

**GOOD MORNING ONE AND ALL**

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# **LECTURE ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

# INTRODUCTION:

- ◉ Women empowerment can be defined as a process leading to enhancing women's control over financial, human and Intellectual resources in society.
- ◉ In any nation, the women empowerment can be measured by extent of their involvement in social, economic and political fields.
- ◉ Women can be made said to be truly empowered only when all the factors such as self-worth of women, their right to control their own lives, their ability to bring about social change, are addressed simultaneously.

## Contd.,

- ◉ Women's empowerment is heavily dependent on many different variables that include geographical location (urban/rural), educational status, social status (caste and class), and age.
- ◉ The gender equality and women's empowerment are so mingled that they are considered one and the same thing.
- ◉ The three outcomes of social, economic and political empowerment are intended to contribute towards the ultimate goal of women's empowerment.

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***Social Empowerment*** means an increase in knowledge, self-awareness and self-confidence of women to make choices in personal and family spheres.

***Economic Empowerment*** is indicated by women's capacity to contribute to and benefit from economic activities –

***Political Empowerment*** relates to equity of representation in political Institutions and enhanced voice as citizens and leaders so that women claim their rights and entitlements;

# POSITION OF WOMEN IN INDIA

- ◉ Scholars believe that in ancient India, the women enjoyed equal status with men in all the fields of life. Woman was considered as mirror image of Devi maa.
- ◉ Rig-Veda verses suggested that women were educated and married at a mature age and were probably free to select their husband.
- ◉ later from 500B.C the status of women began to decline.
- ◉ Although reformatory movements such as Jainism allowed women to be admitted to the religious order, by and large the women in India faced confinement and restrictions.
- ◉ The practice of child marriages is believed to have started from around sixth century.

## Contd

- ◉ The National Movement and various reform movements paved the way for their liberations from the social evils and religious taboos.
- ◉ After Independence of India, the constitution makers and the national leaders recognized the equal social position of women with men.
- ◉ The Constitution of India guarantees equality ,grants special favors to women.

# CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

- ◉ Preamble

The Preamble contains the essence of the Constitution and reflects the ideals and aims of the people. The Preamble starts by saying that “we, the people of India, give to ourselves the Constitution.”

- ◉ The Preamble contains the goal of equality of status and opportunity to all citizens.

- ◉ The framers of the Constitution were conscious of the unequal treatment and discrimination meted out to the fairer sex from time immemorial and therefore included certain general as well as specific provisions for the upliftment of the status of women.
- ◉ This can be found in the article 14 of the constitution. It says that
- ◉ The government shall not deny to any person equality before law or equal protection of the law
- ◉ Justice Bhagwati in **Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India** (AIR 1978 SC 597)4'3 said: "These fundamental rights represent the basic values cherished by the people of this country since the Vedic times and they are calculated to protect the dignity of the individual and create conditions in which every human being can develop his personality to the fullest extent."

- Article 15 prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the ground of sex: and Article 15 (3) empowers the state to make positive discrimination in favour of women and child.
- In **Sarita Samvedi v. Union of India** (1996 (2) SCC 380)46,  
The Supreme Court held invalid a provision of the Railway Board Circular dated 27th December, 1982 which restricted the eligibility of a married daughter of a retiring official for out-of-turn allotment of a house, to situations where such a retiring official had no son or where the daughter was the only person prepared to maintain the parents and the sons were not in a position to do so. This was held to be discriminatory on the ground of sex.

- The Supreme Court in Govt. of **A.P. v. P.B. Vijayakumar**, (1995 (4) SCC 520)4'7 held that reservation to the extent of 30% made in the State Services by the Andhra Pradesh Government for women candidates was valid. The Division Bench of the Supreme Court emphatically declared that the power conferred upon the State by Article 15(3) is wide enough to cover the entire range of State activity including employment under the State.

