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**A One Day National Level Seminar
on**

**VISION VIKSIT BHARAT 2047: CONTRIBUTION AND INITIATIVES OF DIGITAL INDIA
FOR EMPOWERING RURAL WOMEN**

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NALLAMUTHU GOUNDER MAHALINGAM COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), POLLACHI

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Vol – 2

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CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR EMPOWERING RURAL WOMEN

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Abstract

Women's Empowerment has been an issue of immense discussions and contemplation over the last few decades world-wide. This as an agenda has been on top of the lists of most government plans & programs as well. Efforts have been made on a regular basis across nations to address this issue and enhance the socio-economic status of women. However, it has been observed that most of the policies and programs view empowerment in the economic sense only working in the belief that economic self-reliance empowers women ignoring other variables like health, education, literacy etc. Introduction In the history of human development, woman has been as important as man. In fact, the status, employment and work performed by women in society is the indicator of a nation's overall progress. Without the participation of women in national activities, the social, economic or political progress of a country will be stagnated. Women constitute half of the humanity, even contributing two-thirds of world's work hours. She earns only one-third of the total income and owns less than one-tenth of the world's resources. This shows that the economic status of women is in pathetic condition and this is more so in a country like India. "Women constitute nearly 50 per cent of population, perform two-thirds of the work and produce 50 per cent of food commodities consumed by the country.

Keywords:- Empowerment, Development, Economically, Struggle, Education etc.

Introduction

In the North Eastern region essentially comprises of eight states and Assam is one of them. The states of eastern region are considered as the diffident area in terms of the per capita income. The socioeconomic set up of the state has not been favourable to on the whole progress. Since it is a mixed state with heterogeneous cultural backgrounds, it has been experiencing revolution and ethnic conflict for the last three decades because of which not only its economy but also the social construction is under risk. The most awful sufferers in the process are the women. The term empowerment will bring the impartiality among the society. Training for better efficiency does not suffice because women need decision making capacity and ability to organize and take part in community and national activities. All countries share a general characteristic. Their women are unable to give their best to the national development. The resulting curriculum and materials help prepare women for self-development as active members of their family, community and

nation. They seek overall personal development and account for the notorious double accountability that women shoulder as economic producers and as mothers and wives. The hidden power of women and her useless voices will come up through the multidimensional process of empowerment. The word itself consist the term 'power'. To understand this process for women s of Assam special aspects should be considered and deliberated. The author highlighted that there is considerable progress in the overall enrolment of girl students in schools from primary level to secondary level in Assam state. He states that the term empowers means to give lawful power or influence to act in a way they deem to be essential. Author observes that female empowerment promotes economic development. This study analyses and suggests that finance concentrated in the hands of mothers gives more reimbursement to children. This study developed a series of non-cooperative family bargaining models to recognize what kind of frictions can give rise to the observed empirical relationship.

Concept of Empowerment

Empowerment refers to policies and measures designed to increase the degree of autonomy and self-determination in the lives of people and in communities in order to enable them to represent their interests in a responsible and self-determined way, acting (again) on their own authority. Empowerment refers both to the process of self-empowerment and to professional support of people, which enables them to overcome their sense of powerlessness and lack of influence, and to recognize and eventually use their resources and chances. Empowerment is a multidimensional process, which should enable women or group of women to realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life. It consists of greater access to knowledge and resources, greater autonomy in decision making to enable them to have greater ability to plan their lives, or to have greater control over the circumstances that influence their lives and free from shocks imposed on them by custom, belief and practice. Generally development with justice is expected to generate the forces that lead to empowerment of various sections of population in a country and to raise their status especially in case of women. "Empowerment comes from Women's groups who seek to empower themselves through greater self-reliance. They have right to determine their own choices in life. They also seek to gain control and access to resources". Empowerment is process, which helps people to gain control of their lives through raising awareness, taking action and working in order to exercise greater control. Empowerment is the feeling that activates the psychological energy to accomplish one's goals. The term 'empowerment' has till-date not been very explicitly defined and it may be

assumed that based upon context the term may be interpreted contextually & situational. However, in context of women, empowerment essentially refers to a feeling of awareness of one's own situation backed up with the knowledge, skills and information which could enable women to gain higher self-esteem and facilitate their role as decision makers in the current patriarchal society where women have always been subordinate to men. Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social or economic strength of individuals and communities. It often involves the empowered developing confidence in their own capacities.

