Women Empowerment: A Weapon to Sustainable Development of India

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Structured Abstract

Purpose: In this paper, it has been endeavoured to resolve the social rank of women in India and display the issues and challenges confronted by women empowerment.

Design/Methodology/ Approach: This paper is basically conceptual and descriptive in nature. Secondary data published in various secondary sources are used in this study.

Findings: This paper expresses that in spite of government schemes, legislations and other various attempts, women of India have been remained till behind in status than that of men in the society.

Research Limitations: This study is mainly based on secondary data but the current data are hardly available. The primary data may be used which can enhance the quality of the study.

Practical Implication: Government launches various schemes, legislations at intervals and NGOs are also coming to exercise women empowerment for sustainable development of India. A better framework can be made by considering the result of this study.

Originality/Value: A number of studies have been conducted on women empowerment. In addition to these, this study may offer more information in this regard.

Key words: Women, Empowerment, Injustice, Inequality, Gender Discrimination.

Paper Type: Research Paper

Introduction

Women are regarded as the agents of different Goddess like Maa Durga for power, Maa Laksmi for wealth, Maa Saraswati for wisdom and so on whom we all worship with great devotion. Therefore, women should also get at least minimum respect from every corner if not adoration. But the words 'Agent and Part of Goddess' are only in theory, in the material world, the case is otherwise (Shettar, 2015). It is universally acknowledged that a

considerable part of women in India have been enduring innumerable humiliation day after day in their daily life in different ways in the patriarchal society of India from the time immemorial like physical and mental torture at home with disagreeable sneering comments, evil proposals with vulgar language from some mischievous rogues, different sexual oppression by some evil-designed lascivious loafers outside which goes too far like rape, murder, suicide considering no age discrimination i.e. from child to old aged women are not excluded who cannot escape from their cruel clutch of the rogues and compelled to surrender to their brutal, irresistible sexual lust and so on. Then, there exists another picture also in the screen where skilled Indian ladies like Gargi, Maitreyee, Lopamudra etc in ancient age, Rani Durgabati, Chand Sultana, Mirabai in medieval age, Matangini Hazra, Pritilata Waddedar, Indira Gandhi, Kalpana Chaula, Sania Mirza, Lata Mangeskar etc in modern age, who have been given exorbitant reverence for their different glorious achievements like spiritualism, heroism, patriotism, wisdom, politics, science, games & sports, music and so on. But truly speaking, this figure is too small and in reality women in general are disregarded and given less importance in comparison to their male counterpart in India as there exists factors like inequality, gender discrimination etc from the very beginning of the existence of mankind causing a cut-throat hindrance on the way of all round development of the country. Though law and legislation authorise equal status to the women with men, the patriarchal values, cultural practices and social rules provide a secondary status to the women in the society. But as the time is passing away, attitude of the society also is being changed. However, society as well as government now have come to realise that without welfare of women, overall development of the country is beyond expectation. In this connection, the famous quotation of Swami Vivekananda, one of the dignified sons of India is noteworthy, "There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing" (Prathiba, 2017). Considering the position of Indian women in the society, India Government deliberately has thought about empowerment of women and rendered a lot of plans by which gender discrimination can be removed to some extent where women can have an easy and free access to education, employment, politics etc, equally with their male counterpart resulting elevation of their social, economical and political status.

Review of Literature

Devi, (2017) attempts to highlight the existence of a few key determinants of inequalities prevailing in our country to understand the extent of women empowerment. He also throws light on gender equality and women empowerment in education, economic participation, resources and political fields. Substantial progress towards gender parity in primary, secondary as well as higher education is achieved slowly. Feminization of workplace, mobility and participation of women in decision making, social and political grounds are noticed but pitiable. Higher education, gender sensitive education system, employment, political participation, elimination of child marriage, training programme etc are recommended for gender equality and women empowerment.

Hooda & Hooda, (2017) reflect the need, reasons, government schemes of women empowerment and reveal that in spite of having various initiatives from the government side, Indian women are comparatively disempowered and possess lower status than that of men. Poverty, gender bias in – higher education, health & nutrition, household work, childcare etc, high rate of mortality in women especially in Asia, Africa & China and inequality in professional world make the status of women more serious. Education, awareness programmes, strict implementation of programmes, safety measures etc mentioned here are the issues which should be taken into care for women empowerment.