- ◉ **Article: 16 Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment**
- ◉ The Constitution, provides equal opportunities for women implicitly as they are applicable to all persons irrespective of sex.
- ◉ In case of **C.B. Muthumma v. Union of India** (1979) 4 SCC 260<sup>44</sup>, a writ petition was filed by Ms Muthamma, a senior member of the Indian Foreign Service, complaining that she had been denied promotion to Grade I illegally and unconstitutionally. She pointed out that several rules of the civil service were discriminatory against women. Striking down the rules as violating the principle of equality.

- In **Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan** (AIR 1997 SC 3011)4'9, the Supreme Court, in the absence of legislation in the field of sexual harassment of working women at their place of work, formulated guidelines for their protection. The Court said:

"Gender equality includes protection from sexual harassment and right to work with dignity which is a universally recognised basic human right.

- ◉ **Article 39 (a)** provides that the State to direct its policy towards securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood.
- ◉ **Article 39 (d)** mandates equal pay for equal work for both men and women.
- ◉ **Article 42** directs the state to make provision for ensuring just and human conditions of work and maternity relief.
- ◉ Above all, the constitution regards a fundamental duty on every citizen through **Articles 51-(A) (e)** to renounce the practices derogatory to the dignity of women.
- ◉ **Article: 243 D to 243 T** Reservation of seats in Panchayaths and Municipalities, not less than 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the seats are reserved for women.

## ACCORDING TO THE UNITED NATIONS, WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT MAINLY HAS FIVE COMPONENTS:

- ◉ Generating women's sense of self-worth;
- ◉ Women's right to have and to determine their choices;
- ◉ Women's right to have access to equal opportunities and all kinds of resources;
- ◉ Women's right to have the power to regulate and control their own lives, within and outside the home; and
- ◉ Women's ability to contribute in creating a more just social and economic order.

# contributions for Women Empowerment

1. 1946 CSW establishment
2. 1948 UDHR
3. 1975 International Women`s day
4. 1975 1<sup>st</sup> World conference on women, Mexico city
5. 1976-1985 UN decade for women
6. 1979 CEDAW adopted
7. 1980 2<sup>nd</sup> world conference, copenhagen
8. 1985 3<sup>rd</sup> world conference, Nairobi
9. 1995 4<sup>th</sup> world conference, Beijing, China
10. 2000 23<sup>rd</sup> special session of the GA on women, equality, development and peace.
11. United Nations millennium development summit.

# Meaning of women empowerment

- ◉ **Women Empowerment** refers to increasing and improving the social, economic, political and legal strength of the women, to ensure equal-right to women, and to make them confident enough to claim their rights, such as:
- ◉ freely live their life with a sense of self-worth, respect and dignity,
- ◉ have complete control of their life, both within and outside of their home and workplace,
- ◉ to make their own choices and decisions (right to choose: to say yes or no),
- ◉ have equal rights to participate in social, religious and public activities,
- ◉ have equal social status in the society,
- ◉ have equal rights for social and economic justice,
- ◉ determine financial and economic choices,
- ◉ get equal opportunity for education,
- ◉ get equal employment opportunity without any gender bias,
- ◉ get safe and comfortable working environment.

# Hindrances of women empowerment

- ◉ 1. Gender discrimination
- 2. Lack of Education
- 3. Female Infanticide
- 4. Financial Constraints
- 5. Family Responsibility
- 6. Low Mobility
- 7. Low ability to bear Risk
- 8. Low need for achievement
- 9. Absence of ambition for the achievement
- 10. Social status
- 11. Lack of Self-Confidence
- 12. child marriage (still existing)
- 13. Atrocities on Women etc

## Contd.,

- ◉ The most famous saying said by the Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is  
“To awaken the people, it is the women who must be awakened. Once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves”.
- ◉ In India, to empower the women, first it needs to kill all the demons killing women’s rights and values in the society such as dowry system, illiteracy, sexual harassment, inequality, female infanticide and domestic violence against women, rape, prostitution, illegal trafficking and other issues.
- ◉ Gender discrimination in the nation brings cultural, social, economic and educational differences which push country back. The most effective remedy to kill such devils is making women empowered by ensuring the Right to Equality mentioned in the Constitution of India.

