

Maria Mies Women Development in the Context of Liberalisation

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Editors

Prof. Laxmidevi Y.
Prof. R. V. Gangshetty
Prof. M. P. Baligar
Dr. Ramesh M. Sonkamble

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Women Empowerment in Indian Post-Liberalized Era

Dr. Bhakti Mahindru

Assistant Professor & HOD of Economics

BLDEA's S. B. Arts & K.C.P. Science College, Vijayapur

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Abstract

Women play a very crucial character in the growth of economy and society. Women are family leaders, planners, teachers, workers and play an important part in the enlargement of agriculture, business and services. However, women's rights are limited that the poverty rate is higher amongst women. Empowering women is the only solution for all the economic problems. If woman is educated and empowered her potential power can be utilized towards economic development. Empowerment visualizes the complete participation of individuals in the decision making process that shapes their lives. As Indian economy develops, it leads to the nation to place greater emphasis on social and human development, including women empowerment. The paper defines women empowerment as efforts to "defend the human rights of women and girls, combat discrimination, and challenge roles and stereotypes that create inequality and exclusion." Women empowerment is an significant factor in achieving gender equality, where women and men have identical opportunities towards education, health, work participation and individual development. The objective of development cannot be achieved without the advancement and enablement of womanhood. This paper covers the need, purpose, importance of women empowerment, status of women in India, government initiatives for women empowerment and its outcome.

Keywords: Women, Empowerment, Education, Economic Status, Programmes, Schemes & Development.

Introduction:

Women empowerment refers to the process of enabling women to have larger opportunities towards decision making. This may include strengthening women's contribution in commercial and politics and supporting them to make choices about their fitness and welfare. Women empowerment is highly essential as it leads to many positive outcomes, such as economic advancement and expansion, better health and well-being, and greater gender equality. In India, women empowerment has been a crucial concern for many years. Despite some progress in recent years, women in India still face significant challenges when it comes to gender equity. These problems include discrimination, lack of access to education and employment, and gender-based violence.

Women empowerment is the procedure of women's advancement, acceptance and inclusion in decisions. It also refers giving them identical prospects for social progress and enlargement and preventing gender inequality.

The GoI is seriously making efforts for the protection and enabling of womenfolk and children. The climbing discrimination towards womanhood is to be minimized.

and these outlines are the resolutions to the major complications associated to womanhood in India which is most essential for real Economic Development.

Objectives:

1. To study the history of Women Empowerment.
2. To assess the Challenges in the path of Women Empowerment.
3. To review the available Schemes for Women Empowerment.

Brief History Of Women Empowerment:

Articles 14 to 16 of the Constitution of India, which came into effect from January 26, 1950, provide for equality for both genders and discrimination is strictly prohibited. When India gained independence in 1947, Indian women gained universal suffrage, long before many Western countries granted women the right to vote. India is the second country in modern history with female leader named Indira Gandhi, after another South Asian country Sri Lanka, elected Sirimavo Bandaranaike in 1960.

GoI took efforts to ratify key international conventions to eliminate discrimination against women. Being a founder of the International Labor Organization (ILO) and has approved 47 recommendations. Signed the Convention on the Eradication of all Arrangements of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1980 and ratified it in 1993 with some reservations. It has yet to endorse the Optional Protocol of the CEDAW and National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. Within the country, the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 and the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 have been decreed to proscribe occurrences of dowry and domestic violence. The government also expanded maternity leave in the private sector from 12 weeks to 26 weeks under the Maternity Welfare Act, 2017.

The Women's Reservation Bill gives 33 percent reservation for women seats in all levels of Indian politics. This can be considered as a tool to increase women participation in politics. This bill was first introduced by the Deve Gowda government on September 12, 1996. Sequential governments tried to push for the bill but it took 14 years to get it approved in the Rajya Sabha (Upper House of Parliament). This bill is yet to be passed by the Lok Sabha (lower house of Parliament) and all state legislatures. This bill was presented as a historic attempt to change the gender identity of Indian citizens. Opponents of the quota system argue for necessary to ensure the effective and efficient participation of women in politics. Including women voices in governance can help streamline processes that often take generations. In contrast, skeptics think that the bill would only benefit elite women. While a 33 percent female reservation is a bold move, the Trinamool Congress, ardent supporters of the bill, went a phase forward by reserving 40 percent seats in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

Challenges:

Few Major Challenges are listed:

1. **Discrimination:** Women in India often face discrimination in many areas of life, including in the home and in the workplace. This discrimination in the extent of education & employability leads to unequal treatment & lower wage rates.
2. **Lack of access to education and employment:** Women in India face significant barriers during accessing education and employment. For example, data from the

World Bank shows that only around 50% of women in India participate in the labor force, compared to around 80% of men. It is due to lack of access to education and training, as well as the cultural and social norms that prevent women from participating in the labor market.

