



EMPOWERING WOMEN IN INDIA: A WAY NOT A DESTINATION

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ABSTRACT

“Identity of men is hidden in women and there is a common proverb that says behind the success of everyman there is a woman but success of women keeps men ahead.”

Of the 1.3 billion people who living in absolute poverty around the Globe, 70% are women for these women, poverty does not just mean scarcity and want. It means rights denied, opportunities curtailed and voices silenced. The situations remains far worse at the apex of power: out of 179 nation’s worldwide, only nine currently have a woman elected head of State or government. Historical shows that only 39 states have ever elected a women President or prime minister. Women are less than one tenth of the world’s cabinet ministers and hold one fifth of all sub- ministerial positions (UN2000).NGOs and international agencies, major barriers continue to restrict women’s advancement in public life. The extensive comparative literature seeking to explain these cross- national disparities has suggested multiple reasons behind this phenomenon, including the importance of cultural attitudes, social structure and political institutions.

Empowerment of women is the key devices to enable them resurrects their status multifariously in the society and reconcile them to share virilities of the fast development world. This device is significant in view of the role that women can more effectively play in all vital areas. It en lights the skills and qualities of women leaders and managers to face challenges and how women has converted the cultural and social obstacles into inspiration ladders for their success or identity. By empowerment of women is meant that the conferment of power by means of low in all matters affect gender interests, related to family well being and socio economic national affairs, providing for participation in decision making in all such matters. Empowerment means to inspire women with the courage to break free from the chains of limiting beliefs, patterns and societal or religious conditions that have traditionally kept women suppressed and unable to realize their true beauty and

power. Women's lack of empowerment is believed to be an important factor in the persistence prevalence of malnutrition.

This paper presents and highlights on the opportunities and challenges of women workforce in India The present study deals the Empowerment in Management and Women empowerment and how the social and economic factors can contribute to women empowerment and also dealing the changes in women's mobility, interactions, labor patterns, infra household decision making and control over recourses, and also explaining the factors which are to be considered for empowerment.

KEYWORDS: *Poverty, Empowerment, Women Welfare, Key Device, Inspire, Opportunities And Challenges, Beliefs, Societal, Religious, Power, Justice Etc.*

INTRODUCTION

One shloka of Sanskrit says "Yatra naryastu pujiyate tatra ramante devata" meaning where women are being worshiped, god will always be there. Our holy books Vedas and Upanishads advocated for the equal status of the women in the society and in that era they were treated at par with men.

Even in India's independence struggle we find Rani laxmibai of Jansi, First congress president Anne Besent, Madam Bhekarji Cama, Sarojini Naidu contributed a lot. She is Mother Therisa, She is Florence Nightingale, She is Late Kalpana Chawla and today she is Chanda Kochar heading India's largest private sector bank. From homemaker to banker, from freedom fighter to a ray of hope to homeless and sick, from inspiration to institution she has played and will play multiple roles in shaping the society, creating beautiful world. She has proved that given an opportunity, she will excel in whatever field she is working.

The status of women in society has an important bearing on their participation in economic activity, which is common in all countries developed and developing. In developing countries the family incomes are, by and large, low and that can best be supplemented by women's work.

Traditionally, a women's place was at home and she moved within the narrow sphere of her work and life activities but she always shown inclination to work and earn name and frame. Generally women's outside work profile confined to domestic help, secretarial, medical and teaching only. But now the situation is changing. Crossing all traditional barriers and prejudices women today work in large numbers may be manufacturing, services and consumer industries, defense may be blue-collar or white-collar work. However, women who enter occupations traditionally reserved for males, have to struggle, face many difficulties to create place for her and moreover prove worth. Hence the choice of being employed outside home is a challenge but with the economic necessities, women are forced to come out of their home, seeking employment opportunities.

Management point of view power is nothing but the potential ability to influence other behavior. Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender or economic

strength of individuals and communities; it often involves the empowerment developing confidence in their own capacities. Empowerment is based on the idea that giving employee's skills, resources, authority, opportunity, as well as holding them responsible and accountable for outcomes of their actions will contribute their competence and satisfaction.

