

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT SCHEMES, CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS AND LEGISLATIONS IN INDIA - A STUDY

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Abstract

Empowerment means giving power, the means, the ability, and the authority. Till today, in India, women who were considered abla can do their work by themselves. In India, women's empowerment has become the buzzword of the day. In the earlier days, there were for women had Kitchens, Kids, and Kitting. Afterward came- Powder, Pappad, and Pickles. Presently there are Electricity, Electronics, Energy, and Engineering. Women in India have gone a long way and are increasingly seen and successful in all spheres of life and have moved from the kitchen to a higher level of professional work. In the words of **Former President of India APJ Abdul Kalam** "Empowering women is a prerequisite for creating a good nation, when women are empowered, society with stability is assured. Empowerment of women is crucial as their thoughts and their value systems lead to the development of a good family, good society and ultimately a good nation." Considering the importance of women in the path of progress and development of our country India, the Indian Government has launched various schemes and programs for the progress and prosperity of women in all areas of life like doctors, lawyers, architects, engineers, scientists, defence pilots, airline pilots, professors, teachers, police officers, police constables, train drivers, taxi drivers, auto-rickshaw drivers, traffic policewomen, bus conductors, directors, managers, I.A.S. Officers, I.P.S. Officers and in other Indian Administrative Services, etc. Many women's development programs are initiated by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, the Government of India, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, and the Ministry of Human Development, along with Constitutional Provisions and various legislations in favour of women, for women empowerment.

Keywords: Empowerment, Women Empowerment, Government Schemes, Constitutional provisions, Legislations, Development.

INTRODUCTION

Gender discrimination and the domination of males in Indian society have given rise to the need for women's empowerment in India. Women empowerment means giving power or authority to women, to make independent decisions and move ahead in life for the development and prosperity of society, and the country's progress. Women empowerment means removing disparities between men and women, providing them equal opportunities for their growth and social development and removing gender discrimination. Article 15(3) of the Constitution of India states that the welfare of women and children can be stated as "Nothing in this article shall prevent the state from making any special provision for women and children". Women and children are the most disadvantaged sections of society. Various women empowerment schemes have been launched by the Government of India for empowering women. There are various provisions in the Constitution of India and laws for women's empowerment.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- (1) To highlight the concepts of empowerment and women empowerment.
- (2) To review the literature on women empowerment.
- (3) To know the different Government of India schemes, Constitutional provisions, and legislations for women empowerment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is descriptive in nature, and based on secondary data sourced from books, journals, websites, etc.

CONCEPT OF EMPOWERMENT AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment means to give power to someone to make their own independent decisions in life. Women empowerment means giving power and authority to women to make their own decisions and move forward in life. In India, women for a long time were subjected to suppression, discrimination, gender bias, and unequal opportunities and they were not allowed to step out of the house in certain communities and they were not given the chance to educate themselves and progress and prosper in life. They were the backward and deprived sections of the community. So, for India to take the path of development and for the progress, security, and prosperity of women, the Government of India has launched various schemes, through the Ministry of Women and Child Development, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, and the Ministry of Human Development.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Lakshmi M.J. (2021) in her research paper titled, 'Women Empowerment in India: A Historical Evolution' has divided the evolution of women empowerment in India into three broad periods, Ancient and Medieval India, Colonial India, and Independent India. The study is descriptive based on secondary sources from books, journals, etc.

Hoque A. (2020), in his research paper titled, 'Women Empowerment in India: Current Issues, Challenges, and Future Directions' has attempted to analyze the current issues and women's problems and ways and means to attain women empowerment. It is a descriptive study and secondary data is used.

Loya J. (2021) in her research paper titled, 'Women Empowerment in India: An Analysis' has attempted to examine in India women empowerment. It has examined the different Government Schemes and their goals/activities for the upliftment of women's status. The area of study is in India Secondary data has been used and a non-participant observation method has been used.

Pratibha L. (2017), in her research paper titled, 'A Study on Issues and Challenges of Women Empowerment in India' has done a descriptive and analytical study. Secondary data has been used. Women's empowerment in India has been analyzed. Crimes against women, in India, the need for women empowerment schemes, and challenges are discussed.

Mandal B. (2018) in her research paper titled 'A Study on Women Empowerment in 21st Century' has studied women's education in pre-colonial, colonial, and modern India, the forms of women's empowerment, violence against women, women's rights, legal protection of women in Indian Constitution, the role of NGO in women empowerment, the Government Schemes and programs for women empowerment, etc. Secondary data has been used and it is a qualitative study.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA SCHEMES FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

(1) The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme was launched in 2015, with the objectives of preventing gender-based sex selective elimination, ensuring revival and protection of the girl child, and ensuring education and participation of the girl child. This social campaign is aimed at the removal of female feticide. On January 22, 2015, the 'Save the Girl Child' movement was initiated.