3. **Gender-based violence:** The National Crime Records Bureau reports that in 2021 there were over 428,278 reported cases of violence against women in India. It includes physical and sexual violence, & also violence against children and women. The statistics are shocking; during 2021 - 31,677 rapes against women were reported.
4. **Poverty:** Many Indian women live in poverty, particularly in rural regions. Poverty can make it difficult for women to access education and employment and can lead to other problems such as poor health and malnutrition.
5. **Disparities between urban and rural areas:** Women in rural regions of India often face greater challenges when it comes to empowerment. Due to little access to education and health care, leading to isolation, marginalized & gender-based violence.

Impact of Empowerment:

Women empowerment can have many positive effects on lives of women, including economic development, greater control towards their decision, greater political and social participation and laughter across genders. By encouraging women to partake in the economy, women can access better-paying jobs, which can help them and their families escape poverty. Empowered women are capable to take their own decisions with improved self-confidence and assurance with physical and mental soundness. When women are able to contribute in the political process, they have more decision-making power, being a policy maker they can frame better policies for the upliftment of whole women fraternity. Empowering women also helps to reduce gender discrimination and promote greater gender equality, leading to better relationships and positive outcomes between men and women, well-being, and overall quality of life.

Discussion:

NFHS-5 data is a useful source of health indicators and also demonstrates the importance of government initiatives related to quality of life in India. Significant progress was made between 2015-16 and 2019-21; Household electricity consumption increased from 88% to 96.8%, while households using clean cooking oil increased from 43.8% to 58.6% enhanced drinking water bases increased from 94.4% to 96%, and household use of improved sanitation facilities shot up from 48.5% to 70.2%. These basic principles, which are important indicators of quality of life, form the root of human development, regardless of gender. But the data also displays gender differences in the encumbrance of accessing basic services, leading to significant improvements such as health and education, followed by signs of progress such as mobile phone use, the internet, wealth and freedom to decision making. Women Empowerment incorporates improvements completed in the spheres of social, political, educational, health and economic status. One of the utmost important determinants of empowerment is education. NFHS-5 shows that as of 2019-21, the literacy rate of women aged 15-49 was

approximately 13% lower than that of men. While the percentage of women with over six years of education increased slightly from 68.8% to 71.8%, only 41% of women aged 15-49 had completed ten years or more of education of schooling compared to 50.2% men. Ensuring gender equivalence in education remains an important strategy for the future. The second area of support is the economic area, which includes assets, money and business. The data depicts that 43.3% of women between the age group of 15-49 owned a house or land alone or with others during 2019-21, compared to 38.4% in 2015-16. In a significant improvement of more than 25% from the previous round, 77.4% of women now have bank or savings accounts which they themselves use. However, performance data is still far from supported. Even yet there is an increase in the number of people of working age, there is a stress on women's 20 percent involvement in the workforce to 50.6% for men. (PLFS 2019-20)

Women are unpaid for domestic responsibilities which includes farm or business & child care especially after marriage. As per NFHS-5, a significant 23.3% of women aged 20-24 are wedded earlier the legal age (a reduction in 3.5% from 2015-16), while a lesser but substantially it is observed that 17.7% of men amongst 25-29 are married before the legal age. While the overall fertility rate has fallen, adolescent fertility among women aged 15-19 remains unabashedly high at 43% which may be an important marker of reasons women are not arriving or staying in the workforce. Additionally, only 13.6% of children under the age of five attended pre-primary school in 2019-20, thereby likely increasing the load of care on women. Another dimension of empowerment exists in the sociopolitical realm and emerges at the meeting of voice and decision-making. 88.7% of married women are often involved in making decisions about their own health care, making major purchases, and visiting family or relatives. This is very encouraging and lays the foundation for further developments in the field.

New teaching spaces and virtual public spaces include the internet, and the statistics about this are incredible. There is a stark difference in gendered access to the internet, wherein 33% of women report they have ever accessed the internet, compared to 57% of their male counterparts. This concerns the broadcasting of aid programs and the modernization of mobile phones, which are increasingly becoming a global solution, especially since telephone access is still increasing in the nation. It is important to match these expectations with reality; only 54% of women in the economy have a mobile phone in use, compared to 45.9% in 2015-16. Based on this information, we need to restructure existing interventions, increase their scope and impact, and support new forms of cooperation with a different dimension. Such as, the National Rural Livelihoods Program is leveraging the power of mobile phones to deliver important messages and updates to SHG members. However, As per NFHS records, merely half of the women in the country have a mobile phone. Those who cannot reach us also need to be intervened. Similarly, because of more number of spousal violence, early marriage and childbearing, more support requests to be given to the practice of communication power. Skills development programs and entrepreneurship supports can be updated to support the revitalization of women labours while creating a framework for children's workplaces in both formal and informal settings. Particular attention can be paid to those in the field of education who

work on menstrual management and support the transition to higher education. Empowerment is a continuous journey, and although we have come a long way.

