



Women Empowerment As A Tool For Enhancing Her Protection And Prestige.

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Abstract

This paper talks about the status of women as she has been placed on high pedestal during medieval as well as modern times. Women empowerment is day by day increasing the potential of women in every field. The paper will focus on the both eastern as well as western movement of women empowerment. It will also analyze the insecurities of modern women and will suggest measures for empowerment so that the ultimate goal is achieved.

“An enlightened woman is a source of infinite energy.”

Keywords: Women empowerment, Gender equality, Domestic violence, CEDAW

Introduction

Twenty first century has brought in its trail a new hope for women. Dramatic changes had happened in the role, ambitions and attitude of women during the last few decades of twentieth century and are happening quite fast even now. Women have departed from their traditional role of reproducers, mothers and wives only. Till now, they were living under the shadow of father, husband or son. Now from a non-entity, they have been able to establish their independent identity.

Issues

But still, women feel insecure, unhappy and dissatisfied with their position and social status more than their predecessors? They are confused about their role and position in modern society? Is employment making women economically strong, but socially and emotionally broken? Why women have been *relegated to secondary position*, though they possess diverse capabilities and are participating equally in nation-building activities? Is it because they belong to weak, incapable of shouldering responsibility or intellectually incompetent? Nay, it is not so.

Then why modern women feel insecure and unhappy, despite attaining so much success in almost every sphere of modern world. Women have played multiple roles in life and in each role their performance is par excellence. Why women have to suffer innuendo kinds of physical violence, discrimination and emotional problems? The position of women is still far from satisfactory. There is still a deep entrenched discrimination against them almost in every walk of life. It crosses all the borders, age, region, race, caste, class or community.

Feminist Movement for empowerment

With times, women have risen up to situation – Modern women have proved that they are second to none, even outside home at their workplace, even in areas, which were far away from their traditional role of a house-maker or a mother. With changing times, they have risen up to the occasion and managed the work both

inside and outside the home at their work place – such as in industry, media, IT, politics, technology, administration/ management, armed forces or civil services.

At home, they rear children with love and affection at home and manage household activities. They have shown their capability to deal with the recent economic depression – a situation of – with ingenuity. Like a financial expert they meet the challenges of the present times of ever rising prices in their own income.

Outside, they work shoulder-to-shoulder with men almost in all the areas. They are educated. Many of them are financially independent.

Modern women are more aware than their predecessor of their rights and are keen to exercise them. They know their worth in within the family, in the society and in the world.

It did not happen overnight. Women fought a fierce battle to reach up-to present position. They continuously worked hard to get equality, liberty and opportunity.

Movement for empowerment of women

Woman's movement for empowerment in India is quite different from the similar movements in Western nations.

Women in western world

In the West, since beginning its focus was on establishing an independent identity of a woman free from male domination. The feminist movement in the West laid great stress on the freedom and liberty of women. It resulted in reacting aggressively against patriarchal system of society and male chauvinism.

Since Feminist movement for liberation and other revolutions took place in western world, the western society realized much earlier the need to improve the position of women in society. There the governments and the society made many efforts/reforms – legal, social, economic and political to gave to women more and more freedom and liberty to take their own decision without being influenced by the men-folk.

Women of Western world today enjoy more privileges in matters of education, employment, freedom, liberty & equality than their counterparts in eastern world.

Margaret Thatcher, the Prime Minister of United Kingdom during late eighties led her country from a bad economic condition to success. She has shown to the world that in a democracy, it is not necessary to bow down before the unreasonable demands of pressure groups or abandon useful but unpopular policies in order to win an election. Gorabachov's Soviet Union watched with interest her efforts for economic development. She has shown to the world that women are capable of wielding political power even in a "Developed country" like England.

But the erosion of family values and decay of day today 'social life' has always been a matter of concern USA and the West. There people and leaders regularly call for the restoration of social/family values and systems, which basically depend on culture of 'inclusiveness' and not on the concept of "exclusiveness", which Western societies glamorizes.

Women in Eastern World

The eastern world, especially nations in Asia are still struggling to give to its women their rightful place. Problems of high female mortality rate, sexual harassment, deaths during childbirths still exist there. There are millions of women who have go through sexual harassment, domestic violence, discrimination, abuse or are denied of pleasures of life because of their gender. Their problems are deeply ingrained in the history, laws and cultures of complex and sophisticated Asian societies.