Types of Women Empowerments

- **Social Women Empowerment** - A critical aspect of social empowerment of women is the promotion of gender equality. General equality implies a society in which women and men enjoy the same opportunities, outcomes, rights and obligation in all spheres of life.
- **Educational Women Empowerment** - It means empowering women with knowledge, skill, and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process. It means making women aware of their rights and developing a confidence to claim them.
- **Economic and Occupational Empowerment** - it implies a better quality of material life. it means reducing financial dependence on their male counterparts by making them a significant part of human resources.
- **Legal Women Empowerment** - It suggests the provision of effective legal structure which is supportive of women empowerment. it means addressing the gaps between what the law prescribes and what actually occurs.
- **Political Women Empowerment** - It means the existence of a political system favoring participation and control by women in political decision-making processes and governance.

Women Empowerment in India

From ancient to modern period, women's condition socially, politically and economically has not remained the same and kept changing with times. In ancient India, women were having equal status as men in early Vedic period they were very educated and there are references of women sages such as Maitrayee in our ancient texts. Since the famous treatise of Manu, i.e., Manu smriti, the status of women was relegated to a subordinate position. all kinds of discriminatory practices started to come into existence such as child marriage, devadasi paratha, Nagar sadhu system. A few enlightened Indians such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, influenced by the modern concept of freedom, liberty, equality, and justice, started

to question the prevailing discriminatory practices against women. Through his unrelenting efforts, the British were forced to abolish the ill-practice of sati. Similarly other social reformers such as Ishwar Chandra Vidyanagar, swami Vivekananda, Acharya Vinoba Bhave, etc. Work for the upliftment of women in India. for instance, the widow remarriage act of 1856. Was the result of Ishwar Chandra Vidyanagar movement for improving the conditions for widows.

Indian national congress supported the first women delegation which met the secretary of state to demand women's political rights in 1917. the child marriage restraint act in 1929 was passed due to efforts of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, and also Mahatma Gandhi called upon the young men to marry the child widows urged people to boycott child marriage. during freedom movement almost all the leaders were of the view that women should be given equal status in free India and all types of discriminatory practices must stop for that to happen, it was through fit to include such provisions in the constitution of India which would help eliminate age-old exploitative customs and traditions, and also add provisions which would help in empowering women socially, economically and politically.

Women Empowerment Challenges and Aspects

- **Economic Backwardness:** Women constitute only 29% of the workforce., but form majority of destitute in the country. There has been failure in transforming the available women base into human resource.
- **Lack of Political Will:** The still pending women's reservation will underscores the lack of will to empower women politically. Male dominance prevails in the politics of India and women are forced to remain as mute spectators.
- **Education:** This is the most important and indispensable tools for women empowerment. It makes women aware of their rights and responsibilities. Educational achievements of women can have ripple effects for the family and across generations. Most of the girls drop out of school due to unavailability of separate toilets for them. The recently launched SWACHH BHARAT MISSION. Focusing on improving sanitation facilities in schools and every rural household by 2019 can prove to be very significant in bringing down the rate of girl dropping out of school. One issue of dropping education is child marriage. Or marriage in less age .so every girl and their parents have to make herself dependent first.
- **Bridging Implementation Gap:** Government or community based bodies must be setup to monitor the program devised for welfare of the society. Justice delayed is justice denied. Efforts should be made to restructure the

legal process to deliver fair and on time justice to victim of heinous crimes like rape, acid attack, sexual harassment, trafficking and domestic violence. The idea of fast-track courts, devised to impart speedy justice to victim of rapes and other crimes against women, is a good initiative taken by the judiciary and the government of India.

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