

WOMEN EMPOWERMEN

Introduction:

- ◆ The life of women has undergone major transformation in recent times. The modern woman is no longer confined to the four walls of the house.
- ◆ Women are now realizing their worth in every way & demanding gender equality & justice both at home & in the work place.
- ◆ They have broken the glass barrier in almost every field, entrepreneurship development programmes like start up and stand up India, Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana have enabled women to stand on their own feet.
- ◆ A Woman is a full circle, within her is the power to create, nurture and transform. Nari Shakthi is a concept that has existed in Indian Culture since time immemorial. The mother goddess has been worshipped from ancient times in various forms – Durga and kali in East India, Mahishasura Mardini and Bhagawati in Kerala, etc. She has always been portrayed as the epitome of shakthi, able to accomplish that which man cannot.
- ◆ This however, is only one side of the picture. The flip side is a grim scenario of women having no voice in their own lives, leave alone the decisions of the family. They had been subservient to the men in their lives. Their aspirations were not considered important enough to be encouraged. Their hardships were submerged in their responsibilities as mother, wife and daughter.
- ◆ Women make up half of India's population.

Cultural stereotype:

- ◆ We hear of horrific incidents of violence every day, and despite control over their finances, they are often not given an equal day in household (or work decisions).
- ◆ There is stereotyping of women's work, gender wage gaps & limited (or) no values to productive resources enhances economic inequality.
- ◆ Women face inappropriate allocation of talent & human capital.
- ◆ This is because gender discrimination has its roots in the Indian society since ancient times.
- ◆ In recent years, the traditional roles of women have undergone some changes due to economic needs & other reasons.

- ◆ Our Constitution guarantees the right to equality and right to not be discriminated against on the basis of sex.

Government Initiative:

- ◆ Government views the problems plaguing the women of India, as problems plaguing our entire society.
- ◆ Government has taken a number of measures to ensure that female citizens have equal opportunities along with a supporting and safe environment for their development.
- ◆ Government initiatives for empowerment of women is multi dimensional with conveyance schemes of different ministries & Department. Let us discuss each of them

Workplace:

- ◆ In the workplace today every fourth worker in India is woman.
- ◆ The more technical & complex the work, the more likely we are to find an increasing number of women.
- ◆ With increasing participation of women in variety of fields her bargaining power steadily increasing. With increase in access to transportation would enable to increase women's labour participation rate which is evident in rural area.
- ◆ Women still contribute a disproportionate amount of unpaid work in their home & on farms.
- ◆ There is further decline in female labour participation rate which is very low compared to any other region of the world. It is due to both individual & family constraints.
- ◆ Maternity benefit act has been amended which extends paid leave for working women to 26 weeks. In order to extend protection of women in unorganised sector government under PM Matru Vandana Yojana provide practical compensation for wage loss, for pregnant & lactating mother. A recent SEBI rule makes women representative in board of companies. Strict implementation of sexual harassment of women and workplace Act 20B covers all women in both in public and private organisation.
- ◆ Ministry of WCD has set up online complaint system for case of sexual harassment at workplace which makes it easier for women to report.
- ◆ STEP - Support to Training & Employment programme for women by ministry of WCD - to train women with no access to formal skill training

Financial Empowerment:

- ◆ Economic empowerment is central to overall empowerment of women. This is done by suhanya Samirddhi Yojana & PM Jan Dhan Yojana.
- ◆ SHG Play an effective role for promoting women entrepreneurship. It not only reserved their income but also their social status.

Encouraging Entrepreneurship:

- ◆ PM Mudra Yojana -75% of these loans are given to women.
- ◆ Over 47 lakh SHG have been promoted under NRCM.
- ◆ Start-up India
- ◆ Stand Up India
- ◆ Micro Credit mechanism is promoting the small-scale business enterprises. They have provided micro finance, capacity building programmes by training women.
- ◆ The office of development commissioner of MSME has opened a women cell to provide co-ordination & assistance to women entrepreneurs facing specific problems.
- ◆ SIDDI has been implementing two special schemes – Mahila Udayam Nidhi – exclusive for providing equity to women entrepreneurs
- ◆ TREADC -Trade related entrepreneurship Assistance & development enables Credit availability to under privileged women through NGO.
- ◆ NITI Aayog – women entrepreneurship platform aimed at building an ecosystem for women entrepreneurial aspiration by three pillars.
 1. Ichha Shakthi – Motivating aspiring entrepreneurs to start their enterprises.
 2. Gyaan Shakthi – Providing Knowledge & Ecosystem support to foster entrepreneurship.
 3. Karma Shakthi – Providing hands on support to setting up & scaling up business.
- ◆ Women's entrepreneurship can make a particular strong contribution to the economic well being of the family & communities, poverty alleviation& women's empowerment. Keeping this in mind the government has taken much initiative focusing women.

