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Women Empowerment at Work Place-Indian Scenario

*Empowerment provides a great access to knowledge and resources, more autonomy in decision making, great ability to plan lives, more control over the circumstances and it effects customs, beliefs and practices. SHGs play a vital role in contributing for the upliftment of women. There are many more government schemes which are directed towards improving the conditions of women and to ascertain their socio-economic betterment along with social solidarity. **Key Words** : Empowerment, SHGs, Upliftment, Beliefs & Customs.*

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Introduction :

"There is no chance of the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on one wing." **Swami Vivekananda**

In the history of human development, women has been as important as men. Without the participation of women it is not possible for a nation to grow economically, socially or progress politically. Women constitute nearly 2/3rd of the Indian population.

Concept of Empowerment :

The Oxford American Dictionary defines "empowerment" as "to make (someone) stronger and more confident, esp. in controlling their life and claiming their rights." It means to give women power and help them face the challenges of being a woman in society. Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social or economic strength of individuals and communities. It often involves the empowered developing confidence in their own capacities. A woman is entitled to live in dignity and in freedom from want and from fear. Empowering women is also an indispensable tool for advancing development and reducing poverty. Empowered women contribute to the health and productivity of whole families and communities and to improved prospects for the next generation.

Women constitute almost 50% of the world's population but India has shown disproportionate sex ratio whereby female's population has been comparatively lower than males. As far as their social status is concerned, they are not treated as equal to men in all the places. In the Western societies, the women have got equal right and status with men in all walks of life. But gender disabilities and discriminations are found in India even today. The paradoxical situation has such that she was sometimes concerned as Goddess and at other times merely as slave.

According to the Random House Dictionary : Empowerment comes from the term empower which means

to give power or authority and to enable or permit?. The key elements in empowerment are enabling? and providing power? and they reinforce each other. In practical terms however, empowerment would mean the process of challenging existing inequality, power relations, and of gaining greater control over sources of power by the under-privileged.

Review of Literature :

Venkata Ravi and Venkatraman (2005) focused on the effects of SHG on women participation and exercising control over decision making both in family matters and in group activities.

Murtaza (2012) examined the current status of women in higher education in GilgitBaltistan. He examined the challenges faced by the women were harassment at work places and work load. The parents didn't spend similar amount in educating their daughters as compare to their sons.

Kandpal et al (2012) studied the participation in community level female empowerment program in India increases participants physical mobility, political participation and access to employment.

Objectives of the Study :

(1) To know the need of Women Empowerment. (2) To assess the Awareness of Women Empowerment in India. (3) To analyze the Factors influencing the Economic Empowerment of Women. (4) To study the Government Schemes For Women Empowerment. (5) To identify the Hindrances in the Path of Women Empowerment. (6) To offer useful Suggestions in the light of findings.

Research Methodology :

This paper is basically descriptive and analytical in nature. In this paper an attempt has been taken to analyze the empowerment of in India. The data used in it is purely from secondary sources according to the need of this study.

Women Empowerment - Challenges and Prospects :

Some decades ago, women were limited to the kitchen.

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Today, Indian women have made their presence felt virtually in every field. Women have ultimately come out of their 'Saree' image and entrap the nation by dint of their hard work and power. Empowerment is in fact the ability of women to exercise full control over one's actions. The ability of a woman to break the barriers and tread on a new path was proved by her. People usually get carried by the myth that men can do far better than women. Indian women dispelled the myth by making their footprints in almost every field of work. There are several constraints that check the process of women empowerment in India. Women often internalize the traditional concept of their role as natural thus inflicting an injustice upon them. Poverty is the reality of life for the vast majority women in India. It is the another factor that poses challenge in realizing women's empowerment. There are several challenges that are plaguing the issues of women's right in India. Targeting these issues will directly benefit the empowerment of women in India.

Education : While the country has grown from leaps and bounds since independence where education is concerned. the gap between women and men is severe. While 82.14% of adult men are educated, only 65.46% of adult women are known to be literate in India. The gender bias is in higher education, specialized professional trainings which hit women very hard in employment and attaining top leadership in any field.

Poverty : Poverty is considered the greatest threat to peace in the world, and eradication of poverty should be a national goal as important as the eradication of illiteracy. Due to this, women are exploited as domestic helps.

Health and Safety : The health and safety concerns of women are paramount for the wellbeing of a country and is an important factor in gauging the empowerment of women in a country. However there are alarming concerns where maternal healthcare is concerned.

Professional Inequality : This inequality is practiced in employment and promotions. Women face countless handicaps in male customized and dominated environs in Government Offices and Private enterprises.

Education as a weapon to Empower Women :

Education is a powerful tool of social transformation. Hence, education for Women has to be paid special attention. Greater access for women to education must be ensured in the educational system. Empowerment of women needs to begin with her participation in different spheres of life. Education is a great determinant in this regard.

