

A Study on Women Empowerment and Schemes in India

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Abstract: *Women empowerment has become a significant topic of discussion in development and economics. Women Empowerment derived into two words that are women and empowerment. Empowerment means to give power to someone. So, Women Empowerment means power in the hands of women. It signifies that women should be given equal opportunity in every field, irrespective of any discrimination. Women Empowerment is the process that creates power in women to live a happy and respectable life in a society. Women are empowered when they are able to access opportunities in a variety of fields such as in education, profession, lifestyle, etc., without any limitations and restrictions. Out of the total population, 50% of the population should consist of women. However, due to female foeticide practices, girl child numbers are decreasing sharply in India. It has also impacted the sex ratio in India. The literacy rate in girls is very low. Most of the girls are not even provided with primary education. Moreover, they are married early and made to raise children and shoulder only household work. This paper attempts to analyse the need of Women Empowerment and highlights the methods and schemes of Women Empowerment.*

Keywords: Empowerment, Lifestyle, Schemes, Discrimination

I. INTRODUCTION

Women and children are a vital part of Indian society. Also, these are the most vulnerable sections of India. Our society comprises men and women. In earlier times, men were considered to be the leading members of a family. They were responsible for earning the livelihood and were the decision takers of the family. On the other hand, women were responsible for doing household work and upbringing of the children. So, the roles were mainly based on gender. There was no involvement of women in decision making. If we assess our entire sector, then research says that women's issues are either focused on her reproductive role and her body or on her economic role as a worker. But none of them is focused on empowering the women. Women Empowerment includes raising their status through education, awareness, literacy and training. It also includes the authority to take decisions. When a woman makes a crucial decision, she feels empowered. Women's empowerment is the most crucial point for the overall development of a country. Suppose, in a family, there is one earning person, while in another family, both men and women are earning, then who will have a better lifestyle. The answer is simple, the family where both men and women are earning money. Thus, the country where men and women work together develops at a faster rate.

History says that women were ill-treated. The Sati Pratha in the ancient times to the girl child abortion in the present scenario, women continue facing such violence. Not only this, heinous crimes against women such as rape, acid attack, dowry system, honour killing, domestic violence, etc., are still happening in India. They are not allowed to go out and are dominated by their husbands. Women are taken for granted by men as they are considered their property. Even at the workplace, women are discriminated against. They are paid less for the same work as compared to their male counterparts. This study showed that the background of the women leaders reflected the structure of the area that they represented. Most of the women member were from joint families and remaining from scheduled and backward castes. The study pointed out that although women were not aware of their role in Panchayat even then they were familiar with the social problems faced by women in society. The result showed that women demand more power in the Panchayat Raj Institutions but they also want reservation in the Lok Sabha and the state assemblies (Sharma 2002). The study is based on purely from secondary sources. This paper analysed the status of Women Empowerment in India and highlights the Issues and Challenges of Women Empowerment. Practically women's empowerment has seen women suffering from various social evils. Women's empowerment is an important tool for expanding women's resources and strategic life choices. Empowerment of women is

a process of social, social and political status in the society, the process of raising the traditionally less disadvantaged people. This is the process of protection against all kinds of violence. Studies show that women of India are relatively inactive and they enjoy a little lesser status than men despite many government-initiated efforts. It has been found that acceptance of unequal gender norms by women is still in force in the society. This study has been concluded by an observation that access to 57 education, employment and change in social structure is only the competent factors for women empowerment. (Dr. R. M. Shetter 2015)

II. METHODOLOGY

The study is empirical in nature and relies completely on secondary data regarding the indigenous healthcare system in India. The current information has been taken from various online portals, Website, Journals and Newspaper.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 List of Major Women Empowerment Schemes in India

Women Empowerment scheme	Launch Year	Objectives
Working Women Hostel	1972-73	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To promote the availability of safe and conveniently located accommodation for working women. To provide accommodation to children of working women, up to the age of 18 years for girls and up to the age of 5 years for boys.
Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP)	1986-87	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide skills that give employability to women. To benefit women in the age group of 16 and above in the country.
NIRBHAYA	2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To facilitate safety and security for women at various levels. To ensure strict privacy and confidentiality of women's identity and information. Provision for real-time intervention as far as possible.
Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme	2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To prevent gender-biased sex selective elimination To ensure survival & protection of the girl child To ensure education and participation of the girl child.
One-Stop Centre Scheme	2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide support and assistance to women affected by violence, both in private and public spaces. To Facilitate/Assist in filing First Information Report (FIR/NCR) To provide psycho-social support and counselling to women/girl
Women Helpline Scheme	2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide toll-free 24-hours telecom service to women affected by violence. To facilitate crisis and non-crisis intervention through referral to the appropriate agencies such as police/Hospitals/Ambulance services/District Legal Service Authority (DLSA)/Protection Officer (PO)/OSC.



