

CONCEPT OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

S. I. Waikhom¹, Nanaobi D Waikhom², Vipinkumar G Yadav³

Associate Professor, Civil Engg. Deptt., Dr. S S & S GEC, Surat, Gujarat, India ¹

Student, English Dept., Seth M P T College, SNDT University, Surat, Gujarat, India²

Associate Professor, Civil Engg. Deptt., Govt. Engg. College, Rajkot, Gujarat, India ³

Abstract: Women empowerment is a word which, just as it is mentioned, brings upon the mind an understanding that women are weak, seeking help and need to be supported. As long as this word will remain in public forum of discussion, women cannot become empowered in true sense. Nature has made women different from men physiologically and anatomically, besides other minor differences in terms of physical ruggedness, brute strength, emotional bonding and the likes. The nature of work chosen by the earlier humans, hunting and food collection by men and rest by women at tribes, started this disparity in dignity and significance of work. This further lead to women being treated as “Assets” like cattle and were often used for trading. Women of that time must also have had to fight their way out of this perception and treatment, may it be for saving their children or their men. This modified role has remained with Indian society till today. Still women are expected to look after the families of men, and fight out the threat to “safety and survival” if beyond their men. Women of today have a herculean challenge to change their popular image and be acknowledged again as equal to men. Modern ideas of individual freedom, educational and technological advancement has made today’s women more self-confident, self-reliant and self-satisfied. While a sizeable section of society has already been struck by this glittering transformation, a vast population still has to come to accept and adopt it. Many modern women have showcased their potential by achieving high accolades in various fields while still fulfilling their share of family responsibilities. The new generation needs to look up to them as role models and persevere to bring equality among men and women as human beings. The present study aims to highlight the concept of women empowerment as understood by modern Indian Society and the way it is moving towards future goals.

Keywords: Crime against women, Modern Women, Women Achievers, Women Empowerment, Women in Indian Society.

I. INTRODUCTION

Are women weak and need to be empowered? Who will empower them? How will they get empowered? What kind of sustainable balance will be achieved by truly empowering the women?

The answers to any of these questions won’t be easy and simple. Different people have distinct opinion on these and a consensus may never be possible. However, we may all agree that, women should be treated equally in all matters of life. And for that, only

one thing needs to be changed: “Perception”. The following quote (from blog) will justify this need:

“For long I was protected in a hideous place just before the day came when a whole new world was waiting for me. It was the bright light which was forcing my eyelids to glue to each other but just when I gained control over the entire situation, I opened my eyes and saw my mother. Her face was pale, eyes crying, lips smiling and heart unwilling to accept the fact that, I was a girl!”



Figure 1: A Girl is born

Yes, the first welcome note I heard was ‘OH BETI HO GAYI KYA’?? I couldn’t understand what it meant. But those words were sealed with my destiny!”

Women empowerment begins right from here!

They, by all means, deserve their rightful place in our social fabric and economic and political setup.

II. POSITION OF WOMEN IN INDIAN SOCIETY

Indian women have been playing a vital role in family, society and life, as a whole. Yet, issue of social change in India is a complex one. Status of women in Indian context cannot be defined simply. General concepts like equality, role differentiation, legal, social and political rights, dependency or independence are not applicable to all sections of our population. Since a very large section of our society still continues to be under the influence of traditional standards, we have to juxtapose the role conception, norms and values in all their wide range in traditional society, against the new dimensions in women ‘s status and roles introduced by the constitution and the processes of social change.

Status is best realized through roles. The easiest way to assess the status of women of any group or category, or in any sub-system is to analyse the roles women are being called upon to play and the way of their performance. This also brings-in the structure of rights and opportunities provided to them by the state and by social and cultural institutions which do not necessarily or always reinforce each other.

III. WOMEN ACHIEVERS

Any achievement of women, however small, in any field dominated by men is worth an applause and iconisation for others to get inspired. The women of today have made their mark in almost every field of life, ranging from office work to fighting war along with men. Honourable Supreme Court has made a landmark decision in allowing women to be inducted in combat division. For the ease of understanding, the extent of achievements of women in various significant fields, have been briefly classified here.

A. Leadership and Governance

The history is replete with numerous examples of women leaders who took over the charge from their male counterparts and steered their people in the troubled times. Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi is one such brave leader who stood her ground against the mighty British colonialist as well as the male dominated society by sheer grit and determination. For the comfort of correlating better with modern period examples, here follows a list of women leaders who live as examples of women empowerment.

