

Women Empowerment: Reality or Myth

Dr. Shailja Vasudeva, Assistant Professor Department of Political Science, Shaheed Captain Vikram Batra Govt. Degree College Palampur, Distt. Kangra, Himachal Pradesh, India

Abstract

Women are considered to be goddess in the land of India. But in India women are the victims of rape cases, feticide, dowry deaths and acid attacks etc. In this research paper views are given on women empowerment. Women empowerment is a truth or a myth, a detailed description on it has given by this research article. This article also focused on legal rights of women in India. This article emphasized on the controversial issue, are women really empower or not.

Keywords: India, women, women empowerment, reality, myth

Introduction:-

A woman is beautiful creation of God. She is protective mother, a caring sister, a loving wife and an obedient daughter. Women are playing an important role in our families as well as in society. No doubt, women play an important role in the development of society and the nation. When we study our religious books, like Ramayana, Mahabharata, Geeta, Shiv Puran and others also, they have emphasized on women as “MAHASHAKTI”. Than a question arises in my mind, why there is a need of women empowerment, if women is a Mahashakti.

Meaning of Women Empowerment: -

The word “**Empowerment**” means, ‘Authority or power given to someone to do something’.¹ Women Empowerment refers to increasing and improving the social, economic, Political, and legal strength of women, to ensure equal right to woman, and to make them confident enough to claim there rights.² in the present scenario the topic on “**Women Empowerment**” is a burning issue not only in India but also all across the world.

Constitutional And legal Rights For Indian women:-

For the empowerment of women, the constitution of India and different governments have intermittently contributed a lot. Women in India are enjoying two categories of rights, namely as constitutional right and legal rights. The constitutional rights are those, which are provided by Indian constitution. The legal rights, on the other hand are those which are provided in the various laws (Articles) of the Parliament and the state legislative.

The constitution of India allows for positive and protective discrimination in favour of Indian women. As per constitution, women are enjoying full Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles, more than men in our society. No one can discriminate against any citizen of India on the ground of sex and there is concept of equal pay for equal work for men and women in India, there are reserve seats for women in Panchayats, Municipal Communities, State Legislature and in Parliamentary elections.³

Like constitutional Rights, women are also enjoying legal rights. Various legislation's contain several rights and safe guards for women like Immortal Traffic Prevention Act (1956), Dowry Prohibition Act (1961), Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act (1971), Indecent Representation of women Prohibition Act (1986), Commission of Sati Prevention Act (1987), National Commission for women Act (1990), Pre conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Technique (Prohibition of sex selection) Act (1994), Protection of women from Domestic Violence Act (2005), Sexual Harassment of Women at workplace (Prevention and Prohibition and Redressal) Act (2013)⁴

Rightly said by **Mr. Chris Rock**, "Gone the days when people said, There are only three things women need in life: FOOD, WATER AND COMPLIMENT.

Now a days, we see women are successful in every field like Education, Politics, Acting, Photography, Modeling, Dance, Music, Research and Technology, Games, Business and so on. I have taken examples of successful women who are role models of society in their respective fields.

Shobhna Bhartia chairperson Hindustan Times Media, Seema Dhundia Commandant CRPF, Manisha Girotra MD UBS (Union Bank of Switzerland) India, Arundhati Bhattacharya Chairperson SBI (State Bank of India) and Chanda kochhar Managing Director and chief executive ICIC Bank. Famous Business women's, kiran Mazumdar chairperson and managing Director of Bicon Ltd., Indira Nooyi chairperson and CEO of pepsico, Sangeeta Pendurkar MD, Kellogg India Pvt. Ltd. Schauna chauhan Saluja CEO of Parle Agro, Vinta Bali MD of Britannia Industries Limited, Avani Saglani Davda MD Godrej nature's Basket, Jessy Paul, CMO Wipro, kavita Hurry MD INGVYSYA Mutual fund and Chitra Ramakrishna Deupty MD, National stock Exchange (NSE). Famous Politicians, Indira Gandhi, Jayalalita, Sushma Swaraj, Mamta banerjee and Pratibha Patil Former President of India. Namrita Chandi Flight Planner, the most senior women helicopter pilot in IAF. Panam Dudeja, Jewellery Designer she has been working with Tanishaq retail sales of the jewellery brand of Titan Industry as senior Jewellery design manager. Dayanita Singh, Photographer she is the country's most ideal acknowledged Art Photographer and Jasmeen Patheja Photographer and social Activist, A designer and photographer by profession, an activist by choice heads a nationwide agitation against sexual harassment Called "Blank Noise" Anjali Gopalan AIDS Activist. Vidhya Athreya, wild life Scientist. Padmini chetture famous Bhartnatyam Dancer, Lata Mangeshkar Famous singer. Ahwaraya Rai, Sushmita Sen, Laura Dutta, Diana Hayden top models and they won Beauty Contest at International level. Shri devi, Madhuri Dixit, Vidya Balan, Kajol, Shradha Kapoor, Karina Kapoor and Priyanka Chopra famous Bollywood Actress, Mathali Raj and Julian Goswami Criketers, Sania Mirza

