

EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH EDUCATION

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Abstract : Empowerment is related to the sharing of available resources and power, and so it cannot be absolute. Women is empowered from all the related aspects of nature and natural resources, but the discrimination of the social and human world try to restrict it. It is education that will make women capable to fight against any form of discrimination by making them aware about their rights & duties. Government of India has initiated many programmes for the upliftment and development of girls & women, but they are not ready to get benefit from these programmes and schemes up to desirable level due to their unawareness. It is education that will do away every type of darkness around them and will make them emotionally strong to fight for their right to every member and every section of society. Hindu Succession Act, 1956 has gone changed in many ways and many times, but sisters are still not ready to fight for their right with their brothers. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, Kishori Shakti Yojana, etc. are available, but it is sad to know that in 132 villages of Uttarkashi district of Uttarakhand state no girl child has born out of 216 during three months. World is also working for the empowerment through agencies like UNICEF and World Bank. Sustainable development goal No-5 speaks to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. As the level of education of girls and women have started to increase they are more empowered, but this is not the desirable level. To educate girls and women, to make them aware about different governmental schemes, to educate and train them to deal with emotional issues, to make them physically fit and to educate them to fight with social and religious taboos, etc. are some of the measures that can help the girls and women to empower from every aspect of empowerment-Social Empowerment, Cultural Empowerment, Economic Empowerment, Emotional Empowerment, Physical Empowerment and of course through quality education Intellectual Empowerment.

1. Introduction

Empowerment is related to the sharing of available resources & power and so it cannot be absolute. Empowerment is relative, but if it becomes absolute for any one it automatically arrests others empowerment. Equal distribution of power and resources among

individual, community, section etc. without any discrimination on the basis of class, caste, creed and gender, is an example of absolute empowerment. Empowerment is natural in one sense as nature gives equal to everyone, but other resources and diligence of individual make him/her more or less empowered and in this sense a portion of empowerment is natural & another portion is earned. Empowerment is not same for everyone as an individual may find empowered in a situation which is not the same to other or every individual. Empowerment is a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional and multi-layered concept [Razi, S & Razi, N (2019)]. Empowerment is not uni-directional, rather it is multi-directional—Physical, Intellectual, Emotional, Social, Economic, Cultural, Political, Vocational, Aesthetic, Moral, etc. Empowerment can be viewed from two point of view-do the individual find him/her empowered? and do others find him/her empowered? Chadha, A (2019) defines, “Empowerment is the process by which individuals and groups gain power, access to resources and control over their own lives. In doing so, they gain the ability to achieve their highest personal and collective aspirations and goals.” To gain power, to use & access resources and to control the power and resources as per own choice is empowerment, but empowerment is not the use of resources & power to self only as it provides opportunity to help & guide others too. In this sense enlightenment is also a type of empowerment. Empowerment is the process that helps people to gain control over their lives through raising, taking action and working in order to exercise greater Control [Brahmanandan, T&Srinivas, KV(2018)]. One’s empowerment is dependent upon others and on the individual too, and so in the process of empowerment coordination among access, resources, schemes, implementation to make a balance is essential. Empowerment is the process of obtaining basic opportunities for marginalized people including women by herself or by support of others. Empowerment in one sense is to help the marginalized group to be par with average people by sharing available resources, availing provided additional facilities and enriching in desired direction. Women Empowerment needs an empowerment within as the condition of the women of

marginalized section is vulnerable in comparison to the general category women.

Women are empowered and they are still empowering themselves in almost every walk of life. For women the concept of empowerment has gone changed. They were empowering through welfare schemes and now they are moving towards the approach of equity with the men. Women empowerment and its nature have changed in many ways, but still much needs to be done to the SC, ST and Backward Women. In fact, the idea of women empowerment came forward when the Third International Women's Conference at Nairobi in 1985 was organized and it introduced and defined women empowerment as a distribution of social power among marginalized & women and control of resources for women. It was a mile-stone in the history of women empowerment when in 2001 National Policy on the Empowerment of Women came into existence. The policy deals in details about the economic and social empowerment of women, but this is not sufficient because there are other important dimensions of women empowerment. Right of Property is the centre of women empowerment. Many changes in Hindu Succession Act, 1956 has took place to provide the daughter the equal property right in ancestral property. Hindu Succession Amendment Act, 2005 is especially important. The amendment now grants daughters the same rights that were earlier limited to sons. It also talks of daughter's duties, liabilities and disabilities as like sons. Few hurdles came in the way of this amendment act to undermine it to the daughters born after September 9, 2005 and many more conditions came in the course of time to restrict daughter's right through various court decisions. Now it is all over as on February, 02, 2018 Supreme Court has made it a general rule that whether the daughter is alive or dead on this date of amendment, will be entitled to share in father's property. It also makes her children to claim this right. This is a huge step in the direction of women empowerment, but the girls & the women have to strive for the same as neither she is emotionally ready for this nor she has shown much courage to fight against social norms & taboos.

