

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

In India, women have a secondary status in the traditional patriarchal society. This is revealed in the economy, social and political domains. Women's equality and empowerment have always been a priority and have been given utmost importance by stakeholders. This paper critically examines the status of women in India and compares it to other countries. The paper develops arguments based on secondary sources such as journal reviews, books, reports, NGOs, government and international organisations, and websites. It critically observes women's empowerment in India, different models and dimensions. It discusses constitutional safe guards, government plans and programmes, indicators of women's empowerment, etc. However, India ranks low when compared to other countries. Therefore, there is a need to reassess and modify programmes to achieve sustainable development goal -5 by 2030.

Keywords: Women Empowerment Government, Social, Gender Equality, Rights.

Introduction

India has traditionally been a patriarchal society, with women playing a secondary role in every household. However, women's welfare has always been a priority for policy makers since independence. Over the years, the approach to women's issues has shifted from welfare to development, as required by the Fifth Five Year plan (1974-78). India has also supported various global initiatives such as the Mexico plan of action (1975), the Nairobi forward looking strategies (1985), the CEDAW (1993), the Beijing Declaration (1995), and the Platform for action (1995) as well as the Outcome Document (2021) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA Session) on gender equality and development and peace. In this paper, we discuss the current state of women's empowerment in India, in addition to its position at the international spectrum in relation to SDG Goal 5 by 2030.

India is traditionally a patriarchal society and women play a secondary role in every household in the country. However, the issues related to the plan of the study are as follows: In the next section, the review of literature is discussed. The concept of women empowerment is discussed with supportive models along with dimensions. In Section 3, the research objectives are discussed and the methodology of the study is discussed. In Section 4, the various legislative and government initiatives for women empowerment are discussed. Different Non-Governmental Organization and corporate sector initiatives are discussed. In Section 5, the international comparison is discussed regarding the position of women empowerment. Finally, there are suggestions to address the challenges and a way forward to move forward.

Review of Literature

Empowerment is the process by which the powerless gain more power over resources and ideology. It is associated with terms like Power, Autonomy, Agency and Status. The Indian Constitution

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has made it very clear that women have an equal right to equal treatment. It has also asked the authorities to create rules and regulations in order to protect this right. Feminist scholars during the 1970's as a means of challenging patriarchy. As a radical approach to transform power relations in favor of women's rights & gender equality. In the 1980's, Batliwala (1993) and Kabeer (1994), Rowlands (1997) and Sen (1997) emphasize the complex interrelationship between women's self-awareness and ability to express themselves. Women's access to, and control over, material resources.

The 1990s can be seen as an important decade for women's empowerment around the world, as most of the global conferences highlighted the need to take advantage of the opportunities. It highlighted reproductive, sexual, and violence against women, as well as gender inequality. Even of the eight MDGs that the UN set in 2000 with the aim of achieving gender equality by 2015, Goal 3 was about promoting gender equality and empowering women. Women's empowerment is defined as the transformation in a woman's life, which allows her to lead a more fulfilling human life. This transformation takes place both outwardly (in terms of health, mobility, education, awareness, family status, participation in decision-making) and internally (in terms of self-awareness and self-confidence) Human development in south Asia (2000; Mathew, 2003). UNIFEM has been re-named as UN Entity for the empowerment of women and gender equality.

The Conceptual Framework of the Women and Development Commission

The framework and methodology for empowerment was developed by the International Aid Agency for Women and Development and the Government of Belgium (the Government of Belgium). The framework was influenced by the work of Kabeer (2006), Longwez (2006), Rowlands (2006), Leon (2006), and DAWN (2006). The Commission was of the opinion that empowerment took place at two levels: the individual and the collective. However, the earlier model primarily focused on the individual aspect of empowerment, and identified the four fundamental concepts of empowerment as assets (knowledge), will (power), and capacity (capacity). This model divides resources into assets (physical assets that give one more economic power), knowledge (which provides people with skills, training, literacy, and critical analysis skills), and will (psychological strength or power within oneself to make one's own choices), followed by capacity (opportunity to use resources (knowledge, will, power), make decisions, and take on responsibility).