International Tennis Player, Marykom Boxer. Jwala Gutta, Sania Nehwal and P.V. Sindhu International Badminton Players.⁶ Karnam Mallaswari weight lifting, Deepa karmaker Artistic gymnast, Shiba maggon Basketball Player. Geeta phogat, Babita Phogat and vinesh Phogat free style Wrestlers, last but not least Anjali Bhagwat famous shooter and so many other women, who are making there name and fame not only in India, but all across the Globe.⁷

That is the matter of proud for all of us but the matter of concern is, whether all the women are actually empowered or we only have few examples in front of us. I have read so many times in newspapers and heard on so many news channels about feticide, eve teasing, child marriage, dowry deaths, Rape cases about sexual harassment which ultimately shakes my belief in the women Empowerment and accordingly I fall that our social environment is not favorable to women and hence sometimes I feel that India is a male dominating society.

In India most of women have been facing exploitation at every step of their lives and this male dominating society always tried to suppress women either in the form of female feticide, child marriages, dowry or in the form of rape, acid attacks and this suppression leads to more crimes against women. I want to bring it to yours notice by expressing my viewpoints on these issues in details.

First of all, I want to discuss most shocking and serious issue “**Feticide**”. A women has to face endless difficulties throughout her life. She has to struggle even before entering this world, through feticide. Feticide means destruction of abortion of a fetus, unlawful abortion may be considered “**Feticide**”. Indian’s prefer male children over females. Male child as provider’s who will stay with their families and Girl child called as “**PRAYA DHAN**” in India. In the times of girls marriage Dowry bears a huge financial obligation for the bride’s family. As a consequence a girl child is viewed a possible source of drain on the families finances, ultimately an onus. This view evolves in to gigantic proportions taking the shape of infanticides and feticides of girl child.⁸ the much abhorred practices like abortion of female fetuses and killing of girl babies have resulted into an unnaturally skewed Child Sex Ratio (CSR) in India. In states like Rajasthan and Haryana, these practices were most prevalent the child sex ratio. No law and order, no judgment of honorable court of laws is working there to stop this terrible crime. Indian Former Home Secretary, Gopal Krishan Pillai said, “whatever policies, we have been following need a complete review because we are not able to arrest the decline in child sex Ratio” .⁹

The Funniest thing about we Indians is, During festival like “Durga Ashtmi,” we are in search of girl children for “Kanya Pujan.” Than only confusion in my mind is why illegal activities like girls feticide happen. In our society either highly educated or less educated people wish to have boy child not a girl child. It’s a matter of shame for all of us, who are talking about women empowerment.

Second major hurdle between women empowerment is **child marriage**. UNICEF defines, child marriage as a formal marriage or informal union before 18 years of age. Child marriage is defined as force marriage by UNICEF, Because they believe children under age 18 are incapable of giving a legally valid consent.¹⁰ child marriages are still practiced, because age is counted as an index of

purity. It also stems from the belief that young girls can be better molded in to house hold roles than older girls.

The Indian states with highest observed marriage rates for under 18-year girls in 2009, according to a Registrar General of India. Reports, were Jharkhand (14.1%) west Bengal (13.6%) Bihar (9.3%), Uttar Pradesh (18.9%), Assam (8.8%) and Rajasthan (15.6%).¹¹ The latest census report on the decadal head count in 2011 reveals that child marriage is rampant with almost one in every three married women having been wed while she was still under the age of 18 years. What is the worse is a whopping 78.5 Lakh girls (2.3% of all women or girls who were married in 2011) were married while they were not yet 10 years of age.¹²

A girl child, which even don't know about the meaning of marriage is forced to become in a relation. After that she indulges in family planning very earlier. In that situation, how can we think about women empowerment?