Beauty of Indian movement

In India, initially the focus of the movement for emancipation/empowerment of women-folk was to improve and not to denounce the traditional values and systems. It was to lead women to freedom and remove darkness spread all over due to the apathy of powerful lobbies of the society, that crushed the spirit of men and women alike. It aimed to empower not only the women, but the nation as a whole. Therefore, under the guidance, encouragement and support of eminent male leaders like Gandhi, Nehru, Patel and social reformers like Raja

Rammohan Roy, IshwarChandVidyasagar, Vivekanand etc., women in India also challenged those quarters which were interested in holding all backwards.

Being under the foreign domination, India suffered for a long time due to multiple ills – poverty, illiteracy, ignorance due to superstitions and blind following of outdated customs and social practices, women being the worst victim. Therefore, the movement for empowerment focussed on education, social and legal reforms like like equal civic, personal and property rights to men and women. Stress was laid on ‘Stree Dharma’ (fundamental duties of women). The strength of the whole movement was based on its being above party, caste or communal politics.

Confusion in women's mind about their role in life

There is a confusion in women's mind as well as to what should be their role in life – that of a home-maker or a career woman. On one hand they are under constant pressure, because psychological strains are created by the need to conform to socially induced images of femininity – to be a good wife, perfect mother and efficient home-maker. On the other, desire to establish their own identity or financial strains in family life force them to become career women.

Issues: Why Indian women feel insecure in general?

Generally women suffer deprivation, discrimination, humiliation and denial of basic human rights in varying degrees at some point or the other. Discrimination against them is at every stage of life and every where. It may be a girl child, a married woman, a single woman, a working woman, refugees or women belonging to lower, middle or upper strata of society.

In India, women in general form one of the most vulnerable sections of Indian Society. Women are at disadvantage due to:

- Class oppression due to poverty,
- Economic dependence on male counterpart,
- Caste oppression due to inter caste clashes
- Social taboos and
- Gender oppression
- Increasing number of crimes.

Many transitions in one life for a woman

A woman faces many transitions in one life. Almost every tenth year brings a major change in her life. With each transition, her role and position in society changes drastically. She needs attention, support, care and love of her near and dear ones during transition from one phase to another – in her childhood of her parents and close relations, in her youth of her spouse, in her old age of her sons and daughters. It is usually apathy of people concerned, at every stage of her life, which makes a woman's life miserable. Discrimination against her starts much before she is born- in the form of feticide and continues till her last breadth.

Unfortunately, most of the times, it is her own family and people, who are responsible for her sufferings. Women generally prefer to suffer silently than to go to courts or seek justice in the courts/state authorities or any outside agency. The consumerist culture has increased atrocities, domestic violence and physical assaults on women.

Position of women in the nineteenth century

Up-til the beginning of twentieth century women in India along with other women all over the world were hedged in by many social, economic, legal and religious restrictions. Most on them were illiterate, ignorant and confined them within the four walls of the house for centuries. They were not aware of their rights. Ignorance and deprivation were accepted as their lot. They were far away from the mainstream, cut of from all the communications with outside world and generally confined within the four walls of their house.

Still victims of social evils and discrimination

A large number of women are still victims of many evil social customs and traditions, which are ingrained in the history, culture and laws of the patriarchal system of society. Most heinous crimes are still done against women irrespective of caste, creed, time or place such as infanticide, feticide, physical abuse, early marriage, illiteracy, unequal rights in marriage, divorce, rape, molestation, dowry deaths, inheritance, polygamy, inauspicious widowhood with severe disabilities and restrictions, restrictions on widow remarriage or Sati etc.etc.,. The list is endless. Crimes against women are increasing everyday.

Declining Sex-ratio

Societal bias against women continues as revealed by falling sex-ratio. India may be progressing economically, but socially it is on its back gear. On gender issues it lags behind alarmingly – be it sex-ratio or number of crimes, as statistics show, against women. On paper there are enough laws to tackle the issues, but without much positive results. The sex ratio has steadily declined over the 20th century. The sex ratio in 1901 census was 975 female to every 1000 males. Now according to provisional data of Census 2011, released on 31st April 2011, national sex ratio is 940 females for every 1000 males in 2011, child sex (0-6years) has worsened to 914 in 2011 from 927 in 2001. Decline is unabated since 1961 Census.

Poor statics in other spheres as well

As for health-care, the National Sample Health Survey showed that over 50% of women are anemic. India's maternal mortality ratio is highest in South Asia: 540 deaths per 1,00,000 live births.(TOI, 8.3.07, P.18) Though 70% of the female labor force works in agriculture, less than 10% of women farmers are landowners. Nearly half the women in India are still illiterate. Literacy rate 65 years after independence has reached for females only upto 65% (total being 74% and for males 82%).