Panda, (2017) highlights the unequal status of women with men and the necessity of women empowerment in the areas of decision making, education, employment etc. He also analyses the influential factors such as gender discrimination, responsibility of family, risk bearing ability and so on. Illiteracy, poverty, health & safety, professional skill, family burden etc are the constraints which stand in the way of women empowerment in India. He further comments that the government policy alone cannot make the women empowerment possible, the cooperation of the society, change in mindset of men etc are essential.

Chakravarty, Kumar & Jha, (2013) aim to know the concept of women empowerment on a holistic basis and examine the initiatives for women empowerment considering specific attention on SHGs in Ranchi district of Jharkhand state in India. They also attempt to realize the linkages between women empowerment and SHGs. The SHGs in Ranchi district extend helping hands towards financial stability of weaker section of women. They ultimately suggest special emphasis to the specific factors in local level area for developing country like India towards women empowerment.

Research Gap: In the literature review, it is noticed that various crimes, States/UTs/ Cities involved and other information relating to Indian women have not been discussed so far in an exhaustive manner. So, there is an ample scope to highlight the related issues in detail in order to realize the Indian scenario of women empowerment and how women empowerment becomes a weapon to sustainable development of India.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the necessity of Women Empowerment.
2. To highlight the Indian scenario regarding Women Empowerment.
3. To identify the obstacles in the way of Women Empowerment in India.
4. To suggest some measures for smooth implementation of Women Empowerment in India.

Limitation of the Study: This is a secondary data based study but the current data are hardly available. The primary data may be used which can enhance the quality of the study.

Research Methodology: Mainly the secondary data have been used for this study. Various journals, articles and web resources are the sources from where data and related information have been procured. The presentation of statistical data has been made in tabular form.

Need for Women Empowerment: Need for women empowerment is endless, boundless in India. Following are some of these needs to empower the women.
* To abolish the impact of gender discrimination, inequality and injustice.
* To provide them safety and security in daily life.
* To ensure a fear free workplace for women.
* To make them strong to combat against exploitation.
* To minimise domestic violence and corruption.
* To avail legal protection.
* To establish the identity of their own.
* To make them eligible and effective to contribute to the society.
* To make them able to stand on their own feet.

Crime against Women & Their Empowerment: Indian Scenario

Almost all the States/UTs in India are experienced with the crimes against women more or less. Some crimes are reported and others are not. The National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India has published statistics on crime against women during 2016-18 and has recorded variety of crimes in this regard namely acid attack, abetment to suicide of women, dowry death, buying of minor girl child, use of child for pornography, immoral traffic, prostitution, miscarriage, women centric cyber crimes, sexual violence, assault, harassment, murder with rape or gang rape etc. Rape happens with girl child of below 6 years to woman of above 60 years and the offenders' relation to victims of rape are family members, guardians, relatives, friends/online friends, neighbours, teachers, employees, live in partners on pretext of marriage or separated husband, person in position of trust etc outside custody and the police personnel, public servant, armed forces, authority, management/staff of jail, hospital etc. inside custody. Again some offenders are unknown or unidentified also. Crimes also happen on pregnant women, women incapable of giving consent, women with mental or physical disability etc. Women have to carry on endangered life after brutal incident. The convicted offenders are punished in some cases but due to insufficient evidence or untraced/no clue, true cases are dismissed also. Now, number of crimes, major States/UTs and cities associated with few major crimes are presented in tabular form.

Table 1 shows that as per IPC+SLL, total crimes 338954 against women in 2016 have increased to 378277 in 2018 and reflected a sharp increasing trend. During 2016-18, among states, UP ranks top with 492621, 56011, and 59445 cases respectively and an upward trend is noticed. It may be remarked that in 2016, the state UP is followed by W.B., Maharashtra but in 2017-18, the same is followed by Maharashtra, W.B. Again, during 2016-18, among UTs, Delhi UT scores highest with 15310, 13076 and 13640 cases respectively.

Again, in the event of rate of total crimes in 2018, Assam tops with 166% followed by Haryana (107.5%), Odisha (91.3%) among states and Delhi UT is in top position with 149.6% followed by Chandigarh (83.4%), A&N Islands (77.4%) among UTs. Among states, Nagaland (7.3%) and among UTs, Daman & Diu (123%) stand in bottom places.

