**EMPOWER WOMEN** **TO MAKE INDIA TRULY INDEPENDENT**

(by Rhythm Mangla)

Swami Vivekananda, one of the greatest sons of India, quoted that, “**There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly with one wing**. “

On the eve of **Independence Day**, a certain thought popped up in my mind: Indian women, are they really independent? As the dictionary says, the literal meaning of the word ‘independence’ is self-reliance, autonomy, freedom, liberty etc. Women folks, can they walk safe down the road without fear of being shouted at, followed, or worse. I think the answer is ‘No’.

**Women empowerment** a much raised and discussed topic around the globemeans emancipation of women from the vicious grips of social, economical, political, caste based discrimination. It is about helping them to stand on their own feet, help them take decisions, make choices without any restriction of relatives or society. The real meaning of women empowerment is to make them well educated and leave them free. But in practicality, has this empowerment been achieved or is it still awaited? The past is well known (male-dominated patriarchal society), but this isn’t completely past.

People’s orthodox perspective, patriarchate bottlenecks, lack of political will, implementation gaps, dowry in certain rural pockets etc constantly act as rocks on the way which have to be removed for striving forward. The government is playing a stellar role by running various welfare schemes and policies, which includes Support to Training programme for Women, National mission for empowerment of Women, Dowry Prohibition Act, Domestic Violence Act, Sexual Harassment of Women at work-place Act and the list in ever going. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, also makes the elected bodies to reserve one-third of the seats for women. This provision was made to increase the effective participation of women in politics.

The women of our country should be strong broad minded and mature in taking their own decisions. There is no denying to the fact that women in India have made a considerable progress in almost seven decades of Independence. Kalpana Chawla, Saina Nehwal, Geeta Phogat, Indira Gandhi etc have made our country strive forward in all spheres and be neck-to-neck with the other countries.

So, on the eve of this Independence Day, let us keep all our differences aside and take a pledge to empower women socially, economically, educationally, politically and legally. It might seem to a Herculean task and might sound hard by the yard, but by the inch it is just a clinch. All we need is a concerted effort in the right direction that would liberate women from all forms of evil. She should be raised to be an Independent woman and not the victim of anything.

Nelson Mandela said, “**Freedom cannot be achieved unless the women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression**.”