



***AN EVALUATIVE STUDY ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA
BETWEEN 2010-2020***

Dr. Manorama Gupta

Associate professor

Department of Political science

D.A.V., P.G. College, Kanpur

Abstract:

India is known for its culture, heritage, various religions, and diverse unanimity. Despite being a democratic country, India has a long way to go in ensuring equal status for its citizens. Since independence, we have undoubtedly conquered a gloomy past of extreme discrimination against mankind. Several articles and provisions of the constitution of India protect especially women's rights socially, politically, and economically by keeping them at par with men. This paper focuses on understating the concept of women empowerment with its constitutional part. Through qualitative and quantitative methods, it attempts to examine the major public events and initiatives undertaken by the government, detailing the current scenario of Indian women.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Movements, Government Initiatives, Schemes, Programme.

Introduction:

India is a country of cultures and religions. For ages, we have been following various practices in the name of customs and traditions. We are so much habitual of following the traditions superstitiously that they become an inseparable part of our society. We have been worshipping our mothers and daughters like a goddess. At the same time, women in our country have been treated as a 'Second Gender'. It is a classic irony of our society to give a woman the status of a great goddess and on the other hand to expect her to be treated like a devoted servant. The treatment of women by men has always been like masters and slaves. In Indian culture, at one end the male has to be domineering, imposing, and always taking the initiative and at the other end, the female should be subservient and submissive. These are the predefined character traits as the only way of creating balance in our society. We have a preconcerted workspace, orders, and systems to be necessarily followed by both men and women respectively.

Change is a gradual process. We can expect the same for the status of women in India in the changing times. They have struggled a lot to raise their voice against all odds, inequality,



suppression, and for the betterment of their class. In the era of pre-independence, we noticed that their struggle was combined with the emotions of patriotism. The involvement of women in the pre-independence period was essential for moral and social awakening. Those agitations and movements were not concerned with the liberation of women from the patriarchal and dominating psyche. This approach toward the pitiable conditions of women did not remain the same after the independence.

With the making of the Constitution of India, it was believed that there will be a rise in women's status along with the other socially marginalized and depressed classes. The creators of our constitution had a clear vision to establish a system where discrimination, favoritism, or biases will not prevail. The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution's different parts. The constitution not only empowers women but also authorizes the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination that favor women. Despite fulfilling basic requirements, achieving the main objective is a challenging task.

Women Empowerment: A brief Understanding

According to Robert Adams "Empowerment is the capacity of individuals, groups and/or communities to take control of their circumstances, exercise power and achieve their own goals, and the process by which, individually and collectively, they are able to help themselves and others to maximize the quality of their lives. By women empowerment, we mean the transformation of women from a state of imposed incompetence towards a more confident, dignified, and reputed social status. It is a progression of treating women with the same status as men in every domain of life. It is a symbol of the increasing power of women. Securing strength in a patriarchal society means the security of social stability that facilitates the opportunities and participation of women in the process of social development.

In the view of United Nations, women's empowerment primarily has five components:

- Generating women's sense of self-worth.
- Women's right to have and to determine their choices;
- Women's right to have access to equal opportunities and all kinds of resources;
- Women's right to have the power to regulate and control their own lives, within and outside the home.
- Women's ability to contribute to creating more just social and economic order.



Women empowerment is nothing but recognition of basic humanrights and creating an environment where they are treated as equal to men. The government of India has always been endeavouring for social, economic, educational, and medical improvement in women's conditions. Since independence, there have been a lot of schemes and strategies initiated by the government to fulfill the needs of nearly half of the population of the society. In this study, we will discuss various schemes that have been continuing forthe last ten years. We will try to figure out the success ratio of these policies. The practical problems while implementing these schemes at different levels will be notified. By the completion of this research study, we will be in the position to give some suggestions which will help for further research in this field.

Constitutional Provisions for Empowering Women:

Women in Indian society were unaware from the true meaning of Liberty and Equality because of the injustice they endured in the society. The Constitution of India changed many things substantially. In all areas of life, equality and fairness are guaranteed by the Constitution. It ensured that the state developed several programmes for women's welfare and guaranteed equality for women. The following are some of the articles that ensure gender equality:

- Article 14 This article of the Indian Constitution declares that everyone is equal before the law and enjoys equal protection under the law.
- Article 15 forbids discrimination against any citizen based onthe basis of religion, color, gender, traditions, caste, and so forth.
- Article 16 It gives every individual an equal opportunity to get hired for any position in government offices.
- Article 39A It gives the States the mandate to advance justice based on equality of opportunity and to give every citizen access to free legal assistance in order to obtain justice.
- Article 42 encourages the States to establish fair and humane working conditions including maternity benefit.
- Article 51A says that every person has a responsibility to reject behaviors that are disrespectful of women's dignity.