Position of women in ancient India

The position of women was not always so bad in India. In ancient India, during the Vedic period, women were placed on a high pedestal. In her role of a good wife and a worthy mother, she commanded a great deal of respect and honor in the society. They were known for their mental alertness, intuition and spiritual qualities of love and service. The best of qualities a human being can possess like knowledge, wealth, strength and ability to provide food and shelter were all visualised in the form of woman – Saraswati, Laxmi, Durga, Annapurna respectively. She had freedom and access to education and knowledge. Gargi and Maitreyi are well known for their pursuit of knowledge. Maharshi Manu, who set the code of conduct for Indian society, said, “*YatraNaryastuPujyante, RamateTatraDevata*”, meaning where woman is worshipped, there resides god.

During later period of Vedic age, as described in *Brahmanas* and *Sutras*, women lost their independence and their status was degraded to that of ‘Shudras’. Women were regarded as unfit for independent life. After the revival of Hinduism, according to Chinese travellers, marriages between men of higher castes and women of lower castes were permitted and their offsprings were given a recognised position in society. Marriages of widows was discouraged, custom of Sati was established, but child marriage was unknown. Women were taught Arts and Shashtras as well. (Tara Chand, p. 82)

Position during medieval period

Seventh century onwards, with the downfall of Hindu Raj and continuous invasions of Turks, Afghans and Mughals, the position of woman deteriorated fast. Right to education was taken away from them. They became the victims of illiteracy, ignorance, complete male-domination and many kinds of religious and social restrictions. Patriarchal system institutionalized unequal nature of family laws and traditions. Property was inherited only by sons.

In some parts of northern India, Bengal and Rajputana, women from families of Rajah, Chiefs, Zamindars and upper castes suffered from social evils like ‘Purdah system’, ‘Sati Pratha’, ‘dowry’ ‘poligamy’ and

'infanticide', renunciation of all the comforts and happiness by widows (young or old). In Maharashtra, these evils were curbed to some extent by the energetic steps taken by Peshwa.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that there were no exceptions to this rule. Even during those days, there were a few great women like RaniLaxmibai, ChandBibi, MilyaBai, Razia Sultana etc. who came into forefront, led people and earned fame and respect of people.

Position of women in modern period

During the second half of the nineteenth century, modern education drew the attention of some sensitive Indians and reformers like Swami Dayanand, MaharshiKarve, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Gandhiji etc. towards the oppressive and evil social customs, practices and traditions. They tried to put to an end those evil practices. They worked for the better future and emancipation of women community. Inspired by Gandhiji, many women from well to do and middle class families not only received education, but also came out to take part in public life.

Women's Associations were formed allover the country. All India Women's Conference was formed in 1926 and is working since then to support legitimate demands of women. All India Muslim Ladies Conference was started in 1914. Leading Muslim ladies demanded abolition of Purdah system, restrictions on polygamy and spread of education for women. They were supported by reformists.

Wives of some viceroys showed interest in the uplift and education of women and helped in opening some colleges and institution for them. In 1923, due to sincere efforts of Mrs. RamabaiRanade, Women India Association was formed with branches allover the country. It rendered valuable service to the cause of women.

Position after Independence:

Brighter Side of Women's development

Since Independence, India is passing through times of rapid changes in social behavior. It is still in transitional phase. Government took upon itself responsibility of protecting its women, providing them better conditions of living, better education, better medical facilities, better job-opportunities and opening up enough avenues for them to grow to their fullest stature.

Constitution of India gave them freedom, equality and access to education and employment. Government of India issues guidelines, from time to time, to Central and State Government for formulating and implementing action programs for women. It has identified areas of health, family planning, nutrition, education, vocational courses for women, employment, legal provisions and social welfare for its future action plans.

Woman herself has become aware and confident of her mind, capabilities and rights. She started questioning the stereo type assumptions that went with womanhood. Gradual and greater awareness has led her to make her own decisions. She made her own efforts for welfare of women and secured more space in economic, political and social spheres for them through the intervention of government's authorities. The older typical image, slowly and slowly, started getting diffused. Women got a foothold in modern world and started leading active life.

