
A Critical Study of the Strategies for Women Empowerment In India In Present Scenario

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Abstract:

In the present research study the researcher attempts to highlights that women have been always fighting for their rights and position in society. In a developing country like India where women are treated as a second-grade citizen and inferior to men, women empowerment is justified. Following are the main causes on account of which government decided to take such an initiative for women.

Women empowerment is required most, because of the big gender gap or larger gender discrimination in the context of existing economic and other decision making processes which render the women voiceless and restricting their activities to the domestic sphere.

Gender equality continuous to be elusive in the most countries today. Even in the developed west, one identifies numerous instances of social and cultural prejudices, which widen the gap between men and women. Though the constitution is prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of sex, the women in India are continued to be discriminated even after so many years of Independence.

Keywords: Gender equality, Problems, Struggle, Strategies, Indian Constitution, Government Initiatives, Empowerment

INTRODUCTION:

The Indian women have always been quite strong. They have always been in the forefront of the struggle for the betterment of the mankind. They have been great support to their male counterpart. It is their power of resilience that in spite of the persistence efforts of the male to enmesh them in the web of myth they have never lost their composure and cool and today they are bravely facing the challenges of their subjugation.

NEED & IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY:

Today there is a demand for education and health among girls and women. After 75 years of independence, women in India are still not empowered. Lack of proper education, segregation from the employment market, high morbidity and mortality rates, increasing violence against women and their sub minimal participation in decision making processes reflect their present status. Though the government efforts no doubt welcome, the achievement cannot be at such at early date. Parents play an important role in the process of empowerment of women. Unless and until parent's attitude is not changed towards their girl child, aim of women empowerment will not be fulfilled.

Empowerment of women is a critical issue that is being discussed all over the world. Women's status in Indian society has radically changed since Independence. Government after realising the situations of women and their worse position in the society took huge initiatives to bring about a change and improve the social, economic and political conditions of women. Empowerment as a concept was introduced at the international women's conference at Nairobi at 1985. India celebrated the year of 2001 as the National Women's Empowerment year for enhancing the status of sustainable achievement in women's empowerment.

Many women are not aware of their rights. Thus the move to enforce laws must be accompanied by a movement to bring about an attitudinal change in our society. There is a need of strengthen women to independently struggle for her existence.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To study the various problems of the women.
2. To evaluate the importance or need for empowerment of women.
3. To critically examine the ongoing approaches and strategies for the empowerment of women.
4. To clarify the concept of empowerment of women, its varied components and aspects.
5. To study the Constitutional Provisions for women empowerment.
6. To discuss the various challenges before women in India.

HYPOTHESIS:

1. Economic empowerment is the foremost and basic component in the overall empowerment of women.
2. Non-governmental organisations intervention empowers poor women.
3. The literacy percentage among Indian women is lawfully low.
4. The women in India are continued to be discriminated even after so many years of Independence.
5. The self-confidence within the women is the first requisite to bring bottom up changes in our society.
6. The Indian Constitution attempts to provide equal opportunities to women, protect their rights and ensure justice to them.

CAUSES FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:

Women empowerment is required most, because of the big gender gap or larger gender discrimination in the context of existing economic and other decision making processes which render the women voiceless and restricting their activities to the domestic sphere.

Gender equality continuous to be elusive in the most countries today. Even in the developed west, one identifies numerous instances of social and cultural prejudices, which widen the gap between men and women. Though the constitution is prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of sex, the women in India are continued to be discriminated even after so many years of Independence.

Women have been always fighting for their rights and position in society. In a developing country like India where women are treated as a second-grade citizen and inferior to men, women empowerment is justified. Following are the main causes on account of which government decided to take such an initiative for women.

PROBLEMS OF WOMEN IN INDIA:

In a rapidly changing and culturally differentiated society, a slow process of adjustment in its social value system and rigidity of its institutions, results in various forms of incongruous behaviour. The changing social patterns without restructuring or redefining social values and norms always cause deviant behaviour. Structural changes in the socio-economic system are needed for smooth process of adjustment.

