



## A Study on Women Empowerment After 1947

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*The standard of any civilized society can be best be judged from the status accorded to its women. A woman is the mother of the race and is the line between generations. Women constitute about one-half of the global population but they are placed at various disadvantageous positions due to the gender differences and bias. They have been victims of violence, exploitation and discrimination. Against all such odds and obstacles women all over the world have launched powerful movements to reverse centuries of discrimination and injustice. They are mobilizing many movements against violence and oppression, and are demanding equal rights, greater opportunities for development, equitable laws. With the growth of education and awareness, women no longer feel that they are confined to four walls, but are venturing out into every conceivable area of society. The government has introduced major development programmes for their major progress. The constitution of India has also provided several rights to women for their all round progress. Although there is a formal recognition of women's equality with men extensive data gathered by the UN and other sources show that women continue to face discrimination and marginalization. The empowerment of women occurs in reality when women achieve increased control and participation in decision-making that leads to their better access to resources and therefore improved social economic status. The experts on gender issue hold that women's advancement involves the process by which women achieve increased control over public decision making. The male domination of society and government are often seen working for the purpose of serving male interest and in this course subordination of women takes place. The experts also inform that there are five level of women empowerment framework namely welfare, access, consciousness, mobilization and control.*

**Key words:** Problems, Remedy, Legal provisions, Schemes, Empowerment.

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**Introduction :** In the Indian culture since the very early periods, women as a group have been dominated by men and their status has been low in the family and society. In the ancient time the condition of women was very miserable. There was existence of satipratha system, and also prevalence of female infanticide and child marriage. If we contrast the condition of present and modern women we come to the conclusion that till today the condition of women is not good. Women have been exposed to greater insecurity, poverty, illiteracy, casteism, orthodoxy unhealthy living condition, traditionalism, backwardness, corruption, criminalization due to male dominance in most of the field. Dowry system has also grown over the years. Although there were some women like Kiran Bedi, Kalpana Chawla, Pratibha Patil, Sonia Gandhi,

Aishwarya Rai etc, who have established a recognizable place in the society but they represent a very small proportion of total Indian women. The society is not safe for the common women. They have to face problems like rape, kidnapping, eve teasing etc.

### **Hypothesis :**

To make people aware of women empowerment

### **Methodology**

The study will be based on data collected by :-

- Constitutional legal provision available for women.
- A scanning of women's empowerment executive enforcement policies of the central and state government and their plans and programmes .

- A study of selected number of secondary sources and publication, books, official reports, media clipping and past seminar reports concerning the issue.

### Objectives :

The purpose of this research is to look at the formulation of various policies, the orientation and planning that would best enhance the role of women's contribution towards sustainable development throughout the country.

### Problems faced by women are due to various factors as mentioned below:

1. **Rape:** Rape is not only sexually motivated; it is a weapon of power. It is violation of physical and mental nature, the victims being women.
2. **Kidnapping/abduction of women:** Kidnapping and abduction meant to be taken away by force or to hold captive.
3. **Molestation :** Molestation means to harass and assault sexually. Incident of molestation of women include making obscene gestures, whistling, using vulgar language as singing aloud-raunchy
4. **Eve-teasing :** Eve-teasing means harassment of sexually aggressive behavior towards women or girls.
5. **Dowry Deaths:** Dowry or dahej is payment made in cash or kind by the bride's family to the bridegroom's family along with the giving away of bride (kanyadaan) in Indian marriage.

### Remedies:

- **Education-** It is a major factor which empowers women to sort out their problems. It makes women aware of their weakness and gives courage to eradicate their problem.
- **Equality -** Equality given by the constitution helps women to face their problem . It is a major factor which has provided equal right in every field. They have granted equal opportunities as are granted to men.
- **Rights-** The constitution of India has provided many

rights to women for their progress. These rights have created awareness among them to face their problems. Legal rights provided by the government act as a tool to eradicate their problems.

- **Awareness-** Awareness is the major factor which contributes to providing solution of women's problem. If women are aware of their rights and duties they can easily tackle their problem' and can be prevented from exploitation.
- **Women welfare organization-** These organizations to a great extent provides help to women who approach them and teach them that they can tackle their problems easily.

