

THE DISCOURSE AND AGENDA OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AMIDST GENDER DISABILITIES AND DISCRIMINATIONS

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Abstract: India is a country of Indira Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Kasturba, Sunita Williams, Kalpana Chawala, and many more woman personality. Even though in India and in the world women are known as weaker sex while men are known as stronger sex, and stronger sex always have tried to put a weaker sex under their shadow. India is social democratic country where social bandage is stronger than it is in any other country in the world. Woman is generally treated as means of entertainment for a men since long and due to this she lags behind socially, economically, politically and socially in India. She was not allowed to own property, did not have share in property of their parents, and no freedom to choose their job and so on. In early vedic era woman enjoyed equal status with men. Rigveda and Upnishad mentioned several name of women sages and seers notably Gargi, Maitri etc. However during the period of Moguls and British rule situation of women worsened. After independence the constitution of India gave equality and certain rights to women e.g No discrimination of gender, equality of opportunity and gave big chances to women to progress in free India.. Now we have come across from such darkness we need strong movement to fight for the right of woman and to ensure that they get all right which men have or in other award for woman empowerment. The word woman empowerment is originated in 1960 during civil right movement in USA. It was interpreted differently that time but today it is used in different sector as business social work and development. Generally women empowerment is confined within gender equality and increasingly being taken in agenda of international development organization.

Introduction: The nature of empowerment renders it difficult to define. Empowerment has become one of most widely used development terms. It is precious because this word has now been one of the fashionable concepts to include in policies/programme/project. Empowerment as a process to change the distribution of power self empowerment means that woman gain autonomy are able to set their own agenda are fully Political and social decision making process empowerment can have four component cognitive, psychological economic and political Empowerment increase for woman. It is necessary to take education, training work hard and leadership to give more opportunity for various field linking women's movement all over the world.

The status of Women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past fewmillenium. In early Vedic period Women enjoyed equal status with men. Rigved& Upnishads mention several names of women sages and seers notably Gargi& Maitrey. However later the status of women began to deteriorate approximately from 500 B.C., the situation worsened with invasion of Mughals and later on by European invaders some reformatory movements by Guru Nanak, Jainism, Rajarammohan Rai, Ishwarchandra Vidya Sagar, Pandita Rama Bai and others did give some relief. It is not that Britishers didn't do anything for improving the condition of women. Some laws were enacted such an "Abolition of practice of Sati", Widow Remarriage Act 1856 etc. The origins of the concept of empowerment go back to the civil rights movement in the USA in the 1960. It has since then been interpreted

differently and filled with new meanings and is today used in such different sectors as business, social work, development discourse and by advocates of very different political agendas. The different definitions of empowerment range between defining it as a largely individual process of taking control of and responsibility for one's life and situation, and defining it as a political process of granting human rights and social justice to disadvantaged groups of people. The empowerment of women is located within the discourse and agenda of gender equality and is increasingly being taken in the agendas of international development organizations, perhaps more as a means to achieve gender equality than as an end in itself.

Women constitute almost 50% of the world's population but India has shown disproportionate sex ratio whereby female's population has been comparatively lower than males. As far as their social status is concerned, they are not treated as equal to men in all the places. In the Western societies, the women have got equal right and status with men in all walks of life. But gender disabilities and discriminations are found in India even today. The paradoxical situation has such that she was sometimes concerned as Goddess and at other times merely as slave.

The empowerment of women is located within the discourse and agenda of gender equality and is increasingly being taken in the agendas of international development organizations, perhaps more as a means to achieve gender equality than as an end in itself. At the Social Summit in Copenhagen in

1993 and the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo 1994 Governments committed themselves to the empowerment of women. This commitment was operationalised and formulated into a clear action plan at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995 where Governments committed themselves to the “empowerment and advancement of women, including the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief, thus contributing to the moral, ethical, spiritual and intellectual needs of women and men, individually or in community with others and thereby guaranteeing them the possibility of realizing their full potential in society and shaping their lives in accordance with their own aspirations.

