

***An Overview of Women Empowerment and Welfare Strategies and Schemes in India***

Pallabi Devi, Research Scholar,  
Department of Sociology, Dibrugarh University  
Dipu Sarmah, Student  
Department of History, Dibrugarh University

**Abstract**

'Women' the weaker sections of society was defined by past and present great Indian culture, for the development of women, the Government of India and local bodies provided the many strategies and schemes. The purpose of the schemes are that the empowerment of women could only be achieved if their social and economic status is upgraded. The present paper tries to analyse the women empowerment strategies and plans in India past and present in the 21st century. It is also an overview of various schemes on health, education and financial assistance for women empowerment. The paper also discussed the role of Government and legislative measures for women rights and providing opportunities for women empowerment at the past and present society.

**Keyword:** Women, Empowerment, Strategies and Schemes.

**1. Introduction:**

Empowerment is a multidimensional concept and relates to the social attainment of economic participation and political participation of people. The idea of empowerment implies formal rather than substantive power, and it involves an external upper-level agency to grant power rather than people below seizing it in the course of the struggle. Further empowerment being an on-going process, there is no final goal.

Women empowerment means the capacity to participate as equal men in social, economic and political systems of a society. It refers to increasing the spiritual, political, educational, social, gender and financial strength individuals and communities of women. Women empowerment policies and schemes exist at the national, state and local (Panchayat) level, various sectors including health, education, economic opportunities and challenges and gender-based violence and political participation as well. The main problems faced by women in still today up to some extent: gender discrimination, lack of education, female infanticide, financial constraints, low ability to bear risk, dowry, atrocities of women, i.e. raped, kicked, kill, subdued etc. The need for women empowerment is that: deprived of

decision making power, freedom of movement, access to education, access to employment, domestic violence and exposure to media.

**2. Objectives:** The main objectives of the paper are to an overview of the women empowerment schemes in incredible India and give some suggestions for the fight against the women empowerment and development in the present era.

**3.Methods:** For the present paper, secondary sources of data like the website report, compiled books and articles used only.

**4. Discussion:** Many challenges are currently to harass against women in our present era. Many of the issues are redundant and quite necessary, which has faced across the country; they are contributory causes to the overreaching status of women in India. In these issues will directly benefit the empowerment of women in India(Rana Mohak, 2014). These are mainly education, poverty in the country, health and society etc.

Government of India has decided and implemented various reducing schemes for the above challenges. Thus the Government of India has implemented the strategies for empowerment of women. The concrete base of the government programmes for women empowerment began as early as 1954 in India. But the actual participation started only in 1974. Various attempts taken by the GOI during post-independent India toward the women empowerment are- Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (1993), Mahila Samidhri Yojana (Oct, 1993), Indira Mohila Yojana (1995, Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP), Hostels for Working Women, Creches/daycare Centre for the Children of Working and Ailing Mothers, National Mission for Empowerment of Women, Integrated Child Development Services (1975), Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for the empowerment of Adolescence Girls, (2010), Integrated Child Protection Scheme (2009-2010), Dhanalakhmi (2008), Prime Minister Rojgar Yojana, Integrated Rural Development Programme, Women Development Corporation scheme, Working Women's Forum, Indira Mahila Kendra, Women Helpline Scheme, Khadi and Village Industries Commission, Maternity Benefit Programme, Beti Bachao Beti Podhao Scheme, etc. At present, the GOI has several schemes for women operated by different departments and Ministries.

**4.1.Welfare through Legislation:**The government of India undertook some legislative measures to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and to provide for the

'Justice'. For examples- The prevention of Sati Act,1829; The Hindu widow Remarriage Act,1856; The Child Marriage Restraint Act,1929; Divorce as per the Sharia Act,1937; Divorce as per the Muslim Dissolution act,1939; The Hindu marriage Act, 1955; the Hindu Succession Act, 1956; The Hindu adoption and maintenance act,1956; The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961(amendment 1984); The Equal Remuneration Act,1976; The Family Court Act,1984; maternity Benefit Act,1961; The medical termination of Pregnancy Act,1971; National Commission for Women,1990; Rastriya Mahila kosh(1992-93) Sexual Harassment of women at workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 etc.

