



WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT

The illustrious Indian past honours women in various socioeconomic spheres, but it also reflects the additional hurdles they confront in business, politics, and education relative to their male counterparts. Women are not regarded equally to males in all fields when it comes to social status. Women make up about 50% of the world's population, yet they do so while standing on shaky foundation. However, only a small percentage of women have benefited from development efforts, despite claims that their involvement in progress and other economic activities is increasing due to changing circumstances. A quick peek at the advancement of a few women reveals a glimpse of women's empowerment. On the other hand, a staggering number of women in society are still denied access to basic rights, which reduces them to a pitiful state and also threatens her true power. The global canvas shows that approximately 70% of women live in poverty, 80% of refugees are women, and 23% of women worldwide are illiterate. Domestic abuse, female feticide, rape, molestation, and eve teasing are all global realities that prevent women from being fully empowered. Women must band together to address the issue of gender parity and economic empowerment by ensuring that their voices are heard in the formulation and strict implementation of laws and public policies. Half of the world's population and one-third of its workers are women, but they only make up one-tenth of worldwide income, own less than one percent of global property, and put in two-thirds of all working hours. News of women's rights violations continues to shock our conscience on a daily basis. In effect, this approach gives women an identity in a traditional male-dominated socio-political system and also gives them a much-needed forum to seek solutions to issues that directly affect them, which is the true meaning of empowerment. It also gives women a constitutional platform to confront men and speak out against issues of women's oppression, subjugation, and related issues. Women can realise their full potential and strength in all sectors of life thanks to the multifaceted empowerment process. Consciousness is the first step in a woman's empowerment; it includes her perceptions of herself, her rights, her abilities, and her potentials, as well as her knowledge of how gender, sociocultural, and political forces influence her.

KEY WORDS: Women Empowerment, gender, sociocultural, and political forces, abilities.



INTRODUCTION

The opportunities and difficulties of women's empowerment in India are highlighted in this essay. Women's emancipation from the pernicious clutches of social, economic, political, caste, and gender-based discrimination is known as women's empowerment. Through a variety of criteria, including their participation in family decision-making, freedom of opinion, financial power, gender equality, political participation, media exposure, access to education, etc., we may assess their conditions. It has been noted that gender inequality continues to be a major problem and still dominates our culture. However, as the world has changed, women's circumstances have also altered, moving from the four walls of the home to the workplace. But more work still has to be done to educate them and improve their social standing. We have concentrated on the secondary source of data in this essay. The study sheds light on the government's initiatives and efforts made in the same direction. Additionally, we have concentrated on the actions that are being and will be taken to improve their situation.

Women's status in our culture has not been honourable for years. They had experienced exploitation, bigotry, discrimination, and many other things that left them miserable. Though occasionally many activists and social workers contributed to their upliftment, there has been a significant disconnect between the policies that were intended and those that have been put into practise. Frequently, either the government was not helpful, or even when plans were made for their benefit, the male-dominated culture worked as a hindrance to their development. They have a lot of room to grow and develop.

By taking control of your life and being independent, empowerment also helps to solve the societal problems that are surfacing. We concentrate on stopping violence against women through empowering women.

A multifaceted and dynamic social process called empowerment aids individuals in taking charge of their own life. The secret to achieving social reform, political stability, and economic progress is empowering girls and women. Scholars, scientists, and world leaders



alike are praising them for lending their voices to this crucial endeavour. The future belongs to women, according to Mahatma Gandhi, who also underlined the need of women's empowerment. Nations are more safe, secure, and affluent when women thrive, as Mr. Barack Obama, the 44th US President, correctly stated. The 7th UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, noted that the empowerment of women is the most effective development tool available. The Nobel Prize winner in Economics, Prof. Amartya Sen, emphasised that empowering women is essential to creating the future we want. Giving women more control over their lives benefits entire families, communities, and future generations by boosting their efficiency and well-being. Numerous international studies on the effects of women's leadership and empowerment have shown that women are the world's largest rising market and that greater equality and empowerment will increase productivity, GDP, and prosperity. So why isn't this occurring widely, then? Since a woman is their children's first teacher, she must instil in them from an early age the notion that men and women hold equal social status and that there is no superior gender. When she is mature and powerful enough to do so, she may put this into practise. In spite of the government's numerous efforts, numerous research findings indicate that women in India still have less influence and a lower social position than men. It is discovered that women continue to accept society's unjust gender stereotypes. To protect the welfare of women, laws and policies addressing discrimination, economic disadvantage, and violence against women still need to be strictly implemented at the local level. Therefore, it has become widely acknowledged that failure to properly take into account the oppressed positions (rights and opportunities) of women in society can have detrimental repercussions on overall growth. Overall, women's liberation and empowerment could be the better solution to the plethora of issues that women encounter. Women who are empowered in the social, political, economic, and spiritual spheres are more confident in their talents and aware that power can shift. To truly empower women, there are numerous obstacles to overcome. The purpose of the essay is to present the reality of the obstacles to and opportunities for women's empowerment in India.



