

## WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND LIVELIHOOD: A STUDY OF RAJASTHAN

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### ABSTRACT

*Women's Empowerment has always been a burning issue all over India including Rajasthan. Women empowerment signifies that women should be given equal opportunity in every field, irrespective of any discrimination. Women have undergone a lot over the years in this patriarchal society. Even the basic right of education is not being provided to them. Their capabilities to perform any task was always questioned. But with time, they understood their rights. We can now women can be found working in practically every industry, including IT, engineering, architecture, law, and the financial sector. They have also succeeded in service-related professions like those of a nurse, beautician, salesperson, waitress, etc.*

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**Keywords:** *Women's Empowerment, Patriarchal Society, Financial Sector, Service-Related Professions.*

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### Introduction

Ever since the issues related to Women in Development started getting crystallized in early seventies and getting noticed by policy planners, academia, media and the ordinary women of the world and a large number of women's groups started pressuring the political parties and governments to include women as direct participants in development planning, a number of studies have been made to find out whether there have been any changes in the situation- social or economic- of women in the world. In India also a number of studies have been made and impediments in the progress of women brought to the notice of national and state governments. Towards Equality: Report of the Committee on the Status of Women, the National Perspective Plan and the Shram Shakti report were some of the pioneering studies made in India in the late 80s. They became the basis for programmes for women. development in the country. The setting up of the National and State Commissions for Women, the 73<sup>rd</sup> and the 74<sup>th</sup> amendments in the Constitution of India to strengthen the Panchayati Raj system and local urban bodies and to provide 33% reservation to women at every tier in them were expected to act as stepping stones for women to achieve their desired goals. In Rajasthan, the Women Development Programme, commonly known as the Saathin Programme raised the expectation of rural women to great heights but the achievements under it which took nearly a decade to be felt in the government and the society little time to be frittered away, and the programme in its original shape and vision stands demoralized.

In Rajasthan, an analysis of the situation of women and children was made by the UNICEF in 1991. Previously, UNICEF and NCERT had worked together to publish a document titled "Hamari Betiyan" in 1989. It was an evaluation of the girl's circumstances On a personal level, we should start respecting women and start giving them opportunities equal to men. We should promote and encourage them for jobs, higher education, business activities, etc. The government is already working towards women's empowerment through various policies. But we as individuals can also empower women by abolishing social evils like the dowry system, child marriage. These small steps will change the situation of women in society and make them feel empowered.

### Livelihood & Women

Women take up home-based work to supplement household income since they cannot work in factories. Male benevolence towards the unpaid work that women do at home is reinforced by the male

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perspective that women are dependent on male family members. Domestic responsibilities and home-based contract employment are balanced by women workers. Due to a lack of transferable skills and their constricting traditional social roles, women who work from home are unable to transition from low-paying occupations to high-paying jobs (Benton 1989:263). Employers can save on overhead expenses, delegate long-term obligations, and experiment all at once by using home-based workers. These workers frequently earn wages that are less than the industrial wage rate. This paper provides a review of the literature that is available and pertinent to the proposed investigation. There have been numerous studies done on the subject of women's subordination versus empowerment. The chapter covers papers, journals, and books, starting with a description of the condition of women as it has historically been in our culture and ending with the desired level of empowerment.

According to Kapur in 2001, "women's empowerment is viewed as a process in which women gain a greater share of control over resource material, human and intellectual, like knowledge, ideas, and financial resources like money and control over decision-making at home, in society, and in the nation and to gain power." Focusing on these elements, the researcher ensures that the study is relevant to past studies by ensuring this.

### **Subordination of Women**

According to Mie, "Development would not exist without underdevelopment, wealth would not exist without poverty, and the domination of men would not exist without the subjection and submissiveness of women" (Mies, 1988, 3).

The liberation fight has typically been prioritised over the women's struggle, which has typically been suppressed and ignored. platforms. Because of the social structures and power dynamics present in our culture, this prevailed. In relation to this, Fanon explained decolonization and recommended complete social structural change as a means of liberation.

Such prevailing societal institutions and power structures are the result of a hypocritical patriarchal ideology that, while elevating women to the status of Durga and Shakti, regards them as mere objects to be exploited for whatever purposes the patriarch desires.

He quotes the Indian mystic Tulsidas, who said, "Dhol, Ganwar, Shudra, Pashu, Nari, ye sab tadhan ke adhikari (Drum, rogue, slave, animal, and women, they deserve beating and condemnation)" and further advances the notion of Satya Prakash Mohanty, while reclaiming the identity of the to expound "the epistemic status of (her) cultural Thus, "sometimes a woman's life also tells the story of a nation" is a true statement.

Gender disparity, income inequality, the concealment of work done, female foeticide, and violence (physical, emotional, spousal, and non-spousal) are some of the methods used to ensure subordination. This made it easier for the various philosophers to come to the conclusion that people nevertheless experience unjust and unfair disempowerment despite their numerical strength and merit (both discovered and undiscovered, used and unused).