Dowry and Domestic Violence both create trouble in the path of women empowerment. One of the most worst evils of Indian society is the dowry system. The word 'Dowry' means, "An amount of property or money brought by a bride to her husband on their marriage." It is a custom that is prevalent in all the sections of our society in one form or the others. It is the most crudest expression of the male dominance in the Indian society.

Dowry means greed factor, no matter girl is educated or not, but demands related to dowry are expected to be met. On the other hand dowry is also a means for showing off social stature in our society. One's status in society is often measured by the amount of money a person spends in her daughter's wedding. One more humorous observation is there, with the increases in girls age, amount of dowry also increases.

Even dowry is not a one time pay up. With the passage of time the demands from the boys family side, keep on increases. If these demands are not met then whole of this condition leads to verbal abuse, domestic violence and sometimes bride loss her life due to all these activities. Many physical and mental torture being given to bride which ultimately leads to the depression in bride and hence many brides commit suicides due to all this.

Year 2016 figures indicates that in India 20 women die every day due to dowry issues.¹³ So my question is, whether this scenario is indicating the women empowerment in India?

Rape is even more disgusting crime towards ladies, in India. Rape means, "Rape is a type of sexual assault usually involving sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual penetration carried out against a person without that person's consent."¹⁴ Rape is the most common crime against women in India.

One of the most painful, worst and disgusting examples of animalism was "**NIRBHAYA RAPE CASE**" in Delhi. It was 16th Dec 2012, when Nirbhaya rape case happened in a private bus. When the victim was travelling with her friend and was gang raped by a group of people. Nirbhaya survived II days in a hospital at Delhi and after II days she was shifted to a hospital in a Singapore. But in Singapore she survived only for two days and died.¹⁵

As per records of National Crime Bureau in 2013, 24923 rape cases were reported and in 2016, 34,600 rape cases were reported.¹⁶ which clearly indicates that rape cases in India are increasing day by day. So is this scenario specifying women empowerment in India?

Sexual Harassment is also very common in India. Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favor, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when either: The conduct is made as a term or condition of an individual's employment, education, living environment or participation in a university community.¹⁷

Its simply means the harassment of women by unwanted sexual Advances in workplaces, educational institutes and many other places. Alison Doyle was very nicely described about the types of sexual harassment. According to Doyle, "There are various types of harassment, that can occur in the workplaces, i.e. workplace harassment, whether verbal or physical badgering based on sex, religion or race is unlawful and also a form of discrimination." ¹⁸ This is the matter of shame for all of us, women are even unsafe in their workplaces. Even famous top models, singers and Bollywood actresses too, admitted that they have been faced sexual harassment many time.

Eve teasing is also most common crime against the women in India. Eve teasing is a typical social crime. Eve teasing means, "The making of unwanted sexual remarks or advances by a man to a women in a public places." Whenever you go in India be it the mall, bus stands, railway stations, theatres, colleges, schools, if you are a woman you can't escape from it. Women who are educated intelligent and wise enough, they are also faces torcher in their workplaces also. It's a matter of shame for ourselves.

Acid attack is another, the most heinous crime against women. It's not only just inflicts physical injuries but also destroys the victim's entire life, leaving the scar of heinous crime on the body and the mind of the victim.

I want to put light on some acid attack cases, which held in India. Let me focus on case of **Luxmi Agrawal**, An Indian campaigner and TV host. She is also a acid attack Victim. She was attacked in 2005 at the age of 15 and after that attack she survived and now she is fighting for the rights of acid attack victim.

Second case nursing student **Preeti Rathi** (Sept.6, 2016), victim of Mumbai acid attack, She was attacked by unidentified man, he threw acid on her face and run away. This acid attack damaged her eyes, infected her kidney's the acid also entered her esophagus veins and windpipe. After fighting with this unbearable pain, Preeti Succumbed to her injuries and lost the battle of her life
¹⁹

Approximately 106 acid attacks were reported in 2012, as per The Acid Survivors Foundation (ASFI) of India. Further this figure rose to 122 in 2013, 349 in 2014 and 500 in 2015 and lot many other cases are there, which are still unreported.²⁰

Now its very much clear, that the situation of Indian women whether they are literate or illiterate, House wife or working women, Weak or strong they have to be ready to face

rape cases, Eve teasing, sexual harassment, Acid Attacks and so many other physically and mentally torcher by this men dominating society.

