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IMPACT OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA: A STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT

The present paper is an attempt to analyze the status of women empowerment in India using various indicators like women's household decision making power, financial autonomy, freedom of movement, political participation, acceptance of unequal gender role, exposure to media, access to education, experience of domestic violence etc. based on data from different sources. The study reveals that women of India are relatively disempowered and they enjoy somewhat lower status than that of men in spite of many efforts undertaken by government. Gender gap exists regarding access to education and employment. Household decision making power and freedom of movement of women vary considerably with their age, education and employment status. It is found that acceptance of unequal gender norms by women are still prevailing in the society. More than half of the women believe wife beating to be justified for one reason or the other. Fewer women have final say on how to spend their earnings. Control over cash earnings increases with age, education and with place of residence. Women's exposure to media is also less relative to men. Rural women are more prone to domestic violence than that of urban women. A large gender gap exists in political participation too. The study concludes by an observation that access to education and employment are only the enabling factors to empowerment, achievement towards the goal, however, depends largely on the attitude of the people towards gender equality.

Key words: Women empowerment, financial autonomy, gender gap, employment

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1. Introduction

Empowerment refers to the process of enhancing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. The empowerment of women is about expanding women's assets and capabilities to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable the institutions that affect their lives.

'EMPOWERMENT' MAY be described as a process which helps people to assert their control over the factors which affect their lives. Empowerment of women means developing them as more aware individuals, who are politically active, economically productive and independent and are able to make intelligent discussion in matters that affect them.¹ Women empowerment as a concept was introduced at the International women Conference in 1985 at Nairobi, which defined it as redistribution of social power and control of resources in favour of women.

The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNDFW) includes the following factors in its definition of women empowerment:

- Acquiring knowledge and understanding of gender relations and the way in which these relations may be changed.

- Developing a sense of self-worth, a belief in one's ability to secure desired changes and the right to control one's life.

Literature Review

H. Subrahmanyam (2011) compares women education in India at present and Past. Author highlighted that there has a good progress in overall enrolment of girl students in schools. The term empower means to give lawful power or authority to act. It is the process of acquiring some activities of women.

M. Bhavani Sankara Rao (2011) has highlighted that health of women members of SHG have certainly taken a turn to better. It clearly shows that health of women members discuss among themselves about health related problems of other members and their children and make them aware of various Government provisions specially meant for them.

Doepke M. Tertilt M. (2011) Does Female Empowerment Promote Economic Development? This study is an empirical analysis suggesting that money in the hands of mothers benefits children. This study developed a series of non-cooperative family bargaining models to understand what kind of frictions can give rise to the observed empirical relationship.

Duflo E. (2011) Women's Empowerment and Economic Development, National Bureau of Economic Research Cambridge The study argues that the inter relationships of the Empowerment and Development are probably too weak to be self-sustaining and that continuous policy commitment to equality for its own sake may be needed to bring about equality between men and women.

Sethuraman K. (2008) The Role of Women's Empowerment and Domestic Violence in child Growth and under nutrition in a Tribal and Rural Community in South India. This research paper explores the relationship between Women's Empowerment and Domestic Violence, maternal nutritional status and the nutritional status and growth over six months in children aged 6 to 24 months in a rural and tribal community. This longitudinal observational study undertaken in rural Karnataka, India included tribal and rural subjects.

Objectives of the study

- To know the need of Women Empowerment.
- To assess the Awareness of Women Empowerment in India.
- To study the Government Schemes For Women Empowerment.
- To identify the Hindrances in the Path of Women Empowerment.
- To study the various crimes against Women

Research methodology

This paper is basically descriptive and analytical in nature. In this paper an attempt has been taken to analyze the empowerment of women in India. The data used in it is purely from secondary sources according to the need of this study.

Crime 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 alarming statistics. The Crime Head Wise details of reported crimes during the year 2009 to 2013 along with percentage variation are presented in Table 1;

Need of women empowerment

Reflecting into the "Vedas Purana" of Indian culture, women is being worshiped such as LAXMI MAA, goddess of wealth; SARSWATI MAA, for wisdom; DURGA MAA for power. The status of women in India particularly in rural areas needs to address the issue of empowering women. About 66% of the female population in rural area is unutilized. This is mainly due to existing social customs. In agriculture and Animal care the women contribute 90% of the total workforce. Women constitute almost half of the population, perform nearly 2/3 of its work hours, receive 1/10th of the world's income and own less than 1/100th the world property. Among the world's 900 million illiterate people, women outnumber men two to one. 70% of people living in poverty are women. Lower sex ratio i.e. 933. The existing studies show that the women are relatively less healthy than men though belong to same class. They constitute less than 1/7th of the administrators and managers in developing countries. Only 10% seats in World Parliament and 6% in National Cabinet are held by women.