Women must be given freedom to choose their interest of work and discharge their duties unbiased. Government should open its doors for women to be given opportunities to prove themselves on a par with the men. The National Policy For The Empowerment Of Women came was passed in 2001 the goal of which is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour

of women. In India, women are marginalized and discriminated at every level of the society. Empowered women should be able to participate in the decision making. Women work equal to men. They should be paid equal too. Various Articles of the Constitution of India attempt to ensure that there is no prevalence of gender pay gap. Specific legislations also address gender pay gap. These articles of the Constitution are as follows :

(1) Article 14 : Men & women to have equal rights & opportunities in the political, economic & social spheres.

(2) Article 15(1) : Prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex etc.

(3) Article 15(3) : Special provision enabling the State to make affirmative discriminations in favour of women.

(4) Article 16 : Equality of opportunities in matter of public appointments for all citizens.

(5) Article 39(a) : The State shall direct its policy towards securing all citizens men and women, equally, the right to means of livelihood.

(6) Article 39(d) : Equal pay for equal work for both men and women

(7) Article 42 : The State to make provision for ensuring just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.

National Mission for Empowerment of Women India :

The National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW) was launched by the Government of India (GOI) on International Women's Day in 2010 with a view to empower women socially, economically and educationally. The Mission aims to achieve empowerment of women on all these fronts by securing convergence of schemes/ programmes of different Ministries/Departments of Government of India as well as State Governments. The Mission utilises existing structural arrangements of participating Ministries wherever available and partners with Panchayati Raj Institution (PRIs) in implementation of activities. In light with its mandate, the Mission has been named Mission Purna Shakti, implying a vision for holistic empowerment of women. and educationally.

Focus areas of the Mission :

(i) Access to health, drinking water, sanitation and hygiene facilities for women. **(ii)** Coverage of all girls especially those belonging to vulnerable groups in schools from primary to class 12. **(iii)** Higher and Professional education for girls/women. **(iv)** Skill development, Micro credit, Vocational Training, Entrepreneurship, SHG development. **(v)** Gender sensitization and dissemination of information. **(vi)** Taking steps to prevent crime against women and taking steps for a safe environment for women.

Women Empowerment Schemes :

(1) Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao Scheme.

(2) One Stop Centre Scheme.

(3) Women Helpline Scheme.

(4) UJJAWALA : A Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of trafficking and Resue, Rehabilitation and Re-integration of Victims of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual

Exploitation.

- (5) Working Women Hostel.
- (6) Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme For the Children of Working Mothers.
- (7) Ministry approves new projects under Ujjawala Scheme and continues existing projects.
- (8) SWADHAR Greh (A Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances).
- (9) Revision under IGMSY in Accordance with National Food Security Act, 2013 in XII Plan.
- (10) Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP).
- (11) NARI SHAKTI PURASKAR.
- (12) Awardees of Stree Shakti Puruskar, 2014 & Awardees of Nari Shakti Puruskar.
- (13) Awardees of Rajya Mahila Samman & Zila Mahila Samman.
- (14) Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY) - A Conditional Maternity Benefit Scheme.
- (15) Release of 2nd instalment of Grant for 2015-2016 for all the States under IGMS.

Ways to Empower Women :

- (1) Changes in women's mobility and social interaction.
- (2) Changes in women's labour patterns.
- (3) Changes in women's access to and control over resources and
- (4) Changes in women's control over Decision making.
- (5) Providing education.
- (6) Self-employment and Self-help group.
- (7) Providing minimum needs like Nutrition, Health, Sanitation, Housing.
- (8) Other than this society should change the mentality towards the word women.
- (9) Encouraging women to develop in their fields they are good at and make a career.

Findings of the Study :

- (1) There are quite a few areas where women empowerment in India is largely lacking.
- (2) The mind-set of the people in the country need to be changed.
- (3) There is still a wide gap that exists between those under protection and those not.
- (4) Poverty and illiteracy need to be tackled wisely. The Empowerment of Women begins with a guarantee of their health and safety.
- (5) Empowerment of Women could not be achieved if their economic and social status is not improved. By adopting definite social and economic policies with a view of total development of women they can be made to realize that they have the potential to be strong human beings.

Suggestions :

- (1) Importance should be given to the education of women, which is the grassroots problem. Hence, education for women has to be paid special attention.
- (2) Awareness programmes help to create awareness among women especially belonging to weaker sections about their rights.
- (3) Women can be empowered through work and

should be provided enough safety and support to work. Proper wages and work at par with men should be given so that their status can be elevated in the society.

(4) Implementation of Programmes and Act may help to control the mal-practices prevalent in the society.

Conclusion :

The above mentioned discussion reveals the concepts empowerment, agency and autonomy can substantially diverge from each other and are may not reflect into the other. This divergence tells us that there is a need for identification of some cultural factors having bearing on empowerment and autonomy. It is a need to understand that the concepts of empowerment and autonomy are sufficiently different. The study also infers that there is a necessity to look beyond economic resources or material prosperity and into cultural and social influences, which are playing a significant role in shaping the women's autonomy and agency.

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