Empowerment and authority are both interrelated words. They both have some similar characteristic features. Authority is the formal right of a superior to command and compel his subordinates to perform a certain act. "Empowerment is the authority of an employee to make decisions in his area of responsibility, without having to get approval from someone else." In other words empowerment occurs when the power of decision making and authority to share resources go to employees who then experience a sense of ownership and control over jobs. There are three important factors that are to be considered for empowerment on an organization. They are:

- Organizational Values or Leadership actions.
- Human resources systems.
- Organizational structure and job design.

These three factors lead to empowerment in an organization which leads to, continuous improvement actions of organization and brings competitive quality, productivity and better customer service. Empowerment demands for the team formation. These teams are called self-directed teams or empowered teams. It includes the following.

- a) The ability to make decisions about personal or collective circumstances.
- b) Having positive thinking about the ability to make changes.
- c) Access information and resources for decision making.
- d) Involving in the growth process and changes that is never ending and self initiated.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EMPOWERMENT ORGANIZATIONS

- They do not have barriers between people and departments.
- Formulate a vision.
- Create the feeling of belongingness.
- Creativity of the employees is encouraged.
- Keep the organization's strength simple.
- Employees learn and teach the art of self leadership.

EMPOWERMENT IN MANAGEMENT

Organizations can use empowerment to effectively open the knowledge, experience and motivation power that people already have the three keys that managers must use to empower are: Share information, create autonomy and replace the old hierarchy with self-managed teams.

“Empowerment is simply the effective use of a manager’s authority and it is a productive way to maximize all-around work efficiency.”

Sharing information with everyone gives them a clear picture of the company and its current situation. It builds trust between employer and employee.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment of women also called gender empowerment has become a significant topic of discussion in regard to development and economics. Empowerment is one of the main procedural concerns when addressing human rights and development. Women empowerment connotes Economic Empowerment which implies a better quality of material life through sustainable livelihoods owned and managed by women.

“When women are the advisor, the lords of creation don’t take the advice till they have persuade themselves that it is just what they intended to do, then they act upon it and if it succeeds, they give the weaker vessel half the credit of it: if fails, they generously give herself the whole”

-LOUISA MAY ALCOTT-

Women empowerment is a process in which women gain greater share of control over resources-material, human and intellectual like knowledge, information, ideas and financial resources like money and access to money and control over decision- making in the home, community, society and nation and to gain “Power”

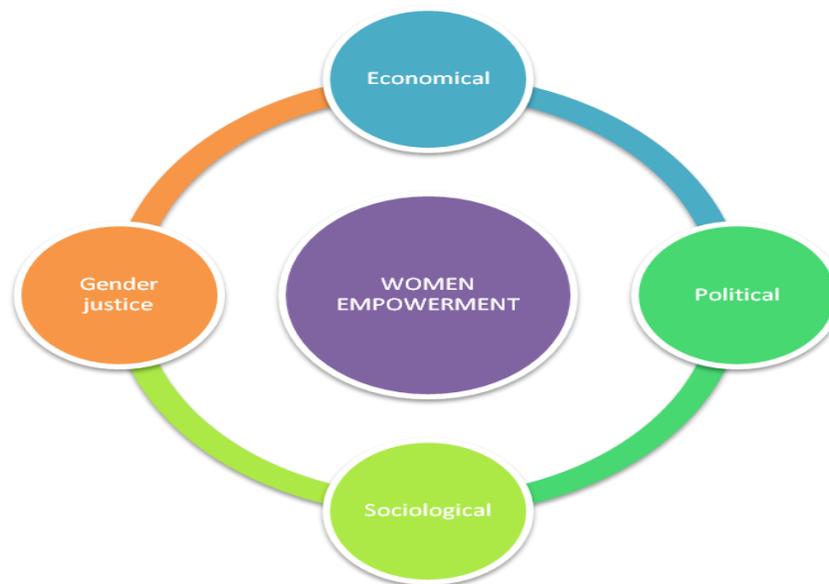
According to Country report of India, “Empowerment means moving from a position of enforced powerless to one of power”.

- A. SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT:** creating an enabling environment through various affirmative. Developing policies and programs for development of women besides providing them easy and equal access to all the basic human minimum services so as to enable them to realize their full potential.
- B. ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT:** ensuring provision of training, employment and income generation activities with both ‘forward and ‘backward’ linkages with the ultimate objective of making all potential women economically independent and self-reliant.
- C. GENDER JUSTICE:** elimination of all forms of gender discrimination to ensure both de jure and de facto rights and fundamental freedom for women on par with men in all spheres.