In fact, the process of women empowerment includes few factors like equal access of opportunities, no discrimination on the basis of gender, freedom from every form of violence, economic freedom, participation in the process of decision making and freedom of choices in women related matter. Razi, S (2019) claims that women's empowerment is a process through which the women gain greater share of control over every type of available resources. National Policy for Women, 2016 has identified seven priority areas and women empowerment can be understood in terms of these areas as health, food security & nutrition; education; economy; governance and decision making; violence against women; enabling environment and environment & climate change. Women empowerment is a process of empowerment that begins from the social & economic empowerment, but in the process many forms of empowerment have to be included to complete the meaning of empowerment— Physical, Intellectual, Emotional, Political, Vocational, Aesthetic, Moral and Cultural. Education as a vital source of awakening and enrichment can help the women for their complete empowerment and this is essential for the globe. Nehru has rightly said to awaken the people women must be awakened. Once she moves the family, village and the nation all move.

2. Initiatives For Empowering Women

Women social, political and economic conditions have gone changed over the ancient to modern period. In early vedic period women status was equivalent to that of men. Over the passage of time many form of discrimination crept into the social system like child marriage, devadashi pratha, sati pratha, nagar badhu system, parda pratha, etc. Women socio-political and economic rights were curtailed and right to education, right to work, right to take decision, etc. were seized. In modern age Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasadar, Vinoba Bhave, Vivekanad, Maharshi Dayanand, Mahatma Gandhi, Jyotirao Phule, Tilak, Gokhale, Annie Beasant and many others fought for the right, status and welfare of the women. In fact, centuries of male dominance and discrimination made by them against women gave birth to the need of women

empowerment. During every periods of time fight & struggle continued against unnatural and undue exploitation of women. Even in modern age it continued and is still continuing. The Widow Remarriage Act (1856) and The Child Marriage Restraint Act (1929) is the testimony of the fact that the empowerment process of women is not a new phenomenon. In 1917 Indian National Congress supported the demand of Women's Political Rights by the first women's delegation that met the secretary of state and the initiatives have covered a long way. Indian constitution though its Article 14 ensures the women the right to equality, Article 15(1) prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, article 16 provides equal opportunity of employment to all, article 39(d) advocates for equal pay against equal work to men and women both, 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments provide 33.33 percent reservation of seats to women in different levels of elections in local governance. There are Equal Remuneration Act (1976), Dowry Prohibition Act (1961), Maternity Benefit Act (1961), Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act (1971), Sati Prevention Act (1987), Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (2006), Sexual Harassment of Women at Work Place Act (2013) and many others for the welfare, security and development of women. International Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), The Mexico Plan of Action (1975), Nairobi Strategy (1985), Beijing Declaration & Platform for Action (1995), Millennium Development Goals (2000) and Sustainable Development Goals (2017), etc clearly indicate that the international organizations & agencies are also working for women empowerment as the nation is doing. Millennium Development Goal 02-Achieve Universal Primary Education (for girls too), Goals 03-Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women, Goal 04-Reduce Child Mortality and Goal-05-Improve Maternal Health are directly linked with the women empowerment and remaining 04 other goals (01,06,07 & 08)) are also linked with the women as a member of human civilization. Out of 17 Sustainable Development Goals, goal-05-Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, directly talks about women empowerment and all other goals indirectly convey the development of women as part & parcel of humanity.

There are few intense new initiatives for women empowerment. National Policy on the Empowerment of Women (2001) and National Policy for Women (2016) Draft are of special importance. The goal of 2001 policy is to take care of advancement, development and empowerment of women. Objectives of 2016 draft policy are to address every related issues to empower women—enabling socio-cultural, economic and political environment, gender issues, health care, universal quality education, increasing women participation, governance & decision making, transforming discriminatory societal attitudes & mindsets, development of gender sensitive legal-judicial system, elimination of all forms of violence against women, more care for the empowerment of women belonging to the vulnerable & marginalized groups, women participation & partnerships for women empowerment, evaluate & strengthen related system to bridge gender gaps, etc.

