



GENDER AND MEDIA: REPRESENTATIONS, ISSUES AND CHALLENGES



Editor

Dr. Mahananda Chandrakant Daryi

(OUR RESPONSIBILITY CEASES ONCE THE VEHICLE LEAVES THE PLATFORM)

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WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA: FACT OR FANTASY?

Mr. N.M. Ankushrao

Abstract:

The present research paper deals with two different sides of women empowerment which is fact or just imagination. Most of people think that women are empowered, got equal status and opportunity, they are leaders and decision-makers. It is absolutely fact at the some extent. But it has another side too, which should be taken into consideration. Numerous women are tolerating atrocities against them. As a result, the researcher examines reality of women empowerment.

Keywords: Empowerment, atrocity, humanism, patriarchy, tradition etc.

Women empowerment is the most arguable concept in the last few years. For understanding thoroughly the concept of women empowerment, it is essential to understand the term 'empowerment'. According to Cambridge Dictionary, 'The process of gaining freedom and power to do what you want or to control what happens to you'. It means if we want to empower someone, we will have to give him/her freedom, power authority and control. American psychologist and Professor Julian Rappaport introduced the term 'empowerment' which afterwards spread all over the world from America. Empowering women means to give all above things to women for uplifting and raising their status in the society. In fact, women empowerment is an umbrella term which includes many areas encompassing society, politics, economical and cultural things. As far as Indian context is concerned, it was started in the era of Mahatma Phule by putting up with many issues and enduring injustice. Mahatma Phule and Savitribai Phule who broke the shackles of so-called 'tradition' and opened the first school for girls in Bhide wada Pune. Many Indian social reformers and progressive thinkers like Raja Ram

Mohan Roy, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Chatrapati Shahu Maharaj and Mahatma Gandhi put forth their thoughts on the need of women empowerment. Swami Vivekananda rightly observes, 'There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved' (www.speakingtree.in). He also says, 'We should not think that we are men and women but only that we are human beings, born to cherish and to help one another'. (www.speakingtree.in). He focuses on the uplift of women is must from improving one's own family, society and country; and draws our attention to gender equality and humanism. The term 'women empowerment' includes self-awareness, self-recognition, self-identify, equal status and opportunity, honour, decision-making authority, choices but patriarchal attitude and masculine ego of men are the obstacles in the way of women empowerment. Without gender equality, women empowerment is impossible. 'Gender equality will be achieved only when women and men enjoy the same opportunities, rights, and obligations in all spheres of life' (Rama Devi.T. 141).

In India, women empowerment can be seen in the form of women's progress in each and every field. Having covered almost all the sectors like government, business, defence, research, tourism etc., women have reached at the peak of success and became leaders in the 21st century. Many examples can be seen like Indira Gandhi, Pratibha Patil, Kalpna Chawla, Kiran Bedi, Sudha Murthy, Mary Kom, Indra Nooyi who set a good example before girls and women. These women are the source of inspiration to other women who are leaving a permanent mark in their fields. Having understood that they will be exploited mentally and physically unless becoming economically independent, they crossed the threshold of tradition and made themselves free from shadow and shackles of patriarchy. Numerous women nowadays have become economically independent whether they belong to urban or rural area. Many self-help groups, small scale industries and microfinance are uplifting the economical situation of women who proved themselves as leaders and decision-makers.

Having taken into consideration the scenario of women's success, we need to introspect and rethink, 'Are they all really get empowered'? We can definitely not get confident answer. Close

observation is needed to see physical and mental exploitation of women who are yet being trapped in the cage of so-called tradition and patriarchy. Simone de Beauvoir observes, 'One is not born, but rather becomes a woman' (Beauvoir, Simone de 301). She wants to say that a woman doesn't born but she has been made in the course of time from childhood by forcing rules, regulation and restriction on her. Domestic violence, sexual abuse and disrespect still prevail in rural and urban area. Tolerating indifferent and lewd remark, they have to go their work places and not fully safe till their arrival at home. Some men have stereotypes which need to be broken. All these things are sufficient to prove that masculine mentality hasn't been changed in 21st century. Nirbhaya and Dr. Disha rape-murder cases, shook the whole country, are enough to prove that atrocities against women are unstoppable. Acid attack and burning alive are common in our country. As far as politics is concerned, thirty three percentages women reservation bill in Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assembly is yet to be passed. Few female M.Ps. and M.L.As are seen in parliament and state assembly. It means they are not politically empowered. A woman has not right to keep her baby or to abort, which is decided by her husband. Lot of miles are ahead to get equal status. The present scenario makes us to introspect that women are not socially, economically, politically empowered in the second decade of 21st century. Purusottam Nayak and Bidisha Mahanta remark: 'The position of women in the country in the social, economic and political fields by no means equal to that of male counterparts'.

Women empowerment is really debatable issue in the recent times. Having educated, some women got equal opportunities and status. But the ratio of successful women is very less in compare to other women who are still being abused, harassed, and beaten and some are victims of acid attack in Indian society. It is a huge contrast that a woman is being supposed an incarnation of goddess but on the other hand these goddesses in the form human are burnt alive. After independent, the social condition of women has not been drastically changed. As a result, it is necessary to think, 'Are they really empowered'?

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