

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN THE ERA OF GLOBALISATION: MYTH OR REALITY

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Abstract: Researcher has discussed the meaning of empowerment of women which 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. Researcher has divided her paper into five parts: First part deals with the Introduction. Second part deals with the Women Empowerment in India under Constitution of India and in various five year plans like fifth five year plan 1974-78 & eighth five year plan, international conventions, national policy for women in 1991, eleventh plan gender budgeting in India & united nations development programmes human development report 2013 & national mission for empowerment of women has been mentioned while the third part deals with the Crime against Women in India for which data has been mentioned National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), India, 2016. Fourth part deals with the laws for the protection of women and lastly, fifth part deals with the suggestions.

Keywords: Domestic, Empowerment, Witch Hunting, Worker.

Woman is an incarnation of 'Shakti'- the Goddess of power. If she is best owned 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. - **Narendra Modi**

The cultural heritage in respect of women is also very clear: "Yatra Naryastu Pujyante Ramante tatra devta".

Introduction: The term "empower" literally means to give power or authority. Indian women are well known for their community life, joint family system, nurturing the moral values, protecting the oneness in the family, sharing happiness and sorrows together and looking after their elders with utmost reverence.

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.

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

Women Empowerment in India: The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles.

The constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. Within the framework of a democratic polity, our laws, development policies, plans and programmes have aimed at women's advancement policies, plans and programmes have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres.

From the **Fifth five year plan (1974-78)** onwards there has been a marked shift in the approach to women's issues from welfare to development and then from **Eighth Five Year plan** emphasis was shifted from development to empowerment. In recent years, the empowerment of women has been recognised as the central issue in determining the status of women.

India has also ratified various International Conventions and human rights instruments committing to secure equal rights of women. Key among them is the ratification of the

- a) **Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1993.**
 b) The **National Commission for women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990** to safeguard the rights & legal entitlements of women.

The Cairo conference in 1994 organised by UN on Population and Development called attention to women's empowerment as a central focus and UNDP developed the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) which focuses on the three variables that reflect women's participation in society- political power or decision making education and health. 1995 UNDP report was devoted to women's empowerment and it declared that if human development is not engendered it is endangered. **The Government of India declared 2001 as the Year of Women's Empowerment (Swashakti).** The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women was passed in 2001.

- c) **Gender Budgeting in India**

Gender Budgeting (GB) has been adopted by the Government as a tool for ensuring that adequate budgetary commitments are made for women. To build capacities of functionaries and stakeholders at all levels, a Gender Budget Scheme was launched in the XI plan. As a part of this scheme, the ministry sponsored training programmes & workshops at the centre & in the States, developed training material, undertook direct interactive sessions with identified Ministries and provided technical support on GB in training courses organised by other organisation.

- d) **The National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW)**

NMEW was launched by the Government of India on International Women's Day in 2010 with the aim to strengthen overall processes that promote all round development of women. The mission aims to provide a single window service for all programmes run by the Government for women under aegis of various Central Ministries.

The introduction in 1995 of the Gender related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) coincided with growing international recognition of the importance of monitoring progress in the elimination of gender gaps in all aspects of life.

As per the **United Nations Development Programmes Human Development Report 2013**: India stood at 132nd position out of 187 countries on the gender inequality index performing worse than Pakistan whose position is 123rd. All nations in South Asia, except Afghanistan, performed better than India, with Sri Lanka (75) topping them all. Nepal ranked 102nd and Bangladesh 111th. Key factors which put India on such a low rank in 2013 are given below:-

1. Skewed Sex Ratio
2. Education and Health Status of Women in India
3. Maternal Mortality Ratio

The 73rd & 74th Amendments to the Constitution provided for reservation of seats in local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in the decision making process at the local levels.

Crime against Women in India: According to the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), India**, a crime against women is recorded every 1.6 minutes in India. Every 4.8 minutes a girl is subjected to domestic violence in this country and every 13.5 minutes a rape case is recorded.

According to the report of NCRB for the year 2016, cases under “Crime Against Women” increased by 2.9% in 2016 over 2015. Majority of cases were under the head “**Cruelty by Husband or His Relatives**” (32.6%) followed by ‘**Assault on Women with Intent to Outrage her Modesty**’ (25.0%), ‘**Kidnapping & Abduction of Women**’ (19.0%) and ‘**Rape**’ (11.5%).