UJJAWALA	2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide information about the appropriate support services, government schemes, and programs available to the woman affected by violence, in her particular situation within the local area in which she resides or is employed. To prevent the trafficking of women and children for commercial sexual exploitation. To facilitate the rescue of victims from the place of their exploitation and place them in safe custody. To provide rehabilitation services with both immediate and long-term to the victims by providing basic amenities/needs such as shelter, food, clothing, medical treatment including counseling, legal aid and guidance, and vocational training.
Nari Shakti Puraskar	2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To strengthen the place of women in society. To facilitate institutions that work towards the progress and development of women in society.
Mahila E-Haat	2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To facilitate entrepreneurship opportunities online for women. To educate women on various aspects of online selling and helping them establish their venture.
Mahila Police Volunteers	2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An MPV will serve as a public-police interface in order to fight crime against women. The broad mandate of MPVs is to report incidences of violence against women such as domestic violence, child marriage, dowry harassment and violence faced by women in public spaces.
Mahila Shakti Kendras (MSK)	2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To create an environment for women where they have access to healthcare, quality, education, guidance, employment, etc. To facilitate these opportunities at the block and district level in the country.
SWADHAR Greh	2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To cater to the primary need for shelter, food, clothing, medical treatment, and care of women in distress. To provide women with legal aid and guidance.

3.2 Working Women Hostel

Since its inception in 1972-73, 952 hostels have been sanctioned under the scheme all over the country for benefit of about 72,268 working women. To provide safety for working women, a provision has been made to keep security guard and to install CCTV Cameras in Working Women Hostels. To provide quality of stay for working women, provision has been made in the Scheme guidelines to provide safe and affordable accommodation for working women with clean and well-ventilated Day Care Centre for the children of inmates, medical first-aid and providing washing machines and geysers/solar water heating system.

The beneficiaries under the scheme are working women who may be single, widowed, divorced, separated, married but whose husband or immediate family does not reside in the same city/area. Particular preference is given to women from

disadvantaged sections of the society. The Scheme guidelines also provide for reservation of seats for physically challenged beneficiaries. It is the responsibility of the Implementing Agencies to create awareness about the facility among working women. However, the guidelines of the Scheme and list of sanctioned hostels are available on the Ministry's website. As per the norms of the Scheme, financial assistance is provided to the eligible implementing organisations such as State Government agencies and Civil Society Organizations through concerned State Government. Karnataka released 973.66 lakh rupees so far for this scheme.

3.3 Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women

The support training and employment programme for women scheme introduced by central government in 1986-87 as a 'Central Sector Scheme'. The objective of the Support to Training and Employment programme for Women and to provide competencies and skill that enable women to become self-employed. The assistance under STEP Scheme will be available in any sector for imparting skills related to employability and entrepreneurship, including Agriculture, Horticulture, Food Processing, Handlooms, Embroidery, Handicraft, Tailoring, Stitching, Computer and IT enabled services along with soft skills and skills for the workplace such as Spoken English, Gems and Jewellery, Travel and Tourism, Hospitality. The scheme plans to benefit women who are in the age group of 16 years and above across the country including rural women.

3.4 Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme

The 2011 census depicted that the CSR of India has declined to 917 per 1000 males, which required immediate attention. To fight this grave social problem, Modi Government in January 2015 launched "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" scheme to educate the public about the need to save and educate the girl child. The main objective of this scheme include "preventing gender biased sex selective elimination, ensuring survival and protection of the girl child and education of the girl child." The Government started the scheme with any initial fund of Rs. 100 crores but a lot of experts who have been continuously working in this area such as Sabu George have suggested that monetary support though gives a push to the programme but strict penal action against the people indulging in activities such as pre-natal sex determination and abortion is the key to bring about an actual change.

The falling CSR, main reason behind this campaign is a result of the so called need of a family to have a male child who would continue the family line, inherit the family wealth and provide safety to the family. Whereas female child is considered as a burden because parents think she is going to be an economic bane rather than a boom. The main reason behind this ideology is the "dowry system". This system turns marriages into not just business transactions but also denies women the respect they deserve. Even if a girl child is born, parents hardly prefer investing in the child's education because their only concern is marrying her off. The dowry system increase the economic pressure on the parents because of which saving money for the dowry is considered a more viable option by a huge number of people rather than educating the girl child.