To eradicate these shameful acts from our society, our honorable Supreme Court of India have issued 15 Judgments²¹ that changed the women's position in India. Which are as following:

- (1) Vishaka & Ors v. State of Rajasthan & Ors, (1997) 6 SCC 241:- sexual. Harassment against women in work places.
- (2) Vaddeboyina Tulasamma v. Vaddeboyina Shesha Reddi, 1977 SCR (3) 261:- Hindu female's right to maintenance , Sec. 14(1) Hindu Succession Act, 1956 to be liberally construed in favour of female.
- (3) Mrs. Mary Roy etc. v. State of Kerala & Ors, AIR 1986 SC 1011:- Christian women are entitled to have an equal share in their father's property.
- (4) Md. Ahmed Khan v. Shah Bano Begum, 1985 SCR (3) 844:- Muslim women maintenance under Sec 125 crpc.
- (5) Shamim Ara v. State of U.P., 2002(7) SCC 518:- requirements of a valid talaq.
- (6) Daniel Latifi v. UOI, 2001 (7) SCC 740:- liability of Muslim husband to his divorced wife.
 - (7) Lata Singh v. State of U.P., 2006(6) SCALE 583:- freedom of women to marry or live with anyone.
- (8) D. Velusamy v. D. Patchaiammal, (2010) 10 SCC 469:-
 - (9) Roxann Sharma v. Arun Sharma, Civil Appeal No. 1967 of 2015:- custody of minor child.
- (10) Seema v. Ashwani Kumar, AIR 2006 SC 1158:- compulsory registration of marriages.
 - (11) Dr. Upendra Baxi & Ors. v. State of Uttar Pradesh, AIR 1987 SC 191:- conditions in which girls were living in the Government Protective Home.
- (12) Sakshi v. UOI, AIR 2004 SC 3566:- conducting trial of child sexual abuse or rape.
 - (13) R. D. Upadhyay v. State of Andhra Pradesh, AIR 2006 SC 1946:- development of children who are in jail with their mothers, either as undertrial prisoners or convicts.
 - (14) Centre for enquiry into Health and Allied themes (CEHAT) v. UOI, 2003 (8) SCC 398:- guidelines to prevent female feticide.
- (15) Delhi Domestic Working Women's Forum v. UOI, 1995 SCC (1) 14:- dealing rape victims.

To stop these torches and to empower women the govt. of India also repeatedly putting full efforts for the betterment and welfare of women in India. Through these welfare schemes which are as follows.

- Mother and child Tracking system (MGTS), 2009
- The Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yogna Conditional Maternity.
- Benefit Plan (CMB)
- Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girl SABLA
- Rashtriya mahila kosh
- Priya darshini
- Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao Scheme
- Ujjwala
- One stop centre scheme
- Working women hostel
- Maternity Benefits Programme
- Women helpline Scheme
- Swadhar Greh
- Sarswati Yogna (2014)
- Sukanya Samriddhi Account (SSA) (2015)
- Bhagyashree Scheme for Girl child (2016)

It is fact that women empowerment is very much necessary in the nation's growth. Empowerment of women leads to the development of the family, community, society and the nation. But as per my view I think women are still not completely empowered and they are into the process of empowerment. In this process of women empowerment women has to play very vital role socially, culturally and economically and also they should take part in decision making as well.

All the women should be completely aware about there rights and should get safe and favorable environment in our society. If an educated women is accepting curse like dowry, eve teasing, sexual harassment etc. It means they are not aware about there fundamental rights and also they are not aware about constitutional and legal provisions.

Mother should also play an important role, as they can give her sons moral values and learning's to treat women with respect. Education and self dependence of women very much essential. Parents should avoid child marriages and they should give girls an equal opportunity for education and to make their future as per their skills and competences.

Working women should get a safe and favorable environment in the workplaces women should freely live their life with the respect and dignity women whether inside or outside of their homes should get a respectable and comfortable environment. They should have complete knowledge about their constitutional and legal privileges so that if in case something wrong happened to them, then they can raise their Voice.

Rightly said by, Madeleine Albright. Former United States secretary of state "It took me quite a long time to develop a voice and now that I have it, I am not going to be."

I conclude my words, with saying women's empowerment is neither a fully achieved reality, nor a myth, but a work in progress. This goal will be achieved only when gender inequality is removed. Everyone should try to educate and empower women to enlighten India. Last but not least, I want to say, please

**“Respect And Empower Women To Empower This Country,
Women Are Need of The Society, Never Spoil Them.”
Jai Hind, Jai Bharat, Jai Nari Shakti**

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