

# A CONCEPTUAL PAPER ON NEED FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

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## ABSTRACT

*Women Equality with men has become a universal topic for discussion. Stress is on empowerment and development of rural women. Women rights are violated in some form around the globe maybe from voting right to right to education. In some societies, women are paid less, treated as child-rearers, to cook, clean and are the victims of domestic abuse. It is very clear that women are not treated equal to men though they are fundamentally equal. Women Empowerment is a way by which women can gain equal rights like men, ability to participate in economic, social and political activities. Women Empowerment is essential because women are also humans like men, share burden like men and in the modern times women are excelling in all the areas with dedication and hard work. Empowering women helps for the development of society. Every individual and society should improve its efforts for women empowerment. Pandit Jawaharlal cited that to awaken the people, we must awaken the women first because if women awake then the whole family and society gets awakened. Empowering Women is essential to maintain gender equality or gender equality is necessary for women empowerment.*

**KEYWORDS:** Women Empowerment, Education, Society.

## INTRODUCTION:

The topic “Women Empowerment” has gained a universal significance for discussion these days. Empowering Women has become a blazing issue round the globe. For many decades rights of women are violated in one way or other in almost all the countries of the world like voting right, right to education and equal participation in decision making etc. Even at present, in some of the countries, women are not allowed to do anything, come out freely out of their homes without men, have property on their name and take important decisions in their life. Societies in which a pace for gender equality is initiated, women are paid less, treated their existence for cooking, cleaning and child care taking only and also the victims of domestic abuse along with other inequalities. It is clear that Women are not treated equally all over the world though they are to be treated equal. Before 100 years, women are not allowed to vote, maintain monetary transactions or access birth control information. A survey on the top 50 women leaders in Asia revealed that the three aspects that are challenging the women leadership as “Family life constraints”, “Organizational policies and Practices Favoring Men” and “Cultural Barriers”. The Statistical Figures shows that the Human Sex ratio is 954 women for every 1000 men, which indicates that the women number is lesser than men. Women constitute almost 50% of the total World population. Biologically also, female race is superior to men.

In India various traditions, customs and practices developed over centuries which became a part of our society. Much importance is given to female genders from goddesses to family members. Simultaneously women are also treated as inferior to men like dowry practice, sati sahaaganam, sexual violence, sexual

work harassment, domestic violence etc. All these practices consisted of mental and physical concepts. These situations led to the need for Women Empowerment.

*“Women perform 66% of the world’s work, and produce 50% of the food, yet earn only 10% of the income and own 1% of the property. Whether the issue is improving education in the developing world, or fighting global climate change, or addressing nearly any other challenge we face, empowering women is a critical part of the equation”*

**-Former President Bill Clinton at Annual Meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative (2009)**

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Acharya and Bennet (1983), studied on Nepal women empowerment in different dimensions came to a conclusion that, bringing women into the market economy positively affects their influence in resource allocation and domestic decision- making.

Ackerly, (1995), studied on Bangladesh women empowerment. Their findings are women gain knowledge and empowerment through market access, but it rarely occurs.

Mathura and Mather, (1997), studied on women empowerment in Sri Lanka. The findings are, work for pay and education increase decision making input in financial, but not in the social and organizational matters in the household.

Frankenberg and Thomas, (2001), studied on women empowerment in Indonesia found out that status influence financial arrangements and decision-making power.

Sridevi (2005) studied in postgraduate women teachers (PGT) in Chennai, India. The study aims to obtain a scientific measure of women empowerment in Chennai. She found out that as the age is higher, the chance of empowerment reduced, when the husbands are equally educated then the empowerment is increased. She recommends that the women should change their self-perception more than being economically independent. In addition, the society should understand the capabilities and the contribution of the women in the development process.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To get an awareness on Women Empowerment
- To know the position of Women Empowerment in India
- To assess the need for Women Empowerment in India
- To get acquainted to the various provisions in the Constitution of India for the empowerment of Women.

## WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Women Empowerment in a simple way can be understood as giving power for women to take decision for their own lives or infusing such capabilities in them to enable them to find a right place in the society.

Women Empowerment refers to the *“creation of an environment for women where they can make decisions of their own for their personal benefits as well as for the society.”*

Women Empowerment refers to “increasing and improving the social, economic, political and legal strength of the women, to ensure equal-right to women, and to make them confident enough to claim their rights.”

According to the United Nations, the components of Women Empowerment are:

- Developing a sense of Self-worth in women
- Right for Women to have and determine their choices
- Right for Women to have access to equal opportunities and all kinds of resources
- Right for Women to have the power for regulating and controlling their own lives
- Ability of Women for contributing to create a more just, social and economic order

## WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

To start from the ancient period, Women’s situation in the society remained the same. In ancient period, men and women had equal status. In early Vedic period there are evidences that women are educated like men. During the medieval period the condition of women got worsened during the Muslim rule and British Rule. From decades, women rights are violated in various ways. It is also persisting in all the parts of the world. So a dire need is felt for the Women Empowerment in India and also round the globe.

