

# **A STUDY OF ISSUES AND PROBLEMS FACED OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT FOR EARNING**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Women's Empowerment has been an issue of immense discussions and contemplation over the last few decades world-wide. This as an agenda has been on top of the lists of most government plans & programs as well. Efforts have been made on a regular basis across nations to address this issue and enhance the socio-economic status of women. However, it has been observed that most of the policies and programs view empowerment in the economic sense only working in the belief that economic self-reliance empowers women ignoring other variables like health, education, literacy etc. Introduction In the history of human development, woman has been as important as man. In fact, the status, employment and work performed by women in society is the indicator of a nation's overall progress. Without the participation of women in national activities, the social, economic or political progress of a country will be stagnated. Women constitute half of the humanity, even contributing two-thirds of world's work hours. She earns only one-third of the total income and owns less than one-tenth of the world's resources. This shows that the economic status of women is in pathetic condition and this is more so in a country like India. "Women constitute nearly 50 per cent of population, perform two-thirds of the work and produce 50 per cent of food commodities consumed by the country. They earn one third of remuneration and own 10 per cent of the property or wealth of the country" (Reddy et al., 1994).

**Keywords:** Women, Empowerment, Issues, Problems

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the ancient Indian society women were adored and worshiped as goddesses. However in the middle age, the status of women got down to a great extent. Women are considered in the society

only to perform duties like bring up children, caring every family member, and other household activities. There is old and traditional faith of people coming out for years that men are for the field whereas women are only for the home. Now-a-days, women are breaking all the barriers of social issues and problems against them in the society.

Earlier to this women were facing a lot of problems because of male dominated, patriarchal society system, practice of old traditional believes, etc. Women were only responsible to the traditional roles like child bearing and child rearing. In the modern world, where women status has been improved a little while, still they are facing problems. They have to perform both family and professional responsibilities together without the help of their husbands. In some cases, the condition of women becomes more embarrassed when they get tortured by their family members instead of getting help. Sexual harassment is more common at homes as well as in the offices by the family members, relatives, neighbors, friends, boss, etc. They have to suffer a lot in their daily life to nourish their career as well as saving their family relationships.

Empowerment refers to policies and measures designed to increase the degree of autonomy and self-determination in the lives of people and in communities in order to enable them to represent their interests in a responsible and self-determined way, acting (again) on their own authority. Empowerment refers both to the process of self-empowerment and to professional support of people, which enables them to overcome their sense of powerlessness and lack of influence, and to recognize and eventually use their resources and chances. Empowerment is a multidimensional process, which should enable women or group of women to realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life (Surekharao and Rajamanamma, 1999). It consists of greater access to knowledge and resources, greater autonomy in decision making to enable them to have greater ability to plan their lives, or to have greater control over the circumstances that influence their lives and free from shocks imposed on them by custom, belief and practice. Generally development with justice is expected to generate the forces that lead to empowerment of various sections of population in a country and to raise their status specially in case of women. "Empowerment comes from Women's groups who seek to empower themselves through greater self-reliance. They have right to determine their own choices in life. They also seek to gain control and access to resources".

**ISSUES AND PROBLEMS FACED BY WOMEN IN INDIA**

There are various issues and problems which women generally face in the society in India. Some of the problems are mentioned and described below:

**1. Selective abortion and female infanticide**

It is the most common practice for years in India in which abortion of female fetus is performed in the womb of mother after the fetal sex determination and sex selective abortion by the medical professionals.

**2. Sexual harassment**

It is the form of sexual exploitation of a girl child at home, streets, public places, transports, offices, etc by the family members, neighbors, friends or relatives.

**3. Dowry and Bride burning**

It is another problem generally faced by women of low or middle class family during or after the marriage. Parents of boys demand a lot of money from the bride's family to be rich in one time. Groom's family perform bride burning in case of lack of fulfilled dowry demand. In 2005, around 6787 dowry death cases were registered in India according to the Indian National Crime Bureau reports.

**4. Disparity in education**

The level of women education is less than men still in the modern age. Female illiteracy is higher in the rural areas. Where over 63% or more women remain unlettered.

**5. Domestic violence**

It is like endemic and widespread disease affects almost 70% of Indian women according to the women and child development official. It is performed by the husband, relative or other family member.

**6. Child Marriages**

Early marriage of the girls by their parents in order to be escaped from dowry. It is highly practiced in the rural India.

**7. Inadequate Nutrition**

Inadequate nutrition in the childhood affects women in their later life especially women belonging to the lower middle class and poor families.

**8. Low status in the family**

It is the abuse or violence against women.

**9. Women are considered as inferior to men**

So they are not allowed to join military services. 10. Status of widows Widows are considered as worthless in the Indian society. They are treated poorly and forced to wear white clothes.

Earlier women were facing problems like child marriage, sati pratha, pardapratha, restriction to widow remarriage, widows' exploitation, devadasi system, etc. However, almost all the old traditional problems have been disappeared gradually from the society but given rise to other new issues. Women are continuously facing many problems even after having self-confidence, individuality, self-respect, personality, capacity, talent, and efficiency more than men. They are facing problems in their daily life even after they are given equal rights and opportunities like men by the Constitution of India.

