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# WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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**ABSTRACT**
*United Nations Development Programme focused on gender equality and women empowerment not only as human rights, but also because there a pathway to achieving the millennium development goals and sustainable development. Women empowerment is a debatable subject. At earlier time they were getting equal status with men. But they had faced some difficulties during post vedic and epic ages. many a time they were treated as slave. From early twenty century ,their statues have been changed slowly and gradually. Women's empowerment has been an issue of immense discussions and contemplation over the last few decades worldwide. However, it has been observed that most of the policies and programs view empowerment in the economic sense only working in the belief that economic self reliance empowers women ignoring other variables like health, education, literacy etc. Introduction in the history of human development, woman has been as important as a man. In fact, the status, employment and work performed by women in society is the indicator of a nations overall progress. without the participation of women in national activities, the social, economic or political progress of country will be stagnated. Women constitute half of the humanity, even contributing two-thirds of world's work hours. She earns only one-third of the total income and owns less than one-tenth of the world's resources. This shows that the economic status of women is in pathetic condition and this is more so in a country like India." Women constitute nearly 50 percent of population, perform two-thirds of the work and produce 50 percent of food commodities consumed by the country. They earn one third of remuneration and own 10 percent of the property or wealth of the country.*
**KEY WORDS:** *Women Empowerment, Characteristics , Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao, Amendment,*

## INTRODUCTION

Women empowerment can be defined as promoting women's sense of self worth, their ability to determine their own choices, and their right to influence social change for themselves and others. It is closely aligned with female empowerment- a fundamental human right that's also key to achieving a more peaceful, prosperous world. Women's empowerment and promoting women's rights have emerged as a part of a major global movement and are continuing to break new ground in recent years. Women empowerment is about creating high level corporate leadership for gender equality, treat all people fairly at work, respecting and supporting non-discrimination and human rights .Ensure the heath, wellbeing and safety of all workers, whether male or female .Promote education, training and professional development for women .Empowerment women is essential to the health and social development of families ,communities and countries. When women are living safe, fulfilled and productive lives, they can reach their full potential. women constitute almost 50% of the world's population but India has shown misappropriate sex ratio whereby females population has been comparatively lower than males .As far as their social status is concerned, they are not treated as equal to men in all the places. In western societies the women have got equal right hand status with men in all walks of life. But gender disabilities and discriminations are found in India even today.

### Concept of Women Empowerment

Empowerment is a multi-faceted, multidimensional and multi-layered concept. Women empowerment is a process in which women gain greater share of control over resources-material, human and intellectual like knowledge, information ,idea and financial resources like money and access to money and control over decision making in the home, community, society and nation ,and to gain „power". According to the Country Report of Government of India, "Empowerment means moving from a position of enforced powerlessness to one of power".

### What is Women Empowerment?

Women empowerment in simple words can be understood as giving power to women to decide for their own lives or inculcating such abilities in them so that they could be able to find their rightful place in the society.

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.

Thus, women empowerment is nothing but recognition of women's basic human rights and creating an environment where they are treated as equals to men.

### Definitions

The nature of empowerment renders it difficult to define. On the one hand, it is often referred to as a goal for many development programmes/projects. On the other hand, it can

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also be conceived as a process that people undergo, which eventually leads to changes.

**Nelly Stromquist**, defines empowerment as "a process to change the distribution of power both in interpersonal relations and in institutions throughout society".

**Lucy Lazo** describes as "a process of acquiring, providing, bestowing the resources and the means or enabling the access to a control over such means and resources".

Given the above, the term is therefore more relevant to the marginalized groups the poor, the illiterates, the indigenous communities - and of course, cutting across these categories, the women.

**Paz's** defined empowerment as "the ability to direct and control one's own life".

**Ms. Aksornkool,** "it is a process in which women gain control over their own lives by knowing and claiming their rights at all levels of society at the international, local, and household levels. Self-empowerment means that women gain autonomy, are able to set their own agenda and are fully involved in the economic, political and social decision-making process".

