

# Women Empowerment

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## **Introduction**

As we all know that India is a male dominated country where males are dominated in every area and females are forced to be responsible for only family care and live in the home including other many restrictions. Almost 50% of the population in India is covered by the female only so the full development of the country depends on the half population means women, who are not empowered and still restricted by many social taboos. In such condition, we cannot say that our country would be a developed in the future without empowering its half population means women. If we want to make our country a developed country, first of all it is very necessary to empower women by the efforts of men, government, laws and women too.

The need of women empowerment arose because of the gender discrimination and male domination in the Indian society since ancient time. Women are being suppressed by their family members and society for many reasons.

In order to really bring women empowerment in the Indian society, it needs to understand and eliminate the main cause of the ill practices against women which are patriarchal and male dominated system of the society. It needs to be open-minded and change the old mind set against women together with the constitutional and other legal provisions.

In India, the empowerment process has already begun. We are now witnessing a steady improvement in the enrollment of women in schools, colleges and even in profession institutes. Their health is better as compared to earlier decades. In this decade, women are entering into the job market in increasing numbers. They are showing their skills even in non-traditional sectors like police, defence, administration, media and research fields.

## **What is Women Empowerment?**

Women empowerment can be defined in very simple words that it is making women powerful so that they can take their own decisions regarding their lives and well-being in the family and society. It is empowering women to make them able to get their real rights in the society. But what does women empowerment mean? Women empowerment generally has five components : firstly, women's sense of self-worth; secondly, their right to have the power of control their own lives, both within and outside home; and lastly, their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a just social and economic order nationally, internationally and universally.

## **Why Need of Women Empowerment in India**

As we all know that India is a male dominated country where males are dominated in every area and females are forced to be responsible for only family care and live in the home including other many restrictions. Almost 50% of the population in India is covered by the female only so the full development of the country depends on the half population means women, who are not empowered and still restricted by many social taboos. In such condition, we cannot say that our country would be a developed in the future without empowering its half population means women. If we want to make our country a developed country, first of all it is very necessary to empower women by the efforts of men, government, laws and women too.

The need of women empowerment arose because of the gender discrimination and male domination in the Indian society since ancient time. Women are being suppressed by their family members and society for many reasons. They have been targeted for many types of violence and discriminatory practices by the male members in the family and

society in India and other countries as well. Wrong and old practices for the women in the society from ancient time have taken the form of well-developed customs and traditions. There is a tradition of worshipping many female goddesses in India including giving honour to the women forms in the society like mother, sister, daughter, wife and other female relatives or friends. But, it does not mean that only respecting or honouring women can fulfill the need of development in the country. It needs the empowerment of the rest half population of the country in every walk of life.

India is a famous country proving the common proverb like 'unity is diversity', where people of many religious beliefs are in the Indian society. Women have been given a special place in every religion which is working as a big curtain covering the eyes of people and help in the continuation of many ill practices (including physical and mental) against women as a norm since ages. In the ancient Indian society, there was a custom of sati pratha, nagarvadh system, dowry system, sexual violence, domestic violence, female infanticide, pardapratha, wife burning, sexual harassment at work place, child marriage, child labour, devadashpratha, etc including other discriminatory practices. All such type of ill practices is because of male superiority complex and patriarchal system of the society.

Socio-political rights (right to work, right to education, right to decide for themselves, etc) for the women were completely restricted by the male members of family. Some of the ill practices against women have been eliminated by the open minded and great Indian people who raise their voices for the discriminatory practices against women. Through the continuous efforts of the Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Britishers were forced to eliminate the ill practice of Sati paratha. Later, other famous social reformers of the India (Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Swami Vivekananda, etc) also had raised their voices and worked hard for the upliftment of women in Indian society. In India, the Widow Remarriage Act, 1856 was initiated by the continuous efforts of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar in order to improve the conditions of widows in the country.

In the recent years, various constitutional and legal rights have been implemented by the government of India in order to eliminate ill practices and gender discrimination against women. However, in order to solve such a big issue, the continuous effort of everyone including women is required. Modern society is being more aware about the women rights which results in the increasing number of several self-help groups, NGOs, etc working in this direction. Women are being more open minded and breaking the societal barriers in order to achieve their rights in all dimensions even after crimes are going side by side.