- ◉ The process of empowerment has five dimensions, viz. Cognitive, psychological, economic, political and physical:
- ◉ The cognitive dimension refers to women having an understanding of the conditions and causes of their subordination at the micro and macro levels. It involves making choices that may go against cultural expectations and norms;
- ◉ The psychological dimension includes the belief that women can act at personal and societal levels to improve their individual realities and the society in which they live;
- ◉ The economic component requires that women have access to, and control over, productive resources, thus ensuring some degree of financial autonomy. However she notes that changes in the economic balance of power do not necessarily alter traditional gender roles or norms;
- ◉ The political element entails that women have the capability to analyze, organize and mobilize for social change; and
- ◉ There is a physical element of gaining control over one's body and sexuality and the ability to protect oneself against sexual violence to the empowerment process.

## Ways to achieve women empowerment

- ◉ Changes in women's mobility and social interaction
- ◉ Changes in women's control over Decision making by Providing education, Self employment and Self help group
- ◉ Providing minimum needs like Nutrition, Health, Sanitation, Housing and other than this
- ◉ society should change the mentality towards the word women
- ◉ Encouraging women to develop in their fields they are good at and make a career

# Govt Initiatives towards women Empowerment

- ◉ The Government of India (GoI) has two main bodies to advance gender equality: the Ministry of Women and Child Development and
- ◉ the National Commission for Women, which is an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- ◉ The National Commission for Women has in the last few years introduced several new bills in the parliament from time to time towards eradication of many social evils. Some of the significant enactments are mentioned here.

## Contd.,

- ◉ The Government of India has declared 2001 as Women's Empowerment year. The national policy of empowerment of women has set certain clear-cut goals and objectives.
- ◉ A major thrust for economic empowerment has been through the formation of thrift and credit based self-help groups (SHGs) formed by women – with states such as Andhra Pradesh demonstrating effective ways of making this a mass movement.
- ◉ Increased support for women SHGs in the National Rural Livelihood Mission and successful linkages between SHGs and Micro-Finance institutions such as RMK, NABARD, and SIDBI besides private microfinance institutions have helped in generating additional income, jobs and in creating small enterprises for women.

- ◉ Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme –  
Prevention of gender-based sex selective elimination  
Ensuring survival and protection of the girl child  
Ensuring education and participation of the girl child
- ◉ Women Helpline Scheme
- ◉ UJJAWALA
- ◉ A Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of Trafficking and Rescue, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of victims of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation.
- ◉ Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for the Children of Working Mothers
- ◉ SWADHAR Greh ( A Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances)
- ◉ Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY) – A Conditional Maternity Benefit Scheme
- ◉ Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP)
- ◉ Mahila Police Volunteers
- ◉ Inclusion of Women Pilots into Indian Air Force. Etc.,

## Major problems and challenges to women empowerment in India :

- ◉ There are so many problems and challenges to the empowerment of women in India. The major factors and causes, which are mainly responsible for obstructing the women empowerment in India, may be described as follows –
- ◉ Still a new born baby girl is considered as burden in family in most of the cases and consequently they are treated with **ignorance from childhood**. As a result, there is a tendency and attitude of negligence among the parents towards their girl-child to make them properly educated, developed and independent.

Contd.,

- ◉ The **patriarchal structure** of Indian society is highly responsible for creating impediment to the empowerment of women. Because, the greed of power among men and their reluctance to share power with women are widely prevalent in society.
- ◉ Various **criminal incidents against women** also hamper the women empowerment process in India. Non implementation of various laws to prevent the crimes against women and lack of proper initiatives to execute the governmental or public policies for the welfare and development of women also make hurdles in the way of their empowerment.

CONTD.,

- The problems of **Child-labour, lack of proper education and awareness of rights** among women are highly responsible for the under-development of the women in India.
- Moreover, in the daily life of the women, the **lack of respect** towards them and their **financial incapability** are also responsible for exploitation of women in present Indian society, causing obstruction to women empowerment in India.
- **Child-marriage** leads to girls dropping out of school, which further limit their scope of future development and empowerment. It also results in girls becoming mothers at an age when they are not out of childhood themselves.