Women's Empowerment in a Multifaceted Way

Human Development Index (HDI) was first introduced by UNDP in 1990 to track the socio-economic development of a country. In its 1995 report, UNDP stressed the significance of women's empowerment as it was essential for human development as a whole. In order to analyse human development statistics and women's share, two indices have been introduced namely gender development index, which takes into account inequalities in the achievements of women and men, and gender empowerment measure (GEM), which measures the degree to which a woman has influence in political, professional and organisational decision-making.

The matrix gives a structure and a holistic view of the specific issues to be addressed in the perspective of women empowerment. However, it does not cover major issues and does not focus on class and ethics. The matrix is useful for qualitative use and does not provide historical depth. The process of women empowerment has five scopes: cognitive, psychological, economic, political and physical (Mokta, 2014).

Dimensions	Explanation	Parameters
Cognitive	Understanding and knowledge of micro and macro factors that contribute to women's under-representation. This includes making decisions that may be contrary to cultural norms and standards.	Raising Women's Self-Esteem and Confidence. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Elimination of Discrimination and All Forms of Violence against Women and Girl Child. Building and reinforcing relations with civil society, especially women's organisations.
Psychological	The idea that women can make a difference at both personal and social levels to improve their lives and the world around them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enforcement of laws and regulations and protection of women's rights.

Economic	Women have access and control over productive assets, so they have some financial independence. However, she adds that shifts in the balance of economic power don't necessarily change traditional gender roles and behaviors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing an image of women in society and celebrating their contribution to society, economy and politics. • The development of critical thinking skills among women. • Encouraging collective decision-making and action. • Empowering women to make informed decisions. • Ensuring Women's Engagement in all Industries. • Information, Knowledge and Skills for Self-Employment
Political	Women are capable of analysis, organisation and mobilization for social transformation.	
Physical	The empowerment part of the process is about taking control over your body and your sexuality, and defending yourself from sexual assault.	

The Proposed Model of Study and Research Methodology

In the second section, the models discussed have focused on the factors that influence women's empowerment. The Wieringa (1993) and Mokta (2014) models have also discussed different aspects of women's empowerment. This model proposes to discuss women's empowerment on three levels: economic, social and political. These three levels of women's empowerment depend on legislative safeguards, affirmative policies for education, control over resources, and various government, non-government organisations and corporate sector promotional programs. The study aims to identify the differences between India's current state of women's empowerment and what stakeholders expect to see in order to reach the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of equal opportunities for women and men by 2030. It has used relevant secondary sources such as scholarly articles, reports from various ministries functional under the Government of India, corporate and non-governmental organisations, and international organisations for review, analysis, and discussion.

Analysis

Since the Fifth Five Year plan (1974-78), the focus on women's issues has shifted from social welfare to development. More recently, women's empowerment has become a key factor in determining women's status. In order to protect women's rights and legal rights, the National Commission for Women was established by a law of Parliament in the year of 1990. The Government of India has taken several steps to ensure the empowerment of women. In the perspective of the discussion on women empowerment, the following is a detailed list of the constitutional safe guards. Significant of them are given below:

Government Plans, Constitutional Articles and Programmes for Women Empowerment:

Women's Empowerment in India is a topic that has been on the agenda of planners and policy makers in India for quite some time now. This section is dedicated to the government's efforts in this regard.

Constitutional Articles

In the drafting of the Constitution of India, women's empowerment was one of the priorities of the Constitution Committee led by Baba saheb bhim rao ambedkar. Below are some of the articles that have been specifically written about women:

The Economic Empowerment provisions in the Constitution of India.