#### **4.1.1. Constitutional Provisions For empowerment of women:**

- Equality before law for all persons (Article 14).
- Provision of discrimination on the grounds of religion, caste, sex or place of birth (Article 15(1)).
- Article 16 describes the equality of opportunity for all citizens relating to employment and appointment office under the state.
- State policy to be directed to securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood. (Article 39A).
- Equal pay for equal work from both are men and women (Article 39 (d)).
- Reservation is not less than one-third of total seats for women indirect election to local bodies like Panchayats and Municipalities (Article 343(d) and 343(T)).

#### **4.1.2. Empowerment of Women and the 73<sup>rd</sup> constitution of India (Amendment Act):**

The 73<sup>rd</sup> constitution amendment act made an effort to give some special powers to women in all the three tiers of Panchayat raj. It states that the social and economic status of women could not be improved much without political power. Women in villages and towns need to give some political power. They should provide their share in the decision-making process. As per the provision of 73<sup>rd</sup> constitutional amendment act, one-third of the seats, reserved for women along with schedule castes and scheduled tribes. It has created some awareness among women; it suffers from many drawbacks. These are illiteracy, non-availability of corrupt leadership and bureaucracy and bias towards elites and middle class etc.

**4.3. Schemes for Improving women's Health:**A large numbers of organizations, independent surveys and studies conducted by women's health. Various governmental

agencies like Indian Council of Medical Research, Ministry of health and family welfare, Central Government Health Services Scheme (CGHS) etc. have been a touch to promote women's health. Such schemes are supervise improving women's health and nutrition like **Janani Suraksha Yojana** is a safe motherhood intervention under the National Rural Health Mission (NHM) and was implemented to the objective of reducing maternal and neo local mortality and promoting institutional delivery among the poor pregnant women. The scheme was defined under implementation in all states and union territories with a special focus on Low performing States (LPS). It was launched in April 2005 modifying the National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS). The NMBS provides for financial assistance of 500 rupees per birth up to two live births to pregnant women who have attained 19 years of age and below poverty line households. The JSY was launched the financial assistance of Rs.500 which was available uniformly throughout the country to BPL(Below Poverty Line) pregnant women, under NMBS was replaced by graded scale of assistance were based on the categorization of states as well as whether beneficiary was from rural/urban areas.

One of the schemes, **Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY)** is a maternity benefit scheme implemented by the Ministry of Women and Child Development sponsored by the Government of India. Under this scheme conditional maternity benefit is a centrally sponsored scheme for pregnant and lactating women have improve their health and nutrition status by providing cash incentives to pregnant and nursing mothers. October, 2010 it was implemented on a pilot basis and is now operational in 53 selected districts. The scheme were attempts to partly compensate for wage loss to pregnant and lactating women after delivery the child. The scheme was important that providing cash directly to the beneficiary, through their bank accounts/post office accounts; in response to individual fulfilling the specific conditions. In the particular scheme covers all pregnant and lactating women from 19 years of age and above for first two live births and are entitled for benefit under the scheme.

**Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan** is a new initiative of the Norendra Modi government launched on June 6, 2016; launched with the objective of boosting the health care facilities for women, especially the poor. Under this scheme the pregnant women will be given free health check up; required treatment for free on 9<sup>th</sup> of every month. It will be

applicable for pregnant women to entry in all government hospitals across the country. The main motives of Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matriva Abhiyan were normally when a woman gets pregnant, she suffers from various kinds of disease and health issues such as blood pressure, high sugar and hormonal diseases. The scheme thus will provide free check up to the pregnant women assuring their good health and birth of a healthy child. It is more applicable only the women in their pregnancy period of 3 to 6 months. The women who are not from urban, and belong to semi urban, poor and rural areas will be given preferences under the Surakshit matriva abhiyan.