Major movements demanding Women Empowerment:

- **Nirbhaya Case (2012):**The heinous gang rape commonly known as the Nirbhaya Case of Delhi is part of the daily abuse that Indian women experience. The continuation of violence stretches from sexual harassment in public to physical abuse in our homes which is considered a much safer place for women. This incident generated unrest at the national and international



levels. Public protests took place in big cities across the country, which led to various constitutional and administrative reforms.

- **Stop Acid Sale (2013):** Acid assaults are heinous crimes since the attackers intend to disfigure the victims rather than kill them. Victims of these attacks are deformed, frequently blinded, and traumatized. Laxmi Aggarwal, a survivor of an acid assault, filed a P.I.L. seeking a ban on the sale of hazardous liquid and started the campaign of Stop Acid Sale. The honorable Supreme Court in 2013 has outlawed the open sale of acid as a result of both Laxmi's and her ngo CHAANV's relentless work.
- **Lahu Ka Lagaan (2017):** She Says India, a non-profit organization, runs a social media campaign called Lahu Ka Lagaan to abolish the 12 percent levy on sanitary napkins in India and make them tax-free. This program is essential due to the fact that just 12% of India's 497 million women use sanitary napkins. When celebrities utilized their social media power to express their support for the initiative to make sanitary napkins tax-free, the campaign gained significant exposure. Apart from the tax-free status of sanitary napkins, the major goal of the campaign was to promote the execution of government initiatives to provide low-cost pads and vending machines for the delivery of sanitary pads.
- **#Me too Movement (2018):** The Indian # Me Too Movement was inspired by the globally prevailing movement against sexual harassment and eve-teasing. Years of suppression and abuse had finally cracked up by the afflicted women who took social platforms as their stage to share their tales against various gentlemen in power and position including the government officials, media persons, and Bollywood biggies of Indian society. The movement continues with a sequence of allegations and open acceptance of women's sexual harassment cases, including several well-known people.
- **Sabrimala Case (2018):** A Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Ayyapan on the hilltop of a district Pathanamthitta in Kerala is widely known as Sabrimala temple. Previously, women devotees of menstrual age were not permitted to worship here, owing to the celibacy character of the deity at this temple. The Supreme Court of India concluded in September 2018 that any provision made for women based on biological characteristics infringes the constitution. The ban is a violation of Articles 14 and 25 of the Indian Constitution. This ruling sparked large protests by those who disagree with the verdict.
- **Triple Talaq (2019):** According to Muslim law, Triple Talaq denotes freedom from the marriage bond, either ultimately or immediately, in which the male cancels his marriage by merely using the word 'talaq' three times either orally, in writing, or, more recently, electronically including email, messages, WhatsApp, skype, etc. This is known as Triple Talaq, also known as 'talaq-e-



bidder. The Supreme Court declared the practice unconstitutional in 2017 and further declared it as a criminal offense.

- **Shaheen Bagh Protest (2020):** The Shaheen Bagh, commonly referred to as a place of modern-day Satyagraha by protesters. The sit-in female-led protest began on December 15, 2019, and continued till March 24, 2020. The movement mainly consisted of Muslim women who used nonviolent resistance to block a major road in Shaheen Bagh to protest against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC). The Shaheen Bagh protest has become one of the longest nonviolent rallies in contemporary India.

Government Enactments to Strengthen the Status of Women:

Empowerment is a key instrument in the fight against female exploitation and abuse. It is an excellent way for women to obtain proper legal protection. Under many constitutional provisions; women have been given the power to fight discrimination and abuse. Articles like 14, 15, 16, 19, 21, 39, 51 etc. confirm their assistance in the comprehensive upliftment of women. Following are some notable acts enacted in the last 10 years:

- **The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013:** An alleged brutal gang rape of a social worker in a Rajasthan village in 1997 prompted the filing of this writ petition. This incident reveals the horrific dangers a working woman faces at her work place. The absence of proper legislation gave lead to four women's organizations to file a writ petition in the Supreme Court seeking a guideline to help institutions in recognising, preventing, and addressing workplace sexual harassment.
- **Juvenile Justice Act (2015):** Seeking lesson from the Nirbhaya case the parliament passed the new bill against the juvenile of age group of 16-18 who are involved in heinous crimes like rape and murder shall be punished as adults in case of conflicts with law. This step taken by the government will act as a deterrent for further similar crimes.
- **Maternity Benefit Act (2017):** Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act was widely hailed as a historic step. The amendment doubles the paid maternity leave entitlement from 12 to 26 weeks for all women in establishment with greater than 10 employees. There are clear positive impacts of this policy on women's health and well-being.
- **The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019**