Schemes / Programmes for Women Empowerment:

The Ministry of Health and Child Welfare is executing several programmes/projects to enable women by empowering them in various income generating activities throughout the country.

The details are as follows:

One Stop Centre and Universalization of Women Helplines: WCD Ministry is managing two programmes from Nirbhaya Fund i.e. One Stop Centre and Universal of Women Helplines. One Stop Centers (OSCs), commonly termed as Sakhi Centres, provide a series of services such as police assistance, medical assistance, legal services along with legal & emotional counseling, temporary shelters and more to women affected by violence, including domestic violence. Women's Helpline (WHL) calls women pretentious by public and private violence to police, police stations, hospitals, legal services, etc. It provides 24-hour reserve and non-emergency services by connecting you to appropriate institutions such as. Further for sharing evidence about women's health and programs throughout the country, WHL also provides support to women in misery through recovery tools and counseling services. Women can benefit from women's service by calling the emergency number 181.

Swadhar Greh Scheme: The Swadhar Greh Scheme is realized as a Centrally Funded programme for women victims of challenging situations in need of official support for retrieval towards life with pride.

Ujjawala Scheme: The Ujjawala Scheme is Centrally Funded programme for Avoidance of transferring and for Release, Restoration, Recovery and Expulsion of sufferers of transferring for profitable sexual abuse.

Working Women Hostel: This Scheme is executed by the Supervision with the intention to offer innocent and accessible situated accommodation facility for employed women, including day care provision for their children, at urban, semi urban & rural areas where occupational prospect for women occur.

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP): Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) programme was started on 22nd January 2015 with an objective to reduce Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and associated concerns of enablement of girls and women over a lifespan. The aim of the program is to avoid gender selection, eliminate gender bias, ensure the endurance and safeguard of girls and ensure the education and engrossment of girls.

Mahila Shakti Kendra (MSK): The Mahila Shakti Kendra (MSK) programme was accepted in November, 2017 as a centrally funded to enable rural women through collective participation. To enable inter-sectoral meeting of schemes and packages meant for women. The scheme is executed through State Governments and UT Administrations with a charged division ratio of 60:40 between Centre and States excluding North East & Exceptional Sort States where the funding ratio is 90:10. For Union Territories 100 percent central financial support is provided.

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY): Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana scheme (PMMVY) is a Centrally Funded Restricted Cash Transfer

Scheme, for execution throughout the nation since 01.01.2017. Maternity assistance under PMMVY is applicable to all lactating and pregnant women except regular employees of Central Government or State Governments or PSUs or PW & LM who are eligible for similar benefits as per the rules applicable to the first child in the family. Depends on current policy. According to the scheme, Rs 5,000 is given in 3 segments to eligible beneficiaries during pregnancy and lactation, depending on the individual meeting certain nutritional and health requirements. The entitled recipient also obtains the remaining cash inducement as per agreed standards of maternity benefit under Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) after formal delivery so that on an average, a woman receives Rs. 6,000/-.

Mission Shakti: 'Mission Shakti' (Integrated Women Empowerment Programme) - an Sunshade programme in a task approach directed at solidification in involvement for protection, safety and empowerment of women. It pursues to grasp the Government's vision for 'women-oriented development' by addressing concerns disturbing women on a life-cycle range base and by creating them equal associates in nation-building. In addition to strengthening digital tools through coordination between departments/divisions and various levels of government and greater collaboration and funding of Panchayats and additional local government bodies including Jan Sahabha git valast mile chasing of provision transfer.

Conclusion:

The journey of Women Empowerment and Gender Equality started since 1947. Visible results have been achieved through legal reform, human development and grassroots leadership. Women play a considerable role in the society and the nation. The eminence of women in India is drastically improving. The government of India, by passing timely acts and implementing rules and regulations trying to empower the women. The outcome of women employment on family and society is more apparent in circumstances where women retain higher level of service and income. The empowerment of women employees is also greater if they hold top level positions. A more concerted effort is required to close the urban-rural divide and ensure that women in rural areas enjoy the same access to education, employment, healthcare and decision-making as their urban counterparts. The hardest challenge will be to change attitudes, given that many barriers to women empowerment are attributed to patriarchal and patrilineal traditions that are deeply entrenched in many parts of India.

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