### Legal Provision For Protection Of Women:

The Indian penal code provides punishments for offences against the human body and property. This applies equally to men and women. The offences of sati can be prevented or punished even under this code. Section 306 I.P.C prohibits the attempts of suicide and Section 307 I.P.C penalizes the attempts to murder. Section 303 I.P.C prohibits the attempt to culpable homicide. It is worthwhile to note that by the criminal law amendments act 1983, chapter xx(a) has been added in I.P.C to prevent cruelty by husband or relation of husband of a woman, making the offence punishable for a term which may extend .

### Important Acts Regarding women:

1. juvenile
2. grounds of growth and relief
3. special marriage act
4. dowry prohibition act
5. labour laws

### Some Decision of Supreme Court :

1. Prosecution over dowry inescapable says SC
2. bride burners should be hanged : SC
3. dowry death not applicable if harassment is over a year : SC

### Amendments :

Criminal procedure code was amended to provide that when the case is of the nature referred to in sub-section (3) of section 174, the nearest magistrate empowered to

hold inquest may hold an enquiry into the cause of death either instead of or in addition to the investigation held by police officers.

- The Indian Penal Code has been amended in 1986 with the introduction of section 204(B), which lays down that where the death of a woman is caused by any burns or bodily injury or under any abnormal circumstances within 7 years of her marriage and it is shown that she was harassed by her husband in connection with dowry demand, such death shall be called dowry death and the husband or the relatives shall be deemed to have caused her death. The maximum punishment for this offence is 7 years imprisonment for life.
- The dowry prohibition act 1961 was also amended by act 63 of 1984 in views of the ever increasing number of dowry death .It was pointed out by the committee on the status of women that educated youth is grossly insensitive to the evils of dowry and unashamedly contributes to its perpetuation. Even the definition of dowry, which in the earlier act 1961 had been defined as “consideration for marriage”, was substituted by the words “in connection with the marriage”, as it was found almost impossible to prove that anything given was a “consideration for the marriage, for the reason that the giver, i.e the parents of the girl would be unwilling to set the law in motion. The offence was also made recognizable so that the police was given power to register a case under the act to take up investigation. The act also made it clear that demand for dowry itself was an offence and made it punishable with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than six months. If the demand was satisfied it would constitute an offence u/s 3 which provides penalty for giving and taking dowry.

#### **Schemes favouring women :**

The department of women and child development under the ministry of Human Resource Development has been implementing the following schemes:-

- **Swayamsidha:-** It is an integrated project for the development and empowerment of women through self help group (SHGs) with emphasis on covering services, developing access to micro-credit and

promoting micro enterprises . So far 52,016 SHGs have been formed under the project out of 650 blocks allotted so far.

- **Sw-Shakti Project:-** Earlier known as the rural women's development and empowerment project was sanctioned in October 1998 as a centrally sponsored scheme to be implemented in the states of Bihar, Chattisgarh, Gujrat, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Uttranchal, and Uttar-Pradesh for the duration of five years with an outlay of Rs. 186crores .The project aims at enhancing women's access to resources for better quality of life. The project is supported jointly by the World Bank and IFAD.
- **Swalamban:-** The objective of this scheme is to provide training and skill to women to facilitate them to obtain employment or self employment on a sustainable basis. Some of the trades where training is imparted include computer programming, medical transcription, electronic assembling, consumer electronic repair, radio, and television repairs, garment making handloom weaving, handicrafts, community health work and embroidery. During 2003-2004 463 proposals were approved benefiting 71,240 women.
- **Hostels for working women:-** The scheme of assistance for construction and expansion of hostels building for working women is being implemented since 1972. Under this scheme financial assistance is provided to NGOs, cooperative bodies and other agencies engaged in women's social welfare etc. for construction of building for working women hostles. During 2003-2004, 13 new hostels were sanctioned under this scheme benefiting 1,188 women.
- **Swadhar:-** The scheme was launched in 2001-20002 as a central sector scheme for providing holistic and integrated services to women in difficult circumstances. The package of service made available under this scheme include provisions of food, clothing, shelter, health care counselling and legal support social, and economic rehabilitation. The scheme also supports a help line for women in distress. Presently 31 projects are being funded under the scheme.