- Equality of access to employment or any other public office (Article 16) for all citizens of the state.
- State to ensure equal opportunities for women and men for the right to an adequate means of subsistence (Article 39 (a)); and equal compensation for equal work for men and women (Article 39 (d)).
- State to ensure fair and equitable working conditions and maternity leave (Article 42).

Political Empowerment

- The 73rd Constitution Amendment Acts passed by the Parliament of India in 1992 provide that at least 33% (including SC/ST reserved seats) of total direct election seats in each Panchayat

shall be reserved for women, and those seats shall be allotted by rotation to different segments of the Panchayat in accordance with Article 243D(3).

- According to Article 243D(4) of the Constitution, at least one third of the Chairperson's office number at each level of Panchayat shall be reserved to women.
- The total number of direct election seats reserved for women in each Municipality shall be at least one-third (including reserved seats for women belonging to scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes), and those seats shall be allotted by rotation to the different constituencies of a Municipality as per Article 243T(3) of the Rules of Procedure.

Social Empowerment

- Equality before Law for women (Article 14)
- No discrimination against any citizen on grounds of sex beside religion, race, caste etc. (Article- 15)
- The state to make special provision in favour of women and children (Article 15(3))
- Promote justice based on equal opportunity and provide free legal assistance by appropriate legislation or scheme, or by any other means, to ensure that justice opportunities are available to all, regardless of economic disadvantage or disability (Art. 39A)
- State to give priority to the educational and economic well-being of the less-favoured members of society and to safeguard them from social disadvantages and all forms of oppression (Article 46).
- To abstain from sexual practices which are offensive to the honor and well-being of women [article 51(a)(e)]

Gender mainstreaming in government plans and programmes has been a priority area since the inception of India's Constitution, and with particular emphasis on gender mainstreaming as one of the five Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the government of India has been working actively towards gender mainstreaming through women empowerment, and few of the initiatives mentioned below.

Economic Empowerment

- Since 1986-87, the support to training and employment programme for women (STEP) scheme has been administered by the Ministry of women and child development as a "Central Sector Scheme." The aim of the STEP Scheme is to provide employment skills and competencies to women aged 16 and above so that they can become self-employed/repreneurs. The support under the STEP Scheme is provided directly to the institution/organisation including Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). The support can be provided in any sector, including horticulture, agriculture, embroidery, handlooms, food processing, tailoring, stitching, zari etc, handicrafts, computer and IT enable services, soft skills and work place skills like spoken English, travel & tourism, gems & jewellery, hospitality.
- Fearing the plight of the working women, the Government of India in 1972-73 initiated a scheme for grant-in-aid for the construction of new/expansion of existing buildings for hostel facilities for working women in urban, small towns and rural areas where there are employment opportunities for women. Based on the evaluation of the scheme, the current scheme has been modified to support the availability of safe and easily accessible accommodation for the working women who have to stay away from their families because of professional obligations. (Scheme for working women hostel, 1972-73). The Rajiv Gandhi National creche Scheme for the children of working mothers was re-forming by Government of India in 2006. The objective of the scheme was to provide day care facilities for working mothers' children from 6 months to 6 years of age in the community. The objectives of the scheme were: Increase Nutrition and Health Status of Children Promote Physical, Cognitive, Social and Emotional Development of Children Educate and empower Parents/Caregivers for better Childcare.
- Mahila e-Haat is a direct online marketing platform launched by the Ministry of Women & Child Development. It is a bilingual portal. It was launched on 7th March 2016. It is a direct marketing platform for women entrepreneurs /Self Help Groups/Non-Government Organisations to showcase the products and services that they produce, manufacture or undertake. It is a platform to meet the aspirations and needs of the women. It was created with the aim of providing technology to the bulk of the Indian women entrepreneurs / Self Help Groups / Non-Government Organisations. Technology is an essential element for business efficiency.

