



WOMEN EMPOWERMENT & INDIAN ECONOMY : AN OVERVIEW

Dr. Rupali R. Shinde

Head of Dept., Commerce

K.V.N Naik ACS College Nashik, Maharashtra

Abstract

Women empowerment is a debatable subject. Earlier women were getting equal status with men. But they had faced some difficulties during post-Vedic and epic ages. Many a time they were treated as slaves. From early twenty century (national movement) their statuses have been changed slowly and gradually. In this regard, we mentioned the name of the British people. After then, independence of India, the constitutional makers and national leaders strongly demand equal social position of women with men. Today we have seen the women occupied the respectable positions in all the fields. Yet, they have not absolutely got free from some discrimination and harassment of the society. A few number of women have been able to establish their potentialities. Therefore, each and everybody should be careful to promote the women statuses.

India has experienced rapid growth and development in the past years in many spheres. This is deplorable considering the important role played by women in the socio-economic growth of the country.

The Indian development model has yet to fully incorporate the important role played by women for propelling the socio-economic growth of the country. Current governments at state and central level must understand that no nation can progress unless its women are given equal access to opportunities and adequate safety and security. This Research paper discusses on women Empowerment, Its importance and States the importance of women in Indian economy.

Keywords: women empowerment, Women Right, Society, Indian Economy

Objective of research paper:

- 1) To know the Women empowerment.
- 2) To state the importance of women empowerment
- 3) To Study the women empowerment in India
- 4) To Know the position of women in Indian economy

Introduction:

Women Empowerment refers to the creation of an environment for women where they can make decisions of their own for their personal benefits as well as for the society.

Women Empowerment refers to increasing and improving the social, economic, political and legal strength of the women, to ensure equal-right to women, and to make them confident enough to claim their rights, such as:

- freely live their life with a sense of self-worth, respect and dignity,
- have complete control of their life, both within and outside of their home and workplace,
- to make their own choices and decisions,
- have equal rights to participate in social, religious and public activities,
- have equal social status in the society,
- have equal rights for social and economic justice,
- determine financial and economic choices,
- get equal opportunity for education,
- get equal employment opportunity without any gender bias,
- get safe and comfortable working environment.

Empowerment also refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social or economic strength of individuals and communities .It often involves the empowered developing confidence in their own capacities.

Empowerment is probably the totality of the following.

- 1) Having decision making power of their own

- 2) Having access to information and resource for taking proper decisions.
- 3) Having a range of options from which you can make choices (not just yes/No either)
- 4) Ability to exercise assertiveness in collective decision making.
- 5) Having positive thinking on the ability to make change.
- 6) Ability to learn skills for improving ones personal or group power.
- 7) Ability to change others perception by democratic means.
- 8) Involving in the growth process and changes that is never ending and self initiated
- 9) Increasing ones positive self-image & overcoming stigma

Importance of Women empowerment

Women in India: Now the women in India enjoy a unique status of equality with the men as per constitutional and legal provision. But the Indian women have come a long way to achieve the present positions. The gender inequality in India can be traced back to the historic days of Mahabharata when Draupadi was put on the dice by her husband as a commodity. History is a witness that women were made to dance both in private and public places to please the man. In Indian society, a female was always dependent on male members of the family even last few years ago. A female was not allowed to speak with loud voice in the presence of elder members of her in-laws. In the family, every faults had gone to her and responsible. As a widow her dependence on male members of the family still more increase. In many social activities she is not permitted to mix with other members of the family. Other hand, she has very little share in political, social and economic life of the society.

The early twenty century, it was rise of the National Movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi who was in favor of removing all the disabilities of women. At the same time, Raja Ram Mohan Rai, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and various other social reformers laid stress on women's education, prevention of child marriage, withdrawals of evil practice of sati, removal of polygamy etc. The National Movement and various reform movements paved the way for their liberations from

the social evils and religious taboos. In this context, we may write about the Act of Sati (abolish) 1829, Hindu Widow Remarriage Act' 1856, the Child Restriction Act, 1929, Women Property Right Act, 1937 etc. 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 divorcee of sound mind can also take child in adoption. Similarly, the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 says that any person who gives, takes, or abets the giving or taking of dowry shall be punished with imprisonment, which may extend to six months or fine up to Rs.5000/- or with both. The Constitution of India guarantees equality of sexes and in fact grants special favors to women. These can be found in three articles of the constitution. Article 14 says that the government shall not deny to any person equality before law or equal protection of the law. Article 15 declares that government shall not discriminate against any citizen on the ground of sex. Article 15 (3) makes a special provision enabling the state to make affirmative discrimination in favor of women. Article 42 directs the state to make provision for ensuring just and human conditions of work and maternity relief. Above all, the constitution regards a fundamental duty on every citizen through Articles 15 (A), (E) to renounce the practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

Why Women Empowerment is Important:

- 1. Under-employed and unemployed:** Women population constitutes around 50% of the world population. A large number of women around the world are unemployed. The world economy suffers a lot because of the unequal opportunity for women at workplaces.
- 2. Equally competent and intelligent:** Women are equally competent. Nowadays, women are even ahead of men in many socio-economic activities.