**4.4. Educational Development plan for women:** Schemes for Elementary, Secondary and higher education- With the formulation of national policy of education in India initiated a wide range of programmes for students as well as girls. Schemes of elementary education Such as: Sarva Sikhya Abhiyan, Mid day meal, Mahila Samakhya and Strengthening for providing quality education in Madrassas.

On the other hand, Secondary education is the most significant in the educational hierarchy as it prepares the students for higher education and further the division of labour. The policy at present is to make secondary education of good quality available, accessible and affordable to all people in the age group of 14-18. The following schemes targeted at secondary stage are being implemented in the form of centrally sponsored schemes- Rastriya Madhyamik Shikha Abhiyan (RMSA), Girls Hostel Scheme, National Scheme of Incentives to Girls for Secondary Education, Schemes of Vocational Education, National Merit cum-means Scholarship Scheme, Scholarship schemes for Minority Students, National Scholarship, etc.

The university grants commission had stressed as early as in 1948 the essential need for the education of women. The central education department, the National council for education Research and Training (NCERT) promotes educational development both qualitative and quantitative terms and makes special efforts to remove disparities and equalize educational opportunities for all students. The NAEP National adult Education Programme and other Institutions have evinced greater interest in providing educational facilities for women. Women study centre have been established with the assistance of UGC to study the status of women, their problems and issues concerned with women.

Schemes for Higher Education- Higher education is the shared responsibility of both centre and states. Coordination and determination of every standards in institutions is the constitutional obligation of the central government. The central government provides grants to UGC and establishes central universities in the country. Some significant scholarship and schemes provided to the meritorious students, both girls and boys. Some of these are: Schemes of Apprenticeship Training, National Scholarships, Post Doctoral Research Fellow, Junior Research Fellowships(JRF), All India council for Technical education Scholarships, Post-Matric Scholarship for ST/SC students, Sports Authority of India Promotional Schemes, Rastriya Uchachatar Shiksha Abhiyan Etc.

In India many girls are not allowed to good and perfect education. A good percentage of women who have studied hard and are competing with men at all levels in different industries. To empower women and to encourage women to study, private and public banks in India have introduced various education loan schemes that are designed especially for women. For examples Central bank of India and Indian Overseas Bank etc.

**Mahila Samakhya Programme** (MSP) is under National Policy on Education, 1986 recognised the empowerment of women were faced the most critical condition for the participation of girls and women in the education system. These programme was launched in 1988 to pursue the objectives of the national policy of education, 1986. It has recognised that education can be an effective tool for women's empowerment, the parameters of which are:

- Enhancing self esteem and self confidence of women.
- Building a positive image of women by recognising their contribution to the society, polity and the economy and
- developing ability to think critically.
- promoting the decision making and action through collective processes were
- enabling women to make informed choices in areas like education employment and health.
- Ensuring equal participation in developmental process.
- Providing information knowledge and skill economic independence etc.

#### **4.5. Economic Development Schemes for Women:**

To ensure the economic development for women, the five year planning launched some areas; such as factories, mining, offices, teaching, nursing, tea and coffee plantation etc. Central Social Welfare board and State social Welfare board implemented a lot of schemes and NGOs also started empowering schemes and awareness programmes like Self Help Group. Self help groups have started by Non-governmental (NGO) that generally has board anti poverty agendas. Self help groups are seen as instruments for goals including empowering women, developing leadership abilities among poors, increasing school enrolments and improving nutrition and the use of birth control.