- In his budget speech for the current financial year (2017-18), the Finance Minister announced the setting up of an Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) Anganwadi Kendra at the village level with an amount of 500 crore rupees. The aim of the scheme is to provide one-stop convergent support services to rural women to help them develop their skills, find employment, become digitally literate, and improve their health and nutrition. The Women and Child Department of the Ministry of Finance has proposed a sub scheme called Mahila Shakti kendra under the umbrella scheme 'MEP-Empowerment for Women'. This scheme is expected to act as a point of contact for rural women to get their entitlements recognized by the government and to provide them with training and capacity building opportunities.

Social Empowerment

- In January 2015, our Hon'ble Prime Minister launched the BBBP Scheme in Panipat in Haryana in order to address the challenge of declining Child Sex Ratio and related issues of empowering girls and women throughout their entire life cycle. Initially launched in 100 districts during 2014-15, the scheme was extended to 61 additional districts during 2015-16, and then extended to all 640 districts through a nationwide mass media campaign, targeted intervention and multi sectoral actions in select districts. The aim of BBBP Scheme is to celebrate girl child and to enable her education. The BBBP Scheme Guidelines, 2019 aims to ensure that all girls are born, raised and educated without discrimination so that they can become empowered citizens with equal rights in this country. The government has launched many innovative activities under the BBBP Scheme such as: Digital Guddi- Gudda Board UDDONGI-SAPNEYA Di Duniya De RURA My Aim My Target Campaign LAKshya se RURA Pahal-EK Kadam Nari SAMMAN ki Aur Ghar ki PeHCHR Beti ke NAAM Bal Cabinet Introduce Pink Cards.
- OSCs are designed to provide support and redress services to women who are victims of violence in public and private spaces, in the family, in the community and in the workplace. Women who are victims of physical violence, sexual violence, emotional violence, psychological violence and economic violence, regardless of their age, caste, social class, education, marital status or race and culture, will receive support and redress services. Aggrieved women who have been subjected to any form of violence, from attempted sexual harassment and sexual assault to domestic violence and trafficking and honour-related crimes such as acid attacks and witch-hunts, who have come forward or have been referred to them, will receive specialized services. In the first phase of the One Stop Centre Scheme, it is envisaged to set up one OSC in each State / Union Territory. In the second phase, 150 additional OSCs are being set up, in addition to the 36 Centres set up in the 1st phase. OSCs will be connected to the existing Helplines (181 and other existing Helplines). Women who have been victims of violence and need redress services can turn to OSCs.
- The Scheme of universalisation of women help desk is aimed at providing 24 hours instant and emergency service to women who are victims of violence through referrals (links with relevant authorities like police, OSC, hospital, etc.) and information on women-related government schemes across the country via a single, unified number. Women Helpline will be connected with OSC, under which an OSC will be set up in each State/UT. OSC will provide integrated support & assistance to women victims of violence in private & public spaces under the same roof. Women victims of violence and those who need redress services will reach out to OSC via WHL. Under the Scheme, States/UTs will use or supplement their existing Women Helplines via a single national number.
- The Ujjawala scheme has been in operation since 2016. The Ministry has developed a Central Scheme for the prevention of trafficking for the rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration of victims of trafficking for the commercial sexual exploitation in Ujjawala. The aim of the new scheme is to prevent trafficking on one side and to rescue and rehabilitation on the other side. The scheme targets women and children that are at risk of being trafficked into commercial sexual exploitation. Implementing agencies include the Social Welfare / Women and Child Welfare department of the State Government, women's development corporations, urban local bodies, women's development centres, reputed public/private trusts or voluntary organizations.
- The Swadhar – a Scheme for women in difficult situations was established in 2001-02 under the auspices of the department of women and child development. The scheme aims to provide a safe and supportive institutional environment for women victims of such circumstances so that they can lead their lives with dignity and conviction. The scheme provides them with shelter,

food, clothes, health care, and economic and social security. It also ensures that their special needs are met and under no circumstances should they be left alone or abandoned which could result in exploitation and poverty.