Laws for the Protection of Women:

- **Acid Attacks- Justice Verma Committee** aftermath of Nirbhaya case recommended that **acid attacks** to be defined as an offence in the IPC and noticed, The gender specificity and discriminatory nature of this offence does not allow us to overlooked this offence as yet another crime against women.

By worthiness of Criminal Law (Amendment Act), 2013, sections 326A and 326B were inserted in the Indian Penal Code providing for punishment to anyone who causes permanent or partial damage or deformity to, or burns or maims or disfigures or disables, any part or parts of the body of a person or causes grievous hurt by throwing acid on or by administering acid to that person, or by using any other means with the intention of causing or with the knowledge that he is likely to cause such injury or hurt or who throws or attempts to throw acid on any person or attempts to administer acid to any person or attempts to use any other means, with the intention of causing permanent or partial damage or deformity or burns or maiming or disfigurement or disability or grievous hurt to that person, ‘Acid’ was defined to include any substance which has acidic or corrosive character or burning nature that is capable of causing bodily injury leading to scars or disfigurement or temporary or permanent disability. [Laxmi v. Union of India, (2013)]

- **Witch hunting**, a hundred year or older practice (rather a crime) literally means chasing and killing a woman believed to have evil magic powers. Europe, Asia and Africa top the list of continents popular for witchcraft and witch hunting, in the world whereas in India Assam is called the “Indian capital of black magic”. Other parts of India too are not untouched by this disbelief of existence if witches.

As of 2017, Bihar, Jharkhand and Maharashtra are the only states which have successfully enacted and enforced witch hunting (regulating and prohibiting) laws. The rest 26 states are still lawless when it comes to witch hunting laws. What is even more disappointing is that even the three state laws are inadequate in the present scenario and adopting or taking ideas from these laws for an upcoming law on witch hunting in any other state would not be prevent, prohibit or abolish witch hunting practices (a leap towards civilisation) but rather is only half way.

- The **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013**- is a legislative act in India that seeks to protect women from sexual harassment at their place of work. Most Indian employers have not implemented the law despite the legal requirement that any workplace with more than 10 employees need to implement it. [Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan (1997)].
- **Domestic Violence Act, 2005- Sec.2 (q)** means any adult male person who is, or has been in a domestic relationship with the aggrieved person and against whom the aggrieved person has sought any relief under this Act: Provided that an aggrieved wife or female living in a relationship in the nature of a marriage may also file a complaint against a relative of the husband or the male partner. Section 3 of the Act defines the term domestic violence.
- **Triple talaq**- Role of judiciary and the present government for the ban of triple talaq is really appreciable for the protection of muslim females.
- **Domestic Worker**- The term domestic worker is defined under the Unorganised Workers Social Security Act, 2008 and progress has been made in passing The Domestic Workers Regulation of Work and Social Security Bill, 2016 and Draft Labour Code on Social Security and Welfare Bill, 2017
- **Maternity Benefit Amendment Act, 2017**
 - a) When a female employee is on her maternity leave, the employer cannot terminate her from the services. In **Air India v. Nargesh Mirza** [AIR 1981 SC 1829; 1981 (4) SCC 335], the supreme Court struck down the provision of rules which stipulated termination of service of an air hostess on her first pregnancy as it arbitrary and abhorrent to the notions of a civilized society.
 - b) 26 weeks paid maternity leave and welfare for any female employee. The claim applies only to the first two children. For the third child, the maternity leave claim will only be for 12 weeks.

- c) One month's paid leave where a female employee affected from any illness rising out of pregnancy, delivery or miscarriage.
- **Factories (Amendment) Act, 2015**- Factories Act now allows women to work in night shifts.
 - **Pre- conception & pre- natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act, 1994**- Sections 3, 4, 6, 22 & 23 of the Act provides provision for the protection of women.

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.

Suggestions:

1. Value system to be inculcated from the childhood.
2. Role of media and police is very important.
3. Mindset of the people has to be changed relating to sensitivity and seriousness of crime against women.
4. Sensitisation of Judiciary, NGO's and general public.

As women, we must stand up for ourselves. As women, we must stand up for each other. As women, we must stand up for justice for all

-Michelle Obama

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