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vulnerability in all sectors - economic, social, political, education, health care, nutrition and legal. Women are oppressed in the spheres of life and as such they need to be empowered in all social contexts. This is also tellingly brought out in the following observation recorded by the United Nations.

Women must have equal roles to play for the progress of the society. The progress and development of the nation is measured on different yardsticks. Among them education is the most important indicator. Quality, progress and development of education indicate the growth of the country. Different documents conclusively prove that the quality and growth of education in ancient India was quite high and the lives and living standard was also very good. At that same time education of women was considered very important at that time. "Women empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society including participation in the decision making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement, equality, development and peace". This paper will focus on social movements of women empowerment.

UNDERSTANDING EMPOWERMENT:

Women empowerment is a global issue. This concept of women empowerment appears to be the outcome of several important critiques, discussion, dialogues and debates by the women movement throughout the world, especially in the third world countries (feminist). Empower is a term widely used in the context of development, particularly women's development. The empowerment approach was first clearly activated in 1985 by Development Alternatives with women for a new era (DAWN). In the mid 1980's the term empowerment became popular in the field of development, especially with reference to women.

Power is the key word of the term 'Empowerment' which means control over material assets, intellectual resources and ideology. The material assets over which control can be established may be of any type - physical (land, water and forests), human (people's bodies labour and skills), financial such as (money and access to money). Knowledge, information, ideas can be included in intellectual resources.

According to Pillai (1995). Empowerment is an active multi - dimensional process which enables women to realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life. Power is not a commodity to be transacted, nor can it be given away as aims. Power has to be acquired, and once acquired, it needs to be exercised, sustained and preserved".

Empowerment stands for acquiring the power to think, to speak, to act freely, to exercise choice, to raise voice and to be able to take a decision. This is equally true for both men and women. Empowerment is a process and the process of empowerment is both individual and collective, since it is through involvement in groups that people most often began to develop their awareness and the ability to organize, to take action and bring about change. Empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, to greater decision making power and control and transformative action. Empowerment, in a nutshell, is a way of defining, challenging and overcoming barriers in one's life through which an individual increases his or her ability to shape his or her life and environment.

MEANING AND CONCEPT OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT :

The Concept of Women Empowerment was voiced in the International Women's conference in Nairobi in 1985. In this conference women's empowerment was considered as a distribution of social power and center of resources in favour of women. Empowerment is an active process enabling women to realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life. The goals of women empowerment are to challenge patriarchal ideology to transform the structures and institutions that reinforce and obliterate gender discrimination and social inequality and to enable poor women to gain access to and control of, both material and informational resources.

- a set of mind and attitude of a person. An empowered woman has a positive self image and takes an active part in decision making related to herself, her family and the community.
- greater access to knowledge and resources, greater autonomy in decision making and greater ability to overcome restrictions and constraints imposed by

customs, beliefs and practices, self confidence and understanding to the importance of human values, rights and privilege, conducive for a more dignify and satisfactory way of life.

At a workshop of Pacific Women entitled 'Women, Development and Empowerment (1987)', Vanessa Griffen spoke about what empowerment means to her : To me, the word simply means, adding to women's power and it means:

- having control, organizing further control.
- having a say and being listened to.
- being able to define and create from women's perspective.
- being able to influence social choices and decisions affecting the whole society (not just areas of society accepted as a women's place)
- being organized and respected as equal citizens and human being with a contribution to make.

According to Kamala Bhasin (1992), empowerment of women means :

- recognizing women's contribution and knowledge.
- helping women fight their own fears and feelings of inadequacy and inferiority.
- women enhancing their self respect and self dignity.
- women controlling their own bodies.
- women becoming economically independent and self reliant.
- creating and strengthening women's group and organization.
- promoting qualities of maturing, caring gentleness, not just in women but also men.

The national policy for the Empowerment of women (2001) was announced on the basis of some objectives to strengthen and enhance the process of empowerment: The policy was -

- creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential.
- equal access to participation and decision making of women in social, political and economic life of the nation.
- mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development process.
- changing societal attitudes and community practices by active participation and involvement of both men and women.
- building and strengthening partnership with civil society, particularly women's organizations.