Table 2 depicts that during 2018, in case of cruelty by husband or his relatives, total cases are 103272. Here, among the states, W.B. tops tally list with 16951 cases followed by UP (14233), Rajasthan (12250). In case of kidnapping & abduction of women, total number of incidents happens 7275 and with 15381 cases the state UP stands in the 1st position and Bihar (7951), Maharashtra (6825) are the followers. In the event of assault on women with intent to

outrage her modesty, the figure is 89097, where UP is the topper with 12555 cases followed by Maharashtra (10835), Odisha (9973). When we talk about the rape, 33356 cases are recorded where the states Rajasthan (4335), UP (3946) follow MP (5433). In the crime head-insult to the modesty of women, the total number is 6992 and AP holds the foremost position recording 1802 cases with its followers states, Maharashtra (1074), Telangana (878). It is worth mentioning that, in the five crime heads, Delhi is the only UT which hoists its flag with top rank.

Table 3 highlights the IPC and SLL crimes against women in 2018. When we consider IPC crimes, 323345 cases are recorded with UP (49638) in the 1st position followed by Maharashtra (29067), W.B. (28031). If SLL crimes are noticed, 54932 incidents happen and the state UP (9807) again is the topper followed by Maharashtra (6430), Bihar (4228). When the sum total of IPC & SLL crimes against women is taken into consideration, the cases become 378277. The state UP holds top position in the list recording 59445 cases and Maharashtra (35497), W.B. (30394) are the followers. Again, it is noteworthy to notice that the UT Delhi holds supreme position in committing IPC as well SLL crimes against women.

Table 4 shows that in metropolitan cities, total number of cases in 2016, 41761 reaches to 42180 in 2018 by a slight fall in the year 2017. During three years, Mumbai, Bengaluru succeed Delhi. As per the rate of total crimes against women in 2018, 197.9% in Lucknow ranks foremost position followed by 154.8% in Delhi, 153.5% in Indore. Lowest rate 10% is in Coimbatore.

Table 5 highlights that in 2018, 11788 incidents happen in the fact of cruelty by husband or his relatives. Delhi tops with 3128 cases followed by Hyderabad (1343), Lucknow (1212), Jaipur (993). While noticing the crime head- kidnapping & abduction of women and assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty, 8992 and 9013 cases are recorded respectively and Delhi tops in both the occurrences with 3037 & 2353 cases respectively followed by Mumbai, Bengaluru, Lucknow. In case of rape, total number of cases happened is 2776 with 1080 in Delhi followed by 319 in Mumbai, 299 in Jaipur, 129 in Indore and so on. Dealing with insult to the modesty of women, it may be mentioned that 2776 incidents are accounted for and Mumbai with 532 cases claims top position and Delhi (508), Kolkata (232), Hyderabad (129) are following Mumbai.

 At present, in Grampanchayat as well as Municipal Elections in India, 33% reservation for women has been initiated (http://www.preservearticle.com/). The Women Reservation Bill or The Constitution (108th Amendment) Bill, 2008 wants a reservation of 1/3rd seats in Lok

Sabha and State Legislative Assembly for Women. But this bill has been passed in Rajya Sabha in March 2010 but is still waiting to be passed in the Lok Sabha (https://www.google.com). Apart from these, in education and jobs also, reservation facilities are provided to women (http://www.preserarticle.com).

Problems of Women Empowerment in India: Women of India confront numerous problems of which, some are citied below.

* Illiteracy and ignorance   * Sexual harassment

* Inequality/Gender discrimination   * Female infanticide

* Domestic violence   * Rape

* Dowry system   * Prostitution

* Killing of Foetus   * Mal-nutrition

* Family obligation   * Poverty

* Poor risk bearing capacity   * Child marriage

* Health and hygiene problems   * Illegal trafficking

Schemes for Women Empowerment: A number of schemes for women empowerment are in exercise in India. Few of which are mentioned below [(Prathiba, 2017), (Panda, 2017), (Shettar, 2015), (www.wbkanyashree.gov.in)].

* Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme

* SWADHAR Greh (A Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances)

* Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY) October, 1993

* Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY) 1995

* Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP)

* National Mission for Empowerment of Women

* Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescence Girls (RGSEAG) 2010

* Dhanalakahshmi 2008

* Ujjawala 2007

* Women's Development Corporation Scheme (WDCS)

* Working Women's Forum

* Mahila Samiti Yojana

* Indira Priyadarshini Yojana

* Kanyashree Prakalpa, 2013 etc.

Legislations for Women Empowerment: For safeguarding women from inequality, injustice as well as from discrimination, various legislations are passed by Indian Parliament time to time. Some of the laws are highlighted below [(Article on Women Empowerment), (https.www.prsindia.org)].

* Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act-1956

* Dowry Prohibition Act-1961

* Maternity Benefit Act-1961

* Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act-1971

* Equal Remuneration Act-1976

* Commission Sati (Prevention) Act-1987

* Pre-Conception & Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act-1994

* Prohibition of Child Marriage Act-2006

* Harassment of Women at Work Place (Prevention and Protection) Act-2013

* Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act-2015

* The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act-2019

The above discussion clearly reflects the distressed as well as problematic scenario of Indian women and at the same ground, the necessity of women empowerment in India. It also throws light on various initiatives taken by the government to strengthen the women empowerment in India

Findings of the Study

1. An upward trend is observed in case of crime against women.

2. Reservation and preferential policies have been implemented in education, jobs, politics and other fields.

3. The women of India are passing through hardship of numerous social evils.

4. A number of government schemes and legislations have been initiated for empowering the women in India.

5. NGOs say for example SHGs are acting to make the women empowered.

6. Mindset of the members of the society has changed towards women and the society is feeling its importance.

7. In spite of all efforts, the conditions of women specially in rural India are still alarming.

Conclusion

To uplift the nation relating to deplorable position of women in the society, remarkable comment of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru may be taken into consideration, '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" (Pratiba, 2017). One of the most essential concerns in 21st Century the empowerment of women has been supported not only at national level, but international level also. With a view to fulfil this urgent need, initiatives have been started from every associated corner. With the helpful hands of the state governments as well as the government of India, women of the country themselves also are becoming conscious about their equitable demands & rights and articulating for extortion of their social, political, economical rights, such as right to education, right to equality, to be equal in every sphere of life with their male counterpart. The Self Help Groups of women are empowering themselves slowly but steadily which seems to be encouraging. Now, every Indian should take an oath to detect the loopholes on the way of advancement of women and take fruitful measures to perish all the limitations so that the golden moment can come soon with the multidimensional benefits of women empowerment and India can ride on the paramount position where Indians altogether, irrespective of gender, community, religion, language etc can lead to a boundless prosperous, unmixed delightful blessed life. In the end, it may be opined that for sustainable development of India, women empowerment can undoubtedly be treated as a weapon.

Suggestions for Women Empowerment in India

Empowerment of women can only be possible if the following steps are to be taken into consideration properly.

1. Literacy: As per Census of India, 2011, the overall literacy rate is 74.04% comprising male 22.14% and female 65.46% which indicates far more low literacy of female than that of male. The improvement of female literacy is, therefore, highly solicited.

2. Health and Hygiene: The society till date prefers the birth of male child than that of female child and is less concerned with the nutrition of female child. This leads to the problems of health and hygiene of women. Unhealthy women cannot compete with men and cannot have the capacity of taking risk. So the health and hygiene issues of women should be given due importance.

3. Financial Stability: Financial weakness is another important factor in the way of women empowerment. Hence the women must be financially stable.

4. Equality in Professional World: In the men dominated professional environment, women are not allowed to grow. So this inequality should be eradicated as far as practicable.

5. Equality in Household Work: The role of women as daughter, sister, wife and mother contributed to the family cannot be denied. The household activities like kitchen and cleaning work, child care etc are mainly the burden of women. This discrimination should also be removed by sharing the activities with their men counterpart.

6. Sex Ratio: As per Census of India, 2011, the sex ratio is 943 females per 1000 males. The state Kerala has the highest rate of sex ratio i.e. 1084 females and Haryana the lowest 877 females to that of 1000 males. Gender discrimination, the main factor causing the reduction in sex ratio, should be put to an end. In this context, it may be mentioned that the message 'Determination of Sex-A Criminal Offence' may be conducive enough in increasing this ratio.

7. NGOs: The SHGs of women and other NGOs should be well equipped which may extend their helpful hands towards successful women empowerment in India.

