

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN 21ST CENTURY: WHY AND HOW?

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Abstract: In the 21st century, the term “Empowerment of Women” has become a well known subject on many occasions. The vast majority of the politicians – so called well wishers of the public never left opportunity to talk about their concern and responsibility in giving priority to the empowerment of women. Since old times, women have been viewed as substandard and subordinate to man. Women’s empowerment in India is heavily dependent on many different variables that include geographical location, educations, social status and age.

The government of India frames different policies and programmes at different levels cover various proportions and strategies of gender development. Efforts have been made to empower women in a social, economical and political context over the years but due to lack of synchronization and coordination, the achievements are not satisfactory. It is fact not only for unorganized rural women, but also for urban women employees.

Today, empowerment has become one of the most central concerns of 21st century. But practically it is still an illusion of reality. This paper throws light upon several challenges faced by Indian woman and why there is still requirement for their advancement. It will likewise concentrate on the steps taken by the Government and portray suggestions for their development

Keywords: Education, Gender Inequality, Literacy Level, Women’s Empowerment

I. INTRODUCTION

Swami Vivekananda said, “There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the situation of women is improved.” All through history, gender disparity was a part of an approved men commanded society. The traditional attitudes of India expect that the role of women is mainly focused to the household activities like upbringing of the children and kitchen work. This partition of work was the main reasons why certain evils like ‘Bal Vivah’, ‘Dowry System’, ‘Sati Pratha’, ‘PardahSystem’, etc. took birth in our culture.

From the previous couple of millenniums, women’s position has been liable to numerous immense changes in India. Women delighted in equivalent position with men in ahead of schedule Vedic period. The Position of women began to decrease with invasion of Mughal. Reformatory movements were taken by Raja Ram Mohan Rai, Pandita Rama Bai, Guru Nanak, Ishwarchandra Vidya Sagar, Jainism and others did give a little relief. British enacted

some laws such as an Abolition of Practice of Sati, Widow Remarriage Act (1856), etc. The true change came after independence.

After independence policies and programmes exist at the panchayat level, state level and national levels in many sectors to improve women's status. But there exist more extensive gap between policy advancement and its genuine usage at the general public level. We need to change the standard depiction of women as a dynamic object. The 21st century needs to witness the grassroots lady accomplishing the increasingly elevated top position of achievement.

II. WOMAN EMPOWERMENT – CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The beginnings of the idea of empowerment do a reversal to the social liberties development in the USA in the 1960. It has characterized in an alternate manner and filled with new implications. Today it is utilized in various sectors such as social work, business and by advocates of very different political agendas. This idea is characterized as political procedure of conceding social equity and human rights to disadvantage group of people.

Women Empowerment is the skill of women to exercise full control over their activities. It means control over intelligent assets, material resources, and even over their philosophies. There is a dire requirement for reframing strategies for the strengthening of women at miniaturized scale level.

III. NEED FOR WOMAN EMPOWERMENT

“You can tell the condition of a country by looking at the status of its women” said Jawaharlal Nehru. Empowerment of women has become the solution to many societal problems, said Rameshwari Pandya (2008). In 21st century, women have to come out of her long cherished male supremacy and her weaknesses. She must have capacity to battle the issues of this globe. We have a few ideals of successful women in every field except these numbers can be checked just on fingertips.

In India, women occupying highest offices of Prime Minister, President, Lok Sabha Speaker and most eminent positions in the corporate segments yet without a doubt despite everything we witness abusive behavior at home, dowry deaths and mistreatment of women. The female feticide is not an uncommon wonder. The census of 2014 demonstrates that the present sex proportion of India, 943 females per 1000 males is still far from satisfactory. Women's contribution in the state assemblies and Parliament was just 8 to 10% respectively.

Today, women are missing of chances in different fields of employment and are segregated on account of they are women. Deep biases and severe poverty against women create a pitiless cycle of inequity that keeps them from satisfying their maximum capacity. The incidence of rape and cruel attacks is alarming. Empowerment is the helping tool for women to attain equality with men and to reduce gender bias noticeably. Women play an important role in the development of different sectors and contribute for economic improvement in the visible and invisible form.

Hence there is a need of social, political, economical and cultural empowerment of women simultaneously to remove this cruel cycle in which Indian women have been entrapped very badly. The actual truth is dreadful conditions and exploitation of women specially women from deprived sectors of the society and those belonging to rural areas.

A. Crime against Women in India:

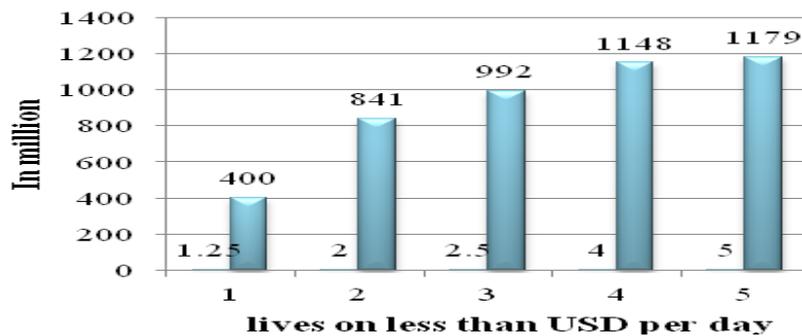
The worldwide survey was conducted by Thomson Reuters said that India is the fourth most unsafe and worst country in the world for women to live in amongst G20 countries. In India, there is harassment and stalking at work place and in educational organizations, outright trafficking and forced prostitution. 12 million girls were aborted over the last 3 decades in India - an estimate. According to UN Population Fund, there were 50,000 maternal deaths which are highest in the world in 2013. As per National Crime Records Bureau, a total number of 3,09,546 incidents of crime against women (both under SLL and IPC) were reported during the year 2013 as compared to 2,44,270 in the year 2012 in India, showing a raise of 26.4 % in the year 2013. In the last five years, these crimes have increased continuously.