**Some of the major problems modern women are still facing mentioned below:**

1. Violence against women: Women are getting affected by the various violence almost every day which is disrupting the society. Women are being victims of violence at huge level day by day because of increasing crimes against women (according to the report of Crime Record Bureau of the Central Home Ministry). Woman is getting kidnapped at every 44 minutes, raped at every 47 minutes, 17 dowry deaths every day, etc. They may face violence within the family (dowry related harassment, death, marital rape, wife-battering, sexual abuse, deprivation of healthy food, female genital mutilation, etc) or outside the family (kidnapping, rape, murder,

etc). 2. Gender discrimination Women are considered as weaker section of the society than men and given less importance. Girls' children are becoming real victims of the discrimination. There are also discrimination of power and work between men and women because of the patriarchal system families in India. Gender discrimination affects women in the areas like nutrition, education, health, care, decline of female population, job, public life, etc.

- Problems of female education Women education percentage is low in India especially in the rural areas because they are discouraged for higher education like professional and technical education.
- Problems related to unemployment Women are getting more problems in searching their suitable work. They become more prone to the exploitation and harassment in the work areas.
- Boss Intentionally They are given more work and hard tasks by their boss intentionally. They have to prove their devotion, seriousness and sincerity towards work time to time.
- Unbearable Conditions Women who are uneducated more prone to divorce and desertion by their husbands on any stage of life. They have to live whole life with fear of divorce. In some cases they have to finish their life because of unbearable conditions.
- Increasing Dowry system is another huge women problem in the society which is increasing day by day. Women are ill-treated, man-handled, disrespected, tortured and suffer other cruelties (violence, murder and suicide) because of the lack of dowry at the time of marriage. It causes degradation of women status to a great extent.

## **ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN**

### **Poverty Eradication**

Since women comprise the majority of the population below the poverty line and are very often in situations of extreme poverty, given the harsh realities of intra-household and social discrimination, macro-economic policies and poverty eradication programmes will specifically address the needs and problems of such women. There will be improved implementation of programmes which are already women oriented with special targets for women. Steps will be taken for mobilization of poor women and convergence of services, by offering them a range of

economic and social options, along with necessary support measures to enhance their capabilities. Micro Credit In order to enhance women's access to credit for consumption and production, the establishment of new and strengthening of existing micro-credit mechanisms and micro-finance institution will be undertaken so that the outreach of credit is enhanced. Other supportive measures would be taken to ensure adequate flow of credit through extant financial institutions and banks, so that all women below poverty line have easy access to credit.

### **Women and Economy**

Women's perspectives will be included in designing and implementing macro-economic and social policies by institutionalizing their participation in such processes. Their contribution to socio-economic development as producers and workers will be recognized in the formal and informal sectors (including home based workers) and appropriate policies relating to employment and to her working conditions will be drawn up. Such measures could include: Reinterpretation and redefinition of conventional concepts of work wherever necessary e.g. in the Census records, to reflect women's contribution as producers and workers.

### **Globalization**

Globalization has presented new challenges for the realization of the goal of women's equality, the gender impact of which has not been systematically evaluated fully. However, from the micro-level studies that were commissioned by the Department of Women & Child Development, it is evident that there is a need for re-framing policies for access to employment and quality of employment. Benefits of the growing global economy have been unevenly distributed leading to wider economic disparities, the feminization of poverty, increased gender inequality through often deteriorating working conditions and unsafe working environment especially in the informal economy and rural areas. Strategies will be designed to enhance the capacity of women and empower them to meet the negative social and economic impacts, which may flow from the globalization process.

### **Women and Agriculture**

In view of the critical role of women in the agriculture and allied sectors, as producers, concentrated efforts will be made to ensure that benefits of training, extension and various

programmes will reach them in proportion to their numbers. The programmes for training women in soil conservation, social forestry, dairy development and other occupations allied to agriculture like horticulture, livestock including small animal husbandry, poultry, fisheries etc. will be expanded to benefit women workers in the agriculture sector.

### **Women and Industry**

The important role played by women in electronics, information technology and food processing and agro industry and textiles has been crucial to the development of these sectors. They would be given comprehensive support in terms of labour legislation, social security and other support services to participate in various industrial sectors. Women at present cannot work in night shift in factories even if they wish to. Suitable measures will be taken to enable women to work on the night shift in factories. This will be accompanied with support services for security, transportation etc.

### **Support Services**

The provision of support services for women, like child care facilities, including crèches at work places and educational institutions, homes for the aged and the disabled will be expanded and improved to create an enabling environment and to ensure their full cooperation in social, political and economic life. Women-friendly personnel policies will also be drawn up to encourage women to participate effectively in the developmental process.