## NEED FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

*“Getting Education is mandatory for men and women alike”,*  
*“When a Man gets Educated, only the Man learns. When a Women gets Educated the entire Generation learns” - Prophet Muhammad*

*“You can tell the condition of a Nation by looking at the status of its Women” - Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru*

The above sayings of Women clearly enlightens that Women Empowerment is necessary because women are also humans like men and they too have the right to enjoy the equal right, burden like men. In recent times women proved any chance to them will make them contribute to this world a lot. On the positive side, women are competing men in every sphere of activities. In spite of their dedication in the Workplace, females are not given much priority. They should be provided an equal say in everything. Significant steps should be taken for empowering girls and women especially at rural level. This empowering leads to the changes in the society which may retain for ages. It is the responsibility of every citizen to strive for the progress of Women by giving equal right and opportunities for Women. The following concepts highlight the need for Women Empowerment in India and in the World also:

### ***Employment position of Women***

50% of the World Population is constituted by Women. But a large number of women are unemployed. Due to the unequal employment of Women the World Economy is affected to a very large extent.

### ***Competency of Women***

Women proved that they are equally competent to Men in all spheres of life. They are competing men in every walk of life like medicine, war, art, business, music etc. So women deserve equal opportunity with men in all activities.

### ***Dexterous***

Women are equally talented like men. In the olden days, women were not encouraged for higher education and their intelligence is wasted. An opportunity for women to exhibit their talents will certainly benefit the self and the society.

### ***Rapid Implementation of Business***

Women are fast in starting any type of business than men. According to the National Federation for Independent Businesses, Women are more efficient than men in facing the business rescissions and adapting themselves according to the situations.

### ***Comprehensive Development***

*“We recognize that gender equality, the empowerment of women, women’s full enjoyment of all human rights and the eradication of poverty are essential to economic and social development, including the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals.”*

### **Millennium Development Goals (2010)**

Women Empowerment paves the way for women to involve in economic activities which helps them to earn money. This process leads to the development of the Self, Family, Society and the entire World.

### ***Leads to Innovations***

Women proved that they are good in innovations too. The famous women innovations are WindShield Wipers by Mary Anderson, Invisible Lens by Katherine Blodgett, Dishwasher by Josephine Cochrane, White Correction Fluid by Bette Nesmith Graham, Fire Escape by Anna Connelly, Circular Saw by Tabitha Babbit, Chocolate Chip Cookies by Ruth Graves Wakefield, and Computer Compiler by Admiral Hooper etc. These evidences portrays that Women are innovating in all the fields. Empowerment of Women leads to more innovations, which helps for the improvement living standards.

### ***Global Economic Development***

Empowering Women financially leads to the economic development of the individual, family and the society. It leads to the stability of the country economically. It also leads to the reduction of poverty of the country. It makes the Country’s leaders to deal with other countries and receive financial support more effectively.

### ***Domestic Violence Reduction***

Empowering Women helps to remove the inequalities based on gender. Once these inequalities are removed, Women also enjoy equal status to men in the society. This eventually leads to the reduction of Domestic Violence. Higher risk of domestic violence is more in the case of uneducated women. Women Empowerment leads to the increased education opportunities to women. As a result there will be a reduction in the Domestic Violence.

### ***Reduction in Corruption***

Uneducated Women are prone to corruption to a very large extent. It is due to ignorance of their rights and duties. Empowerment of Women leads to Women Education, which in turn helps the Women to know their rights and duties. As a result they will not be exploited and the rate of corruption decreases significantly.

### ***Decreased Risk of Assault***

Half of the Global Population constitutes Women only, but the daily earning capacity of women is less when compared to men in almost all the parts of the World. In India also, Women are paid less than Men in wages only on the basis of gender discrimination. If the entire women earners suffer this discrimination, there will be an increase in the violence and other problems only due to the Gender Discrimination. If Women are empowered, the Gender Discrimination is reduced then the violence against Women will be reduced significantly.

***Increased Export Opportunities***

Majority of the Agricultural Workers in the World are female. Women Empowerment leads to the Empowerment to grow, buy and sell the crops according to their like. It leads to the decrease in the malnourishment in producing countries. In turn it leads to the increase in the production of food items. The surplus production will be helpful for export. Thus the Empowerment of Women paves the way for the increased Export Opportunities which in turn helps for the economic development and financial development of the country.

***Improved Family Financial Position***

In some cases, the male member may be the only earner of the family, whose income may not be sufficient to meet the financial needs of the family. Financial Empowerment of Women helps the women to improve her financial resources, which increases the financial flow to the family. The additional resources will be useful to meet the needs of the family and prevents the family from running into poverty.

***Reduced pressure for men***

Men are treated as primary earners for the family. As such they will be under pressure in regard to the family affairs. In case of Women Empowerment, the pressure on men will be reduced to a large extent. They will have the freedom to search for desired jobs, take care of their children and involve in any activities of their own interest. This reduces the gender inequality and society loosens up. Everyone will be free and they can act in the way of their like.

