PREFACE

The object of the work is to analyse and appreciate the elementary principle of the empowerment of women through reservation from the constitutional point of view.

The empowerment of women is a popular and so far unquestionably accepted concept amongst the Third World feminists, including Indian ones and has to take the mind out of the sails of the momentum of the ideology and practice of social movements - been promptly co-opted by the Indian establishments. So, we have calls for, and attempts at, the "empowerment of women" - political, social, economic and cultural by the Indian Women's Movement, if the goings-on of a multitude of desperate, autonomous groups without sufficiently co-ordinated voices and uniform practices congregating only occasionally on certain issues, can be called a movement at all. Magnanimous, paternalistic assurances by the Indian Government of such empowerment of the country's womankind who, due to lack of deeper enquiry and insight, have been sweepingly proclaimed as unexceptionally powerless by Indian feminists and the academic authors of the at-present market flooding "women's studies".

A persistent, pressuring competition for greater assimilation of power had been unleashed so much so that the desired balance of power, in fact, became a "balance of error". It can, therefore, perhaps, in all surety be assured, that the abrasive power game would also not cease between men and women. It also
seems quite evident that as long as power is allowed to mediate relationships, conflict and one-upmanship will not cease. But feminists will turn around and say power exists and is to be found to be playing a role in the construction of all social relationships. It is in this non-understanding of the social construction of reality that the root cause of the Third World feminists misconstrued of their concept and goal of "Empowerment of Women" lays.

Since power has been proclaimed and propagated as a given, attempts have been made by some, who wish for a more egalitarian state of affairs, to demise strategies that would distribute power evenly in such a way that peace and harmony will prevail. Power generates crass competition and power game amongst the powerful. In the firm belief that power cannot be done away with, it is not even thought of to devise strategies that aim at banishing power as a reality from human conduct and the absolescentising of the concept from the corpus of human knowledge to strike a death blow at the very roots of the causes that give birth to the ability to dominate, overwhelm and subjugate to power, which is very much given to human beings to do and is a definite possibility if they so will it.

Power has been allowed to gain ascendancy by human machinations but human efforts can lead to its diminution's and to the creation of abilities that help in generating aptitude to tolerate differences lead to co-operation, kindness, understanding and love. These abilities can also be made
to ascend by human beings in human conduct and power made to decimate. As long as power and its concomitant competition are allowed to be the bricklayers of human relationships, these relationships can never be conflict-free imbued, with gracious give and take and a richer way to love and be loved. This is true of gender relationships as well in which power struggle should be made to disintegrate completely and replaced by more human, constructive and enriching dispositions. This will certainly not happen by the "empowerment of women" which one feels is a mis-construct having its genesis in a patriarchal mindset and lexicon, which apparently have such deep roots that they orientated even the thinking and actions of those who genuinely want to change the subordinating super subordinating order.

The Third World women's movement and Indian women's liberation groups need to develop in the place of empowerment, which implicitly contains within its conflict generating competition hierarchisation and one-upmanship. That is because this will thus not bring about the cessation of gender power-play, more integrating and cementing concepts that emphasize caring and sharing, a living with plurality and a multi level enrichment and dignified co-existence of both the genders and ensure the demise of gender politics once and for all.

(Kumkum Budgujjar)