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This descriptive essay is supported by secondary evidence. We have made an effort to examine the situation of women's empowerment using information gathered from books, newspapers, journals, magazines, the internet, and other sources.

EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment is the process of giving people or groups more power and responsibility so they can make decisions and translate those decisions into desired actions and outcomes.

Empowerment is a broad political commitment, not a technological aim. To get there, a protracted process of fundamentally altering all cultural, social, political, and economic standards is necessary. It also calls for an entirely new way of thinking, where gender stereotypes no longer restrict people's options but rather give way to a new philosophy that sees everyone as a vital force for change and sees growth as a process of broadening options for both sexes, not just one.

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

The notions of "women's empowerment," "gender equality," and "gender equity," which are distinct but closely linked, sometimes collide. The term "gender equality," which is defined in terms of equality before the law and equality of voice, is explained in the policy research paper (World Bank, 2001). Gender equality calls for a redistribution of power and resources in order to achieve "equivalence in life outcomes for women and men, acknowledging their diverse demands and interests." However, gender equity "distinguishes that equality of results may necessitate distinct treatment of men and women since women and men have different needs, choices, and interests" (Reeves and Baden, 2000). It is believed that empowerment and autonomy are somewhat comparable; however, whereas the former is a static state that can be measured by the majority of accessible indicators, the latter is a dynamic process that changes over time and is not as easily measurable Jejeebhoy (2000). There may be numerous signs of women's empowerment, and they may vary across urban and rural settings.



STATUS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

People are coming forward with their contributions to the advancement of women as a result of the shift in thought and increased level of awareness. Many social workers, academics, and members of the government are working to improve the status of women. They are receiving education, and as a result, they are more aware of their rights.

INDIA'S CURRENT STATE OF WOMEN

Ancient India was a centre of learning, and prominent female scholars there made significant contributions to the development of society. Ironic that while women are revered in India just as much as god idols, in practise they have virtually little influence in the community. This is because we do not prioritise seeing women and men as fellow humans. When love, respect, freedom, responsibility, ambition, etc. are taken into account, they are not all that different. Currently, women in India continue to experience exploitation, cruelty, and inequity in both urban and rural society, and it is particularly pronounced in the latter due to the lack of proper educational opportunities. The boy child is still seen as superior to or more capable than the girl child in many nations, including India, according to studies by the United Nations on various traditional customs. Girls still experience harmful conventional norms and beliefs such as son preference, forced marriages, and criminality against women, which have a significant negative impact on their self-esteem and capacity for success. India was placed 108th out of 144 nations in the 2017 World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report for disparity between men and women, particularly in the areas of 139 economic engagement and opportunity, 112 educational achievement, 141 health and survival, and 15 political empowerment.

EDUCATION STATUS

If a girl is raised with the appropriate principles and given an education, she develops into a strong woman. Education for girls has the power to change lives for the better, both for the individual and for society at large. Education promotes rights knowledge, independence, and the self-assurance necessary for a better life. The socio-economic prosperity of any nation is



intimately correlated with the literacy rate, one of the key indicators of social development. The 2011 census shows that India's female literacy rate is still significantly lower than its male literacy rate (80.9%), at 64.7%. The gender disparity in literacy rates is, nevertheless, gradually closing over time. From 21.6% in 2001 to 16.3% in 2011, it has decreased. Women may significantly increase the productivity of the economy if they are given access to education.

SIGNIFICANCE AND CHALLENGES TO WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

The biggest obstacles to women's empowerment are a variety of issues, including gender discrimination, a lack of education, female infanticide, financial constraints, family responsibilities, low mobility, a low capacity for risk-taking, a low need for achievement, and a lack of ambition for success. Atrocities against women, including rape, kicks, killing, subduing, humiliating, deserting, and divorce (Shettar, 2015). The inaccessibility of information on victims' rights among rural and less educated women is another gap in the implementation of laws and policies on violence against women, according to a report by Upadhyay (2010). In addition, the ability or inability of women and girls to utilise laws and regulations to address sexual and physical violence is significantly influenced by societal shame and the fear of family abandonment.

Poverty, health and safety concerns, and professional and domestic inequality are some more obstacles that make achieving women's empowerment difficult.

