

# WOMEN EMPOWERMENT RECENT TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

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## **Introduction**

Men and Women are equal and possess equal capabilities. The inequalities between Men and Women are Manmade. Women in the most societies are given a subordinate position in the family as well as in the society. Because of discrimination against women, they are not getting their equality and equal opportunity with men. For a long time, India remained a male dominant society where women were oppressed in a different ways. The majority of children who leave school without completing primary education are girls. Most of the women in India are engaged in household or domestic work. If they wish to work outside, they are engaged in the low paid primary sector only.

Before Europeans ruled over India, some anti social practices existed in India like a) Child Marriages b) Dowry system c) No Education to females d) Sati sahadamanam these are the main hurdles for the development of India.

Early marriages/ child marriages means doing marriage below the age of 15 years. In backward areas girls are married at the early age; with these early marriages troubles begin for the girls, as these girls are not matured enough to share the burden of family and motherhood.

The practice of giving and taking dowry has become a menace in India. Dowry means good, property and money demanded from the brides' side as a condition of marriage by the bride grooms' side. Parents of brides, sometimes have to sell their lands and properties to meet the demand of dowry. Women are harassed and tortured for bringing more money from parents.

Another cruel and anti social practice in India once upon a time was sati sahadamanam, which means when a husband dies for various reasons; according to hindu tradition and customs the dead body has to be burnt in fire; along with the dead body of husband wife has to sacrifice her life in the flames of fire.

## Present Trends Scenario

With the advent of Britishers, total trend/ scenario in India has been changed. English education was introduced to all, people's thinking changed; so many educated social reformers fought for the welfare of women. Widow marriages encouraged; female education encouraged; sati sahaaganam was abolished and child marriages rate has been tremendously reduced.

The Constitution of India provides equality for women. It also directs the state to take special measures to neutralize the socio, economic, education and political factors. Equal remuneration act, in 1961 Dowry prohibition act was passed. Dowry is a crime against women. The child marriages restraint act lays down the minimum age of marriage for girls as 18 years. Legal action can be taken against those who marry off girls below 18 years of age. Now there are some laws to ensure women rights and to empower them.

Women have voting rights and the right to contest in elections. Their representation has rose to 8% in parliament. Women are participating and voting in elections in large numbers. Women began to think independently and are forming their own opinions. In India women were facilitated with 33% reservation in education, employment and elections. Now 1/3 seats are reserved for women in the rural and urban bodies. The above said facilities led to WOMEN EMPOWERMENT to some extent. Today women are entering into large number of occupations as peoples representatives, ministers at union and state levels, administrators, police officers, lawyers, doctors, engineers, pilots, military personnel, teachers, journalist, office staff etc; India can truly develop only when women are regarded as equal, when they could freely exercise equal rights with men and contribute to the nations progress.

## Challenges

**Financial Resources** First and foremost is the problem of raising capital. They consider the women entrepreneurs as handicapped in handling the financial resources for their business. They cannot crack deals and convince the investors for their ideas easily because the mindset is such that women entrepreneurs are not given priority easily.

**Mainstream Thinking** Indian women are considered as “homemakers” and not” businesswomen” who can go out and tackle the obstacles of carrying out a business of their own and do all the stress handling. They are bound to remain within the

realm of their home. This mainstream thinking pulls them back to ground zero. The societal pressure demotivates them before even starting their path towards achieving their goals.

**Conflict between family and dreams** Women entrepreneurs have to deal with the conflict between their personal and professional life. How to manage their children and family and get the support of their family is the biggest challenge they face because at the end, the upbringing of the children is posed on the mother.

**Marketing of Products** It is hard for them to promote and market their products and develop their business because men are considered to be more powerful in this arena to market their products hence even the most knowledgeable women fails to make a mark. Thus, they approach the middlemen who eat up a large chunk of profit.

**Competition** Women entrepreneurs face a stiff competition in making themselves stand determined in their venture to become successful. There are many restraining forces which stop them. Women are still given suspicious looks when they go out late in the evening. Thus women face a major challenge in facing the harsh attitudes of officials and the hardwork required to start up a business.

**Emotional Instability** Women are taken to be emotional and temperamental in handling situations which may be adverse at times. Women entrepreneurs are considered to be incapable of taking a risk and bearing losses.

All the above- mentioned challenges faced by women still exists. In spite of challenges some of the below women are some examples who have taken India to the highest peaks and played a predominant role in the development of India.

Indira Gandhi – First Indian Women Prime Minister

Durgabhai Deshmukh – Freedom fighter

Sarojini Naidu – Freedom fighter

M S Subbalakshmi – Carnatic singer

Kiran Bedi – IPS officer

Renuka Chowdary – Member of Parliament

Kalpana Chawla – Astronaut

Kiran Desai – Booker prize winner

P T Usha – Sports

Sonia Gandhi – UPA President

PV Sindhu – Shuttle

## Conclusion

Women empowerment is not just a question of rearrangement of education, health, economic and political participation. It is also a matter of change of values. The practice of social work methods and techniques in a broader perspective will be helpful in attaining the empowerment of women. These recent trends made women have a sustainable development, and better quality life in the present day, brought many positive changes in their routine life of rural and urban women community. The Empowerment of women has become one of the most important concerns of 21st century not only at national level but also at the international level. Government initiatives alone would not be sufficient to achieve this goal. Society must take initiative to create a climate in which there is no gender discrimination and Women have full opportunities of Self decision making and participating in the Social, Political and Economic life of the Country with a sense of equality. To conclude, there is an urgent need for a sustained, comprehensive effort at all levels to attack this problem of gender bias from all sides in a focused manner.

## REFERENCES & SOURCE

- 1) News Papers
- 2) Articles
- 3) Books
- 4) Internet

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