## **SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN**

### **Education**

Equal access to education for women and girls will be ensured. Special measures will be taken to eliminate discrimination, universalize education, eradicate illiteracy, create a gender-sensitive educational system, increase enrolment and retention rates of girls and improve the quality of education to facilitate life-long learning as well as development of occupation/vocation/technical skills by women. Reducing the gender gap in secondary and higher education would be a focus area. Sectorial time targets in existing policies will be achieved, with a special focus on girls and women, particularly those belonging to weaker sections including the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes/Other Backward Classes/Minorities. Gender sensitive curricula would

be developed at all levels of educational system in order to address sex stereotyping as one of the causes of gender discrimination.

### **Health**

A holistic approach to women's health which includes both nutrition and health services will be adopted and special attention will be given to the needs of women and the girl at all stages of the life cycle. The reduction of infant mortality and maternal mortality, which are sensitive indicators of human development, is a priority concern. This policy reiterates the national demographic goals for Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) set out in the National Population Policy 2000. Women should have access to comprehensive, affordable and quality health care. Measures will be adopted that take into account the reproductive rights of women to enable them to exercise informed choices, their vulnerability to sexual and health problems together with endemic, infectious and communicable diseases such as malaria, TB, and water borne diseases as well as hypertension and cardio-pulmonary diseases. The social, developmental and health consequences of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases will be tackled from a gender perspective. To effectively meet problems of infant and maternal mortality, and early marriage the availability of good and accurate data at micro level on deaths, birth and marriages is required. Strict implementation of registration of births and deaths would be ensured and registration of marriages would be made compulsory.

### **Nutrition**

In view of the high risk of malnutrition and disease that women face at all the three critical stages viz., infancy and childhood, adolescent and reproductive phase, focused attention would be paid to meeting the nutritional needs of women at all stages of the life cycle. This is also important in view of the critical link between the health of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women with the health of infant and young children. Special efforts will be made to tackle the problem of macro and micro nutrient deficiencies especially amongst pregnant and lactating women as it leads to various diseases and disabilities. Intra-household discrimination in nutritional matters vis-à-vis girls and women will be sought to be ended through appropriate strategies. Widespread use of nutrition education would be made to address the issues of intra-household imbalances in

nutrition and the special needs of pregnant and lactating women. Women's participation will also be ensured in the planning, superintendence and delivery of the system.

### **Drinking Water and Sanitation**

Special attention will be given to the needs of women in the provision of safe drinking water, sewage disposal, toilet facilities and sanitation within accessible reach of households, especially in rural areas and urban slums. Women's participation will be ensured in the planning, delivery and maintenance of such services.

### **Housing and Shelter**

Women's perspectives will be included in housing policies, planning of housing colonies and provision of shelter both in rural and urban areas. Special attention will be given for providing adequate and safe housing and accommodation for women including single women, heads of households, working women, students, apprentices and trainees.

### **Environment**

Women will be involved and their perspectives reflected in the policies and programmes for environment, conservation and restoration. Considering the impact of environmental factors on their livelihoods, women's participation will be ensured in the conservation of the environment and control of environmental degradation. The vast majority of rural women still depends on the locally available non-commercial sources of energy such as animal dung, crop waste and fuel wood. In order to ensure the efficient use of these energy resources in an environmental friendly manner, the Policy will aim at promoting the programmes of non-conventional energy resources. Women will be involved in spreading the use of solar energy, biogas, smokeless chulahs and other rural application so as to have a visible impact of these measures in influencing eco system and in changing the life styles of rural women.

### **Science and Technology**

Programmes will be strengthened to bring about a greater involvement of women in science and technology. These will include measures to motivate girls to take up science and technology for higher education and also ensure that development projects with scientific and technical inputs

involve women fully. Efforts to develop a scientific temper and awareness will also be stepped up. Special measures would be taken for their training in areas where they have special skills like communication and information technology. Efforts to develop appropriate technologies suited to women's needs as well as to reduce their drudgery will be given a special focus too.

### **Women in Difficult Circumstances**

In recognition of the diversity of women's situations and in acknowledgement of the needs of specially disadvantaged groups, measures and programmes will be undertaken to provide them with special assistance. These groups include women in extreme poverty, destitute women, women in conflict situations, women affected by natural calamities, women in less developed regions, the disabled widows, elderly women, single women in difficult circumstances, women heading households, those displaced from employment, migrants, women who are victims of marital violence, deserted women and prostitutes etc.

### **CONCLUSION**

Empowerment is process, which helps people to gain control of their lives through raising awareness, taking action and working in order to exercise greater control. Empowerment is the feeling that activates the psychological energy to accomplish one's goals (Indiresan, 1999). The term 'empowerment' has till-date not been very explicitly defined and it may be assumed that based upon context the term may be interpreted contextually & situational. However, in context of women, empowerment essentially refers to a feeling of awareness of one's own situation backed up with the knowledge, skills and information which could enable women to gain higher self-esteem and facilitate their role as decision makers in the current patriarchal society where women have always been subordinate to men. Empowerment 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.

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