BARRIERS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Basically there are four main barriers to Women Empowerment, they are

- Gender Disparity.
- Political sphere.
- Economic sphere.
- Sociological sphere.



GENDER DISPARITY

Gender Disparity broadly stated as the basic disparity in providing, human rights, resources, and economic opportunity and political rights to all parts of the society without any bias based on the gender, race or sect, community. Gender inequality has serious social, political and economic implications. Women are particularly disadvantaged and, as they account for half of the world's population, the consequences are grave both individually and cumulatively for nations.

Gender equality remains an elusive goal across the world. Despite recent progress, clear disparities exist between genders in the economic, political and social spheres. The challenge is greatest in the world. Historical social structures resulting in the marginalization of women have been compounded by poverty and the vulnerabilities and weaknesses of the world

India is among the few developing countries where gender equality and improvement in the status of women are specifically stated to be central goals of development and social policy. Reasons for Gender disparity:

- Illiteracy

- Poverty
- Social demons and Evils- Dowry and widow marriage.
- Cultural and Religious superstitions.
- Exploitation
- Societal norms.

GENDER AND THE POLITICAL SPHERE

Central to addressing the issues that marginalize women in social, economic and political spheres is providing increased access to platforms of government and ensuring that women are able to participate equally in decision-making processes. Government is about legislation, allocation of resources and accountability to citizens. The exclusion of women from this process results in one-sided policy-making which contributes to the continued marginalization of women. Research has also demonstrated that women's participation in government and decision-making has an impact in reducing poverty (Baden 2000). Political culture has therefore commonly been suspected to be an important determinant of women's entry in to elected office, yet so far little systematic cross- national evidence has been available to prove this proposition.

A recent study by the inter- parliamentary Union interviewing 187 women politicians in 65 Countries to find out about their experience found that cultural attitudes and attitudes hostile to women's participation in politics was nominated as the second most important barrier to running for parliament, just behind the problems of balancing time demands (IPU2000b).The Beijing Platform for Action defined two strategic objectives in this area. These are:

- To ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making;
- To increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership. Four different types of female participation – although inter-related – are necessary at all levels of government to ensure equal participation of men and women in government.

This includes:

- (i) Political participation.
- (ii) Political representation.
- (iii) Political leadership.
- (iv) Political accountability.

GENDER AND THE ECONOMIC SPHERE

Lifting women from poverty is about equalizing their opportunities in the economic, social and political spheres. Equalizing opportunities for gender and gender empowerment is fundamentally about ‘gender mainstreaming’- including into the policy process all aspects of development theory and practice of both men and women. Macroeconomic policy affects the empowerment of people because of its impacts on allocations of resources and access to them, along with income distribution and wealth.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: Most women across the globe rely on the informal work sector for an income. If women were empowered to do more and be more, the possibility for economic growth becomes apparent. In addition, female participation in councils, groups and business is seen to increase efficiency. For a general idea on how an empowered women can impact a situation monetarily. A study found that of Fortune 500 companies, “those with more women board directors had significantly higher returns including 53% higher returns on equity, 24% higher returns on sales and 67% higher returns on invested capital (OECD, 2008)”. This study shows the impact women can have on the overall economic benefits of a company, if implemented on a global scale; the inclusion of women in the formal workforce can increase the economic output of a nation.

GENDER AND THE SOCIAL SPHERE

Socio cultural empowerment is the process through which people and groups become aware of the societal and cultural forces at work in their lives and learn how to influence their dynamics. Particularly those of deep- rooted social inequality and exclusion. If we understand the term “culture” in the widely accepted sense of all the capabilities and habits acquired by human beings as members of societies. Countries who are signatories to the Convention are required to end all discrimination against women. They are required to eliminate discriminatory laws and adopt those that favor gender equality, protect women against discrimination, and prevent other parties (organizations, enterprises and persons) from discriminating against women.

Cultural explanations provide a plausible reason why women to have made such striking advances with in the Nordic region compared with other comparable European societies like Switzerland, Italy or Belgium, since all these are affluent post – industrial welfare states and established parliamentary democracies with PR systems.