Requirements of 21st century

The need of the modern times is to maintain a balance between femininity and ambition. The measures for improving the status of women should not destroy those valuable components of Indian culture, which sustains life, activity and happiness of all within a family. Without them a woman's life becomes just like a bouquet of paper flowers, which does not have any fragrance and after some timeslooses its charm.

Nucleus family system gives enough space and opportunity to grow and adjust with each other. Her husband shares all her familial liabilities and willingly takes care of her parents and blood relatives. Both have equal share in matters relating to finances. Husband shares the responsibility for parenting/child-rearing and home-management. Still many couples are not able to create an environment of partnership that is comfortable to all the nucleus family members, leave aside the extended family.

Now in most of the families, elders can not interfere in young couple's decisions. It is considered to be absolutely personal matter. There is no emotional pressure of on the woman of a nucleus family. However, the more she gets, more she desires. Now she wants complete freedom from all familial responsibilities including that of her own household.

An Indian woman has various dimensions to her personality – that of a daughter, sister, wife, a mother, a grand mother – each one adds to her happiness. She does not need to ape West's materialistic value system, where it has already been shifted from "being" to "having". The finer values of life have given way to sheer selfishness, chasing money, materialism, commercialism and desire to possess more and more luxurious goods/comforts. Modernization has increased their necessities & economic expectations.

Empowerment of women

"Empowerment" is only a political slogan as of date. Presence of a few persons of a section in power structure does not change the condition of its majority. These political campaigns mislead people and betray the cause. What is needed for empowering women is toning up social, legal, political and economic systems. True empowerment requires clear cut policies by identifying the specific problem areas and then based on them, the approach for its solution to be followed.

Reservations for women

Some leaders suggest that Reservation of jobs for women is one of the ways, which can empower women. If Government, political parties and its leaders have real faith in Policy of Reservation, then on the grounds of deprivation, discrimination and under-representation, no other section of society deserves Reservation more than women.

However women have set a classic example that they can make progress without crutches. Though the progress is slow, but it is definitely sustainable. Women's march towards progress/empowerment is unstoppable and irreversible. Reservation Policy will not necessarily lead to the sustainable growth of women-folk.

If women can do so without Reservation, why can not men of SCs, STs or OBCs? If for any reason or rhyme, government finds itself to provide reservation to women, then it should abolish immediately this discriminatory policy of reservation.

The need of special attention in case of women arises not because they are intellectually inferior to men, but because they miss many opportunities, when some crucial years of their life are spent in fulfilling familial responsibilities. That time they serve humanity and the nation by taking care of the future generation, cultivating in them positive qualities, which once imbibed, inevitably become part of one's nature and provide guidelines for their wholesome behavior pattern.

For their valuable contribution to the society and the nation, if they could not be rewarded, then at least, they should not be punished.

Conclusion

Joint effort of women and society

A joint effort of women themselves and that of the society and the nation is urgently needed in order to cope with the challenges posed due to recent changes in the attitude and role of women of twenty first century. It would be a blunder, if society does not realizes that women are the backbone of Indian society. They not only provide management at home, but also work they work shoulder-to-shoulder with men almost in all the areas. They contribute, both directly and indirectly, in nation-building activities. Women have always been good managers and decision-makers. Till now their qualities/skills have benefitted 'family' only.

There is a need to maintain balance between femininity and ambitions of women. With modernity, technological advancements, info-tech revolution has changed the role of women, her equations with others,

her perspective and ambitions. Economic independence has made them stronger, confident and more vociferous. They are aware and informed about the solutions of the needs and problems of their own and their children more than their spouses.

Immediately after independence, in 1950's, free young India embodied a liberal and inclusive vision of India. People understood and interpreted liberally the problems of caste, gender, community, rural-urban areas, meaning of social-economic-legal justice and attempted to resolve the issues rationally.

1950's and 60's was the time, when society was in general conservative, attitude hardly rebellion against social norms, talks being all about sacrifice. 1970's and 80's was the period of transition, when though people were still family and society-oriented, rebellion attitude started. Those were the years of social and political turmoil. Women gradually achieved success in various fields. Gender bias started vanishing.

Women acquired more education, economic and social power on their own without craving for any concession unlike other so-called weaker sections of society like SCs, STs or OBCs. A new wave swept across the woman's world – many young women joined the workforce becoming students, teachers, administrators or activists in different social movements. With it, gender relationships and norms have undergone a sea-change because of changed socio-economic atmosphere and a change in expectations. It has ironically increased conflicts.