B. Challenges:

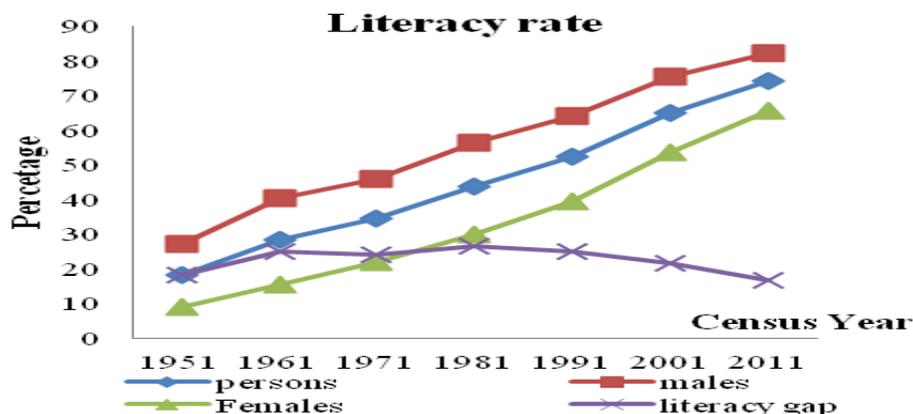
There are many challenges at present plaguing the issues for the rights of women in country. Women’s empowerment in India is directly benefitted by targeting these issues.

1) *Poverty:* Currently poverty is the world’s greatest threat to international peace. Therefore, poverty should be abolished as a national goal for the development and success. Approximately, one third of the India’s population lives on below \$1.25 per day.

Poverty Headcount ratio (2010)



2) *Education:* In India, after independence, there exists a severe gap between the education of men and women. The 2011 census says that the literacy rate for women is only 65.46 % against 82.14 % of men which is very poor. The Centre for the Study of Society and Secularism says that women continue to be victims of exploitation. Educate women about their actual position in the universe to crash the wall of intolerance, negligence and exploitation.



3) *Professional inequality*: It is practised in occupation, employment and promotion in work. Women often face greater handicaps in male dominated and customized environs in private enterprises and Government offices.

4) *Health & Safety*: The wellbeing and security concern of women are central for the wellbeing of a nation. UNICEF concocted shocking figures on the state of new mothers in India in its 2009 report. The maternal mortality report of India stands at 301 for each 1000, with approximately 78,000 women dying in India every year because of complications arising out of pregnancy and childbirth. A few projects have been set by the Government and NGO's however there are still wide gaps that exist between those under security and those not.

IV. STEPS TAKEN IN INDIA FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

The Constitution of India assures equality to women by presenting (Article 14), equivalent privilege of women, Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, sex, caste or place of birth (Article 15(1)), Equal opportunity for all residents concerning with employment (Article 16) etc. The constitution of India provided at least one - third seats for reservation in Municipalities and Panchayats for ladies by 73rd and 74th amendments (1993). And 33% seats reserved in the Parliament and State Legislatures by the 84th Constitutional Amendment Act (1998). Different welfare schemes have been launched by the Government to empower women such as Training for - Employment Programme (1987), Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (1992 - 1993), DWACRA Plan (1997), Indira Mahila Yojna (1995), Mahila Samridhi Yojna (1993), Balika Samridhi Yojna (1997) & Swayam Siddha (12th July, 2001) etc.

V. MEASURES TO BE TAKEN FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Mahatma Gandhi said "if you educate a man you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate a whole family." Social change is possible through education hence women's education has to be paid special attention. Global education for all underneath 14 years ought to be entirely executed. A watch must be kept on reduction rate of girls and corrective measures ought to be taken for that.

Women should be permitted to work and must be sufficiently given security and support to work. Legislations such as Equal Remuneration Act, Factories Act, Constitutional safeguards such as maternity break and other provisions should be strictly followed. Women should to be given right wages and work at standard with men so that their status can be raised in the public eye.

Political strengthening of women is essential for their liberation. They have been given 50% quota as an indication of political strengthening. Strict measures ought to be taken for the execution of Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques Act (1994), Dowry Prohibition Acts and different enactments relating to their liberation.

More steps should be taken to upgrade the wellbeing status of women. Maternal mortality must be decreased particularly in the areas which do not have proper health facilities. Proper attention must be given to meet the dietary needs of women at all periods of their life cycle. The social activists should keep a watch on the violence committed on women living in poor areas and help them to fight the legal battle for obtaining justice. Schemes should be introduced to help women who are victims of marital violence and those connected in sex activities.

CONCLUSION

- India has enacted many legislative and constitutional provisions and many progressive plans to improve position of women. Government activities alone would not be sufficient to accomplish this objective. Society must take up activity to make a domain in which there is no sexual orientation inclination and ladies have full chances of self choice making and taking an interest in political, social and financial existence with a feeling of equity.
- Women's Empowerment could only be accomplished if their social, educational and economic status is improved. The top preference should be given to the education which is the real issue. Development plans should be constructed to remove female illiteracy and creating skills & capability among women for empowering them to remain all alone on their feet.
- An urgent need for a constant effort at all levels to uproot the issue of gender unfairness in a focused manner. "The country which does not respect women have never become great now and nor will ever in future" said Swami Vivekananda. To make India a great country, let us strive to empower women to the most extreme "We have a long way to go, but we will get there one day". We shall overcome.

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