It is difficult to mention and discuss every related programmes & schemes associated with the women empowerment, but there are few notable among them that make the women capable to undertaken her defined roles & responsibilities in these ever changing worlds:

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) : It is a comprehensive programme initiated by government of India to address the declining Child Sex Ratio. The scheme mainly aims to curtail female foeticide and infanticide. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi started it from Panipat, Haryana (place having low CSR) on January, 22nd, 2015, Firstly it was initiated for 100 districts having low Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and now it has been extended.

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) : It is a maternity benefit Yojana in which pregnant women receive incentive of `6000/- cash during pregnancy and after institutional delivery.

Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme: It is a scheme meant for the children of the working mothers for day care facilities to the children between 6 months to 6 years of age to the families having less than Rs. 12000.00 monthly income.

Pradhan Mantri Ujjawala Yojana (PMUY) : It is a scheme meant for poor women of the society in which they are provided LPG gas which decreases air pollution due to use of the fossil fuel.

Mahila-e Haat : It is an initiative to empower the women economically with the help of financial inclusion. It is a on-line digital marketing plat-form for women entrepreneurs to transact business.

Working Women Hostel: It is an initiative for women hostel to working women working away from their place of residence. It meets the housing requirements of working or helpless women.

One Stop Centre Scheme : Popularly known as Sakhi is an initiative of the ministry of women and child development. On stop centers have been established across the country to provide support and assistance in an integrated manner to the violence affected women under one roof. It deals women private & public spaced problems of violence in phased manner.

Swadhar Greh : It is to provide relief and rehabilitation to destitute women and women in distress. Shelter, food, clothing, medical treatment and care are exclusively provided to women in difficult circumstances.

National Repository of Information for Women (NARI) : It is a portal which provides easy access to information on initiatives and schemes related to women.

National Nutrition Mission (NNM) : It is a mission to deal with the problem of malnutrition to achieve an improvement in the nutritional status of children between 0-6 years and the pregnant. It is also aimed at lactating women in a time bound manner.

Empowering Motherhood : Under the scheme child rearing maternity leave for working women has been extended to 26 weeks.

There are other important schemes and initiatives to support the women like Deen Dayal Upadhyay Antyodaya Yojana, Empowering Elected Women Representatives, Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, Kishori Shakti Yojana, Mahila Shakti Kendra, Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, Stand up India, Start up India, Self Help

Groups, Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, Mahila Police Volunteers (MPVs), SABLA, etc. and the union budget of this year needs a special mention which is not presented by India's first full-time female Finance Minister only, rather it is Gender Responsive Budgeting too. The budget allocation for Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, National Nutrition Mission, Mahila Shakti Kendras, National Creche Scheme, Working Women Hostel Scheme, Ujjawala Yojana, etc has been increased. In the presence of a comprehensive scheme like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao we are still not able to save our female children. It is sad to narrate that in 132 villages of Uttarkashi district of Uttarakhand state no girl child has born out of 216 borned baby during three months.

3. Education as a Tool of Women Empowerment:

Education is the most potent force for human development. It is essential for around development of human personality—Physical, Intellectual, Emotional, Social etc. It awakens the individual and enables to respond to the challenges of the life. Education liberates and emancipates. It liberates the human mind and make him/her known to the world from different angles by teaching science, history, language, the world around, the sociology, etc. Educated women become a liberated women. Education enriches the women through different types of knowledge and experiences and ultimately emancipates her with many required powers that help her in life.

Education helps in breaking down the barriers of life whether it is religious, linguistic and cultural or geographical or gender. Education helps to make correct choices in life and teaches to discriminate between right and wrong. Education makes aware about the social taboos and social abuse. Education intellectually enlightens and makes the women capable to understand and fight against every type of harassment. Education fosters the sense of independence. It makes them autonomous in thought & practice and develops an insight to decide in the state of crisis. Education is the essential tool for developing a career and getting financial independence. Educated women not only contribute to the