Introduced and passed in 2019 after the decision of Supreme Court of India, the act stated as under Section 4 any Muslim husband who pronounces Talaq upon his wife by words, which can be either spoken or written or it can be in electronic form or in any other manner shall stand to be



void and illegal. The husband in this way shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years.

Major Schemes of Government Ensuring Women Empowerment

Empowering women economically, socially and making them self-reliant and confident has been one of the core agendas of the NDA government. The major flagships schemes are Beti Bachao Beti Padao, Pradhan Mantri UjjwalaYojana and Sukanya Samvridi Yojana, Women's Reservation Bill, *One-Stop Centre Scheme*.

- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao:**

This scheme not only indicates the immense importance the Government attaches to arresting the alarming decline in the child sex ratio, but also in ensuring the well-being of girl child. The NDA government is attempting to find ways to bring paradigm shift in the way our society perceives a girl child. The multi-sectoral District Action Plans have been operationalized nearly in most of the states since the start of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao. Trainers have been given ability programs and trainings in order to further expand the capacities of district authorities and frontline employees.

- **Ujjwala scheme:**

Ujjwala scheme, launched in 2016, aims to provide 5 crore LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) connections to women members of poor and BPL households. The main aims of the scheme were preserving women's health while empowering them, lowering the severe health risks connected to cooking with fossil fuels, preventing a large number of respiratory tract infections in mothers caused by burning firewood. This target was achieved in August 2019. Successively Ujjwala scheme 2.0 was introduced in 2021 with an extra grant of Rs 4,800 Crores. The scheme's reach was increased from its initial objective of 50 million poor households to 80 million needy families, resulting in increased participation.

- **Sukanya Samridhi Yojana:**

A part of the campaign Beti Bachao Beti Padao, SSY is a small deposit saving scheme for the better and safe future of girl child. Launched in 2015, the program persuades the parents of girl child to start a fund for completion of their girl child's future education and subsequent targets. Over 1 crore accounts have been established as part of the Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, which aims to give girls a golden and stable future. Minimum amount for the opening of an account is Rs 250 only. A total of 11,000 crore rupees have been deposited in these accounts resulting in a highly successful step of the government.



- **The Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Maitritva Yojna:**

Gender equality should be a priority for all citizens, not just women. It should also be everyone's goal to fight for equal labour, equal income, equal property, and equal empowerment for women, as well as to remove all forms of bigotry against them. The Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Maitritva yojns provides the basic environment for the above mentioned goals.Pregnant mothers are guaranteed complete antenatal care via the Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Maitritva programme. Another significant action made by the government was to extend the Maternity Benefit Act's 12-week maternity leave to 26 weeks.

- **One-Stop Centre Scheme:**

Since April 1, 2015, the *One-Stop Centre Scheme*, commonly referred to as Sakhi program, has been in effect. To offer comprehensive support and help to women who have experienced abuse in both private and social fields, these Centers are being created around the nation.Under the 12th Plan Working Group on Women's Agency and Empowerment the formation of a "one-stop center" to assist victims of sexual abuse and ensure swift prosecution for offenders was proposed by the Usha Mehra Commission. This scheme is promoted by the Nirbhaya Fund, which is financially assisted by the central government and thereafter distributed to the states /Union Territories administrations. Currently approx 700 OCS are in working condition across the country.

Conclusion:

Based on the above study, we can conclude that the initiatives taken by the government are always remarkable and appreciable. However, government schemes and programs alone can never be sufficient for the upliftment of women. It is necessary to establish a strong and stable foundation for more effective and smooth implementation of schemes and programs led by the government. It is also true that the condition of Indian women needs to improve necessarily. Despite many challenges in the path of women empowerment, Indian society has always been at the forefront to improve the pathetic condition of women. The changing times of the 21st century demand that every citizen of the country whether male or female, should fulfill his or her responsibility toward empowering women. Efforts should be made to remove the obstacles in this direction through methods like social interaction, political participation, educational seminars, good family values, and awareness campaigns. This way we can make our mothers and sisters independent, self-reliant, decision-makers, and ultimately our nation prosperous.



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