(2) The Women Helpline Scheme was launched in 2016 to provide toll-free 24-hour telecom service to women affected by violence, to facilitate crisis and non-crisis intervention through referral to the appropriate agencies such as police/hospitals/ambulance services / District Legal Service Authority (DLSA) / Protection Officer (PO) / OSC, support services, government schemes and programs available to the women affected through violence. In such a situation the woman can avail toll-free 24*7 telecom service within the local area in which she resides or is employed.

(3) Working Women Hostel schemes were launched in 1972-73 to promote the availability of safe and conveniently located accommodation for working women and to provide accommodation to children of working women. This scheme is available up to the age of 18 years for girls and up to the age of 5 years for boys.

(4) Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP) was launched in 1986-87 to provide skills that give employability to women and to benefit women in the age group of 16 and above in the country.

(5) **The NIRBHAYA** scheme was launched in 2012 to facilitate safety and security for women at various levels, to ensure strict privacy and confidentiality of women's identity and information, and to provide real-time intervention as far as possible.

(6) In 2016, **Mahila E-Haat** was initiated to help entrepreneurship opportunities online for women and to educate women on different aspects of online selling and assist them in starting their ventures.

(7) **Mahila Police Volunteer (MPVs)** was launched in 2016 with the objective that an MPV will serve as a public-policy interface to fight crime against women. MPVs have to report violence cases against women such as domestic violence, child marriage, dowry harassment, and violence faced by women in public spaces.

(8) In 2016 **Nari Shakti Puraskar** was initiated to strengthen the place of women in society and to help institutions that work towards the progress and development of women in society.

(9) In 2017 **Mahila Shakti Kendras (MSK)** was initiated to create a women's environment for accessibility to healthcare, quality education, guidance, employment, etc., and to cater to these opportunities at the block and district levels in the country.

(10) **SWADHAR Greh** was launched in 2018 to cater to the primary need for shelter, food, clothing, medical treatment, and care for women in distress and who lack social and economic support, to help them recover the emotional strength of women which gets affected by account of facing unfortunate situations, to give them legal help and guidance. This scheme also helps to take measures for their readjustment in family/society, to rehabilitate them economically and emotionally, to act as a support system that understands and meets different women's requirements in distress, and to empower them to start their lives afresh with dignity and conviction.

(11) **The Ujjawala Scheme** was launched in 2016 to prevent women and children trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation, to facilitate the rescue of victims from the place of their exploitation, and to keep the victims in safe custody. This scheme also gives rehabilitation services that have immediate and long-term benefits to the victims by giving basic amenities such as shelter, food, clothing, medical treatment, counselling, legal help and guidance, and vocational training.

(12) **Nari Shakti Puraskars** are national-level awards that recognize the efforts made by women and institutions that make a difference in women's lives, especially vulnerable and marginalized women. Every year on March 8- International Women's Day the awards are presented by the President of India at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi.

(13) Adolescence is an important phase in a woman's life, a stage between childhood and womanhood and it is the most eventful for mental, psychological, and emotional well-being. The **Adolescent Girls (AG) Scheme** is implemented by the Ministry of Women and Child Development under Umbrella Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and primarily aims at breaking the inter-generational life cycle of nutritional and gender disadvantage and providing a supportive environment for self-development. The key objective of the scheme is to facilitate, educate, and empower AGs to enable them to become self-reliant and aware citizens. The two major components under the scheme are the Nutrition component and the Non-Nutrition component.

(14) **The Child Protection Services Scheme (CPS)** is a centrally sponsored scheme implemented by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, under which support is provided to States and UTs for giving services to children in need and difficult circumstances. The Child Care Institutions (CCIs) established under the CPS support inter-alia age-appropriate education, access to vocational training, recreation, health care, counselling, etc., and equally cover rural and urban children.

(15) **The Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY)** is a maternity benefit program run by the Government of India. In 2010 it was launched and executed by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD). The scheme is a conditional cash transfer for pregnant and lactating mothers of 19 years of age or above for the first two live births. It provides partial wage compensation to women for wage loss during childbirth and child care and aims to promote conditions for safe delivery, good nutrition, and feeding practices. All organized sector employees are not included in the scheme since they are entitled to paid maternity leave.