SUGGESTIONS TO OVERCOME GENDER DISPARITY

- 1. OPPORTUNITY:** Is economy providing enough opportunities to women to excel? Provide an opportunity in terms of education, entrepreneurship and social security so that more and more women can excel in their field.
- 2. CAPABILITY:** Are we providing required education, and now how to utilize the opportunities existing in the economy? We should educate, and give formal training to sharpen their capacities and opportunities. Women not only need to look beyond traditional jobs, they need look for the new kind of jobs. Like having formal training in operating computers will generate lot of opportunities. Skill development is core focus.

3. **ACCESS:** Are we creating a platform where the opportunities and capabilities come together? We need to provide access to the information and right quality of education so that women can identify the opportunity of working in various fields. We need to build our capabilities to match the opportunities existing in the economy.
4. **SECURITY:** Are we providing social and physical security to women who are working away from home. Social security in terms of job guarantee, basic sanitation facilities, good work culture. Physical security in terms of their safety at work place, travel and even to the extent in their homes against social evils.
5. **EMPOWERMENT:** Is the economy is provided equal opportunities ti the access financial resources, decision making and control over the situation. Empowerment is a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional and multi-layered concept.

NATIONAL PLANS AND POLICIES

Awareness of the above situation, and a determination to address it through focused policy measures, are features of each of the National Five year Plans.

The Tenth Plan document identifies malnutrition, poor health, lack of education, violence, over work and systemic powerlessness as markers of the life-long discrimination faced by women in India. The Tenth plan represents a distinct advance from earlier plans, in terms of articulating a strong and time bound platform for action on gender equality. Key strategies are:

- a. Creating and enabling environment through positive economic and social policies, for the development of women and the realization of their full potential.
- b. Enabling the “de jure” and “de facto” enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedom by women on par with men in the spheres of political, economic, social, cultural and civil rights.
- c. Ensuring equal access of women to public services, public office and decision making in the social, political and economic spheres.
- d. Strengthening legal systems aimed at the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.
- e. Changing societal attitudes and community practices through the active participation and involvement of both men and women.
- f. Mainstreaming a gender perspective into the development process.
- g. Eliminating discrimination and all forms of violence-against women and the girl child.
- h. Building and strengthening partnerships with civil society-particularly women’s organizations, corporate and private sector agencies.

India has also ratified various international conventions and human rights instruments committing to secure equal rights of women.

CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES

- Equality before the law.

ARTICLE 14

- No discrimination by the state on the grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of Birth or any of these.

ARTICLE 15(1)

- Special provisions to be made by the State in favor of women and children.

ARTICLE 15(3)

- Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State.

ARTICLE 16

- State policy to be directed to securing for men and women equality, the right to an adequate means of livelihood.

ARTICLE 39(A)

- Equal pay for equal work for both men and women.

ARTICLE 39(d)

- Provisions to be made by the State for securing just and human conditions of work and for Maternity relief.

ARTICLE 42

- To promote harmony and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

WAYS TO EMPOWER WOMEN

- One way is to deeply the empowerment of women is through land rights, it offers a key way to economically empower women.
- Provide an opportunity in terms of education, entrepreneurship and social security so that more and more women can excel in their field.

- Another way to provide women empowerment is to allocate responsibilities to them normally belongs to men; it is a way for others to see them as equal members of society.
- Participation which can be seen in Political sphere is the ability to vote and voice opinions or the ability to run for the office which a fair chance of being elected plays a huge role in the empowerment of people. It can include in household, Schools and make choices for oneself.
- When women have the agency to do what she wants, a higher equality between men and women is established. It is argued that micro- credit also offers a way to provide empowerment for women.
- A long tradition of government intervention to promote social equality may have made the Scandinavian public more respective to the idea of positive action designed to achieve equality for women in public life.

CONCLUSION

India, among a few leading countries, had been a land where women had been given the right to vote. There is no question of less efficiency, ability and productivity in women than men. A country cannot realize its dream of becoming super power by ignoring the better half of the humanity. Researchers have provided that a country where there are more employment opportunities for women trend to provide better and honest governance. It is a journey and can be successful if two wheels of the chariot come together.

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