Health:

- ◆ If a country aims to build a civilization where women are strong, equal, active & productive members of their society, ensuring quality & equitable health care services to women is critical.

- ◆ It is believed that women empowerment begins from the womb. Preventing sex selection & stopping sex selective elimination is the first step towards empowerment of women.

Health Empowerment:

- ◆ Ministry of health implements several programmes for health of women following a “life – cycle continuum of care approach to ensure equal focus on various life stages of women, ranging from a pregnant woman, the renovates, infants, young children adolescents & family planning programmes.
- ◆ Janani Shiksha Sara kasha karyakaram (JSSK) entitles all pregnant women delivering in public health institution to absolutely free & no expenses.
- ◆ To Ensure quality of services around child birth, government launched HaQshya program -Labour room quality improved initiative.
- ◆ In Effort to educate the parents & care givers about good child rearing practices the book titled ‘Journey of first 1000 days has been published by Ministry of Health.
- ◆ Rashtriya Kishore Swasthya Karyakaram (RKSK) for adolescent health. Weekly Iron – folic acid supplementation provided to in school & out school girls.
- ◆ For planned pregnancy, Ministry & Health Introduced new contraceptives injectable – Chhaya & Antara.
- ◆ Special newborn care unit was established district level to ensure healthy childhood for the girl child.
- ◆ Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyagvam is an initiative to improve the overall quality of children through early detection of birth defect, diseases, efficiencies.

Minority Women:

- ◆ The Population of tribal woman is 5.19 crores which is 49.7% of the total tribal population tribal women have always enjoyed significant place in social structure.
- ◆ Ministry of Tribal affairs initial number of steps via scheme for the welfare of tribes, in doing so it joined hands with other civil society agencies & private to reach the grass root level.
- ◆ Ministry of tribal affairs-initiated number of steps to enhance the socio-economic status of the tribal population, preserving their dignity and culture.

- ◆ Specially tailored education infrastructure & Livelihood schemes have been designed towards bridging gaps of tribal's with other social groups
- ◆ National commission for ST (NCST) was established to overview the implementation of various safeguards provided to ST under the constitution
- ◆ Adivasi MahilaSashktikaram Yojana-National ST Finance & Development Corporation has providing exclusive scheme for the economic development of ST Women TRIFED Schemes which provide market for ST Women Produce.
- ◆ Forest Rights Act provides for full & unrestricted participation of women at all levels. Rights conferred shall be registered jointly in the name of both the spouses.
- ◆ Forest Rights committee provides that at least two – third members shall be ST & not less than one – third of such members shall be women.

Way Forward:

- ◆ No Progress in the country can endure unless it comes with the empowerment of women
- ◆ The way forward lies in the conviction that we must have women led development rather than just women's development.
- ◆ Women need a safe & enabling environment which encourages their empowerment they should be able to live without fear so that can explore their potential and not be bound by artificial restraints.
- ◆ Better responsiveness of the state to crime rates and sexual harassment, laws extending night working hours for women and incentives for women entrepreneurs can make the change in lives of working women.
- ◆ Female political representation promotes female employment due to sensitive policy making. Higher receptiveness of female leaders leads to more accommodating work environment for their female constituents.
- ◆ The Conventional one size fits all empowerment programmes fail to address problems of the most marginalised women because they have not recognised that women's aspirations & needs are complex, sometimes contradictory.
- ◆ To challenge the dominant beliefs of the society in terms of hierarchy, patriarchy & power politics requires empowerment policies & programmes that seek to and understand how

the convergence of multiple identities with gender manifests to impale women's empowerment.

- ◆ If gender empowerment is to be attained women's voices need to be heard in a broad range of decision-making forums from households to national parliaments.

Conclusion:

- ◆ As India looks forward to reaping benefits from its demographic dividend the role of empowered women becomes all the more important.
- ◆ Empowerment of women is a continuous process & government, society must commit to it.
- ◆ Recent Judgement of SC in Section 497 adultery which made the provision gender neutral, instant triple Talaq, right to property and inherit are progressive in nature, there is still lot to go.