Indian social evolution has been a rather interesting process, for it has obviously gone beyond simple social organization to systems, if clearly favouring men which have kept in some perspective the vitally important aspects of human harmony necessary for a race and civilization to continue. Make in women the repository of all material and earthly matters gave woman importance since some of this was economic. But it assured man his freedom from petty problems of daily life which had now become the “duty” of his wife or women folk. Man was thus protected in his “thinker” role or that concerned with “higher” things. In actuality the male grew up expecting service and normally got it.

But all men hardly used this precious gift of mental leisure, it would seems that the less they were pre-occupied with thinking, the more insistent they would be in keeping their women folk firmly bound to the path of sanctified duty which meant constant care of their menfolk. This has been and continues to be the principle dilemma of the modern thinking and working women. Thee quality needed for the creative, progressive, productive Indian women is not simply related equal pay all



equal opportunity which she already has, but for an accepted parity in the right to 'be'. Very few women are consequently relieved of the petty items of daily life, unless they are single women, and the joint family in particular keeps her bound in an endless cycle of irrelevant demands. There are only a few women as these are only a few men who have the mental capacity for though in the creative sense, so to escape, some take to religion and meditation, they only excuse an Indian family will tolerate.

Thus, the self-confidence within the women is the first requisite to bring bottom up changes in our society. Her suppression, lack of education and knowledge and fewer opportunities to interact with the society has deprived of her self-confidence.

EDUCATION OR LITERACY:

In India, there is growing a realisation that the women education is of great importance to the healthy development of the social & the national life. Efforts are being made to provide Schools, for all the girls of school going age and to give incentives to them to learn. Still the situation is far from satisfactory. The literacy percentage among Indian women is lawfully low. This may be due to the lower social status and the psychological makeup of the women, particularly of the lower classes and castes.

After Independence, the educational rights of women were promoted and they were made aware of the value of education. The ratio of women pursuing higher studies and taking education improved gradually since then. The government provided several benefits to women such as scholarship, loan facilities, hostel facilities etc. who wished to go out to pursue higher education. By getting such benefits a large number of women are able to pursue higher education today.

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WOMEN IN THE ECONOMIC AND EMPLOYMENT FIELDS:

The number of working women has also steadily increased. Women have been recruited in all posts such as teachers, doctors, nurses, advocates, police officers, bank employees in all major cities of India. Since 1991 women have been recruited into 3 wings of armed forces that are military, air force and naval force.

India is a developing country, which depends very much on its vast potential of human resources, if these resources are properly tapped the country is bound to progress efficiently, effectively and rapidly. Women form the most important part of the human resources of the nation and they may contribute very substantially in building a strong, powerful and affluent nation. They can, however, make their best contribution when they are properly educated and are able to explode the myths, which have kept them in a state of backwardness and neglect.

ECONOMIC EXIGENCIES OF WOMEN:

In India, women development policies have undergone tremendous changes and even the State Policy has become somewhat more pro-women. The policymakers in India began to perceive social and economic development through the angle of women empowerment recognising women as active agents, participating in a guiding their own development.

FACTORS FACILITATING THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN:

Some social, economic and political factors facilitate the empowerment of women are listed below –

1. Acknowledging women's rights – Society should recognise that women are equally entitled to the rights and opportunities as men.
2. Freedom to take decisions and make choices – Women must have the freedom to take important decisions of life such as when to marry, the number of children they should have and so on.
3. Access to education and employment – Women can become stronger only with educational and economic power, mere expectations cannot help. Conditions must be created in such a way that women can easily get access to education and later on get employed. It will ultimately make women independent and self-reliable.
4. Opportunities for political participation – Women must be granted political power and must be free to take part in the administrative process.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT & CONSTITUTION OF INDIA:

Women in Independent India have maximum rights but many of them are not conscious about their rights. Uneducated women have a lack of awareness of their rights. It can be also concluded that the majority of women are happy in their family life and leave important decisions to their menfolk's discretion. They are not completely free from the hold of the traditional customs practised in society.

Still many are being exploited, they are completely dependent on their spouses. Hence, bringing about more and more legislation in order to ensure better opportunities to women is of no use unless there will be a big change in the Indian society and people's attitude towards women and women's role in society.

As per the act, $\frac{1}{3}$ of seats are reserved for women in addition to the seats reserved for SCs and STs. It was indeed a bold step. The rural women will also be now able to exercise some political power and play a role in decision making for village affairs.