Some of the acts passed by the Parliament are Equal Remuneration Act-1976, Dowry Prohibition Act-1961, Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act-1956, Medical termination of Pregnancy Act-1971, Maternity Benefit Act-1961, Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act-1987, Prohibition of Child Marriage Act-2006, Pre-Conception & Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act-1994, Sexual Harassment of Women at Work Place (Prevention, Protection and) Act-2013, etc in order to empower women with legal rights.

In order to provide safety to women and reduce crime against women in India, government has passed another act Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Bill, 2015 (especially after Nirbhaya case when an accused juvenile was released). This act is the replacement earlier Indian juvenile delinquency law of 2000 (Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000) in order to reduce the juvenile age from 18 to 16 years in cases of heinous offenses.

In order to really bring women empowerment in the Indian society, it needs to understand and eliminate the main cause of the ill practices against women which are patriarchal and male dominated system of the society. It needs to be open-minded and change the old mind set against women together with the constitutional and other legal provisions.

We need to think big and scale up rapidly in each and every area, be it education, infrastructure, industry, financial services or equality of both genders. For around two centuries, social reformers and missionaries in India have

endeavored to bring women out of confines in which centuries of traditions had kept them. According to the 2001 Census, the percentage of female literacy in the country is 54% up from 9% 1951.

But we should not forget that history in a witness to the women who have in the past demonstrated unique leadership capabilities. Razia Sultana, Rani of Jhansi, Sarojini Naidu and Indira Gandhi are motivation examples of women empowerment. Earlier, most women were able to demonstrate the leadership qualities only on their home fronts, as in Indian society man has always acted as the master of the scene and the decision regarding the issue of empowering women has always been taken by him. God has gifted women with compassion, tender-heartedness, caring nature, concern for others. These are very positive signs which imply that women can be leaders. Though some women have shown their mettle yet a large number of them have to sharpen their leadership qualities in various ways. In order to help women to be in limelight, they need to be empowered. Therefore, empowerment of women is the prerequisite to transform a developing country into a developed country.

I would like to peep into the past when the stature of women as destroyed. They were treated as chattel in the early Roman society. In France, they were termed as half-soul creatures responsible for the destruction of society. The Chinese considered them as devil's soul. Japanese men preferred to live unmarried lives. Before the advent of Islam, Arabs buried their daughters alive considering them as a sign of disgrace. In this way, they deprived women of their due place. Most men view themselves as being the superior life-form in society. They justify this belief by saying that they are stronger and more capable; thus, making them more qualified for the more important roles in society. They place themselves on pedestals and force women to believe in their own inferiority to men and their incapability to excel educationally, politically, economically and domestically. But the truth is that women have advanced in all those areas.

In Shakespeare's works, many female characters are portrayed as being manipulated, if not controlled outright by the men in their lives as fathers, uncles, suitors, husbands. Therefore, Shakespeare's works appear to send mixed signals regarding the notion of female empowerment. Empowerment has multiple, interrelated and interdependent dimensions economic, social, cultural and political. It can be understood in relation to resources, perceptions.

Educational attainment and economic participation are they key constituents in ensuring the empowerment of women. Educational attainment is essential for empowering women in all spheres of society, for without education of comparable quality and content given to boys and men, updated with existing knowledge and relevant to current needs, women will be able to have access to well-paid formal sector jobs and advance with men. The economic empowerment of women is a vital element of strong economic growth in any country. Empowering women enhances their ability to influence changes and to create a better society.

Other than educational and economic empowerment, changes in women's mobility and social interaction and changes in intra-household decision-making are necessary. Slight improvement in women's involvement in household decision-making in male-headed household, on such issues as credit, the disposal of household assets, children's education and family healthcare can work wonders. Traditionally, gender based divisions persisted in intra-household decision-making. Women basically decide on food preparation and men make the financial decision. Women are one of the greatest assets in our society. They equal to men in all aspects. Women are more perfectionists in the power to create, nurture and transform.' Today, women are emerging as leaders in growing range of fields be it aeronautics, medicine, space, engineering, law, politics, education, business. Just name the profession and they are there, all that needed in today's world in their empowerment.