**Rastriya Mahila Kush** was established in 1993 as a national level organization to meet the credit needs of poor and asset-less women in the informal sector. Its initial corpus has grown hugely due to prudent credit, investment and recovery management. Its governing board consist of 16 members including government representatives and microfinance specialists. It extends micro credit to poor and unprivileged through a collateral, quasi formal delivery mechanism where NGO's women cooperative, federations etc act as intermediaries. The union budget, it was proposed to restructure the scheme by converting it into a non-banking financial company (NBFC) from 2012 to 2013. Rastriya Mahila kosh has taken by promotional measures to popularize the concept of microfinance, thrift and credit, formation and stabilization of self help groups and enterprise development of women. Rastriya Mahila Kosh extends microfinance through intermediary micro finance4 organizations. Some of its loan schemes include: Loan promotional Scheme, Main loan Scheme, Revolving Fund Scheme, Family Loan Scheme etc.

The **Mahila Udyam Nidhi Scheme (MUN)** and the objective of this scheme is to provide equity type of assistance and the main target to women entrepreneurs for setting up new industrial venture with the project up to Rs. 10 lakh in small scale sectors.

Regarding the financial assistance, **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwalla Yojana** also under the Government of India; and the objective is to provide free LPG connection for women. Pradhan mantri ujjwalla yojana is a new social welfare scheme lunched by the Norendra Modi Government. Under this Yojana the Government aims to provide free LPG connections for the women from the BPL households. Under this scheme, the government

has set aside Rs. 8000 crore for three years providing free LPG connections to the women belonging to the below poverty line households Rs. 2000 cores have already been aside in 2016-17 union budget to cover the initial cost of providing the free LPG connection.

**The Mohila Kisan Shasaktikaran Pariyojana** a new MKSP has been initiated as a sub component of the national rural livelihoods mission (NRLM) to meet the specific needs of women farmers, predominantly small and marginal farmers.

### **5.Suggestions:**

- ❖ The first and foremost issue is that Self defence. Self defence for women is of utmost important in the kind of world where we live in today the 21st century. Women are usually referred as the weaker sections, are considered easier targets. In a country like India where the cases of gender violence are on rise, out of which many go unreported, self defence for women has become a necessity more than ever.
- ❖ NGO and other government organizations need to be organised programme for creating awareness among women specially belonging to weaker sections for their rights.
- ❖ Women should be allowed to different work and should be provided enough safety and support to work.
- ❖ Strict implementation of programmes and Acts should be eradicating the mal-practices prevalent in the society and
- ❖ treat all women and men are both fairly at work from full respect and support human rights and no discrimination.
- ❖ Promote education, Skill development, training and professional development for women.

**Conclusion:** Adopting definite social and economic policies with a view of total development of women and to make them realized that they have the potential to be strong human beings. In this paper it has found that the real scenario of women empowerment in present day may be strong and unique. The implementation of various schemes and strategies for empowerment has been found the negative scenario of our society and



households. Mainly in some cases it leads to the problem of divorce; Women become more educated, politically and socially strong they don't want to compromise anything for anyone. It is a renowned notion that "When women move; the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves". Women empowerment will be effective only when they will be endowed and property that they may stand on their mentally and physically feet and build up their identity in the real society. Only the government scheme does not frequently achieve the definite goal. Society must take initiative to create a situation which there is no gender discrimination and women have full opportunities of self decision making and participating in social, economic and political life of the country with a sense of equality.

**References:**

Haralambos, M (2013) *Sociology Themes and Perspective*, Oxford University Press, 2013.

Hazarika, Dhurba. (2011). "Women Empowerment in India: A brief Discussion: *International Journal of Educational Planning & Administration*. Vol-1, Number 3.

Nagaraja, B. (2013). Empowerment of Women in India: A critical analysis. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHISS)*.

Rana Mohak (2014). Schemes and Strategies for Women Empowerment in India. *NIMS school of Law, Mumbai*.

Rao Sankar C.N, (2014). *Sociology of Indian Society*. Scand Publication, vol-1.

Singhal & Vipin Kumar (2015). Women Empowerment in India- Problems and Challenges". Sunrise Publications, Laxmi Nagar, New Delhi