In 1990's, rebellion attitude became dominant. Family and society were considered major obstacles on the way to progress. In matter of employment, it is not so difficult for women to get jobs as it was earlier. Women were placed more or less on equal footing with men.

Earlier main women issues were of physical strain, constant psychological pressures, to conform to socially induced images of femininity – to be a good wife, perfect mother, efficient home-maker and on the other to work hard in office to prove her worth. Their concerns then revolved around issues like dowry, domestic violence, rape, equal opportunities and equal pay etc. Now the focus is on teaching menfolk a lesson and be ahead of them everywhere. Today's woman wants her man to do all that, which previous generation of women did for their counterparts.

The attitude of people in twenty first century became increasingly individualistic. Both men and women bothered about their own issues and commitments. More importance is being given to self identity, less attention to family-matters. Youth do not tolerate any opposition or interference of elders in their family matters. Any restriction on pleasures of life is just not tolerated. They want life free from tensions and stress.

Independent, but undisciplined life style, pressures due to lack of family support systems, clash in old and new value systems, fatigue due to erratic sleep patterns due to late night entertainment culture, running after money, numerous temptations due to market-oriented economy, fascination for glamour and excitement are responsible for making modern life awry with full of tensions.

Women issues needs to be nurtured very carefully, so that not only they, but also the community and nation can benefit. A woman should not care for her own needs only, but also needs to see the welfare of all the persons around her. To be educated means to be enlightened, to be aware of her surroundings and to be conscious of her responsibilities.

At present families and communities do not have time to spare for inculcating required values in children. Now a days, schools/educational institutions are expected by modern society to inculcate in young children good values and mannerism. From schools required values are expected to be reinserted into society. For inculcation of moral values, modern society should not depend on educational institutions. It can make children learn to stand on their feet and be politically and economically independent, but often, in life they end up "Bowling Alone"(in sociologist Robert Putnam's memorable phrase) and unhappy.

Why should a woman consider maternity, motherhood and household responsibility a burden? That is their source of power as the next generation is in her domain. There is an urgent need to pay attention to the future of family as an institution. Values cannot be taught like texts nor tested in written examinations. Good values are inculcated at home, in one's family and society. They are learned by living. Woman is the hope of the future.

Success in life is not dependent on legal document, or on laid down rules and regulations. It depends on maturity, mutual understanding and willingness to make adjustments for each others happiness.

As far as the ambitions of woman are concerned, she should set her priorities rightly at different points of her life. If she wants to pursue a career first, she should devote her efforts and energy towards it. But once she decides to enter into a family life, she should not take it for granted. She needs to be mentally prepared to shoulder its responsibilities as well. She should find out enough time for her family and children.

As a householder she along with her spouse is responsible to provide a secure and stable home environment. A well knit family promotes a feeling of inter-dependence and a feeling of being wanted and being loved.

As far as government is concerned, it should have liberal policies for making jobs available to women as employment makes women not only economically strong, but socially and emotionally strong. Women like men have every right to feel secure, confident and happy and to be participate actively in the mainstream of a nation/national growth, in solving all the problems of society and nation at every level. They are, both entitled to and responsible for contributing to national development but without disturbing familial peace, social harmony.

Adequate attention needs *to* be given by policy-makers and the society to issues like –

- proper identification of problem areas; adjustments of financial allocations and administrative decisions as well actions to suit condition;
- motivation and disciplining of socio-political authorities to have sympathy and understanding about culture and needs of the society, in which they live;
- For ensuring women's participation in their own welfare and development processes in physically and socially congenial environment, attention should be paid in devising strategies to provide a safe and secure atmosphere to them.
- More in-depth studies of women issues should be encouraged to provide alternative approaches/strategies for resolving them by the Government, society as well as by voluntary agencies.
- Law-makers should legislate more equitably.
- Male chauvinism must go. Unless woman can take her rightful place by the side of man, there is no point of the women knowing what to do. She must be allowed to do it. If the future of the nation is to be safeguarded, it is necessary to acknowledge that roles of man and women in life are complementary not competitive.

Any society could only flourish when its women are given their due place in the process of development. It should never be forgotten that “An enlightened woman is a source of infinite energy.”

SUGGESTIONS

Empowered is a word that gets said way too much, even though many people do not understand exactly what it means. Women, often want to be known as empowered. The idea of being an empowered woman implies that you are in control of your life. There is a bit of feminism in this, but truly many women want to feel that they are empowered and in control of their lives. ***The question is how do you get there? What makes an empowered woman?*** If these are the questions that you have been asking yourself, then you will want to keep reading.