- International Women's Day is celebrated on the 8th of March every year by the Ministry of Women's and Child Development (MoWCD) as the nodal ministry for the issues relating to women. The MoWCD takes this as an opportunity to recognize the accomplishments of women. In 2015, the MoWCD has decided to award 'nari shakti puruskars' to prominent women and institutions for their services in the field of women's empowerment. Over the past decade, the Government has worked hard to recognise and support women, as evidenced by the National Policy for the empowerment of women in 2001. Women's issues have taken on greater importance and focus.

Women are vulnerable to violence in both public and private places, such as Domestic violence, Sexual assault, Rape, Stalking and others. Gender responsive police services require specific training, an increased presence of women in the police force, and community outreach to ensure gender mainstreaming in policies, procedures and operational procedures. In recent years, several pieces of legislation have been adopted in the Parliament to address Gender Based Violence, such as Criminal Law Amendment Act (CLAW) 2013, Sexual Harassment at Workplace (POW) Act (2013), Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005) and provided a platform for women who face violence to take legal action. National Crime Records Bureau data shows that in 2018, there were 3.78 lakh crimes against women reported under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and other criminal laws, as compared to 3.38 lakh crimes reported in 2016.

The working group on women's agency and empowerment (WAGE) has noted that these figures need to be seen in the light of the fact that not all cases of crimes are reported. However, the actual numbers may provide even more reason for concern. The role of police is crucial for the security of citizens, especially women. The home ministry has taken forward the initiative of 33% reservation for women in police forces by implementing in the Union of Tamil Nadu (UTs) and spreading it in the States. There is a rising focus on gender sensitivity in police forces through training schemes, performance appraisal and women police stations in order to fight crime against women.

Non-Governmental Organization Initiative for Women Empowerment

In total, to the Government, women empowerment, particularly in rural areas, has been a top priority for NGOs. The Women and Child Development Ministry works closely with many NGOs to implement its various schemes and to conduct research studies. Many of the Government of India's schemes are implemented with the active involvement and support of NGOs as they play a crucial role in speeding up the pace of implementation on the ground. Table 4 below shows the presence of performing NGOs across states (77.55% of the total number of NGOs working on women empowerment are in the state). The highest presence of performing NGOs is found in Delhi and the lowest presence is found in the states of Karnataka, Maharashtra and Tripura. One of the reasons for this could be the statistics of crime rates in these states.

Some works conducted by Non-Governmental Organization in this area are as follows:

- The apna ghar ashram provides safe and caring homes to the destitute and the disabled women. Over 50% of the residents of the ashrams are rehabilitated. Currently, the ashrams in 17 major cities in India provide safe and caring homes for 458 men and 1004 women. The ashram was awarded the state award by the state government as the best services organization.
- Established in 1973, Apsalaya is a Non-Governmental Organization for women in India that works to empower women by overcoming political, social and economic obstacles. Apsalaya offers sewing classes and provides training to women who have not had the option or chance to become financially self-sufficient. In Apsalaya's Self Help groups, the economic empowerment of women has been achieved for 209 women. In 2017 Apsalaya was awarded Champion Level-GuideStar India Platinum, the highest level of transparency and accountability for a non-governmental organization for women.
- Maitri was established in 2005 and has worked with more than 45,000 people on social and health issues and public health issues. The organization focuses on education, community work, networking, and legal advocacy among others. Maitri works on the fight against viciousness against women and runs a victim support programme. The organization also provides assistance to abandoned elderly widow widows in the city of Varndavan.

