

INTERNATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH CONFERENCE WOMEN IN 21ST CENTURY (CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES)

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Abstract

In 21st century the transformation of social fabric of the Indian society in terms of increased educational status of women and varied aspiration for letters living necessitated a change in the life style of Indian women. Women constitute the family which leads to society and nation social and economic development of women is necessary for overall economic development of any society or a country. Due to change in environment now people are more comfortable to accept leading role of women in our society, though there are some exceptions. She has completed with man and successfully stood up with him in every walk of life and business. These women leaders are assertive, persuasive and willing to take risks. They managed to survive and succeed in this cut throat competition with their hard work, diligence and perseverance. This paper attempts to analyze women in 21st century challenges and opportunities describes about women entrepreneurs and women and violence and women empowerment. Today the empowerment of women has become one of the most important concerns of 21st century. But practically women empowerment is still an illusion of reality. This presentation is based on secondary sources.

Key words: women empowerment, challenges, violence against women.

Introduction

Women empowerment is not a new word in today's gender literature. Women are becoming more and more self-dependent by accessing to all opportunities which women were denied in the past. Women have possessed the power to utilize power in every field. The role of women is rooted into eternity. A woman goes under many transitions. It takes time for women to unfold her into self-established person. There are two types of struggling women in the soci community. One who has highly established and the other in a struggling society to confine herself into proper designation. Gone are the days when men overruled women in each sphere and gone are the days when women were denied of freedom and opportunities now women were setting up enterprises and taking up income generated activities maintaining family.

Women empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender or economic strength of individuals and communities of women. Women empowerment in India is heavily dependent on many different variables that include geographical location educational status social status and age. Policies on women's empowerment exist at the national, state and local levels in many sectors including health, education, economic opportunities, gender based violence and political participation. Empowerment of women is essentially the process of upliftment of economic, social and political.

"It is impossible to think about the welfare
Of the world unless the condition of women
Is improved. It is impossible for a bird to
Fly on only one wing"

-swami Vivekananda

Women are not born, but made, what better than India to exemplify this statement by Simone de beavoir. Women are an integral part of human society but for a woman, there couldn't have been any man she is the mother of mankind. Despite holding such an important and questionable position role of women has been defined by men over millennia our Vedas tells us that women held an important place in ancient culture. No ritual was ever complete without the presence of a woman by her man's side. All our gods are worshipped alongside their heavenly consorts. There is no dichotomy there. No one questions this the staunchest of male chauvinist reverentially bows his head to goddess. it is not considered a sign of weakness to bow to female deities.

Women at home and society in general are a different cup of tea .they are treated as second class citizens. How did this battle begin i.e. 'battle of sexes' begin? How did the men win the winning hand? I think that economics had a role to play in the scheme of things. When men took on the role of bread earner, and women took the natural role of a nurturer, these roles suited their intended role by the creator. Man was physically strong while the woman was inherently strong. Over a period of time the man started believing that his role

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was superior to that of the woman as without him there would be no food at the table. Woman's role was taken as for granted. The physically feeble woman was led to believe this lie for centuries. Someone as respected as Socrates said that the only reason he put up with his wife Xanthippe was that she bore him sons. He said it was like putting up with the noise of geese because they produce eggs and chicks. What an analogy from the most reverend philosopher of all ages! Closer home Manu said in 200 b.c.

"By a young girl, by a young woman, or even by an aged one, nothing must be done independently even in her own house." "In childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead to her sons; a woman must never be independent."

It is only when things went way beyond the level of tolerance that the women raised their voices. The first such voice was heard loud and clear in the early 19th century. When the term 'women suffragists' became a household word in the west. The suffragists had two points of views. One view was that women's natural place was at home and the voting rights will enable them to help formulate laws that affect life at home. The other view was that men and women should be equal in every way and there was no such thing as a 'natural' role for a woman. The 'suffrage' movement can be seen as the first wave of the 'feminist' movement that caught wide spread imagination in 1960's-1980's. This second wave dealt with the inequalities of laws as well as perceived cultural inequalities. Although the term 'feminist' was coined in 1880, its usage as a movement gained ground in 1960's onwards.

Today at the dawn of the 21st century the women across the world are placed at a position of advantage. They are paying heed to their inner voice they are no longer interested in hollow jargon and jingoism.

21st century is the century for change. The planet earth is ready for 'the shift of the ages'. In this new age, love and compassion will rule the roost, and the woman with her natural attributes of compassion will sow the seeds of global transformation. These changes have already begun, and soon they will gain an unprecedented momentum. The time is ripe for women of all races, castes, class and nationalities to come together to be the harbinger of this change when I say 'women', I mean the 'femine' in men and women alike. Indian sculptures have always spoken about 'andhnareesh war' the masculine-feminine deity. The time has come to invoke that masculine-feminine balance in all of us. The modern career woman, equipped with a rich education and a

powerful drive, boasts a different image than her female predecessors. The lives of a woman has changed drastically over the past hundred years, and will continue to evolve for years to come with their access to high degrees of education, women are able to venture into new fields and excel in new careers and by doing so are changing the role they play in society.

Conceptual frame work of women empowerment

One has to view that empowerment is taking place on different levels. We can relate it on basis of three criteria- on individual, group and societal/community level and interaction between them. Globalization of the goal of women's equality, the gender impact of which has not been systematically evaluated fully. From micro level there is need for reforming policies for access to employment and quality of employment. Benefits of growing global economy has been unevenly distributed leading to wider economic disparities the feminization of poverty increased gender inequality through 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 entrepreneurship:

Even as India countries its rapid economic growth women in the country struggle against discrimination and inequality. Women in India 27% of women receive secondary education 12.2% parliament's seats held by women 80% women need permission to visit a health center.