CHALLENGES

Women are more than just a commodity, and it takes work to recognise their value. They have faced numerous problems and difficulties throughout history, and they continue to do so today. A few of these are briefly addressed below:

- **Lack of Education:** The majority of women continue to be denied their fundamental right to education. Their parents make them responsible for taking care of domestic duties.



- Female Foeticide: Regardless of how far our society and country have come, female foeticide is still practised in many places, and our government is doing everything it can to stop it.
- Family Responsibility: Girls are bound to stay within the four walls of their home and are expected to care for their family from a very young age.
- Discrimination based on gender: Men are prioritised over women in all major decisions.
- Social Status: Women struggle to be noticed in society due to their gender. Their rights are fundamentally denied to them, as well as socially.

PROBLEMS AND NEED OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Women have had issues since the beginning of time. Their exploitation is pervasive, widespread, and its remedies are challenging. There have been many prophets of women's emancipation, but prejudice against women and violations of human values still exist. In general, gender issues either directly or indirectly harm women. In other words, any social injustice that disadvantages women, any rule or tradition that upholds and institutionalizes women's inferior standing in society, any occurrence or sequence of occurrences that has a significant impact on women can all be classified as gender issues. Women's organizations and, subsequently, the media pay attention to gender issues because they inspire significant numbers of women to take action.

- Female infanticide;
- Lack of Education for Women;
- Financial Constraints;
- Dowry;
- Low Need for Achievement;
- Marriage in the Same Caste and Child Marriage;
- Social Status;
- Family Responsibility



The main causes of issues relating to women are atrocities committed against women, among other things. Women lack the ability to make decisions, the freedom to move about, access to education, access to employment, and media exposure.

INDIAN CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

- Equality for all people before the law (Article-14).
- Article 15(I) forbids discrimination on the basis of race, caste, gender, or place of birth.
- However, the state may make exceptional arrangements in favour of women and children under Article 15. (3).
- All residents should have equal access to employment opportunities and appointments to all public offices (Article 16). State policy must be focused on guaranteeing equal access for men and women to a sufficient standard of living (Article 39(a); (v) equal compensation for equal labour for men and women (Article 39). (d).
- State obligations to ensure fair and compassionate working conditions and maternity leave (Article 42).
- promotion of peace by every Indian citizen and rejection of actions that are disrespectful to women's dignity Chapter 51A (e).
- Reservation of at least one-third of the seats in local governments, namely Panchayats and Municipalities, for women who are elected directly (Articles 343(d) and 343) (T).
- It has been noted that failure to properly take into account the oppressed positions (rights, and opportunities) of women in society has detrimental effects on overall growth.

The government has launched numerous initiatives to address women's issues generally, yet many women still lack access to these programmes owing to ignorance. To secure the welfare of women at all levels, strict enforcement of laws and policies at the local level is required to address problems including violence against women.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIAN WOMEN

Young women nowadays have more options and influence over their life than ever before. They have the greatest educational options but the fewest career options. In practically every field, including politics, science, technology, the military, administration, and society at large, women are making strides. This is now conceivable as society's attitude toward women gradually changes. Indian women have been breaking down barriers and swimming against the tide during the past two decades, which is heartening. Due to economic demands, women's traditional roles have changed somewhat in recent years, and certain initiatives have been made to mainstream and mainstream women's contribution to the overall growth and development of society. Women's status has significantly changed. Despite their still-insignificant numbers, women have made significant progress in all disciplines.

CONCLUSION

Women who are empowered have the ability to speak up, receive a proper education, have a stable income, avoid early marriage and domestic abuse, and do not have to deal with street harassment. Additionally, when women are empowered, they will empower their daughters. In addition, women's empowerment protects them against poverty. And even if one of them succeeds in getting out of there, they will undoubtedly bring others with them. It is a call to action to help young girls and women realise their own inner power and empower themselves in order to truly leapfrog women's empowerment. Our world will change as a result of the next generation of strong women leaders and change agents. Modern society urgently needs to change the social norms and status of women. Women are considered the core of the society. Only by offering equal opportunities and weight can gender equality be upheld. With these, family, society, and ultimately the nation as a whole improved in terms of good values. Perhaps integrating women into the mainstream of development is the greatest approach to achieve empowerment. Women's empowerment won't be true and successful until they are given access to property and money, allowing them to stand on their own two feet and establish their identities in society. The key indicator of their effectiveness should be how



well they empower women to interpret, apply, and uphold rules that they have created themselves, taking into account their own voices, values, and concerns.

In conclusion, women's empowerment is not feasible until women work together and assist one another in their efforts to become more powerful. In return, they will be appreciated for their support, love, and caring. They will also reside in a civilization that is more advanced and well-educated.

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