economy, but lead a good and independent life on their own cost. It does not help the family, but contributes to the nation as well. Education develops women emotionally and helps them to participate in the process of decision-making. Women cannot be the partner of development without education, as it makes the women aware about her right and duties. Women suffering is due to her educational weaknesses. Due to lack of knowledge about governmental schemes and initiatives women do not take benefit of it. Baby, K (2015) rightly argues, "Since education is the most powerful instrument for value preservation as well as value transformation, it can play the most effective role in empowering women." The productivity of the nation may increase by the increasing level of education. Governmental efforts are in the right direction, but much needs to be done to the education of girls and women for her empowerment and ultimately to the development of the nation. India has 48% of women population, but their literacy rate is low in every area as against the men. In urban area it is 79.11% as against 88.76% of men literacy rates. In rural area it is 57.93% as against 77.15% of male literacy. If women education increases improvement in GDP growth will occur drastically. Chadha, A (2019) concludes, "Investing in education yields significant development benefits. Education reduces poverty, boosts economic growth and increases income." Sakshar Bharat Mission for Female Literacy has been launched to reduce the gap between male and female literacy. It works on functional literacy & numeracy, provides education equivalent to formal system, imparts relevant skill and provides opportunities for continuing education. Right to Education for every child including girls between 6 to 14 years of age is at place. National Education Policy Draft Document (2019) advocates for extension of RTE to 3 to 18 years of age. For quality education to the disadvantaged groups girl students residential schools with boarding facilities under the name Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya has been launched. National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level is being implemented in educationally backward blocks of the country. This initiative is to reduce the school dropouts in the area where female literacy is less than the national average and where the gender gap is more than

national average. Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhinam, not exclusively for girl students, help in accessing the secondary education to all. There are other educational schemes to help the girls and women, but to empower the women in true sense their GER in higher education needs to be increased. It is 25.4 percent as against the male student 26.3 percent. GER of female is higher now, but gap in B. Tech, M. Tech, Law, MBA, etc are still high. It is also reported that female students enrolment is lowest in the institutions of national importance. Education of women needs to be taken care of as it influences the individual, family and at large society and nation. Sharma, S (2016) rightly concludes, “The educational level of an individual contributes in improving quality of life and among women particularly it influences health of infants, rate of infant mortality, nutritional level of children, quality of life of family in general and women in particular, life expectancy, and general wellbeing of the family.”

4. Suggestive Measures:

Education is vital for women empowerment and so empowerment of women cannot be taken care or without managing quality education for them. The school dropout rate amongst adolescent girls is very high. More than 30% of girl students dropout of schools by they reach class IX and it becomes 57% in class XI. Kathuria, T (2018) talks about the barriers of women’s education, “Some of the barriers to women’s education are sociological, rooted in gender stereotyping and gender stagnation and others are driven by economic concerns and constraints.” Following are some measures that can help the women to empower by managing their education

- To arrange in educational institutions all the related facilities for a girl student such as toilet, drinking water, common room etc. from primary education to higher education.
- To manage dropouts in school stage and increase GER in higher learning, especially in technical areas and institution of national importance.
- To educate their parents and mass around them.

- To make them aware about different governmental schemes.
- To educate and train them to deal with emotional issues, especially to the Hindu Success Act.
- To make them physically fit with physical activities and to educate them to fight with social & religious taboos.
- To promote for safe and inclusive school & college environment, specially in remote & tribal areas.
- To manage to free them from the responsibility of sibling care and other related family works.
- To take care of discriminatory attitudes towards girls & women by arranging for responsive complain mechanism.
- To manage for lifelong, continuing and distance education for girls and adult women willing to learn.
- To train the girls and women to access ICT.
- To increase the number of schools, institutions with central government's support in rural, hilly and backward districts/regions.
- To manage for a balance between every type of women empowerment–Social, Economic, Moral, Aesthetic, Intellectual, Emotional, Cultural, Vocational, Physical, etc.

Empowerment is different for different social/ethical groups or sections of society–Women SC, ST, OBC, Senior Citizen, Differently Abled, etc; but empowerment is to have control over one's life as an individual or as a member of human society. It is sad to state that women are deprived of many facilities and it becomes even worse when we come to know that women of deprived sections are in more vulnerable condition. It is education that can make the citizen empowered, whether it is Women or Differently Abled. Ganguli, B (2015) rightly concludes, “Numerous studies show that illiterate women have high level of fertility, poor nutritional status, low earning potential and little autonomy within the household. Education is milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, to confront

their traditional role and change their lives.” Young girl and woman can contribute more to the society and nation if their educational level increases. Population dividend cannot be utilized up to desirable level without girls and women empowerment, which is not essential for the empowerment of women only but for society, nation and the mankind as well. Education is the key element in the process and so it needs to be taken care of to utilize the human resources, and of course woman is not an exception. In fact, besides education of the academic subjects the women need to be given knowledge of governmental schemes, their right & duties and other related legal matters to empower. Knowledge is power and so it is the key to the empowerment and ofcourse the power of knowledge can be earned only through education.

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