TABLE 1: - WOMEN LEADERS OF INDIA
(Courtesy: Wikipedia)

No	Name	State	Term(s)	Total tenure	Party
1	Sucheta Kriplani	Uttar Pradesh	2 October 1963 – 13 March 1967	1258 days	Indian National Congress
2	Nandini Satpathy	Orissa	14 June 1972 – 3 March 1973 6 March 1974 – 16 December 1976	1278 days	Indian National Congress
3	Shashikala Kakodkar	Goa	12 August 1973 – 27 April 1979	2084 days	Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party
4	Syeda Anwara Taimur	Assam	6 December 1980 – 30 June 1981	206 days	Indian National Congress
5	Janaki Ramachandran	Tamil Nadu	7–30 January 1988	23 days	All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
6	J. Jayalalithaa	Tamil Nadu	24 June 1991 – 12 May 1996 14 May 2001 – 21 September 2001 2 March 2002 – 12 May 2006 16 May 2011 – 29 September 2014	4679 days	All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
7	Mayawati	Uttar Pradesh	13 June 1995 – 18 October 1995 21 March 1997 – 21 September 1997 3 May 2002 – 29 August 2003 13 May 2007 – 7 March 2012	2554 days	Bahujan Samaj Party

No	Name	State	Term(s)	Total tenure	Party
8	Rajinder Kaur Bhattal	Punjab	21 January 1996 – 12 February 1997	388 days	Indian National Congress
9	Rabri Devi	Bihar	25 July 1997 – 11 February 1999 9 March 1999 – 2 March 2000 11 March 2000 – 6 March 2005	2746 days	Rashtriya Janata Dal
10	Sushma Swaraj	Delhi	13 October 1998 – 3 December 1998	51 days	Bharatiya Janata Party
11	Sheila Dikshit	Delhi	3 December 1998 – 8 December 2013	5484 days	Indian National Congress
12	Uma Bharati	Madhya Pradesh	8 December 2003 – 23 August 2004	259 days	Bharatiya Janata Party
13	Vasundhara Raje *	Rajasthan	8 December 2003 – 11 December 2008 8 December 2013 – present	2276 days	Bharatiya Janata Party
14	Mamata Banerjee *	West Bengal	20 May 2011 – present	1384 days	All India Trinamool Congress
15	Anandiben Patel *	Gujarat	21 May 2014 – present	286 days	Bharatiya Janata Party

Indira Gandhi (first woman PM, 1966-1977, 1980-84), Sonia Gandhi (Congress president), Pratibha Patil (first woman President, 2007-12).

B. Business Leaders

Many women are making their mark in the corporate world without playing the “I am a woman card”, they do not use being a woman with responsibilities at home as an excuse to cut back on work. Some of the ace balancers are:

TABLE 2: CORPORATE WOMEN LEADERS
(courtesy: Woman's Era, March, 2015)

S.No.	Achiever	Association	Designation
1	Sindhu Menon	Ogilvy & Mather	Director, Client Services
2	Archana Kumar Singh	Kazer & Hawes	President
3	Tanuja Chandra	TIME Education	Director
4	Vandana Das	DDB Mudra group	President
5	Chandra Ganjoo	Trivitron group of Companies	President
6	Subha George	Red Fuse Communications	CEO
7	Kaushal Dutta	HTI India Pvt Ltd	Head, Nagpur & Finance
8	Dr. Suneetha Krishnan	Research Triangle Inst. Globe Ind Pvt Ltd	Country Director
9	Divya Karani	Dentsu Media	CEO
10	Khushnooma Kapadia	Mariott International	Director, Marketing & Communication
11	Jayashree Satagopan	International Paper India	Chief Financial Officer
12	Roopa Kudva	CRISIL	MD & CEO

More details on women business leaders can be found on http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Indian_businesswomen

Women have made the dent in monopolised sector of finance and money management, so far considered beyond women abilities. Table 3 shows the power shift in this field.

TABLE 3: WOMEN BANKERS
(courtesy: <http://her.yourstory.com/indias-powerful-bankers-1211>)

S. No	Achiever	Designation	Association
1	Arundhati Bhattacharya	Chairperson	SBI
2	Chandha Kochar	MD & CEO	ICICI Bank Ltd
3	Naina Lal Kidwai	Group Gen Mang & Country Head	HSBC India
4	Renu Sud Karnad	MD	HDFC
5	Shikha Sharma	MD & CEO	Axis Bank
6	Shubhalakshmi Panse	Chairman & MD	Allahabad Bank

C. Social Activist and Reformers

1. Medha Patkar
2. Teesta Setalvad
3. Arundhati Roy

4. Madhu Kishwar-academic and women right activist

5. Aruna Roy

6. Kira Bedi

7. Shabana Azmi.....

D. Rebels

It may not be easy to appreciate the initiative taken by some brave women who took to arms for the cause they believed in. There may be various different reasons for them to choose this arduous path and quit the other comfort of normal life and become a nomad. Yet, they have consistently proved themselves capable. As the women team up for the right cause, may it be to stop their husbands from drinking alcohol, or their sons from drugs or system atrocities, a massive change and stability has come to such society. A case in the consideration is of “Meira Pabi” of Manipur. The simple house women team up for every just cause.

