

**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LAW
MANAGEMENT & HUMANITIES**
[ISSN 2581-5369]

Volume 5 | Issue 6

2022

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Women Empowerment in India: A Critical Study Along with Scheme of Government

DR ALKA MAURYA¹

ABSTRACT

India is a very famous country known for its cultural heritage, traditions, civilization, religion and geographical features from ancient times. In the history of India like rig Vedic period women were treated equally to their male counterparts in terms of their status and position. Only married men with their spouses were permitted to perform religious rites on numerous occasions. Women had not only equal positions but have been described as more than the better half in the scriptures a status that she has lost with time. In the early Vedic period women received adequate education & they were free to choose their husbands. They were regarded as a mother goddess (Shakti) in the Vedic Period (1500-1000 BC) as a symbol of life with the enormous ability for tolerance and sacrifice and they held a respectable place in society. Women's position decreased throughout the later Vedic period. The glorious Rig Vedic ideals of fairness and harmony started to erode. They were deprived of the right to study the Vedas, recite Vedic mantras and practice Vedic rituals and forced into marriage or domestic life, as well as indisputable devotion to their husbands then also with the passage of time women in India, is discriminated continuously as compared to men or caste discrimination. Now it is essential to empower women so that women take their own decisions for their private needy. So the concept of women empowerment is to make them independent from the mind, thought, rights taking, decision making etc. So my focus is on women's empowerment status in India because women and men are two wheels of the same cart and give them equal opportunity.

Keywords: women empowerment, ancient India, education, goddess, rights.

I. INTRODUCTION

(A) What is women's empowerment?

Women's Empowerment refers to increasing and civilizing the social, economic, political and legal strength of women, to make sure of equal rights for women, and make them sure enough to claim their rights to have complete control of their life, to make their own choices and decisions, to have equal rights in social, religious and public activities, to have equal social status in the society, to have equal rights for social and economic justice, to resolve financial

¹ Author is a Phd Scholar in Sociology, Chaudhary Charan Singh University , Meerut, India.

and economic benefits, to get an equal chance for education, to get equal service opportunity without any gender bias, to get a safe and relaxed working environment.

(B) Empowerment definition?

In 1995 Pillai stated “Empowerment is an energetic multi-dimensional procedure which enables women to know their full identity and powers in all spheres of life.

In 1996 Hoshemi stated five indicators to determine women’s empowerment like mobility, economic security, capacity to make larger purchases, realize freedom from domination within the family and political and legal awareness and participation in political campaigning and protests with this in mind.

(C) Types of empowerment:**a. Social empowerment:**

It is one of the famous forms of empowerment revealed in the ordinary media which strengthens women’s societal relationships and their positions in social structures and gives them more purpose outside of the home.

b. Educational empowerment:

Education is a critical part of growth and development, but there are immobile places in the world which reject education for girls. Because everyone has the right to knowledge. Without a proper education for all, gender empowerment isn’t possible. Education puts everyone on equal footing, and lets young girls have access to their rights and duties.

c. Economic empowerment:

Economic empowerment is the ability of women and men to contribute and advantage of growth processes in ways that recognise the importance of their contribution and value their dignity. Because this empowerment increases women’s access to economic resources & opportunities like jobs, property, financial services, skills development, etc.

d. Political empowerment:

The political empowerment of women “implies the devolution of power and authority in the disadvantaged, demoralized and powerless people who have not been able to take part in the decision-making process and the execution of policies and programs of both government and organizations as well as familial and societal matters”.

e. Psychological empowerment:

Psychological empowerment aligns with communal empowerment it transgresses the

“customary and patriarchal taboos and social obligations” and lets women go beyond what’s expected of them in society. This can build self-confidence, help women recognize their self-worth, and gives them the chance to take control of their income and body.

(D) Explanation of women empowerment in India:

In India, violence and unfairness are the two major problems which Indian women face in present-day society. They have been considered sex objects and inferior to men in different spheres of knowledge. The ‘Sati Pratha’, Purdah System’, ‘Child Marriage’, ‘Dowry System’, etc. have been some forms of violence and unfair attitudes against women. After the independence of India, The 2001 Census shows that the sex ratio for India is. 933 which is the lowest in the world. The percentage of female literacy is 54.16 (2001 Census) against male literacy of 75.85 per cent.