**Batliwala** opined that "Empowerment is not merely a change of mind-set… but a visible demonstration of that change which the world is forced to acknowledge; respond to and ccommodate as best it can".

The **Oxford American Dictionary** defines "empowerment" as "to make (someone) stronger and more confident, especially in controlling their life and claiming their rights." When we talk about women's empowerment, we talk about women taking more of a leadership role. Whereas until very recently, women were subordinates.

**According to Business Dictionary**, empowerment means, "A management practice of sharing information, rewards, and power with employees so that they can take initiative and make decisions to solve problems and improve service and performance. Empowerment is based on the idea that giving employees skills, resources, authority, opportunity, motivation, as well holding them responsible and accountable for outcomes of their actions, will contribute to their competence and satisfaction".

**According to Pillai**, "empowerment is an active, multi dimensional process which enables women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life. Power is not a commodity to be transacted; nor can it be given away as aims".

**Women Empowerment in India**

The concept of empowerment flows from the power. It is a vesting where it does not exist or exist inadequately. Empowerment of women would mean equipping women to be economically independent, self reliant, have positive esteem to enable them to face any difficult situation and they should be able to participate in development activities. The empowered women should be able to participate in the process of decision making. In India, the ministry of human resource development (MHRD-1985) and the National commission for women(NCW) have been worked to safeguard the right and legal entitlement of women. The 73RD AND 74TH Amendments (1993) to the constitution of India have provided some special powers to women that for reservation of seats(33%),whereas the report HRD as March 2002,shows that the legislatures with the highest percentage of women are sweeden 42.7,Denmark 38%, Find Land 36% and Iceland 34.9%.In India "The Panchayati Raj" is the part of the effort to empower women at least at the village level.

The government of India has ratified various international conventions of human rights instruments committing to secure equal rights to women. These are CEDAW (1993),the Mexico Plan Action( 1975),the Nairobi Foe ward Looking Strategies (1985), Beijing Declaration as well as the platform for action (1995) and other such instruments. The year of 2001 was observed as the year of women's during the year ,a landmark document has been adopted,; the National policy for the empowerment of women. For the beneficiaries of the women the government has been adopted different schemes and programs i.e. the National Credit Fund for Women (1993), food and nutrition Board (FNB),Information and Mass Education(IMF)etc.

**Characteristics of Empowered Women**

1. Empowered women define their attitude, values and behaviours in relation to their own real interest. They have autonomy because they claim their freedom from existing male hierarchies, whether they live in traditional societies or modern industrial societies.
2. Empowered women maintain equal mindedness. They act out roles that challenge male dominance. They respond as equals and co-operate to work towards the common good.
3. Empowered women use their talent to live fulfilling lives. They not only survive the harshness of their own subjugation but also transcend their subjugation.
4. Empowered women maintain their strength on the face of pressures from the religion and work and contribute towards the empowerment of all women.
5. Empowered women define their values and formulate their beliefs themselves, they do not derive their sense of being from male authorities nor do they live vicariously through men.

**Barriers of Women Empowerment:** The main obstacles that go against the way of women empowerment in India may be summed up as follows:

1. Gender discrimination.
2. Lack of proper educational programme.
3. Female infanticide.
4. Atrocities on women.
5. Child marriage and dowry system.
6. Financial constraints.
7. Patriarchal order and the subordinate status of women.
8. Lack of health care and safety.
9. Professional inequality, particularly workplace harassment.
10. Inequality in sharing the burden of house - hold work.

**Government Schemes for Women Empowerment in India**

To enable the status of women ,the government and various NGOS and organization plays an important role to empower to women. The central and various State Government initiatives the many schemes for the upliftment of women empowerment such as.

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**1.Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao** Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao scheme was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 22ND ,January 2015 at Panipat, Haryana. Beti Bachao ,Beti Padhao acknowledges the declining of child sex ratio and issues which is related to women empowerment. The main motives of Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao is which initiated by jointly the Ministry of women and Child Development, the Ministry of Health of Human Resources Development of India, that is focusing on spreading awareness and increase the efficiency of welfare activities for girls in the Country. The campaign aims to provide that the girls are born, bring up and educated them without any discrimination and to build up empowered citizens of this country. The campaign is jointly made by National State, District and community level to bringing together with different stakeholders for accelerated impact.