E. Sports

Beside many widely known sports achiever like Saina Nehwal, Sania Mirza, Jwala Gutta, and others, one name worth mentioning for challenging the male forte is Alisha Abdullah, the youngest Asian racer in the world to secure a podium finish at J K Tyre National Superbike Racing Championship. She won eight achievement awards in a year, highest of any sportswoman in India has. And she has made a big dent in the male supremacy of these sports.

F. Home makers

A common housewife is an example of best manager who works diligently every day for the needs of the family and make a happy home. Credit should be given to millions of such women whose hard work, efficiency and initiative is all termed as “routine” and taken for granted and expected as obligation in our society.

G. Science, medicine, technology.....

One can choose any field and find many women who are doing exceptionally well.

IV. CHALLENGES TO WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND COUNTER MEASURES

India is a land of vast disparity. It has diversity in terms of geography, extreme topography, culture, religion, faiths, customs, occupations, education, languages, etc. It is beyond human imagination to think of equality, in any form, in this scenario. However, most visible challenges for women emancipation in India can be identified as:

- A. Lack of Education
- B. Equality at Job (work place)
- C. Social Perception
- D. Indian Marital Customs
- E. Non-existent respectable Grievance Redressal Forums and their limited reach
- F. Fewer Women Organizations

Some of the probable measures for alleviation of women may be following:

- A. Compulsory primary and secondary education for girl child at government subsidy/grant
- B. National Women Right branches at district level
- C. Continuous online registration of women harassment complaints and status of investigation with time bound decision

- D. Heavy financial penalties for eave teasing with permanent remarks in social official record for blacklisting to deny other government services like jobs, licenses, etc.
- E. Bi-monthly publication of offenders list in government/semi-government Publications at district level
- F. Some male members may be involved at various levels of functioning of women organization to sensitize male community
- G. Equal pay for equal work must be implemented in private sector including casual labor (daily wages)
- H. Social customs must be reformed with the help of religious and spiritual leaders visiting all places and awakening the society for women respect and equality.
- I. Mass marriages to denounce dowry practice.
- J. Workshops must be conducted at school, college, university level, especially for male students, to develop sense of respect and cooperation towards females.
- K. Safe job environment should be created by Govt./Pvt. enterprises to promote employability of women and thus increase their self-confidence.

V. CONCLUSION

- A sea-change is required in the perception of society in general.
- The working women should be viewed as an able person (individual)
- Even if a woman achieves a great deal, society still wants to view them as weak...may it be on some other parameters.
- We must view our women as strong person and capable of doing anything a man can do.
- Since the change is required in mindsets of men predominantly, efforts should be made in each household and society to orient their perception towards equal individuality of women.
- In Indian scenario, the dominance of mother-in-law, in the name of social customs, has been one of the key reason of underplay of young women, which thankfully is changing now.
- Women should stop looking at other women as competition, rather applaud when a woman take a step up.

Finally it can be ended with the quote from Osho on equality of men and women, "Equality is out of the question. They are not unequal and neither they can be equal. They are unique"

REFERENCES

- [01] Bano Afsar (2003), "Indian Woman-The changing face", Kilaro Books, New Delhi, 2003
- [02] Faludi Susan (1993), "Backlashed – The undeclared war against women", Vintage Publications, New York, 1993
- [03] Jain Simmi (2003), "Encyclopaedia of Indian women through the Ages", Kalpaz Publication, Delhi, 2003
- [04] Natarajan Samitha R (2013), "Exploitation of women", Jnanada Prakashan, Arunachal Pradesh, 2013
- [05] Osho " A new vision of women liberation"

- [06] Poloharel Krishna and Becket Paul (2013), "Crimes against women", Harper publications, Thomson Press, India
- [07] Pruthi R K, Pruthi R & Devi R (1999), " Encyclopaedia of Status & Empowerment of Women in India, vol-2, Indian Women: Present status and future", Mangal Deep Publications, Jaipur, 1999