According to Dutta's study from 2002, women are still seen as the "Woe of the Society" and an unwelcome burden. And for this reason, different policies and initiatives frequently fall short of their intended goals.

Millions of women in India continue to live in poverty and with illiteracy, bad health, unemployment, and malnutrition. Because of how the impoverished parents generally act, women cannot receive a proper education.

### **Economy and Women**

Women make up 50% of the population in India, do two-thirds of the work, and generate 50% of the food that is consumed there, but they only receive one third of the pay and own 10% of the nation's assets. This is organised subordination; through social institutions, society seeks to keep women in, and when it comes to using cheap labour, women are singled out. In addition, gender-biased salaries serve as a demotivating weapon for women, keeping them vulnerable to exploitation. As noted by Misra, J. (2006), this is nothing less than the feminization of poverty and a persistent type of backwardness.

Rural women are known to have a significant role in caring for livestock, grazing, collecting fodder, cleaning animal sheds, processing milk, and selling livestock products, but they have little actual control over the animals and the products they produce. With minor regional differences, women make about 93% of the workforce in India's dairy industry.

## Empowerment

The phrase or philosophy of empowerment did not first emerge in a context related to gender, but rather through the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1921–1997). To address the conflict with the "oppressors," those in positions of authority, he created the "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" in 1970. The "la conscientização" literacy programme and influential social and educational movement were both the results of Freire's methodology (Freire, 1996). Later, he was acknowledged as the creator of critical pedagogy, which sees education as fostering the capacity for personal growth from a human rights perspective.

Both individual liberations to become a transformative democratic citizen and collective struggle to bring about social transformation in the direction of achieving social justice in an egalitarian society are essential goals of critical pedagogy. The "oppressed" can free themselves from control by understanding the mechanics underlying their societal oppression thanks to this educational awakening.

Three interrelated factors are incorporated into one's capacity for strategic decision-making:

- Agency
- Resources
- Achievements

One's agency is determined by their capacity to articulate their aims and take appropriate action. The "emergence of a critical consciousness, the process by which people move from a position of unquestioning acceptance of the social order to a critical perspective on it" (Kabeer, 1999) is made possible by the existence of other possibilities, which makes this decision conceivable.

"Empowerment is a difficult concept to accept in practise, particularly for women, who are frequently encouraged -- and thus learn -- to not be ultimately responsible in (their) lives that give (them) satisfaction" (Warren and Gielnik, 1995). Nisar-ul-Haq, advancing this idea, defines empowerment as "synonym for participation, for speaking out or for meeting some need" (2005). Claiming parity, equality, and equity "instead of waiting for others to provide it" is what is meant by this, according to Nisar ul Haq (Hall Margaret).

The Informal Sector and Women According to Singh T, Geetika, and Gupta's (2011) study, over 94% of all women workers in India are employed in the informal sector, with roughly 20% of them working in cities. The majority of women employed in the unorganised economy come from social groups that must have money at all costs. Nearly 50% of these female workers support their families solely. Another shocking statistic is that only 7.5% of all female workers participate in legitimate, recognised trade unions. Another worrying aspect is that women often work unpaid, even outside the home, for 5-8 hours a day to support their families.

This fact needs to be taken into account together with the fact that a typical woman works at home for about 7 to 8 hours handling household duties and raising the children. Most of the female workers are untrained. According to Papola (1982, 92), the labour market in urban areas discriminates against women significantly more severely than the labour market in rural areas. Women's engagement in economic activities is declining as a result of this discrimination. In his 2002 article, Shrivastava, he explored the numerous strategies and policies for the advancement of women in India.

According to the author, after independence, women's status and circumstances underwent significant transformation. Equal rights for men and women are guaranteed by the Indian Constitution. There are several provisions for the empowerment of women. Given the work done in the past by various social reformers, the Indian government has created a number of plans and policies, particularly for women. The government has launched a number of socioeconomic initiatives with the goal of providing women with all the resources they need for their health, education, job, etc.

This is the reason why women now are successful in practically all fields that were formerly controlled by men. The largest issue with the informal sector in India is the lack of clear data regarding the entire number of workers, much alone the number of women employed there, as well as their respective ratios in a variety of diverse occupations. The existence and qualifications of unorganised or informal workers—those without job security, work security, or social security—are highlighted in the National Commission on Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector's Report. Currently, 92 percent of the workforce consists of this group of unorganised workers.

Whatever information is available comes from the National Perspective Plan for Women, 2000 and the Census 2001 Report. Even if there is no accurate estimate of the overall number of women

employed in the informal sector, one is nonetheless made based on the information that is currently available. There are about 60 thousand women working in the categories of main employees, marginal workers, and those working in domestic industries, according to census reports from 2001 about workers and their distribution.