(E) Some major problems are faced by modern women in India:

a. Violence against women:

According to the national crime record bureau report which functions under the union Home Ministry. The woman is getting kidnapped every 44 minutes, raped every 47 minutes, and has 17 dowry deaths every day. In 2021 report of NCRB shows that the rate of crime against women (the number of incidents per 1 lakh population) increased from 56.5% in 2020 to 64.5% in 2021. Women may face violence within the family (dowry-related harassment, death, marital rape, wife-battering, sexual abuse, deprivation of healthy food, female genital mutilation, etc) or outside the family (kidnapping, rape, murder, etc).

b. Gender discrimination:

Women are considered a weaker section of the civilization than men and are given less significance. Girls’ children are appropriate real victims of discrimination in the areas like nutrition, education, health, care, job, public life, etc.

c. Educational problem:

Indian proportion of women schooling is low particularly in rustic areas because they are depressed for higher education like professional and technical education.

d. Domestic violence:

This type of domestic violence is similar to a prevalent and widespread disease which affects almost 70% of Indian women according to the women and child development report. This violence is performed by the husband, relative or another family member.

e. Inadequate nutrition:

Insufficient nourishment in childhood affects women in their afterwards life, particularly women belonging to the lower middle class and poor families with anaemic disease, obesity, malnutrition etc.

(F) DISCUSSION:

- In India the educational right is immediately for the boy child and the power to make a judgment at home is for male members & women who use all their lives taking care of family doesn't even get a thank you.
- Women will only be talented to empower if they are not forbidden to access the opportunities. Educational Opportunity is one of the basic rights of every woman & also helps in women's empowerment.
- If women are given proper educational services & encouraged to study more their level of confidence will increase & also be aware of various topics.
- We might be revolving into a digital era but some parts of India still living in different centuries because child marriage, female foeticide practices, and violence against women immobile exist. Governments have launched various schemes over the years for girls like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Yojana, Mahila Shakti Kendra, Sukanya Samridhi Yojana & many more. But as an individual, we have some responsibilities toward the women of society.
- We can take this with respect to every woman around us & also respect their thoughts, views & opinions. Women empowerment is the need of the hour because it is high time we value and credit women for their contribution and help them grow.

a. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur on Child Marriage:

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur the individual female out of seven children, was born to Raja Harnam Singh in 1889. She was a key figure in the Indian Freedom Struggle's Civil Disobedience Movement. Even before dedicating her life to achieving Indian independence, she was active in the social movement for the abolition of child marriages and the Pardah (or Pardah) System. She believed that the two systems were the main barriers to women getting an education and worked tenaciously to get them abolished.

b. Julia Gillard's "The Misogyny Speech":

When she was prime minister of Australia in 2012, Julia Gillard publicly humiliated one of her political rivals for creating sexist comments about her. The so-called "Misogyny Speech" discussed the difficulties faced by women in the workplace and the ongoing battle against discrimination.

II. SIGNIFICANCE OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Women empowerment is an uninterrupted and active formula which allows women to take importance in the choice-making in all financial, political and social actions in the general public and improves their capacities to change the structure and condition which keep them stuck. 73rd Amendment make an effort for women's empowerment which was supported by the state and in which 33% of the seat in Panchayats and in workplaces are saved for ladies. Reservation in the Panchayats was viewed as a remarkable milestone during the time used up empowering women in India. So empowerment of women is essential for maintaining the economic development of the nation. The year 2001 was proclaimed as Women's Empowerment Year. The Government has taken some projects and strategies like The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, the Immoral Traffic Prevention Act, the Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques Amendment Act, 2003, the Sati Prevention Act, the Hindu Succession Act, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act.

III. CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISION FOR WOMEN IN INDIA

The Constitution of India in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principle of state policy provides equality to women like men such as.

