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## THE IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN AND COMPONENTS OF EMPOWERMENT – A CASE STUDY

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### Abstract:

*A woman has the right to happiness, the right to know, the right to make choices that affect her life and the right to have her opinion respected regarding her own body and her place in the family and in society. A woman has a right to respect within her family, the community and society. An empowered woman is free from enslavement, free from mental, physical or moral abuse from her family, social group or nation and she enjoys the right to develop herself to her full potential, spiritually, intellectually, artistically, socially and politically according to her choice. Moral abuse is to subject women to remarks that accuse and shame her for moral profligacy, if she does not conform to the dictates of the patriarchy or does not show respect to her husband or in laws in ways that they demand. She may be accused of taking a lover without any sign or evidence of this being the case.*

### INTRODUCTION :

It is necessary to confront age old patriarchal social attitudes that consider a woman to be less important than a man. She has been deprived of basic human, social and political rights for many centuries. Society can no longer justify these attitudes and their practices and behaviour. Our civilization has suffered and become damaged as a result of this lack of understanding. This programme on values and spirituality seeks to establish that empowered women are essential to bring balance and harmony into the world. Women need to claim their rightful position of equality and complementarily with men in order to restore equilibrium in society. Social development is obstructed by archaic patriarchal social attitudes. People who hold them need to recognize the legally defined rights of women in Indian society. The attainment of women's rights is an effort for human rights.

A woman is as important as a man. From ancient times to the present, women's labour and efforts, often unnoticed and always uncalculated, have contributed substantially to the well being of society. A woman is called the first guru of a child. A child is nurtured physically, emotionally and spiritually by the mother. Therefore, the mother is the key to the quality of the next generation. If the mother is aware of her value, if she is valued and respected by the family and society, if she enjoys her rights and privileges as a mother, wife and daughter, then these elements are transmitted to both her daughters and her sons.

The components of empowerment

You cannot get power by asking, demanding or complaining. You get power by claiming it. First you need to make yourself powerful. Women in general have been weakened emotionally and intellectually by the relentless challenges of a 'patriarchal, misogynistic and materialistic culture. Women in general have been corrupted by materialism, vanity, loss of self respect, dependence and subservience. Women (and men) have to heal their spiritual and psychological wounds, cultivate their intellectual and professional abilities and take power from the Divine through meditation, spiritual study and practice.

### **SELFEESTEEM**

An empowered woman is proud of herself. She feels good about the fact that she is a woman. The prevailing cultural attitude which many women absorb, is to feel ashamed and socialized to believe that she is not physically, emotionally or intellectually capable of doing many things that men can do. One of the slogans of the women's movement is, 'My biology is not my destiny'. While it is true that certain biological functions are performed only by women, in other human activities gender is not an issue. A woman need not feel sorry that she is a woman or try to be like a man. In our society, if someone wishes to compliant a woman they often use a male reference point and say, 'You are different, and you are just like a man'. Such negative compliments need to be challenged.

### **AWARENESS:**

An empowered woman is aware and educated about her rights. This presupposes inner sensitivity and intellectual examination of her intuitive feelings which she begins to articulate. She seeks out information, recognizes the value of discussion about relevant issues and follows matters up. When a woman knows and understands her rights and she is aware of her rights first as a person and then as a woman, she can take further steps. Awareness becomes a power when a person translates it into action.

### **POWER OF CHOICE:**

An empowered woman is free to make informed decisions and exercise her rights. This is the power of choice. Choice means a woman has control over her life and the freedom to make informed decisions relating to her body, as well as to all other aspects of her life. It does not mean that a woman has to do certain things to be labeled empowered. An empowered woman knows which choices she wishes to make and is free to exercise them. She does not do things only to please others. If a woman wants to stay at home or work outside, or remain single, she should be free to make those choices. An empowered woman is conscious of the gender inequalities in society. At every stage she resist them. She does not take for granted the way women are spoken about. An empowered woman is always conscious of gender biases hidden within language, attitudes and practices.

She identifies them and responds immediately and intelligently, that is, she demonstrates her ability to make choices based on understanding. Gender biases are deeply ingrained in all aspects of our society. Someone who is unaware will not notice them. An empowered woman does not compromise or accept that gender bias is so widespread that she can do nothing about it by an individual within one institution is cumulative and ultimately creates change on a wide scale.

A few women in India have broken the barriers that constrained them, identified their goals and reached the targets they set for themselves. Empowered women have usually had social, economic and educational advantages. The vision of women's liberation is realized when empowerment takes place on a large scale across all sections of society.

### **MICRO LEVEL CHANGE:**

The most effective approach to change develops at the micro level. This means that an individual does influence situations and can precipitate change but the person needs to be determined and undeterred by resistance. It is a form of leadership undertaken by individuals who present a clear and powerful vision of what is needed and how to accomplish it. This type of change is easy for others to follow as they have an example. The macro approach means to attempt to bring change through legislation and impose new attitudes and behaviors from above. The macro approach has been tried for a very long time but it has succeeded only in perpetuating inequalities.

An empowered woman can bring change through the micro level approach. She first of all looks at herself. She has daily contact with many people and may enjoy wide social contacts and have many who listen to her. She communicates these ideas through her life and provides alternative perspectives to those around her. If someone does not appreciate or accept the alternative viewpoint, it is not a reason to give it up. It is very important to continue to resist all forms of bias against women and against people. Our society has made women invisible and the time has now come for women to become visible. An empowered woman will be conscious of forms of discrimination and continue to resist them.

**EMPOWERMENT BEGINS OUTSIDE:**

In the initial stages, the women's movement was confined to small discussion groups among educated and informed women who raised questions about women's oppression. Subsequently, these women felt that it should become a mass movement with a mass base. Meeting together, raising questions and seeking answers are all important in the struggle for gender justice. Generally speaking, resistance to oppression is started by people who are not themselves oppressed. Exposure to issues of empowerment makes both women and men aware of the realities and describes how society would be if oppressive practices were discontinued and men and women started living and thinking as equals. The problem of dependence on outside leadership faces every movement, because leaders are often reluctant to withdraw from their positions of power. The success of a movement ultimately depends on creating leaders from within.

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