In India, the empowerment process has already begun. We are now witnessing a steady improvement in the enrollment of women in schools, colleges and even in profession institutes. Their health is better as compared to earlier decades. In this decade, women are entering into the job market in increasing numbers. They are showing their skills even in non-traditional sectors like police, defence, administration, media and research fields. Twenty-six laws have been enacted so far to protect women from various crimes. The recent law on the 'protection of women against domestic violence' satisfies the long pending demand of the women activities. In the political field, the reservation for

women is a significant step forward towards their political empowerment. When thirty-three percent reservation for women in Parliament becomes a reality, women's voice will be heard in the highest forum of democracy. The day, women of India will reach zenith in their empowerment. But a lot of work has to be done as there is a category of women (who consider themselves highly educated) that proudly accepts that they don't have digital literacy even though they own a computer, they cannot even operate bank accounts or make travel arrangements for family or handle hospital admissions even during emergencies. Even for a simple task like social visits or shopping generally they need the company of their husbands.

Women in India feel proud to display that they are well protected and pampered by their husbands without realizing that they are making themselves helpless. Such women's economic literacy is so low that they cannot play any role in family's decision regarding family's budget, savings and investments. To such women, the national budget discussion is for men only and soap operas are for them. Such women suffer a lot if something untoward happens to their husbands. This type of extreme dependency is not good for the development of women. Women should remember that they are also rational, intelligent and thinking human beings. Dependent women are not empowered women. If modern women think that they are empowered, it's a myth for them. Empowerment means to inspire women with the courage to break free from the chains of limiting beliefs, patterns and societal or religious conditions that have traditionally kept women suppressed and unable to realize their true beauty and power.

Some qualities to be acquired by women to become truly empowered are awareness about risk prevailing at home, in work place, in traveling and staying outside home. They should have political, legal, economic and health awareness. They should have knowledge about support groups and positive attitudes towards life. They should get goals for future and strive to achieve them with courage. The best gift parents today can give to their daughters is education. If women choose to be ignorant then all the efforts taken by the Government and women activists will go in vain. Even in twenty-fifth century, they will remain backward and will be paying a heavy price for their dependence, So, it is a wake-up call for women to awake from their deep slumber and understand the true meaning of their empowerment. In the end I would like to conclude with the following words, "Women as the motherhood of the nation should be strong, aware and alert"

Empowering women to participate fully in economic life across all sectors is essential to build stronger economies, achieve internationally agreed goals for development and sustainability, and improve the quality of life for women, men, families and communities.

The private sector is a key partner in efforts to advance gender equality and empower women. Current research demonstrating that gender diversity helps businesses perform better signals that self-interest and common interest can come together. Yet, ensuring the inclusion of women's talents, skills and energies—from executive offices to the factory floor and the supply chain—requires intentional actions and deliberate policies.

Introduced on International Women's Day 2010, the Women's Empowerment Principles are adapted from the Calvert Women's Principles®. The Calvert Women's Principles were originally developed in partnership with UNIFEM (now UN Women) and launched in 2004 as the first global corporate code of conduct focused exclusively on empowering, advancing and investing in women worldwide.

### **Conclusion**

The Women's Empowerment Principles offer practical guidance to business and the private sector on how to empower women in the workplace, marketplace and community. Developed through a partnership between UN Women and the United Nations Global Compact, the Principles are designed to support companies in reviewing existing policies and practices—or establishing new ones—to realize women's empowerment.

Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality

Treat all women and men fairly at work—respect and support human rights and nondiscrimination  
Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers  
Promote education, training and professional development

for womenImplement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower womenPromote equality through community initiatives and advocacyMeasure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality.

Women empowerment is empowering the women to take their own decisions for their personal dependent. Empowering women is to make them independent in all aspects from mind, thought, rights, decisions, etc by leaving all the social and family limitations. It is to bring equality in the society for both male and female in all areas. Women empowerment is very necessary to make the bright future of the family, society and country. Women need fresh and more capable environment so that they can take their own right decisions in every area whether for themselves, family, society or country. In order to make the country fully developed country, women empowerment is an essential tool to get the goal of development

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