## *“Is women empowerment in India a myth or a reality?”*

- ◉ In spite of the various problems and challenges to the process of women empowerment in India, it can't be denied that, in the recent times, the women have been able to occupy various important political and administrative positions in India.
- ◉ They have adorned the positions of President, Prime Minister, Chief Minister, Chief Justice of High Court, Speaker of Lok Sabha, Leader of Opposition, IAS-IPS-IFS Officers in politics and administration of India and have proved their worth.

## Contd.,

- ◉ In fact, if human development is not engendered, it is endangered. However, it can't be denied that, whatever efforts and initiatives are taken for the development and empowerment of women, those may not be meaningful and effective without the autonomy of women.
- ◉ Actually, women empowerment may be realized, only when the women will be able to control their lives, to protect, develop and empower themselves (without any help of others), they will have freedom to take the decisions of their lives and they will become truly self-reliant.

## Suggestive measures for women empowerment in India :

- The following measures should be taken for ensuring women safety and security and protection of women's rights to establish the women empowerment in India. These are –
- **1.** Raising the sense of self-esteem and self-confidence of the women.
- **2.** Providing proper education, developing and increasing the awareness of rights to grow self confidence among the women.
- **3.** Providing suitable information, knowledge, skills to women for their employment.
- **4.** Emphasizing on vocational education to make the women self-help.
- **5.** Developing the ability among the women to determine and achieve the goals and purposes of their lives.

- ◉ **6.** Ensuring women's decision-making over her work and income and growing their economic independence.
- ◉ **7.** Increasing women's participation in all the processes and spheres of life (social, economic, cultural, political, administrative etc.)
- ◉ **8.** More effective enforcement of constitutional and legal safeguards for the protection of the rights of women and elimination of discriminations and all forms of violence and crimes against women and girl child.
- ◉ **9.** Law enforcement agencies should be well trained to react swiftly, neutrally and with sensitivity towards the women and children cases. The legal system and police system should be more strengthened, effective, proactive and responsive to the grievances of women for the elimination of all forms of discrimination and crimes against women.
- ◉ **10.** Formulation and execution of more strong laws and arrangement for exemplary punishment to the criminals immediately to end violence and crimes against women.

- ◉ **11.** Properly and effectively governmental policy-making and policy-implementation for elimination and prevention of gender-inequality, socio-economic inequality and for restoration of women safety and security in society.
- ◉ **12.** The government has to make and strictly implement suitable policy to promote women's participation and decision-making in political, social and economic life of the nation and equal access to health care, quality education, career and vocational guidance, employment, equal remuneration, occupational health, safety, social security and public office etc.
- ◉ **13.** Creating an environment through positive socio-economic policies of the government for the overall development of women to enable them to realize their full potentials.
- ◉ **14.** Main streaming a gender perspective in the development process.
- ◉ **15.** The de jure and de facto enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by women on equal basis with men in all spheres of life – social, economic, political, cultural and civil.

- ◉ **16.** Gender sensitization training and awareness programs in schools, colleges and other professional institutions for bringing about institutional changes to achieve and ensure women empowerment in reality.
- ◉ **17.** Changing the social practices and attitudes towards women and building a positive image of women in the society by recognizing their contribution to social, economic and political spheres of human life.
- ◉ **18.** Developing a supportive family structure which is conducive to the progress and empowerment of women.
- ◉ **19.** Increasing the self-defense power which will enable the women to protect themselves from all types of oppression, exploitations, torture, violence, injustice, inequalities and discrimination.
- ◉ **20.** More effective implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to ensure the education, employment, safety and security and protection of women's rights.

# CONCLUSION

- Thus road map for women empowerment is there but still we have miles to go on this path of empowerment. We hope that in coming years ahead women empowerment will prove its worth. Women are an integral part of a society. They play an important role in determining the destiny of a nation.
- The empowerment of women is a very important task that every one of us should undertake. This is because empowering women is equal to empowering the whole community and generations to come.
- ***“When women move forward the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves”***
- As all we know –  
***“Women is an incarnation of ‘Shakti’ – the Goddess of power. If she is bestowed with education, India’s strength will double.”***  
--- **Narendra Modi (Honourable Prime Minister of India)**

THANK YOU