

## WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: A CHALLENGE OF 21ST CENTURY

Megharaja.B\*

### **Abstract**

Women empowerment plays an imperative role in the growth of any society. One country to become a developed it need equal cooperation in that country, which country having equal preference such as men and women that country could be developed country. Gender equalization is most important for developing any nation. Women when they become free from different problem such as gender, Dowry land and others problem, it could be difficult to develop that nation, so we need for equal preference in our country for developing in economical, political and social. In this paper deals regarding of women empowerment challenges for overcome from different problem in our society, without women empowerment to difficult to develop in different areas, women empowerment is vital role in developing countries.

Key words: Problems of women, Challenges and Actions.

---

\* Assistant Professor, Dept. of Studies & Research in Commerce, Vijayanagara Shri Khrushnadevaraya University, P.G Centre, Nandihalli, Sandur, Bellary

## Introduction

Women Empowerment daily we are listening to news, reading newspaper or magazine, you would have gone through incidents and accidents with women in India. While any other article on women's empowerment in India will take a look at our rich heritage and enlightened societies of the past where women were treated as equals, the concept of "India" itself evolved quite recently, relative to the sum of its parts' histories. But the truth is that in the modern India, the woman has always been a second grade citizen, no matter what its esteemed leaders have said.

Women Empowerment is hard to fathom how slow moving the cultural exchange of the world is when you find out that there are several places across the country where harmful customs of the ancient world coexist with modern appliances and thought. However that may come as hardly any surprise to anyone who has lived in India.

Yes, it is only in India that glaring and brutal gang rapes occur frequently in a state that is headed by a woman Chief Minister. Gender discrimination is the least of worries for women in India, known otherwise as the fourth most dangerous country in the world for women. Other instances of violence against women has an astonishing and grim variety to it – with acid throwing, domestic violence stemming out of dowry, rape, harassment and an assortment of others.

## What is Women Empowerment?

In the simplest of words it is basically the creation of an environment where women can make independent decisions on their personal development as well as shine as equals in society.

Women want to be treated as equals so much so that if a woman rises to the top of her field it should be a commonplace occurrence that draws nothing more than a raised eyebrow at the gender. This can only happen if there is a channelized route for the empowerment of women.

Thus it is no real surprise that women empowerment in India is a hotly discussed topic with no real solution looming in the horizon except to doubly redouble our efforts and continue to target the sources of all the violence and ill-will towards women.

## Methodology

The researcher has been collected information on the basis of secondary data which have been existing in different areas like newspaper or magazine and Journal and internet.

## Objectives of this paper

- To know the problems of women in India.
- To examine the women empowerment challenges in India.
- To know the women empowerment actions.

## Problems

- Lack of literacy
- Lack of financial authorities
- Lack of initiations
- Lack of health and safety
- Women in Difficult Circumstances

In recognition of the diversity of women's situations and in acknowledgement of the needs of specially disadvantaged groups, measures and programmes will be undertaken to provide them with special assistance. These groups include women in extreme poverty, destitute women, women in conflict situations, women affected by natural calamities, women in less developed regions, the disabled widows, elderly women, single women in difficult circumstances, women heading households, those displaced from employment, migrants, women who are victims of marital violence, deserted women and prostitutes etc.