1. Equality before the law under article 14 of the constitution of India.
2. No Discrimination by the state on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them under Article 15 (i) of the constitution of India.
3. Special provision by the state in favour of Women & Children under Article 15(3) of the constitution of India.
4. Equality of opportunity in matters relating to employment under Article 16 of the constitution of India.
5. Securing adequate means of livelihood for men and women equally under Article 39(a) of the directive principle of state policy.
6. Equal pay for equal work under Article 39(d) of the directive principle of state policy.
7. Promoting justice on basis of equal opportunity and providing free legal aid under Article 39(A) of the directive principle of state policy.
8. Renounce practices derogatory to women under Article 51(A)(e) of the constitution of India.
9. 1/3 reservation for women in panchayats under Article 243(D) and in municipalities under Article 243(T) of the constitution of India.
10. Right to Property to Women under Article 300(a) of the constitution of India.

IV. SOME ACTS RELATED TO PREVENTING WOMEN'S EXPLOITATION AND DISCRIMINATION

- **Abolition of Sati Act, 1829**

Due to the continuous efforts of Raja Ram Mohan Roy Sati practice was formally banned in all the lands under Bengal Presidency by Lord William Bentinck on 4 December 1829. People who abetted the Practice of Sati were to be held guilty of committing 'culpable Homicide' offences under the Bengal Sati Regulation Act 1829.

- **Special Marriage Act, 1954**

The Special Marriage Act 1954 is an act of the parliament of India with provision for civil marriage (or "registered marriage") for the people of India and all Indian nationals in foreign countries, irrelevant of the religion or faith followed by either party. This Act originated from a piece of legislation proposed during the late 19th century. Marriages solemnized under the Special Marriage Act are not governed by personal laws.

- **Hindu Succession Act, 1956**

The Hindu Succession act of 1956 is an Act relating to the succession and inheritance of property. This Act lays down a comprehensive and uniform system which incorporates both succession and inheritance. This Act also deals with intestate or unwilled (testamentary) succession. Therefore, this Act combines all the aspects of Hindu succession and brings them into its ambit.

- **Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961**

The Dowry Prohibition Act 1961 extends to the whole of India except (the State of Jammu and Kashmir where the Dowry Restraint act 1960 applied) It shall come into force on such date as the Central Government may by notification in the official Gazette appoint.

- a. **Definition of dowry**

In this act, 'dowry' means any property or valuable security given or agreed to be given either directly or indirectly.

- i. by one party to a marriage to the other party to the marriage or
- ii. by the parents of either party to a marriage or by any other person to either party to the marriage or to any other person at or before or any time after the marriage in connection with the marriage of said parties but does not include dower or mahr in the case of persons to whom the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) applies.

- **Maternity Benefits Act, 1961**

This act regulate women's employment in certain establishments for certain periods before and

after childbirth and this act provided for maternity benefits and certain other benefits. So the maximum period for which any woman shall be entitled to maternity benefit shall be 12 weeks of which not more than 6 weeks shall precede the date of her expected delivery. If a woman dies during this period, the maternity benefit shall be payable only for the days up to and including the day of her death.

- **Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971**

This act provides provisions for termination of definite pregnancies by registered Medical practitioners and matters connected therewith or incidental thereto be it is enacted by Parliament in the Twenty-second Year of the Republic of India notwithstanding anything contained in the Indian Penal Code (45 of 1860), a registered medical practitioner shall not be guilty of any offence under that Code or under any other law for the time being in force if any pregnancy is terminated by him in accordance with the provisions of this Act. Subject to the provisions of sub-section(4) a pregnancy may be terminated by a registered medical practitioner Where the length of the pregnancy does not exceed twelve weeks if such medical practitioner is or Where the length of the pregnancy exceeds twelve weeks but does not exceed twenty weeks if not less than two registered medical practitioner are of opinion, formed in good faith, that The continuance of the pregnancy would involve a risk to the life of the pregnant woman or of grave injury to her physical or mental health or There is a substantial risk that if the child were born, it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities to be seriously handicapped.

- **Domestic Violence Act, 2005**

Domestic violence is governed by the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 and it is defined under Section 3 which states that any act, commission, omission or conduct of a person harms or injures or endangers the health or safety of an individual whether mentally or physically it amounts to domestic violence.

