

The Concept of Women Empowerment : An Analysis and Evaluation

Abstract

In this paper, we have tried to explain that in which ways women should be empowered so that they could play vital role in the harmonious creation of family, society and nation as well. We have also made it a point to emphasise that both husband and wife of complementary to each other and their existing healthier and sound relationship would produce wise and futuristic result and ultimately it will contribute to the well being of their children.

It has been also stressed that by educative means only, women can become self - sufficient and economically stronger and in turn they will contribute to far-fetching impact on their family, society and nation. Keeping this very view in our mind, we have researched and prepared this paper.

Introduction

Recently, there has been widespread discussion that whether women should be empowered or authorized to do all kinds of works which men have been doing in each and every sphere of life. Beyond any doubt and argument, it appears that this issue should not be made an issue of intellectual and academic debate rather right time has come when women should be really empowered to execute almost all kinds of work in all walks and activities of life then only, we can imagine of a healthy, harmonized and a reasonable society. It is ripe time that women should be allowed to play major role in the development of family, society and nation as half of the population of the world consist of women. Women are in fact, very important unit of the society and if they would be educationally and economically sound then the entire family and community around her would be educated and harmonious as generally they seem to have fair sense of judgment and critical mental faculty.

Now, in this modern era, it is expected from the people who seem to be orthodox, conventional and are the believer of certain accepted standard of morality, dogmas and religion that they should come forward to empowering women to do almost everything which by now only men are supposed to do. In reality, after going through newspaper, television, media and other sources of information network, we observe that presently, women are no more same traditional one rather they are marching ahead all around the world with brisk pace and movement. It is high time that they should be given free hand in tackling almost all the complicated and social issues as innately they seem to have some kind of wisdom and intellect superior to men in some field. Just, it is required that they should be taught to exercise their wisdom with certain caution and alertness of mind.

In fact, since the very inception of women's growth and development, they should be carefully designed to think that they are supposed to play very important role in the creation of a benevolent and compassionate family and accordingly they should also be equipped and trained to improve their socio-economic condition. This improved socio-economic condition has to play major role in the development of positive and generous attitude in them and in this way, they will also have a say in all major and minor issues of their family and consequently, their married life would also elevate morally and soundly. Regarding harmonious married life, which should be free from disagreement and dissent, Gandhijee rightly remarks in this context. He writes :

“rules of social conduct must be framed by mutual co-operation and consultation. They can never be imposed from outside. Men have not realized this truth in its fulness in their behavior towards women”¹

Gautam Sinha

Associate Professor
P. G. Dept. of Philosophy,
Gaya College, Gaya
Magadh University
Bodh-Gaya, India

Pranita Sinha

Asst. Professor
Dept. of Philosophy
Sanjay Gandhi Mahila
College, Gaya, India

We also observe that in the present modern and internet era, the need of hour is to create a constructive family first then only we can think of a sensible society and a judicious country too. Each is interlinked. In realization of this goal, women have to play major role as a whole. A man in society is measured and judged by his thought, behaviour and deed. The basis of a good family consists of positive thinking and this thinking a child imbibes right from the womb of their mother. Thus, at the most basic and important level, women have to play leading role everywhere. It has been rightly said that behind every successful man, there is a hand of a woman. A thinker seems to be justified in saying that :

“Best thing that can ever happen to a real scholar is a good and caring wife”.²

In fact, woman is the companion of man gifted with equal mental faculties and capacities. Hence, they should be encouraged to participate in each and every activities of family and they should also have equal right and freedom in their expression of opinion. She is entitled to supreme place in her own sphere of activity as man is in his. After marriage, a wife completely depends on her husband's guidance, advice and direction for solving the problems and puzzles of life. Here, it becomes a moral duty of husband to genuinely show her light in all the circumstances, crisis and difficulty. But, it is generally gathered that men lack their this pious duty and do not look after marriage as a sacred and private affairs. It is aptly to quote once again Gandhijee's remarks in this sphere. He logically and in futuristic way observes:

“A large part of the miseries of today can be avoided, if we look at the relations between the sexes in a healthy and pure light, and regard ourselves as trustees for the moral welfare of the future generation”³

Further, we also survey that in the present materialistic scenario of the world, by a sheer force of money, power and vicious customs almost all around the globes, even the most ignorant and worthless men have been enjoying a superiority over women which they do not deserve. They have considered themselves to be lords and masters of women instead of considering them as their friends and co-workers. It is really a matter of concern that in this advance age, still wives are being treated as dolls and objects of indulgence rather they should be treated as honoured companion in all the spheres and walks of life. Here, It seems to be contextual to quote the remark of an American writer, who beautifully expresses her opinion regarding women's exploitation in her famous article "Marriages As A Trade". She really very poetically and rightly observes:

“I cannot better explain what I mean by the essential servility of woman's code of morals than by quoting Milton's well known line – ‘He for God only, she for God in him’. That one brief verse condenses into a nutshell the difference in the moral position of the two sexes – expresses boldly, simply, straight-forwardly, the growth in woman to serve his own convenience”.⁴

Again, in this regard, she further observes :

“Of all the wrongs that have been inflicted upon woman, there has been none like unto this – the enforced arrest of her mental growth – and none which bears more bitter and eloquent testimony to the complete and essential servility of her position. For her the eleventh commandment was – ‘Thou shall not think’, and the most iniquitous condition of her marriage bargain this – that her husband, from the height of his self – satisfaction, should be permitted her to esteem a fool”⁵.