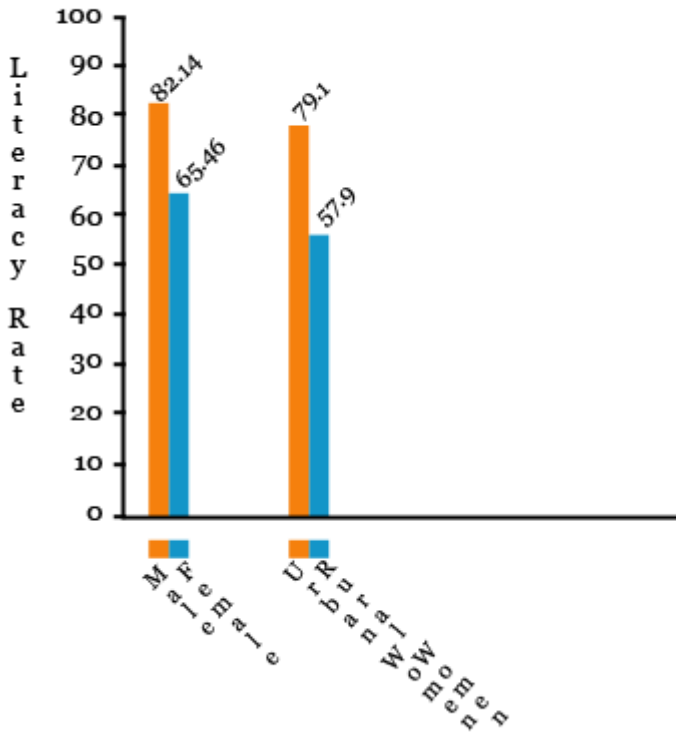
## Challenges

There are several challenges that are currently plaguing the issues of women's rights in India. A few of these challenges are presented below. While a lot of these are redundant and quite basic issues faced across the country, these are contributory causes to the overarching status of women 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 its 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. Not only is an illiterate women at the mercy of her husband or father, she also does not know that this is not the way of life for women across the world. Additionally, the norms of culture that state that the man of the family is the be-all and end-all of family decisions is slowly spoiling the society of the country.

Literacy Facts of Women in India



\*Literacy rates relate to the population aged 7 years & above

Data Source: Census of India 2011

As said in a study conducted by the Centre for the Study of Society and Secularism,

Eradicating this gap and educating women about their real place in the world is a step that will largely set this entire movement rolling down the hill to crash and break the wall of intolerance, negligence and exploitation.

➤ Poverty in the Country

Poverty Headcount Ratio (2010)	
Poverty Trend	World Bank
Live less than \$1.25 a day	32.7% (400 million)
Live less than \$2 a day	68.7% (841 million)
Live less than \$2.5 a day	81.1% (992 million)
Live less than \$4 a day	93.7% (1,148 million)
Live less than \$5 a day	96.9% (1,179 million)

Data Source: Wikipedia

About a third of the country's population lives on less than 1.25USD per day. The GINI index keeps rising slowly over the years, indicating that the inequality in the distribution of wealth in the country is increasing, currently hovering a little close to 33.9.

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 abject poverty, women are exploited as domestic helps and wives whose incomes are usurped by the man of the house. Additionally, sex slaves are a direct outcome of poverty, as unearthed by Davinder Kumar:-

Andhra Pradesh accounts for nearly half of all sex trafficking cases in India, the majority involving adolescent girls. According to police estimates, a shocking 300,000 women and girls have been trafficked for exploitative sex work from Andhra Pradesh; of these just 3,000 have been rescued so far.

The state is relatively prosperous, ranking fourth in terms of per capita GDP in India, but it is also home to some of the poorest people in the country.

If poverty were not a concern, then the girl child will be able to follow her dreams without concerns of sexual exploitation, domestic abuse and no education or work.

### ➤ Health & 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.

In its 2009 report, UNICEF came up with shocking figures on the status of new mothers in India. The maternal mortality report of India stands at 301 per 1000, with as many as 78,000 women in India dying of childbirth complications in that year. Today, due to the burgeoning population of the country, that number is sure to have multiplied considerably. The main causes of maternal mortality are:-

- Haemorrhage: 30%
- Anaemia: 19%
- Sepsis: 16%
- Obstructed Labour: 10%
- Abortion: 8%
- Toxaemia: 8%

While there are several programmes that have been set into motion by the Government and several NGOs in the country, there is still a wide gap that exists between those under protection and those not.

Poverty and illiteracy add to these complications with local quacks giving ineffective and downright harmful remedies to problems that women have. The empowerment of women begins with a guarantee of their health and safety.

➤ **Globalization**

Globalization has presented new challenges for the realization of the goal of women's equality, the gender impact of which has not been systematically evaluated fully. However, from the micro-level studies that were commissioned by the Department of Women & Child Development, it is evident that there is a need for re-framing policies for access to employment and quality of employment. Benefits of the growing global economy have been unevenly distributed leading to wider economic disparities, the feminization of poverty, increased gender inequality through often deteriorating working conditions and unsafe working environment especially in the informal economy and rural areas. Strategies will be designed to enhance the capacity of women and empower them to meet the negative social and economic impacts, which may flow from the globalization process.

➤ **Women and Agriculture**

In view of the critical role of women in the agriculture and allied sectors, as producers, concentrated efforts will be made to ensure that benefits of training, extension and various programmes will reach them in proportion to their numbers. The programmes for training women in soil conservation, social forestry, dairy development and other occupations allied to agriculture like horticulture, livestock including small animal husbandry, poultry, fisheries etc. will be expanded to benefit women workers in the agriculture sector.

➤ **Women and Industry**

The important role played by women in electronics, information technology and food processing and agro industry and textiles has been crucial to the development of these sectors. They would be given comprehensive support in terms of labour legislation, social security and other support services to participate in various industrial sectors.