Role of women social entrepreneurs:

A British council study on the social enterprise landscape in India revealed that in comparison to male-led social enterprises tends to focus on improving the lives of women and on education and literacy. They were also more likely than male-led social enterprises to address the needs of children and persons with disabilities. Many women led social enterprises work on empowering women and solving women specific issues.

Women entrepreneurs in India:

In India, a large percentage of women enterprises are micro-enterprises that women undertake as a forced economic activity. These micro enterprises can be classified into farm and off-farm enterprises. They rarely achieve, scale and serve only to barely sustain the women entrepreneurs and their families.

In rural India traditionally a lot of women primary producers can be classified as entrepreneurs. In many

situations, the solutions are available and the main hindrance is the entrepreneur's lack of knowledge and inability to access the solution. For instance the standup India scheme launched by the government of India, aims to facilitate bank loans of rs/- 10 lakhs- rs/-1 core to at least one SC or ST and one women beneficiary per branch for setting up a green field enterprise in trading, services or manufacturing sector.

Challenges:

Across the world the main eleterrent to women entrepreneurship is the lack of confidence and skills and difficulty in accessing entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurial mindset: many women prefer to get into salaries, jobs, preferring the steady working hours, income and health insurance and paid leaves.

Difficulty accessing resources:women have difficulty accessing funds and other resources due to several reasons: laws regulating the private sphere specifically regarding marriage; inheritance and land can hinder women's access to assets that can be used as collateral to secure a loan.

Lack of practical experience: apart from a few high profile female founders, women do not see too many entrepreneurs in their lives that they can look up to and learn from women entrepreneurs often know from experience how challenging it is to start up and establish an enterprise.

Mentoring & network: a mentor can play a key role in helping a women to make the decision to start up. However, unless women accidentally come across a mentor in the course of their work, there are very few structured mentorship programs available to help them find a mentor who will guide them on their entrepreneurial journey.

Women and violence: women's right to live free from violence is upheld by international agreements such as the convention on the ellmination of all forms of discrimination against women (EDAW) especially through general recommendation 12 and 19, and the 1993 UN declaration on the elimination of violence against women.

Facts and figures ending violence against women various forms of violence

It is estimated that 35% of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or sexual violence by a non-partner at some point in their lives. However, some national studies show that up to 70% of women have experienced physically or sexually violence from an intimate partner in their life time.

Women who have been physically or sexually abused by their partners are more than twice as likely to have an abortion, almost twice as likely to experience depression and in some region 15 times more likely to acquire HIV as compared to women who have not experienced partner violence.

It is estimated that of all women who were the victims of homicide globally in 2012 almost half were killed by intimate partners or family members, compared to less than six percent of men killed in the same year.

The united nation defines violence against women as:

"Any act of gender-based violence

That results in or is likely to result

In, physical, sexual or mental harm

Or suffering to women including

Threats of such acts coercion or

Arbitrary deprivation of liberty.

Whatever occurring in public or in private life."

Scope of the problem: population-level surveys based on reports from victims provide the most accurate estimates of the prevalence of intimate partner violence and sexual violence. A 2013 analysis said about women that 1 in 3 or 35% of women have experienced physical and or sexual violence by an intimate partner non-partner sexual violence.

Impact on children: children who grow up in families where there is violence may suffer a range of behavioural and emotional disturbances these can also be associated with perpetrating or experiencing violence later in life.

Prevention and response: there are growing number of well-designed studies looking at the effectiveness of prevention and response programs. More resources are needed to strengthenedthe prevention of and response to intimate partner and sexual violence, including primary prevention stopping it from happening in 1stplace.

Conclusion: women constitute almost half of the total population in India but they are not enjoying their freedom, equalities, on par with their male counterparts. Women empowerment has no doubts received a considerable attention of the government in post-independent India. Still a lot more have to be done.

Therefore women in 21stcentury have

Freedom of speech

Freedom from enslavement

Freedom from torture

Freedom to vote

Freedom of religion

Freedom of choice
Freedom from fear

The following suggestions are being made for the welfare of women.

- Equal job opportunity.
- Compulsory job reservation for women in both private and government institutions.
- Government schemes should be favorable for female child.
- A common civil code protecting the interests of women.
- Free education and medical facilities should be given for all women.
- Women should be economically independent.
- Prevention and protection schemes for violence on women by government and voluntary agencies.
- Preparing women for competition exams especially IAS, IPS without any sort of discrimination.
- Freedom to take care of herself.

Let me conclude this presentation with the wonderful quotation.

You can feel her **INNOCENCE** in the form of a **daughter**

You can feel her **CARE** in the form of a **sister**

You can feel her **WARMTH** in the form of a **friend**

You can feel her **PASSION** in the form of a **beloved**

You can feel her **DEDICATION** in the form of a **wife**

You can feel her **DIVINITY** in the form of a **mother**

You can feel her **BLESSING** in the form of a **grandmother**

Yet she is so **TOUGH** too

Her heart is so **TENDER**..... So **NAUGHTY**...so **CHARMING**.... So **SHARING**... so melodious...She is a **WOMAN**.....

And she is **LIFE!!!!**

"To all the **WONDERFUL WOMEN.**"