***Better Women Protection Policies***

When majority of the Political leader and Policy makers are men, then there may be chances that Women Welfare is not given due consideration. When women are politically empowered, much importance is given for the legislations that helps for the protection of girls, save the lives of women and improve their healthcare. To protect the future Women folk, Political Empowerment of Women is essential.

***Increased Literacy Works***

Among the total World Adult Illiterates, two-thirds of such Illiterates are women. Women are talented in journalism, publications and movie directions also. Evidences are traced from the ancient period that women are also excellent in literacy. Women Empowerment makes the Women to participate more in these literacy works. This will lead to the development of the country in the field of literature, art and movie industry.

***Enriches National Development process***

Women proved themselves by their outstanding performance in all activities and they are ruling the world. Nation's reputation is increasing due to the Women Participation in armed forces, medicine, social service, science and technical areas. This increasing participation will trigger the National Development Process.

***No substitute to Women***

In some professions or some areas, it is obvious that there is no substitute for women. Women cannot be replaced in those jobs. It is inevitable to empower women so that their involvement and presence can be achieved.

***Preserve the native Cultures***

It is necessary for the women to be empowered so as preserve our cultures. If women are given power and autonomy and involved in political areas, they will be performing in a better way for the preserving the culture which are vanishing due to modernization. A movement started in Canada by four women led to be an international issue on indigenous rights and activism, Hunger strike made by Chief Theresa Spence to convince the Prime Minister to convey about the critical poverty faced by her community can be cited to say that women once empowered will be helpful in preserving the downtrodden cultures.

## WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND INDIAN CONSTITUTION

Constitution of India provides equal right to both men and women. It is one of the finest equality documents in the world. Various provisions in the Constitution protect the Women rights by providing an equal place for women along with men socially, economically and politically.

The Preamble to the Constitution of India treats men and women in equal way. It assures justice, social, economic and political equality of status and opportunity and dignity to the individual.

The policy of Women Empowerment is well supported by the Fundamental Rights provided in the Constitution. The various provisions are:

- ❖ Article 14-Equality before law for all persons
- ❖ Article 15(1)-Prohibition of Discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth
- ❖ Article 15(3)-Special provisions may be made by the state in favour of women and children
- ❖ Article 16-Equality of opportunity for all citizens relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state
- ❖ Article 39(a)-State Policy to be directed to securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood
- ❖ Article 39(d)-Equal pay for equal work for both men and women
- ❖ Article 42-Provisions to be made by the state for securing just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief
- ❖ Article 51A(e)-Promotion of harmony by every citizen of India and renouncement of such practices which are derogatory to the dignity of women
- ❖ Articles 343(d) and 343(T)-Reservation of not less than one-third of total seats for women in direct election to local bodies

## SUGGESTIONS FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

- Educating Women has to be given the first priority.  
*“Education is a human right and an essential tool for achieving the goal of equality, development and peace”*  
*-Beijing Platform for Action*
- Various programs need to be organized for creating awareness on the rights of the women with a special emphasis for weaker sections.  
*Aid programs that provide women opportunities to better their health, education and wellbeing have effects far beyond a single individual*  
*- USAID*
- Opportunities should be provided to Women to work and at the same time enough support and safety should be extended to them.  
*“One motivation for women’s empowerment is basic fairness and decency. Young girls should have the exact same opportunities that boys do to lead full and productive lives-the empowerment of women is smart economics.”*  
*-President Robert Zoellick, World Bank Spring Meetings(2008)*
- Effective implementation of the program to remove the shortcomings in the empowerment of Women

## CONCLUSION

*“To call women the weaker sex is a libel; it is man’s injustice to woman. If by strength is meant brute strength, then, indeed, woman is less brute than man. If by strength is meant moral power, then woman is immeasurably man’s superior: Has she not greater intuition, is she not more self-sacrificing, has she not greater powers of endurance, has she not greater courage? Without her man could not be. If non-violence is the law of our being, the future is with woman. Who can make a more effective appeal to the heart than woman?”*

*-Mahatma Gandhi*

India is a developing country and the economic status is also average because it is also a country where the males are dominating. Empowering women in India is essential to maintain gender equality. Women are half power of the country and combining this half power to the male will make us to attain full power. When this is achieved, India will become the most powerful country in the World. The first step in Women empowerment is Gender Equality. No doubt Government of India has many weapons for empowering Women, the prompt and strict implementation is quite essential. It is not only the responsibility of Government, but it is the responsibility of every Indian. Every Indian should change their attitude towards Women and adhere strictly to the policies and Programs of Women Empowerment. It is also advised to identify the existing drawbacks in the achievement of Women Empowerment. It should start from the women itself, then by the society and the state. It is our duty to see that everybody, a men or women, gets an equal opportunity to express their views and develop the well being of the self and the society.

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