How, the hampering of woman's faculty of reasoning, knowing and thinking takes place, in this regard, she again pathetically remarks:

“The consistent and deliberate stunting of woman's intellectual growth is ... the best proof of her essentially servile position in the house – hold, and that being the case, it is not to be wondered at that her code of honour and morals is essentially a servile code. That is to say, its origin and guiding motive is the well being, moral and material of someone else. Woman's morality has been imposed on her, and to a great extent is not morality at all in the proper sense of the word but a code of manners formulated in the interest of her master”.⁶

To understand more about women empowerment, we also observe that those who are positive and conscious, they have been advocating that there must not be any gender discrimination and the relationship between men and women should be part of the social and legal justice. They opine that like men, women should also be given opportunities in all types of job, equality in pay, perks and all kinds of amenities which men are enjoying so far. It is also being felt that in this patriarchal society, the problems of women are worsening day by day and to protect it, they consider that there should be legal equality between men and women then only, there can be an end of female exploitation. Mahatma Gandhi again observes in this regard:

“There may be no legal bar against a woman hunting or wielding a lance. But she instinctively recoils from a function that belongs to man. Nature has created

sexes as complements of each other. Their functions are defined as are their forms”⁷

In fact, emotions and sentiments play major role in woman's life. Only their prosperity and improved economic conditions do not provide them real happiness and social status. But in contrast, they require emotional caring and loving support too from their parents, family and partners, even if any educational and professional disparity exist. They expect that in each and every judgment and household activities, they should also perform a genuine part in it. In this way, when their role and functions would be defined then they will feel fully secured and start taking immense interest in domestic affairs as well as family and community development programmes too. This new face of woman would certainly bring into existence the new concept of women empowerment.

Women empowerment also means to impart all types of general and technical education to them. If wife is not equally educated then it should be husband's moral duty to encourage and help them to receive higher education if they desire so that their position would be strengthened in the society. Regarding the imparting education to women, Gandhiji once again reasons importantly in this regard:

“To this end those who have not received a liberal education should receive such instructions as is possible from their husbands. The same observation applies, with the necessary changes to mothers and daughters.”⁸

After all the above discussions, now in this section, we shall discuss as to what steps are being taken by the government globally in this regard. According to the estimation of the world agency, with regard to women gender empowerment measure (GEM) or the extent to which women participate in economic and political life, the present report defines that still we have miles to go. Dr. O.P. Gupta presents his report as follows :

“Moving towards gender equality is not a technocratic goal. It is a political process, it requires a new way of thinking in which the stereotyping of women and men gives way to a new philosophy that regards all people irrespective of gender, as essential agents of social change.”⁹

Again, recently a survey was conducted by Tata Strategic Management Group (TSMG) with regard to Well Being Index (WBI) and Female Security Index (FSI) almost all over the world and it has been observed that almost many states of the world ranked at bottom. According to 'GEM', the following problems are in the spotlight and almost all governments of the world must take necessary steps to deal this urgent problem. There are certain

observed issues by the above agencies which are following.

- (i) Female feticide
- (ii) Domestic violence
- (iii) Low sex ratio
- (iv) Sexual harassment at working place
- (v) Economic backwardness
- (vi) Women with equality to men in all regards
- (vii) Low literacy rate
- (viii) Equal participation in all activities and walks of life
- (ix) Reservation for women in parliament as well as assembly and other constitutional bodies too.

The above burning issues must be tackled by the concerned government with attention and concern. These issues also require serious considerations from all the educated and enlightened people of the society otherwise, it may lead serious imbalances in the human population. Female feticide seems to be very alarming one and in this regard, women should also not give their consent as it is generally found that they also become party to this ghastly act. In fact, the Indian national average of 927 females stand for every 1000 males. Some states are already below 900/1100 ratio and this problem is worsening day by day. We also gather that governmental authorities are preparing a roadmap for a partnership between the government and different world organizations of women empowerment connect (WEC) to sort out all the above discussed issues on war footing. They are also trying to bring back underprivileged women of society into mainstream. Recently, Indian government has formulated some financial policies and packages especially designed for women and in this context, government has also strictly instructed the bankers to be alert that only women should be real beneficiary otherwise accountability would be fixed upon them. Again, with a view to empowering women exclusively, Indian government has also started a financial scheme namely 'Priyadarshani' to be floated in entire country to empower deprived women financially. The aim and objective of this scheme is to strengthen and elevate women educationally, morally and spiritually. But, still no desired result is coming out because there are so many man – made hurdles and it require strong determination and will to overcome these difficulties as well as the support and deliberations of intellectuals of the world and they should also patiently work continuously in all the above discussed directions to make this goal realistic.

At last, to conclude with the note of caution and instruction from Mahatma Gandhi towards judicious exercise of freedom and reason from women's side, it is once again apt and appropriate to quote Gandhiji's concluding remark in this direction and he reflects rightly:

"I believe in the proper education of women. But I do not believe that women will make contribution to the world by mimicking or running a race with man. She can run the race, but she will not rise to the great heights she is capable of by mimicking man. She has to be really complement of man"¹⁰

Reference

1. Mahatma Gandhi, "India of my Dreams," Rajpal & sons, 2008, p. 210.
2. "A statement appeared in India Today", Dec. 8, 2008.
3. Mahatma Gandhi, "young India", 27-9-1928.
4. C.Hamilton, " Marriages as a trade", Appeared in "Ethics: A Feminist Reader", Blackwell Publishers USA, 1992,P. 40.
5. Ibid, P.39.
6. Ibid,P.39-40.
7. Mahatma Gandhi, "Harizan", 2-12-1939.
8. Mahatma Gandhi, "India of my Dreams", Rajpal & Sons, 2008, p. 210.
9. O.P. Gupta, "Social and Political Philosophy", Mayur Paperbacks, 2006, p.250.
10. Mahatma Gandhi, "Harizan," 27-2-1937.