3.5 Women Helpline Scheme

Scheme for Universalisation of Women Helpline is meant to provide 24 hours immediate and emergency response to women affected by violence. This scheme is being implemented since from 01-04-2015 by the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development. The Scheme of Universalisation of Women Helpline is meant to provide 24 hours immediate and emergency response to women affected by violence through referral (linking with appropriate authority such as police, One Stop Centre, hospital) and information about women related government schemes programs across the country through a single uniform number. Women Helpline (WHL) is working with the One Stop Centre Scheme (OSC) under which one OSC will be set up in every State/UT to provide integrated support and assistance to women affected by violence, both in private and public spaces under one roof. Women affected by violence and in need of redressal services will be referred to OSC through WHL. Under this Scheme, the States/UTs will utilize or augment their existing women helplines through a dedicated single national number. Department of Telecommunication, Government of India has allocated short code 181 to all States/UTs which is being used by some States/UTs such as Delhi, Chandigarh, Chhattisgarh as Women Helpline. From any post/pre paid mobile or landline services through any public or private network i.e. GSM, CDMA, 3G, 4G etc can be called to 181 as Women Helpline

3.6 One-Stop Centre Scheme

One Stop Centres (OSC) is meant to support women affected by violence, in private and public spaces, within the family, community and at the workplace. Women facing physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and economic abuse, irrespective of age, class, caste, education status, marital status, race, and culture will be facilitated with support and redressal. Aggrieved women facing any kind of violence due to attempted sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, trafficking, honour-related crimes, acid attacks or witch-hunting who have reached out or been referred to the OSC will be provided with specialized services. OSC are set up in each State/UT. This scheme facilitates access to an integrated range of services including medical, legal, and psychological support. The OSC will be integrated with Helpline No. 181 and other existing helplines. Women affected by violence and in need of redressal, services could be referred to OSC through these helplines.

3.7 SWADHAR Greh

This scheme Swadhar Greh Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances is meant to provide temporary accommodation, maintenance and rehabilitative services to women and girls rendered homeless due to family discord, crime, violence, mental stress, social ostracism or are being forced into prostitution and are in moral danger Swadhar Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances was initiated by the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of India. This scheme provides shelter, food, clothing, counseling, training, clinical and legal aid aims to rehabilitate women in difficult circumstance.

IV. SUGGESTIONS

Women can be empowered in various ways. It can be done through government schemes as well as on an individual basis. At the individual level, should start respecting women and start giving them opportunities equal to men. Should promote and encourage them to take up higher education, business activities and jobs etc. The Government has come up with various schemes such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Yojana, Mahila-E-Haat, Mahila Shakti Kendra, Working Women Hostel, Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, etc. to empower women. Apart from these schemes, individually can also empower women by abolishing social evils like the dowry system and child marriage. These small steps will change the situation of women in society and make them feel empowered.

V. CONCLUSION

Women Empowerment is the progression of women and, accepting and including them in the decision-making process. It also means providing them with equal opportunities for growth and development in society, and disapproving gender bias. Article 15(3) mentions the welfare of women and children and can be stated as “Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children.” Ministry for women and child development has collaborated with Facebook on November 19, 2019, to enhance digital literacy and online safety for women and children in India. The campaign categorized under the Global Literacy Program is named “We Think Digital”. Speaking on the 25th Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Union Minister for Women and Child Development Smriti Irani said at the United Nations that India recognises the centrality of gender equality and women’s empowerment in all aspects of developmental agenda. The minister for Women and Child Development Smriti Irani highlighted that more than 200 million women have been brought into the formal banking system through the Government’s Financial Inclusion Initiative. Innovative use of digital technologies has provided equal opportunity for women to access insurance, loans, and social assistance. Microsoft on Wednesday announced recently it has collaborated with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) to impart digital skills to more than one lakh underserved women in India. This initiative is an extension of Microsoft’s partnership with NSDC to provide digital skills to over 1 lakh youth in the country. Women’s empowerment in India has received more attention in recent years, and one NGO is working to help disadvantaged Indian women achieve financial independence with one specific method: an all-women cab company. The Azad Foundation’s Women on Wheels program empowers impoverished women in India by providing them with a stable source of income and a safe environment where women can travel without fear of being harassed. If we want to make our country a developed country, first of all it is very necessary to empower women by the efforts of men, government, laws and women too.

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