3. **Talented:** Women are as talented as men. Previously, women were not allowed higher education like men and hence their talents were wasted. But nowadays, they are also allowed to go for higher studies and it encourages women to show their talents which will not only benefit her individually but to the whole world at large.
4. **Overall development of society:** The main advantage of Women Empowerment is that there will be an overall development of the society. The money that women earn does not only help them and or their family, but it also help develop the society.
5. **Economic Benefits:** Women Empowerment also leads to more economic benefits not to the individuals but to the society as well. Unlike earlier days when they stayed at home only and do only kitchen duties, nowadays, they go outside and also earn money like the male members of the society. Women empowerment helps women to stand on their own legs, become independent and also to earn for their family which grows country's economy.
6. **Reduction in domestic violence:** Women Empowerment leads to decrease in domestic violence. Uneducated women are at higher risk for domestic violence than an educated women.
7. **Reduction in corruption:** Women Empowerment is also advantageous in case of corruption. Women empowerment helps women to get educated and know their rights and duties and hence can stop corruption.
8. **Reduce Poverty:** Women Empowerment also reduces poverty. Sometimes, the money earned by the male member of the family is not sufficient to meet the demands of the family. The added earnings of women helps the family to come out of poverty trap.
9. **National Development:** Women are increasingly participating in the national development process. They are making the nation proud by their outstanding performances almost every spheres including medical science, social service, engineering, etc.

Women empowerment in India

The concept of empowerment flows from the power. It is vesting where it does not exist or exist inadequately. 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. In India, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD-1985) and the National Commission for Women (NCW) have been worked to Women Empowerment in India: A Brief Discussion 201 safeguards the rights and legal entitlement of women. The 73rd & 74th Amendments (1993) to the constitution of India have provided some special powers to women that for reservation of seats (33%), whereas the report HRD as March, 2002 shows that the legislatures with the highest percentage of women are Sweden 42.7%, Denmark 38%, Finland 36% and Iceland 34.9%. In India “The New Panchayati Raj” is the part of the effort to empower women at least at the village level. The government of India has ratified various international conventions and human rights instruments committing to secure equal rights to women. These are: the Mexico Plan of Action (1975), the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies (1985), the Beijing Declaration as well as the platform for Action (1995) and other such instruments. The year of 2001 was observed as the year of women’s empowerment. During the year, a landmark document has been adopted, ‘ the National Policy for the empowerment of women.’ For the beneficiaries of the women, the government has been adopted different schemes and programs i.e. the National Credit Fund for Women (1993), Food and Nutrition Board (FNB), Information and Mass Education (IMF) etc. 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 the central and state levels too women are progressively making a difference. Today we have seen women chief ministers, women president, different political parties leader, well establish businessmen etc. The most notable

amongst these are Mrs. Pratibha Devi Singh Patil, Sheela Dexit, Mayavati, Sonia Gandhi, Vrunda karat, Nazma Heptulla, Indira Nuye (pepsi-co), BJP leader Sushma Swaraj, Mamata Banerji, Narmada Basao, leader Medha Patkar, Indian Iron Woman, EX-prime minister Indira Gandhi etc. Women are also involving in human development issues of child rearing, education, health, and gender parity. Many of them have gone into the making and marketing of a range of cottage products-pickles, tailoring, embroidery etc. The economic empowerment of women is being regarded these days as a sine-quo-non of progress for a country; hence, the issue of economic empowerment of women is of paramount importance to political thinkers, social thinkers and reformers.

Women and economy:

Women play a major role in the economy of a nation, including housewives. Housewives are the largest workforce in the world, the most underpaid and receive undue scoff. If she is paid the role of a housewife's duties can amount to billions of dollars annually. A woman purchases household goods not limited to food items, but clothing, accessories, and many daily use items as simple as a scrub to wash dishes. She is the dictator of large companies producing goods in manifold, she purchases the chips and cold-drinks her child consumes and treats guests with, she decides which commodities will be used and in what quantity. Most shopping outlets are directed towards women. Women are ultimately the largest consumers in the market, especially so in the Indian market where culture is upheld by women, where it's the wifely duty to ensure all goods are stocked in the house and family members are able to work without a hiccup. Yet women are the most overlooked consumer of the market, and the corporates which target female-consumers lack the female workforce within their company.

As women are the largest consumers in the market, any product targeted towards them will surely become a success. India has the widely acclaimed Shahnaz Hussain, who produces beauty essentials directed towards women who are again the largest consumers of self-care products. Adverts for Nirma, Vim, even Bournvita is directed

towards women from the perspective of motherhood and being a good dutiful wife and caregiver.

Yet India's largest economic benefit from women is achieved by the cultural values bestowed. India achieved a savings rate of 33 per cent of the GDP, of which 70 per cent comes from household saving and 20 per cent from the private corporate sector and 10 per cent from public sector. The staggering 70% of household saving is the fuel of the economy, with a tendency to have extra cash stacked away hidden from the family but no spending at all, the Indian culture seems to drive the Indian economy positively. Women empowerment is much more than realizing the work a woman does is equivalent to the work of a man, it's much more than obtaining the right to a certain occupation. Woman empowerment is the global realization that tasks done by women, that the feminine touch to domesticity and professionalism is not desired but needed. It's the realization of the balance of nature, that we are all equal and no work is big or small.

Conclusion

Though economic development has contributed significantly to the upliftment of women in India yet there exists a wide gap particularly in rural India that has to be bridged by effective strategies so as to achieve equality in status of men and women. Patriarchy, religious beliefs, social norms and customs and traditions intensely held in society as a dominant culture over centuries perpetuated a conglomerative culture of discrimination, deprivation, degradation and debasement of womanhood which has regressive effect on the status of women in India in contrast with the feminism and women liberation movements striving hard to effect fundamental and crucial changes in the status of women by adopting slew of strategies for the ultimate goal of equality of status and of opportunity for the women. Always and all the time there is a light at the end of the tunnel, the task of women upliftment and emancipation though arduous and difficult yet not impossible. The efforts of our constitution makers to accord preferential treatment to women and children further supported by effective government policies geared to accord due entitlements to women and also

other economic programs including various legislations will have desirable effect in according equal status and equal treatment and further ameliorate the status of women in India.

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