Today we have noticed different Acts and Schemes of the central government as well as state government to empower the women of India. But in India women are discriminated and marginalized at every level of the society whether it is social participation, political participation, economic participation, access to education, and also reproductive healthcare. Women are found to be economically very poor all over the India. A few women are engaged in services and other activities. So, they need economic power to stand on their own legs on par with men.

It has also noticed that some of women are too weak to work. They consume less food but work more. Therefore, from the health point of view, women folk who are to be weaker are to be made stronger. Another problems is that workplace harassment of women. There are so many cases of rape, kidnapping of girl, dowry harassment, and so on. For these reasons, they require empowerment of all kinds in order to protect themselves and to secure their purity and dignity. To sum up, women empowerment cannot be possible unless women come with and help to self-empower themselves. There is a need to formulate reducing feminized poverty, promoting education of women, and prevention and elimination of violence against women

There are several challenges that are plaguing the issues of women’s right in India. Targeting these issues will directly benefit the empowerment of women in India. While the country has grown from leaps and bounds since its independence where education is concerned, the gap between women and men is severe. While 82.14% of adult men are educated, only 65.46% of adult women are known to be literate in India. Not only is an illiterate women at the mercy of her husband or father, she also does not know that this is not the way of life for women across the world. Additionally, the norms of culture that state that the man of the family is the be-all and end-all of family decisions is slowly spoiling the society of the country. The gender bias is in higher education, specialized

professional trainings which hit women very hard in employment & attaining top leadership in any field. Poverty is considered the greatest threat to peace in the world, and eradication of poverty should be a national goal as important as the eradication of illiteracy. Due to abject poverty, women are exploited as domestic helps and wives whose incomes are usurped by the man of the house. Additionally, sex slaves are a direct outcome of poverty,

Due to gender bias in health & nutrition there is unusually high mortality rate in women reducing their population further especially in Asia, Africa & China.

This inequality is practiced in employment & promotions. Women face countless handicaps in male customized & dominated environs in Govt. Offices and private enterprises. The health and safety concern of women are paramount for the wellbeing of a country, and is an important factor in gauging the empowerment of women in a country. However there are alarming concerns where maternal healthcare is concerned. In its 2009 report, UNICEF came up with shocking figures on the status of new mothers in India. The maternal mortality report of India stands at 301 per 1000, with as many as 78,000 women in India dying of childbirth complications in that year. Today, due to the burgeoning population of the country, that number is sure to have multiplied considerably. While there are several programmes that have been set into motion by the Government and several NGOs in the country, there is still a wide gap that exists between those under protection and those not.

Household relations show gender bias in infinitesimally small but significant manners all across the globe, more so, in India e.g. sharing burden of housework, childcare & menial works by so called division of work in the house. Working women, if they have to accept the job, have to do double-shift for home chores & childcare also. This they resent & call it not division of work but are accumulation of work for women.

The Constitution Framers were very much conscious of the problem of women empowerment hence they ensured that the Principle of Gender Equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental duties and Directive Principles. The various articles mentioned in the earlier paragraph are meant for ensuring gender equality. Moreover the Constitution also empowers the states to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favor of women. The real impetus for this movement was gained when under the Prime minister-ship of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, a scheme known as Indira Mahila Yojana was launched. UNDP also incorporated issues of women upliftment as Primary objective. Various Schemes were later on launched for the

empowerment of women such as Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, Mahila Samridhi Yojana, Self help groups at Panchayat level and many more. The establishment of National Women's Commission and State Women's Commissions were important milestones in the direction of Women Empowerment in India all

kinds of resources that they are denied, in addition to increasing their awareness and skills. This programme will benefit about 9,30,000 women with the setting up of 53,000 self-help groups, 26,500 village societies and 650 block societies.

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