Another estimate is that in India, over 90% of all women employed work in the unorganised sector (National Perspective Plan for Women, 2000). Employees of informal businesses as well as numerous informal wage workers who work for formal businesses, homes, or who have no set employer make up the category of informal wage employment. These include sporadic day workers, household employees, industrial outworkers (particularly home workers), unregistered employees, and part-time or temporary workers who lack stable employment, worker benefits, or social security.

Two of the major subgroups of the informal workforce are home-based employees and street sellers, with home-based workers being more prevalent but street vendors being more noticeable. Together, they make up around 5% of the workforce in affluent nations and between 10% and 25% of the non-agricultural labour in developing countries (World Bank, 2000). The following groups of women workers in the unorganised economy have been identified based on numerous studies and other reports: Construction work: Men perform the skilled and semi-skilled tasks, while women must always work as unskilled labourers carrying building materials to the construction site on their heads.

### **Objectives**

- To determine the metrics for evaluating women's empowerment.
- To comprehend the impact of livelihood on the various aspects.
- To be aware of the difficulties women experience when engaging in activities that provide for their livelihood.

### **Methodology**

To carry out this investigation, a quantitative research design was employed. The study's subject matter is women who work in the unorganised sector. The socioeconomic and political aspects of empowerment have been explained using secondary sources, such as journal articles, books, UNDP reports, and government policy documents.

### **Research Question**

- What connection exists between women's empowerment and participation in the workforce?
- Does women's empowerment result from economic, familial, social, and political empowerment?
- Has involvement in one's livelihood given women access to decision-making.

### **Faces of Women Empowerment in Rajasthan**

The faces of women's empowerment in Rajasthan include Gayatri Devi (the Maharani of Jaipur), Ruma Devi (an empowering rural fashion icon), and many others. This section presents information on the types of tasks carried out by respondents and the degree to which their family-related accessibility, capability, and ability to make decisions have improved.

"Empowerment is a process of realising one's own capacities, strengths, and weaknesses; acting on/accordingly to access the power, resources, and participate in decision-making for the betterment of oneself and others; or for making choices which boost the self-confidence and self-worth in multiple dimensions, i.e. social, economic, familial, and political, thus promoting social mobility."

The social, economic, political, and family empowerment are some of the aspects that were taken into consideration when developing the framework for the current study. Financial Empowerment Economic empowerment is the ability of both men and women to engage in, contribute to, and benefit from economic processes in ways that respect their dignity, acknowledge the value of their efforts, and enable negotiation of a more equitable division of the rewards of progress. Economic empowerment, as stated in the definition, encompasses both men and women who contribute to and profit from the growing process.

Because ensuring human dignity to all members of any human society is its primary duty, social empowerment entails a more equitable social status for women in society. It is frequently argued that improving women's financial access is ineffective for achieving women's empowerment unless it is combined with other types of initiatives, such as training on the impact of women's subordination, the idea of self-esteem, and the significance and advantages of empowering women.

In order to increase their mobility, break their isolation, build their self-confidence and self-image, and establish their public presence so that they can take part in decision-making within an expanding framework of awareness and critical analysis to control and influence the course of development, women must become politically empowered. Equal voting rights are only one aspect of political equality; access to institutionalised power centres is much more crucial. To attain empowerment, political involvement must be ensured. Because women would have a direct avenue through which to present their complaints and challenges.

The study uses the aforementioned metrics to gauge the empowerment of women and seeks to identify relationships between them. The study would gauge women's empowerment in each of these areas through the questions it had posed, and it would also analyse women's empowerment as a whole.

Livelihood is defined as a set of activities that include obtaining water, food, fodder, medicine, shelter, clothing, and the capacity to obtain the aforementioned necessities while working either individually or as a group using endowments (both human and material) for satisfying the needs of the self and his/her household on a sustainable basis with dignity.

The results imply that the parameters are closely related to one another. Because of their interconnectedness, each one of them needs to be empowered for empowerment to occur. The results also show that a parameter's failure directly affects empowerment as a whole.

According to research, women who are actively involved in their livelihoods have undoubtedly increased their confidence and been more independent. If not empowering women, then at least it has extended the scope of their empowerment. The findings highlight the numerous difficulties that women confront, which aids in achieving the goal.

It is more crucial to draw attention to the fact that just 0.98 million women are employed as primary and marginal employees in Rajasthan's urban districts, compared to 10.6 million women who work in rural areas. Cultivators and agricultural labourers make up about 77% of all workers and 18% of all urban female workers.

### Conclusion

This study was conducted to conceptualise and contextualise the idea of empowering women working in the unorganised economy to support themselves. The current study makes an effort to quantify women's empowerment using several metrics chosen after reading the relevant literature. This study aims to comprehend the significance of livelihood in their lives as well as the degree to which their employment gives them the ability to make decisions at home. An urban woman's condition is highly concerning because she must deal with several disparities and discriminatory practises. In addition, their daily schedule is dominated by domestic duties and employment. Additionally, they are denied the fundamental rights to equal pay, land ownership, and additional family-level decision-making. The study uses data gathered from the field and analyses it to come to the following conclusions.

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