Every woman has the ability to take charge of her life with grace, strength, and confidence—including you. That's right, the power to be happy and fulfilled lies in your own hands. So why not live the life of your dreams? It may be easier than you think.

Here are some simple positive tips to get you started

8 Tips on How to Become a Positively Empowered Woman

1) Know Yourself:

An empowered woman knows who she is. Many women today feel as though they have lost themselves. Maybe they gave too much in a relationship that didn't work out. Maybe they put too much time into work and not enough time into themselves. Maybe they feel lost in the challenges of motherhood. Regardless, many women need to spend some time getting to know themselves. Knowing yourself goes way beyond what you do or who you are. Knowing yourself means understanding your own strengths and weaknesses. Do you work best by yourself or on a team? Do you communicate well? Are you organized? Are you a leader? These are questions that the empowered woman knows the answers to, because the empowered woman understands who she is as a person.

2) Keep Learning:

Never ever stop learning. Freeing and expanding your mind is one of the most imperative step toward empowering yourself, so educate yourself in *any* way you can. Even if you don't have a formal education there are still plenty of ways to increase your knowledge on your own. Taking the initiative to teach yourself something new is one of the most empowering things you can do. Read books, go to the library or a bookstore, join a book club, or do research on the Internet. Why not sign up for a class that interests you? It can be as simple as knitting or as complex as physics. The point is to explore an area you have never explored before. Look for weekend workshops in your newspaper or drop by your local institutes to see what classes they have to offer. And if you are a busy mom with no time to take a class, check out an educational book from the library and read a few pages before bed each night. A smart woman is an empowered woman. Noone dare mess with thee

3) Know What YOU Want:

An empowered woman knows what she wants. This means that she has goals and dreams for her life. They may or may not include marriage, a family, or rising up the career ladder. Regardless of what the goals are, the empowered woman knows what she wants out of life. This enables her to act in ways that will move her closer to these goals. If she has a goal of getting married, then she will date with that goal in mind. If she has a goal of advancing in her career, then she will work with the idea of earning an eventual promotion. No matter what the goals are, having them clearly mentally defined enables the empowered woman to go after what she wants. Are you going after what you want?

4) Be Independent:

When was the last time you left your house *without* your cell phone? Have you ever gone to a restaurant and had dinner all alone with just your awesome self for company? Being comfortable with who you are, and knowing that you are strong enough to face any situation on your own, is an empowering feeling. It doesn't matter whether you have a partner or not. Enjoying **YOU** time energizes your spirit in countless ways. Don't let not having a partner or special someone to share things with stop you from doing everything you want to do. Treat yourself to a movie or a weekend getaway for one. Make it a goal to try something new that you wouldn't normally do alone. While you're out there living it up you'll be building confidence and increasing your chances of knowing yourself better.

5) Make Connections:

An empowered woman makes deep connections, both personal and professional. This means that she knows people, but it goes deeper than that. The empowered woman has a network of people that she has relationships with and can count on. They may be business relationships or personal ones, but she knows that she can count

on these people. The business relationships may be people she can count on to help with a project or give honest feedback. The personal relationships may be friends that she can rely on when she needs them. The connections that an empowered woman makes are with people whom she can help and who can in turn help her to become a better person.

6) Give Back:

When you help others, you help yourself. Give back to the community in any way you can and you will be rewarded in more ways than one. Try volunteering one day a week for a program you really believe in. Find a charity you want to support, help with events around the holidays, or organize your own community program. Volunteering is not the only way to get involved with your community. Watching your neighbor's kids or helping a friend in need is just as big a contribution. Giving back does not have to be a grand gesture. It's as simple as saying good morning and holding the door for someone. Open your heart to others and they will open theirs to you. What a positively empowering act..right!

7) Dream Big:

Don't be afraid to go after your dreams. No dream is too big or unobtainable. An empowered woman knows that she can accomplish anything she sets out to do, it is simply a matter of perseverance, believing in yourself, and following your heart. If you truly believe in your dreams you can make them happen. But in order to do this you must try. Consider making a vision board to illustrate and remind yourself of all the goals you would like to accomplish. Listen to your heart. It was put there to empower you.

8) Empower Others:

An empowered woman empowers others. This is maybe the most difficult but most rewarding of all. An empowered woman can encourage other women to strive for what they want. She doesn't pull people down but instead helps them to discover their full potential. This enables her to contribute positively to the lives of other women that she knows.

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