 6.4% during the year 2012. These crimes have continuously increased during 2008 – 2012 with 1,95,856 cases in the year 2008, 2,03,804 cases in 2009 and 2,13,585 cases in 2010 and 2,28,650 cases in 2011 and 2,44,270 cases in the year 2012. West Bengal with 7.5% share of country's female population has accounted for nearly 12.7% of total crime against women by reporting 30,942 cases during the year 2012.

Education: Education is a powerful tool of social transformation. Education can play a vital role in bringing about the desirable behavioural changes among the women and make them well equipped in terms of knowledge, competence and capacity to deal with different political problems.

Globalization Next one of major issue of concern is Globalization. It has presented new challenges for the realization of the goal of women's equality, the gender impact of which has not been systematically evaluated fully. However, from the micro-level studies that were commissioned by the Department of Women & Child Development, it is evident that there is a need for re-framing policies for access to employment and quality of employment.

Social Empowerment of Women Under the social empowerment of women steps needs to be taken to improve the health status of women, reduce maternal mortality especially in the areas which do not have good medical facilities. Awareness programmers' need to be organized for creating awareness among women especially belonging to weaker sections about their rights.

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