- Action Aid India has been providing shelter to the poor and excluded since 1972. The first crisis center in India, Gauravi, was established in 2014 with the support of the Ministry of Health to fight for women's rights in India and to prevent domestic violence against women. Today, Gauravi has 22 centers across India and registered more than 40,000 incidents.
- Ashadeep mission was launched with the aim of providing a higher standard of living (medical care and therapy) to people with mental disorders. The Ashadeep Navachetna home provides shelter, food and medical care to women suffering from mental health problems. The home also helps to reunite the women with their families, if possible, after treatment. To date, the home has saved and rehabilitated 355 women.
- Established in 2011, Seven Sisters Development Assistance aims to build a just and inclusive society in northeast India free from poverty. Sesta Runs Two Programs: Leadership Program For Neigeria's Educated Young, And Enabling Poor Rural Women Through Lifetime Activities Through Shg. Since Sesta's Inception, Nearly 8000 Women Have Been Mobilized To Form 700 Shg.

Corporate Social Responsibility for Women Empowerment

The new Companies Bill, which was passed by the Lower House of the Indian Parliament in December 2012, requires PSUs and private companies with a turnover of more than 10 billion rupees, a net worth of more than 5 billion rupees or a net profit of more than 50 million rupees or more to spend 2 percent of their average net profit in the previous three financial years on corporate social responsibility. The major corporate houses consider women's empowerment to be an important aspect of CSR. It has been observed that these interventions are mainly carried out in the peripheral areas of the main operating regions, either by an in-house or outsourced professional corporate social responsibility team and sometimes in partnership with non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

SDG Goal Five - Achieve Gender Equality: Status of India

According to SDG Goal 5, which aims to achieve gender parity by 2030, there are a number of objectives to be achieved, including:

- Target 1. Put an end to the oppression of women and girls all over the world.
- Target 2. Eliminate Violence against Women and Girls in Public and Private Life, including Trafficking and Sexual and Other Forms of Exploitation.
- Target 3. Eliminate Child Marriage, Forced Marriage, Early Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation.
- Target 4. Recognises and empowers unpaid care and home work through public services, infrastructure, and social protection policies, and promotes shared responsibility within the home and family as nationally appropriate.
- Target 5. Ensure Women's Participation at All Levels of Decision-Making in Economic, Political and Public Life.
- Target 6: Take steps to ensure women have equal economic opportunities, including ownership and control of land and land-related assets, financial institutions, heirlooms and natural resources in accordance with domestic laws.

India has made progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by achieving gender parity in primary education and is well on track to do so at all levels of education. However, the number of seats held by women in Lok Sabha has remained low, with only 11% seats held by women and 46% seats held by men. The gender ratio has improved slightly, with the lowest being 927 women per 1000 men in 1991, which has increased slightly to 933 per 1000 men in 2001 and to 940 per 1000 men in 2011. Despite this progress, India is still facing a number of challenges related to violence against women, such as violence against women at home, in public places, and physical and mental abuse at work.

Thus, the Indian Government has made the eradication of violence against women a top priority for the country and has focused on the following objectives: Elimination of discrimination, violence and exploitation of girls/women Abolition of harmful practices such as child marriage, early marriage and forced marriage Recognition and appreciation of unpaid care/domestic work through public services and social protection policies Encouraging shared responsibility within households Empowerment of women through the use of Information and Communications Technology.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Women empowerment is not just a slogan, it is a key enabler for the optimal functioning of a family, a society, a nation and ultimately a sustainable world. In this paper, we have covered a wide range of affirmative legislations, plans and programmes launched by the Government, Non-Governmental Organisations and Corporate sector through Corporate Social Responsibility in recent years, ranging from the Indian Constitution to development. This has been reflected in improving gender parity in educational attainment, improving political participation, but showing a decreasing trend in economic participation, and opportunity, as well as in the health and survival segment, which is worse even among the SAARC countries. The Sustainable Development Goals, the Government needs to pay more attention to these two segments to achieve gender equality. There is an urgent need to review India's affirmative actions and give fresh impetus to girls and women's empowerment, not only through traditional education but also by helping them acquire skills and providing equal economic opportunities with proper medical and health care. The findings provide several opportunities for policy debate and intervention on women empowerment.

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