- **Rastrya Mahila Kosh (RMK):-** Also known as the national credit fund for women was set up as a registered society under the societies registration act 1860, on march 1993 with a view to facilitate credit support on micro-finance to poor women to start income generating activities. In 2003-2004 an amount of Rs.25 crore was sanctioned through RMK benefiting about 32,765 women.

The UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) has initiated several schemes for women which is one important component for empowerment and development for women in India as well, particularly in its under developed states.

### Participation of Women

**Cottage Industry:-** In India women have been employed from the earliest time in cottage industries. These industries provide employment for women in their homes. The most common cottage industry in which women are engaged either as part time or whole-time workers are bidi making, spinning, weaving, printing, dyeing, thread making, manufacturing of toys, soap-making, phulkari work, bangle making, fruit preservation, pottery, etc. Thus they help in improving the standard of living of the family by supplementing the family incomes.

**Women Farm Laborers:-** In all agricultural community women work side by side with men and share equally all the work in the field, except ploughing. But such women workers do not receive any protection and amenities such as medical facilities and they are generally poorly paid.

**Women in the Professions:-** Under the constitution professions and offices are open to women except the Army, Navy and Air force. Women are admitted in all services and the same scale of pay and emoluments as men in various services. There is one medical college exclusively for women in Delhi known as Lady Hardinge Medical College.

### Industrial Workers:-

- Women and children have a special place in the history of labour legislation in India. The establishment of the International Labour Organization's office in India in 1919 influenced

considerably the activities of the state in this field and now laws are in force to regulate not only hours of work, but to provide for health, safety and welfare of women workers.

- **Plantation And Mine Workers:-** Women are employed in large numbers in plantation-growing like tea, coffee, and rubber in Assam, Bengal, Mysore, and Madras. Although the law allows working up to 12 hours a day on plantation, employed women generally work for seven to eight hours with a rest interval of about an hour at midday. Women workers are given the additional facility to maternity leave. The earning of women are, however, lower than that of men. In case of mine workers there is a ban on their underground employment. The maximum hours of work for women are less than those of men. Under the Mines Act women are prohibited from working between 7 pm and 6 am. The employment of women in dangerous operations is prohibited.

### Education :

All over the world, women have played significant role in their country's development. They have contributed to the economic growth of their country by taking care of their families and working in and owning businesses. They have worked as doctors, teachers and they have even been prime ministers of countries. Unfortunately not every society values the role women play and the contribution they make to their country's development. Low educational levels and the tendency for women to have low self-confidence contribute to make them second class citizens.

"Education is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge skill and self confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process"- (ICPD programme of action, paragraph 4.2). Education is important for everyone, but it is especially significant for girls and women. This is true not only because education is an entry point to other opportunities, but also because the educational achievements of women can have ripple effect within the family and across generations. Closing the gender gap in education is a development priority. The 1994 Cairo consensus recognised education, especially for women. As a force for social and economic

development closing the gender gap in education by 2015 is also one of the benchmark for the millennium development goals.

#### **Findings :**

- Change has come in the status and lifestyle of women.
- Selection of educational field has improved.
- Options in job selection have shown immense changes.
- From now onwards focus will be upon Psychological aspects of women empowerment.

#### **Suggestions:**

- Equal pay for equal work for both men and women.
- Gender disparity should be reduced.
- Domestic violence should be checked.
- To modify the attitude of public towards discrimination against girl child.

#### **Conclusion:**

In our country, various developments had occurred in last 63 years after independence but the dependence of women remains even today. The story of the independence of our country gives us this learning that many times desired fruit is not achieved by individual effort but the target can be easily achieved by the

collective effort. Group is more effective than a single person. The empowerment of women occurs in reality when women achieve increased control and participation in decision making that leads them to better access to resources which would improve their socio-economic status.

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