(16) **The Women Self Help Group (SHG) Scheme** is a government scheme that gives financial help to women from poor families. At the local level, women SHGs are formed and the scheme aims to empower women in India by assisting them to earn a livelihood. In various parts of India, Women's SHGs are also called Mahila Mandals.

(17) The Women Entrepreneurship Fund Scheme was launched in 2020 by the Government of India for women entrepreneurs who want to initiate a business venture but do not have the required money to start a business. Women who want to benefit from this scheme, have to apply through the Women Start-up Hub Portal.

(18) The Sukanya Samruddhi Scheme was launched by the Government in 2015, to give financial help to the girl child, to pursue her education and fulfill her dreams. This scheme can be availed by women who have a girl child, till the time, when their girl child turns 21 years old. Application for this scheme should be done through the Women and Child Development (WCD) Departments of their respective State Governments.

(19) The Mahila Shakti Kendra Scheme was launched in March 2017, with an outlay of Rs.500/- crores, to provide women empowerment centers in all districts of the country. These centers will provide one-stop services for women which include information and access to government schemes and programs, health and nutrition services, legal aid, financial inclusion services, skill development training, etc.

Besides, the above-mentioned Government Schemes for Women Empowerment, there are various other schemes for women empowerment.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS FOR WOMEN

The Constitution of India contains the following rights/provisions for women.

- Legal Equality - Article 14
- No discrimination against any Indian citizen on the grounds of sex, race, caste, creed, or religion - Article 15(1)
- Special provisions for women and children by the State - Article 15(3)
- Equality of opportunity in matters relating to employment - Article 16(2)
- Prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labor - Article 23(1)
- Securing for men and women equal right to an adequate means of livelihood - Article 39(a)
- Equal pay for equal work for both Indian Men and women - Article 39(d)
- Ensuring that the health and strength of women workers are not abused and that they are not forced by economic need to enter into professions not suitable for women's strength - Article 39e
- Provision for securing just and humane work conditions and maternity relief - Article 42
- Duty of every Indian citizen to renounce practices derogatory to women's dignity - Article 51-Ae
- One-third reservation of seats for women in panchayats by direct election - article 243-D (3)
- One-third reservation of Chairpersons in panchayats for women - Article 243-D (4)
- One-third reservation of seats by direct election in the municipality for women - Article 243-T (3)
- The offices of chairperson in the municipalities shall be reserved for women in a manner provided by the state legislature - Article 243-T (4)
- Right to Property to Women - Article 300(a)

LEGISLATIONS FOR WOMEN

Different rights and protection for women are given in the following laws.

- Abolition of Sati Act, 1829
- Special Marriage Act, 1954
- Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
- Hindu Succession Act, 1956
- Maternity Benefits Act, 1961
- Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971
- Domestic Violence Act, 2005
- Sexual Harassment Bill, 2010
- Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956
- Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act 1986
- Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act 1987
- Equal Remuneration Act 1976
- Indian Penal Code 1960
- Code of Criminal Procedure 1873
- Family Courts Act 1984
- Dissolution of Muslim Marriage Act 1939

- Indian Christian Marriage Act, 1872
- Hindu Marriage Act 1955
- Hindu Succession Act 1956
- Legal Services Authorities Act 1987
- Minimum Wages Act 1948
- Mines Act 1952
- Factories Act 1948
- Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1976
- Plantation Labour Act 1951
- Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act 1936
- Employees State Insurance Act 1948
- Legal Practitioners (Women) Act 1923
- Special Marriage Act 1954
- Foreign Marriage Act 1969
- Indian Evidence Act 1872
- National Commission for Women Act 1990
- Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act 1956
- Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, Redressal Act 2013).

CONCLUSION

Empowerment helps women to achieve equality with men or at least reduce considerably the gap. Women empowerment is a process nourished by development policies and programs that enables women to get sufficient strength to challenge their submissive, suppressed, deprived social condition or status. Women's empowerment socio-economically, through an increased awareness about their rights and duties and accessibility to resources is a decisive step, towards much more security for women. On 20th March 2001, the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women was adopted by the Government of India to bring about the advancement, development, and empowerment of women to remove all types of discrimination against women and to have their active participation in all spheres of life and activities. Women empowerment is giving power to women, making women better off, and enabling a higher degree of self-confidence, security, and sense of independence in women. The Government of India has launched various schemes and programs for women's empowerment. Constitutional provisions/rights are given for women's safety and protection and women's empowerment. Various legislation has been passed to empower women.

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