**2. Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana (SSY)** Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana (ssy) is a small deposit saving scheme of the girl child .It was launched by Prime Minister Narenra Modi on 22nd January 2015 in panipat, Haryana this scheme is a part of the "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao" campaign. The bank accounts can be opened at any authorized commercial banks or any India Post Office, the rate of interest was set at 9.1% but later it was revised to 9.2% in late March 2015 for FY2015-16 and rate of interest have been revised for 2016-17 TO 8,6% 28.Currently it provides 8.1 % and income-tax benefit under section 80(c) of the Income Tax Act 1961.The account can be opened any time after the birth or till she turns 10years, with a minimum deposit amount of Rs. 250 and a maximum of RS 1.5 Lakh can be deposited in a year. The bank account will remain effective for 21 years from the date of its opening or till the marriage of the girl after she turns 18 years.

**3. Mahila-E-Haat** The government of India launched MahilaE-Haat in a 2016, under the schemes of women and child development Mahila-E-Haat is an initiative aimed to addressing the needs and desires of women enterpreneurs.It is an online e-commerce site for women where participants can view their goods. As part of the "Digital India" and "Stand Up India" initiatives, it is an initiative for women in the country. This scheme promote the online phase innovation to help and understand the women in business activities, self-help groups, NGOs and their goods and services. Its open to all India women at the age of 18 years and above and provides a simple sign-in preparation and assisted installment mode. Everything can be dealt with on versatility with need for any other arbitration. It has claimed admission of 1.7 million guests since its dispatch and highlights over 2000 items and administrations from over 18 categories across 24 states.

**4. Mahila Shakti Kendra** The Government of India has approved Mahila Shakti Kendra scheme for the period of 2017-18 up to 2019-20 to empower the rural women through community participation. The government encourages the Mahila Shakti Kendra scheme for improvement in business activities, efficiency, wellbeing and nutrition for women. It will work through community mobilization and harmonized volunteers within 115 people in each district. This scheme will provide for rural to get privileges through preparation and capacity building. It works at local, regional, state and national levels.

**5. Working Women Hostel** The government of India has initiated "working women hostel schemes" to promote the availability of reliable and conveniently accommodation for the working women who are living far way their home and doing professional commitments. Under this scheme, the government provides a grant in aid for the construction of new or expansion of existing buildings to advance hostel facilities in cities, towns and also in rural areas .Working women, who may be single, separated, divorced, windowed and married but whose husband or family does not reside in the same city/place. Particular preference may be given to women from backward sections of the society. Hostel facilities will be provided to those women who are entitled to gross income does not exceed Rs.50000/- per month in metropolitan cities, or Rs 35000/- per month ,in any other place.

**6. Support to Training and Employment Programme (STEP)** The support to Training and employment Programme for women (STEP) was launched by Central Scheme in 1986-87.The aims of the STEP programme were to make a great impact on women by upgrading skills for self and wage employment. The activities are envisaged to mobilizing women in improving their skills, arranging for productive assets, creating backward and forward linkage, access to wage employment, providing for support services, awareness generation, sensitization of project functionaries, gender sensitization ,nutrition education, etc. The STEP pilot was established to supply qualifications for women so that they could take productive employment. It also gives the right qualifications and prepares women to do business. Open to every woman over 16 years of age, it is run directly through an NGO given to an institution/organization.

## CONCLUSION

The concept of women empowerment has become one of the important concerns in the 21St century, not only at national level but also at the international level. It plays a significant role which leads to the positive change and transformation of the existing society. The Central and many state governments have done various program and schemes to enable for women empowerment in India. They ensuring gender equality and women participation in every field, but the Government initiatives alone would not be sufficient to achieve this goal. The individuals and society must take initiatives to create a space in the equality and against gender discrimination. Women have the full rights and opportunities of self – dependent and to participate in politics and decision making process.

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