8. Govt. Schemes and Legislations: Proper implementation of various schemes and legislations undertaken by the state governments and Government of India for empowering women is earnestly required.

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APPENDIX

Table 1 Crime against Women (IPC+SLL) -2016-18

Sl. No.	Year	Total Cases		Major States			Major UT
1.	2016	States: 322949	338954	UP (492621)	W.B. (32513)	Maharashtra (31388)	Delhi (15310)
		UTs: 16005					
2.	2017	States: 345989	359849	UP (56011)	Maharashtra (31979)	W.B. (30992)	Delhi (13076)
		UTs:13860					
3	2018	States: 363817	378277	UP (59445)	Maharashtra (35497)	W.B. (30394)	Delhi (13640)
		UTs: 14460					

Source: Crime in India, 2018, Statistics, National Crime Records Bureau, Govt. of India.

Table 2 IPC Crimes against Women (Crime Head-wise & States/UTs-wise)-2018

Sl. No.	Crime Head	Total Cases		Major States			Major UT
1.	Cruelty by Husband or his Relatives	States: 99745	103272	W.B. (16951)	UP (14233)	Rajasthan (12250)	Delhi (3416)
		UTs: 3527					
2.	Kidnapping & Abduction of Women	States: 68881	72751	UP (15381)	Bihar (7951)	Maharashtra (6825)	Delhi (3715)
		UTs: 3870					
3.	Assault on Women with Intent to Outrage her Modesty	States: 86186	89097	UP (12555)	Maharashtra (10835)	Odisha (9973)	Delhi (2705)
		UTs: 2911					
4.	Rape	States: 32013	33356	MP (5433)	Rajasthan (4335)	UP (3946)	Delhi (1215)
		UTs: 1343					

5.	Insult to the Modesty of Women	States: 6420 UTs: 572	6992	AP (1802)	Maharashtra (1074)	Telangana (878)	Delhi (552)

Source: Crime in India, 2018, Statistics, National Crime Records Bureau, Govt. of India.

Table 3 IPC and SLL Crimes against Women - 2018

Sl. No.	Crimes	Total Cases		Major States			Major UT
1.	Total IPC Crimes against Women	States: 310824 UTs: 12521	323345	UP (49638)	Maharashtra (29067)	W.B. (28031)	Delhi (11868)
2.	Total SLL Crimes against Women	States: 52993 UTs: 1939	54932	UP (9807)	Maharashtra (6430)	Bihar (4228)	Delhi (1772)
3.	Total Crimes against Women (IPC+SLL)	States: 363817 UTs: 14460	378277	UP (59445)	Maharashtra (35497)	W.B. (30394)	Delhi (13640)

Source: Crime in India, 2018, Statistics, National Crime Records Bureau, Govt. of India.

Table 4 Crime against Women (IPC+SLL) in Metropolitan Cities - 2016-18

Sl. No.	Year	Total Cases	Major Cities		
1.	2016	41761	Delhi (13803)	Mumbai (5128)	Bengaluru (3412)
2.	2017	40839	Delhi (11542)	Mumbai (5453)	Bengaluru (3565)
3	2018	42180	Delhi (11724)	Mumbai (6058)	Bengaluru (3427)

Source: Crime in India, 2018, Statistics, National Crime Records Bureau, Govt. of India.

Table 5 IPC Crimes against Women (Crime Head-wise & City-wise) - 2018

Sl. No.	Crime Head	Total Cases	Major Cities

1.	Cruelty by Husband or his Relatives	11788	Delhi (3128)	Hyderabad (1343)	Lucknow (1212)	Jaipur (993)
2.	Kidnapping & Abduction of Women	8992	Delhi (3037)	Mumbai (1350)	Begaluru (674)	Lucknow (636)
3.	Assault on Women with Intent to Outrage her modesty	9013	Delhi (2353)	Mumbai (2038)	Begaluru (829)	Lucknow (483)
4.	Rape	2776	Delhi (1080)	Mumbai (319)	Jaipur (299)	Indore (129)
5.	Insult to the Modesty of Women	1677	Mumbai (532)	Delhi (508)	Kolkata (232)	Hyderabad (129)

Source: Crime in India, 2018, Statistics, National Crime Records Bureau, Govt. of India.