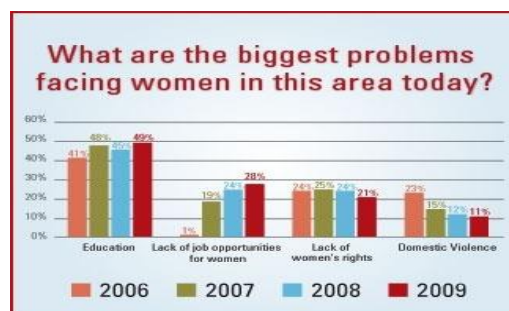
Table 1: Crime Head - Wise Incidents of Crime against Women during 2009-2013 and Percentage Variation in 2013 over 2012

Sl. No.	Crime Head	Year					Percentage Variation in 2013 over 2012
		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	
1.	Rape (Sec. 376 IPC)	21,397	22,172	24,206	24,923	33,707	35.2
2.	Kidnapping and abduction (Sec. 363 to 373 IPC)	25,741	29,795	35,565	38,262	51,881	35.6
3.	Dowry Death (Sec. 302 / 304 IPC)	8,383	8,391	8,618	8,233	8,083	-1.8
4.	Cruelty by husband or his relatives (Sec. 498-A IPC)	89,546	94,041	99,135	1,06,527	1,18,866	11.6
5.	Assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty (Sec. 354 IPC)	38,711	40,613	42,968	45,351	70,739	56.0
6.	Insult to the modesty of women (Sec. 509 IPC)	11,009	9,961	8,570	9,173	12,589	37.2
7.	Importation of girl from foreign country (Sec. 366-B IPC)	48	36	80	59	31	-47.4
A.	Total IPC crime against Women	1,94,832	2,05,009	2,19,142	2,32,528	2,95,896	27.3
8.	Commission of Sati Prevention Act, 1987	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
9.	Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956	2,474	2,499	2,435	2,563	2,579	0.6
10.	Indecent Representation of Women (P) Act, 1986	845	895	453	141	362	156.7
11.	The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961	5,650	5,182	6,619	9,038	10,709	17.9
B.	Total SLL crime against Women	8,969	8,576	9,507	11,742	13,650	16.2
	Total(A+B)	2,03,804	2,13,585	2,28,649	2,44,270	3,09,546	26.7

Source: Crime in India-2013

The main Problems that were faced by women in past days and still today up to some extent:

Gender discrimination	Absence of ambition for the achievement
Lack of Education	Social status
Female Infanticide	Dowry
Financial Constraints	Marriage in same caste and child marriage (still existing)
Family Responsibility	Atrocities on Women (Raped, Kicked, Killed, Subdued, humiliated almost daily.)
Low Mobility	
Low ability to bear Risk	
Low need for achievement	



Government Schemes For Women Empowerment

- Rastria Mahila Kosh (RMK) 1992-1993
- Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY) October, 1993.
- Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY) 1995.
- Women Entrepreneur Development programme given top priority in 1997-98.
- Mahila Samakhya being implemented in about 9000 villages.
- Swayasjdha.
- Swa Shakti Group.
- Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP).
- Swalamban.
- Crèches/ Day care centre for the children of working and ailing mother.
- Hostels for working women
- Swadhar.
- National Mission for Empowerment of Women.
- Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) (1975),

- Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescence Girls (RGSEAG) (2010).
- The Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers.
- Integrated Child Protection scheme (ICPS) (2009-2010).
- Dhanalakahmi (2008).
- Short Stay Homes.
- Ujjawala (2007).
- Scheme for Gender Budgeting (XI Plan).
- Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP).
- Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSEM).
- Prime Minister's Rojgar Yojana (PMRY).
- Women's Development Corporation Scheme (WDCS).
- Working Women's Forum.
- Indira Mahila Kendra.
- Mahila Samiti Yojana.
- Khadi and Village Industries Commission.
- Indira Priyadarahini Yojana.