Women Empowerment let us see the position of women in Indian from the Report of the working group on 'Empowerment of women' for the 11th five years plan (2006) The crime clock maintained by the NCRB reveals a shocking figure -

- crime committed against women every 3 minutes.
- molestation case every 15 minutes.
- rape case every 29 minutes.
- sexual Harassment case every 53 minutes.
- dowry Death case every 77 minutes.
- cruelty by Husband and Relatives case every 9 minutes.

The UNESCO recognizes the empowerment of the women is a pre-condition for national development and progress and identified the, following five critical areas

- equal access to education for women and girls.
- women's contribution to peace.
- women's access to the media and their image in the media.
- women's contribution to the management of natural resources and environmental protection.

- the Girl child with regard to access to education and literacy to be given priority in all its endeavors to the development of world.

Women's empowerment can be viewed as a continuum of several interrelation and mutually reinforcing components :

- awareness building about women's situation, discrimination and rights and opportunities as a step towards gender equality.

Collective awareness building provides as sense of group Identity and the power of working as a group.

- capacity building and skills development, especially the ability to plan, make decisions, organize, manage and carry out activities to deal with people and institutions in the world around them.

- participation and greater control and decision making power in the home, community and society.

- action to bring about greater equality between man and women.

Since time immemorial women have played, and continue to play, a key role in conservation of basic life. Support systems, such as land, water, flora and fauna. So they should have a special role and status in the society. Ultimately empowered women develop some special qualities in their lives. Some of these are -

- women's are able to transform their lives.
- they can organize themselves effectively.
- women's are able to identify their own problems and an solve these problems.
- they can take care of their own learning process.
- women are responsible and accountable for and reflexive on their values, beliefs motivation, rights and duties and obligation.
- women's can create physical security and safe social environment.
- they are able set their own goals and can develop their own strategies.
- they can organize their own resources.
- women's can do their own work and evaluate them.

The above qualities of empowerment show that the term is a complex,

multidimensional related to mental, physical, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of one's life and society. So it also depends on the situational variables and should be considered from the point of view of demands of requirements of the respective populations.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:

In 1813, the chartered Act entrusted the EIC to educate the people but, there was no mention of women's education. The Wood's Dispatch (1854) gave emphasis on girls education and accepted the declaration of the Governor General of Bengal that emphasized on women to improve the moral of the people of India.

In 1882 in India education Commission (Hunter Commission) discussed the education of women with special emphasis. Recommendation of the education commission (1882) made it possible the entry of women to the profession of teaching and nursing.

In 1925 the national council of women was established and in 1928 the first "All India Women's conference" was held and the conference demanded the same type of education for both men and women. Karve established the SNDT Women's college in Bombay in 1916, which was recognized as university in 1938. All of these had influenced positively towards the development of women education in India.

But long before that the "Vakti Cult" movements and later movements of the leaders like Vidyasagar, Ram Mohan, David Hare, Bethune, Derogeo, Vivekananda, Gandhiji, Ranade, Karve etc. had made much headway towards the development and empowerment of women. "The Brahman Dharma" movement had also made visible contribution in the case.

Women empowerment is a process of social change. It is synonymous with the achievement of equality and equal mildness in society. It will enable women to maintain stronger functioning position. It enables autonomy and control over their lives. The empowered women became agents of their own developments, able to exercise choice to set their own agenda and be strong enough to challenge and change their subordinate position in the society. Empowerment is self esteemed

and collective mobilization for challenging basic power relation like social injustice and mobilization of resources. It is self-governance, self sufficiency and self-maintenance.

In a broader sense, empowerment of a women means two thing - liberty from her subordination in the family and release from her sub-alternate in the society. It represents three types of freedom-freedom from ignorance, freedom from exploitation and freedom from inequality and injustice Empowerment has become the key solution to many social problems like high population growth rate, environmental degradation and law status of women.

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