➤ **Support Services**

The provision of support services for women, like child care facilities, including crèches at work places and educational institutions, homes for the aged and the disabled will be expanded and improved to create an enabling environment and to ensure their full cooperation in social, political and economic life. Women-friendly personnel policies will also be drawn up to encourage women to participate effectively in the developmental process.

➤ **Science and Technology**

Programmes will be strengthened to bring about a greater involvement of women in science and technology. These will include measures to motivate girls to take up science and technology for higher education and also ensure that development projects with scientific and technical inputs

involve women fully. Efforts to develop a scientific temper and awareness will also be stepped up. Special measures would be taken for their training in areas where they have special skills like communication and information technology. Efforts to develop appropriate technologies suited to women's needs as well as to reduce their drudgery will be given a special focus too.

## Women Empowerment actions

### Millennium Development Goal

The United Nations Development Programme constituted eight Millennium Development Goals (MDG) for ensuring equity and peace across the world. The third MDG is directly related to the empowerment of women in India. The MDGs are agreed-upon goals to reduce certain indicators of disparity across the world by the year 2015.

The third MDG is centred towards promoting gender equality and empowering women: "Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education by no later than 2015"

While India's progress in this front has been brave, there are quite a few corners that it needs to cut before it can be called as being truly revolutionary in its quest for understanding what is women empowerment. As UNDP says:-

India missed the 2005 deadline of eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education. However, the country has hastened progress and the Gender Parity Index (GPI) for Gross Enrolment Ratios (GER) in primary and secondary education has risen. Given current trends, India is moderately or almost nearly on track. However, as the Government of India MDG Report 2009 notes, "participation of women in employment and decision-making remains far less than that of men, and the disparity is not likely to be eliminated by 2015." Achieving GPI in tertiary education also remains a challenge. In addition, the labour market openness to women in industry and services has only marginally increased from 13-18 percent between 1990-91 and 2004-05.

### Ministry for Women & Child Development

The Ministry for Women & Child Development was established as a department of the Ministry of Human Resource Development in the year 1985 to drive the holistic development of women and children in the country. In 2006 this department was given the status of a Ministry, with the powers to:-

Formulate plans, policies and programmes; enacts/ amends legislation, guiding and coordinating the efforts of both governmental and non-governmental organisations working in the field of Women and Child Development.

It delivers such initiatives such as the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) which is a package of services such as supplementary nutrition, health check-ups and immunisation. As mentioned earlier, the empowerment of women begins with their safety and health and this Ministry is committed to providing them.

### **Swayamsidha Programme**

Additionally, the Ministry is also implementing the Swayamsidha programme – an integrated scheme for the empowerment of women at a total cost of Rs. 116.30 Crores. Core to this programme will be the establishment of women’s self-help groups which will empower women to have increased access to all kinds of resources that they are denied, in addition to increasing their awareness and skills. This programme will benefit about 9,30,000 women with the setting up of 53,000 self-help groups, 26,500 village societies and 650 block societies.

### **National Commission for Women**

The National Commission for Women is a Department within the Ministry of Women and Child Development. It was set up exclusively to help women via the Constitution – by reviewing Legal and Constitutional safeguards for women, recommending remedial legislative measures, by facilitating quick redressal of grievances and by advising the Government of India on all policy matters affecting women.

The website allows for online submission of complaints and fast redressal exclusively for women. Additionally it is also a good resource of information for women and the Commission is committed to helping out women in need.

### **The Women Empowerment Ahead**

India as a country is still recovering from years of abuse in the time of the Raj and more years of economic suffering at the hands of the License Raj. It is only now that globalisation, liberalisation and other socio-economic forces have given some respite to a large proportion of the population. However, there are still quite a few areas where women empowerment in India is largely lacking.

To truly understand what is women empowerment, there needs to be a sea-change in the mind-set of the people in the country. Not just the women themselves, but the men have to wake up to a world that is moving towards equality and equity. It is better that this is embraced earlier rather than later, for our own good.

Swami Vivekananda once said “arise away and stop not until the goal is reached”. Thus our country should thus be catapulted into the horizon of empowerment of women and revel in its glory.



### Conclusion

The Empowerment of women has become one of the most important Concerns of 21<sup>st</sup> Century not only at national level but also at the international level. Efforts by the Govt. are on to ensure Gender equality but 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.

### Reference

- Internet
- Human Resource Management
- Journal
- EXCEL International Journal of Multidisciplinary Management Studies Vol.2 Issue 1, January 2012, ISSN 2249 8834 Online available at <http://zenithresearch.org.in/www.zenithresearch.org.in>