Constitution of India guarantees equal status to all citizens of India including women under article 14 and does not distinguish or discriminate between a man and a woman. Moreover, article 15 empowers the government to make special provisions for women. Women are free to participate in all the religious, cultural, economic and political activities.

Furthermore, they have been entitled to vote and are provided with other special benefits. The constitution protects women against exploitation and ensures that they are given equal rights and opportunities being it any field.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS FOR WOMEN:

The Indian Constitution attempts to provide equal opportunities to women, protect their rights and ensure justice to them through the following provisions-

Rights and protection to women given under the Constitution of India:

- a. Right to Equality– Constitution ensures equality to all its citizens including women (Article 14).
- b. The Constitution ensures that no discrimination shall be made against any person on the basis of caste, class, creed, sex, race and place of birth [Article 15(1)].
- c. No discrimination shall be made on any grounds of discrimination including sex for providing employment opportunities. [Article 16].
- d. The State shall take the responsibility of providing maternity benefits to women employees [Article 42].
- e. Providing harmony and fraternity to people doing away with all customs in respect of women.
- f. One-third reservation of women in the panchayats – There must be separate seats reserved for women in the panchayats with separate seats for women SCs and STs [Article 243 D (3)].
- g. One-third reservation for women in the presidential posts of the Panchayats – Reserving women seats for all posts at all the levels of panchayats (Gram Panchayat, Taluka Panchayat and Zilla Panchayat) [Article 243 D(4)].
- h. One-third reservation in Municipalities – Separate seats for women in all the town municipalities. [Article 243(T) 3].
- i. One-third reservation for women in the presidential posts of Town Municipalities

STRATEGIES FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT/DEVELOPMENT:

The national document which was prepared by the Government of India with an objective of enhancing and widening opportunities for women highlights the importance of 3 strategies-

1. Obtaining greater political participation of women – The document mentions that 33% of seats must be reserved for women in order to obtain effective participation in the field of politics.
2. Income generating schemes for women – As per the document, income generating schemes must be introduced. Some of the schemes are – *IRDP, Jawahar Rozgar Yojana and TRYSEM*.
3. Increasing Female literacy level – The government believed that proper coordination between governmental and non-governmental organisations will help in improving the literacy rate of women which will further help in making them self-reliable.

Thus, women's empowerment and subsequent development, as understood contemporaneously envelops certain groups of themes which must direct the society for a better tomorrow where equity, social justice and freedom are respected in the all walks of the society.

CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:

1. Sexual Harassment within the Workplace: Women have experienced sexual harassment within the workplace to a major extent.
2. Gender bias: Gender issues are regarded as a serious problem that has been experienced by women.
3. Lack of Promotional Opportunities: There have been many more cases of women employed in various offices, organizations, and other places for a long term period, but they have not acquired promotional opportunities.
4. Discrimination: Even after 75 years of independence, women are facing the problem of discrimination in society and various workplaces.

CONCLUSION:

After 75 years of independence, women in India are still not empowered. Parents play an important role in the process of empowerment of women. Unless and until parent's attitude is not changed towards their girl child, aim of women empowerment will not be fulfilled. After Independence, the educational rights of women were promoted and they were made aware of the value of education. But Today there is a demand for education and health among girls and women.

The self-confidence within the women is the first requisite to bring bottom up changes in our society. Her suppression, lack of education and knowledge and fewer opportunities to interact with the society has deprived of her self-confidence. In the developing countries due to the discrimination against women through the neglect of their health and nutrition, the life expectancy has been low. Besides, particularly in rural and tribal areas, consequent reservation of limited resources for the welfare of the male child has resulted in the deliberate neglect of girls in regard to food, nutrition and healthcare, which is also causing a lot of damage to future maternity. The Indian Constitution attempts to provide equal opportunities to women, protect their rights and ensure justice to them through the various provisions.

SUGGESTIONS:

1. The curriculum of school and college level should inculcate values of gender equality, self-respect, courage, independence, role of the women as the saviour of human society etc, which would help develop the personality of women.
2. The women need to be trained in the art of administration, politics, finance and the cybernetics of development.
3. Many women are not aware of their rights. Thus the move to enforce laws must be accompanied by a movement to bring about an attitudinal change in our society.
4. There is a need of strengthen women to independently struggle for her existence.

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