Achievements of women in various fields

While speaking about the great achievements of the Indian women we always point out the achievements of women starting from the Vedic age to the modern age. A large no. of Indian women have been able to do spectacular achievements in spite of the limitations which the socio economic and political framework has imposed on them. Four Indian women, for example, have secured, "Bharata Ratna", the highest national award. The recipients of the award are:

- **Indira Gndhi** (1917-1984) awarded in 1971
- **Mother Teresa** (1910-1997) awarded in 1980
- **Aruna Asaf Ali** (1090-1996) awarded in 1997
- **Lata Mangeshkar** (1929) awarded in 2001

Achievements of women in India	
In the field of	Name of the renound women
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rani Laxmi Bai of Jhansi • Rani Chennamma • Kamalabal Chattopadhyaya • Indira Gandhi • Nandini Satpathy • Rabri Devi • Mayavati • Susma Swaraj
Economics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shikha Sharma • Chanda Kocchar
Bureaucracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Kiran Bedi • C. Bhattacharya • Gertrude Ali Ram
Judiciary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fathima Gibi
Medical Science & Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Anupama Niranjana • Dr. Kalpana Chavla
Art & Literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M.S. Subhalaxmi • Gangubai Hanagal • Lata Mangeshkar • Subhadramma Mansor

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sarojini Naidu • M.K. Indira
Sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P.T. Usha • Bachendri Pal • Karanam Malleshwari • Sania Mirza • Saina Nehwal

Human rights and Women

“Human rights”- as the very term indicates the rights of all human beings of the sex, men and women. Individuals of both the sex are born with these rights. Human rights are God given or Nature given rights. Both men and women have equal access to these rights. No discrimination be allowed or imposed in the exercise of these rights.

It is fact of history that women have been denied equal rights for centuries. The “philosophy of human rights” became popular only during the second half of the 20th century and the issue of “gender equality” and “equal rights” for women assumed importance only after 1970’s.

Rights and protection given to women by the constitution of India:

- Constitution assures equality to all its citizens including women. [Article-14]
- Ensures that no discrimination be made against its citizens on the basis of caste, class, creed, race, sex, place of birth or region. [Article-15(1)]
- Does not deny or impose sanctions or conditions on its citizens to make use of any public place or institutions on the basis of sex, race, caste, religion etc. [Article-15(2)]
- Recommends the State to make certain special arrangements in order to provide protection to women and children and to promote their welfare [Article-15(3)]
- Fixing “equal remuneration of equal work” without discriminating between men and women.
- To provide human conditions for the citizens to fulfill their occupational obligations. The state shall take it as its responsibility to provide maternity benefits for its women employees [Article-42]
- 1/3 of reservation for women in the Panchayats [Article-243 D(3)]
- 1/3 of reservations for women in the presidential posts of Panchayats [Article-243 D(4)]
- 1/3 of the reservation for women in the Municipalities [Article-243 T(3)]

Strategies for the protection of women’s rights and rehabilitation of women

The independent Indian Govt. has undertaken a no. of measures with a view to promote the development and welfare of women. Some of them are as below:

- Welfare of women through legislation
- Legal assistance to assure justice to women
- Establishment of National Commission for Women
- Relief and Rehabilitation
- Expression of Government’s concern for women through the Observance of Women’s Day programme
- Social and Economic programmes for the benefits of Women
- Stree Shakti Scheme (Self-Help Groups - SHGs)

Findings of the Study

- Globalization, Liberalization and other Socio - Economic forces have given some respite to a large proportion of the population. However, there are still quite a few areas where women empowerment in India is largely lacking.
- There are several Government programmes and NGOs in the Country, there is still a wide gap that exists between those under protection and those not.
- Poverty and illiteracy add to these complications, The Empowerment of Women begins with a guarantee of their health and safety.
- Empowerment of Women could only be achieved if their economic and social status is improved. This could be possible only by adopting definite social and economic policies with a view of total

development of women and to make them realize that they have the potential to be strong human beings.

- In order to create a sustainable world, we must begin to Empower Women.

Suggestions

- The first and foremost priority should be given to the education of women, which is the grassroots problem. Hence, education for women has to be paid special attention.
- Awareness programmes need to be organized for creating awareness among women especially belonging to weaker sections about their rights.
- Women should be allowed to work and should be provided enough safety and support to work. They should be provided with proper wages and work at par with men so that their status can be elevated in the society.
- Strict implementation of Programmes and Acts should be there to curb the mal-practices prevalent in the society.

Conclusion

Thus, the road map for women empowerment is there but still we have miles to go on this path of empowerment. We hope that in coming years ahead women empowerment will prove its worth. Women are an integral part of a society. They play an important role in determining the destiny of a nation. It has been rightly said by Swami Vivekanand, "The Best thermometer to the progress of nation is its treatment of women". Therefore, due recognition to them in the society and their greater involvement in socio economic and political affairs becomes all the more important. Every person should come forward to ensure equal status for women in all spheres of life.

"Woman is an incarnation of 'Shakti'—the Goddess of Power. If she is bestowed with education, India's strength will double. Let the campaign of 'Kanya Kelavni' be spread in every home; let the lamp of educating daughters be lit up in every heart."

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