- **Sexual Harassment Bill, 2010**

The bill defines sexual harassment in the work place and creates a mechanism for the redressal of complaints. It also provides safeguards against false or malicious charges.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES TO IMPROVE WOMEN'S CONDITION IN INDIA

In 1954 the Government start programmes for women's development in India but it became effective in 1974. At present, the Government of India has started various schemes for women which are operated by different departments Such as.

- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme**

In 2015 Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao translates to ‘Save the girl child, educate the girl child’. This scheme aims to educate citizens against gender prejudice and improve the efficiency of welfare services for girls. It was launched with an initial funding of Rs. 100 crore (US\$ 13.5 million).

- **One Stop Centre Scheme**

One Stop Centres (OSC) are intended to support women affected by violence, in private and public spaces, within the family, community and 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.

- **Women Helpline Scheme**

This Scheme of Women Helpline is proposed to provide 24 hours immediate and urgent situation response to women affected by violence through transfer (linking with appropriate authorities such as police, One Stop Centre, and hospital) and information about women-related government schemes programs across the country through a single uniform number.

- **UJJAWALA**

A Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of trafficking and Rescue, Rehabilitation and Re-integration of Victims of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation.

- **Working Women Hostel**

This scheme's purpose is to encourage the availability of safe and suitably located accommodation for working women with daycare facilities for their children wherever possible in urban, semi-urban, or even rural areas where employment opportunities for women exist. Ministry approves new projects under Ujjawala Scheme and continues existing projects.

- **SWADHAR Greh (A Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances)**

The Ministry of Women and Child Development is implementing the Swadhar Greh Scheme which targets the women victims of difficult circumstances who are in need of institutional support for rehabilitation so that they could lead their life with dignity. The Scheme envisages providing shelter, food, clothing and health as well as economic and social security for these women.

- **NARI SHAKTI PURASKAR**

Nari Shakti Puraskars shall showcase the Government's commitment towards women with the aim of strengthening their position in society. it will also provide an opportunity for Young Indians to understand the contribution of women in the building society and the nation.

- i. Awardees of Stree Shakti Puruskar, 2014 & Awardees of Nari Shakti Puruskar
- ii. Awardees of Rajya Mahila Samman & Zila Mahila Samman

- **Mahila police Volunteers**

This Scheme was launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in cooperation with Home Affairs for the engagement of MPVs in the States and UTs. It is a central sector scheme that intends to serve as a public-policy interface to help women in distress and to promote a woman-friendly environment both within and outside the police or other authorities and provide an efficient alternative for getting support and help for violence and discrimination.

- **Mahila Shakti Kendras (MSK)**

In 2017 the Mahila shakti Kendra (MSK) Scheme was approved as a centrally sponsored scheme to empower rural women through community participation. This scheme aims to facilitate inter-sectoral convergence of schemes and programs destined for women.

- **NIRBHAYA**

The Government of India had set up a dedicated fund called the 'Nirbhaya Fund' for the implementation of initiatives aimed at enhancing the safety and security of women in the country.

VI. CONCLUSION

In India, women are a significant part of our civilization so nowadays the modern society has started recognizing the individual identity of women. Women believed to have their aspiration, abilities and qualities like a man does and it is also decided that they should have the opportunities to develop their faculties and to articulate them according to their own choice. Nowadays she is facing so many problems in urban/rural areas in the educational areas, social areas, health, and economic area. because women's empowerment should be promoted which increase the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender or economic strength of individuals and communities of women. It depends on many different variables which include geographical location (urban/rural) educational status, social status (caste and class) and age. Women's empowerment policies exist at the national, state and local (Panchayat) levels to improve many sectors, including health, education, economic opportunities, gender-based violence and political contribution. So the empowerment of women has become one of the most important concerns of the 21st century not only at the national level, state level, district level and local level but also at the international level. Only government initiatives alone would not be sufficient to achieve this goal. we must take initiative to create a climate in society 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. Women who were the most dormant segment of the Indian population have now become active participants in all walks of life. Till now, they were the only unit of the family organization. Now, women are becoming not only a significant unit of society but also influencing the course

of social change in society, policy-making & decision-making.

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