

## THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

---

Dr. Seema Pareek\*

### ABSTRACT

*It is untrue that women cannot feel empowered unless they are granted greater authority. Women are already incredibly powerful. Two processes can be seen as part of women's empowerment; (1) Realization of the boundless potential in women; (2) Acceptance of this realization by society. The two spokes that make up the economy are men and women. If both of these wheels work effectively together, they will advance the country and open up new growth horizons. Almost half of the entire population is women. It is essential to empower women economically by making them economically active, strong and self-reliant, because this is the key to women empowerment. In ancient times, women had equal opportunities in all fields, but from the later Vedic period to the medieval period, their position gradually deteriorated. At present, efforts have been made to bring women to a respectable position in all fields, but even today they are victims of violence, oppression and discrimination in the society. The main reasons behind this are the social, political and economic life of the society. The purpose of this study is to analyze the status of women in India and the selected nations across the world. It also looks into the importance of women's empowerment. This article emphasizes the significance of empowered women and suggests strategies for building a strong future for women.*

**Keywords:** Women Empowerment, Economic Development, Growth.

---

### Introduction

Women make up almost half of the population. The key to women's empowerment is empowering them economically through fostering their economic strength, independence, and activity. In India women enjoyed equal possibilities in all disciplines in antiquity, but from the later Vedic period through the medieval period, things started to go worse for them.

Even though there are currently attempts being made to elevate women to respectable positions across all fields, they continue to face abuse, exploitation, and prejudice from society. The social, political, and economic life of the society are the primary causes of this.

The two spokes that make up the economy are men and women. If both of these wheels provide strong contributions, they can help in the progress of the nation and establish new dimensions and patterns of development. The following points highlight the role of women in economic development.

- **Productive, Active and Effective human Resource**

Women are productive, active and effective human resources. Human resources are what make other resources economically useful. Men and women are equally important, useful, and necessary as human resources. Although males are actively contributing, the resources are not being used to their full potential since women are not considered to be valuable human resources. The Production Possibility Curve is a graphical representation of the alternative combinations of goods and services economy can produce.<sup>1</sup>

A production possibilities curve (PPC)'s optimal point, where the lowest cost and highest profit is achievable, can only be reached by fully utilizing the available human, natural, and physical resources from the viewpoints of the individual, community, country and world.

---

\* Professor, Department of Economics, Seth R.L. Saharia Government P.G. College Kaladera, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India.

- **Medium and Catalyst for Sustainable Economic Development**

Inclusive development is required for sustainable economic development as a medium and catalyst for women-inclusive development. Inclusive development means that development should reach all areas and all sections of the society (women, men, and rich, poor). In India's 12th Five Year Plan (2012–17), inclusive growth is emphasized **2**. The role of women is indispensable for inclusive development. She is a motivator as well as a strong, active medium for this.

- **Sensitive Decision-Makers and Visionary Policy Makers**

Women are sensitive decision-makers and visionary policy makers. Women consider any action plan or problem in greater depth and complexity. They are not less intelligent or emotionally intelligent than men, but women have a greater emotional quotient (EQ) than males because they are better at understanding their own and other people's emotions. Women therefore play a significant role in shaping policies with vision and making thoughtful decisions.

- **Active and Significant Contribution in National Income**

Women create work but do not generate income. Although they perform the majority of the job, women play an active and significant role in the economy and contribute to the national income. Women don't earn money; they create work. Women contribute actively and significantly to the economy, but because most of their work is not measured in monetary terms, it is not taken into consideration when calculating national income.

In developing countries, especially in agricultural countries, women make important contributions in the fields from sowing to harvesting, but they do not get the reward in the form of currency. Only the man gets the money by selling this crop in the market. Therefore, women are work creators but not money earners.

According to the Human Development Report **3** not only in developing countries but also in developed countries, women do such household work on an average of four hours a day for which they do not receive any currency in return, hence the work done by them does not become a part of the national income. In the present modern era, women are playing an important role in science-technology, army, administration, management, politics etc. They are taking active part in the development of rural areas as well as urban areas.

Women are making their presence felt in Panchayati Raj institutions, municipal authorities, and Parliament, in addition to the agricultural and industrial sectors. Women's economic contributions are apparent and well known all across the world. The other side of the coin is that the surface of reality remains rough.

The contribution of women in many economic variables is influenced by geographical, social, political, and psychological aspects. The level of economic empowerment of women varies in different countries of the world.

Empowerment is defined as a person's capacity to make effective choices that is, the capacity to transform choices into desired actions and outcomes. Degrees of empowerment are measured by the existence of choice, the use of choice, and the achievement of choice.<sup>4</sup>

On the basis of a comparative examination of numerous economic development indices, we have analyzed the economic condition of women in developed countries, India, and its neighboring countries in the table below.

Country → Parameters ↓	Developed Country	India	Nepal	Pakistan	Bangladesh	Bhutan
ASE	71	0.61	0.66	0.5	0.92	0.43
GII	0.276	0.501 (122th rank)	0.476 (115 <sup>th</sup> rank)	0.547 (136th rank)	0.536 (129 <sup>th</sup> rank)	0.436 (99 <sup>th</sup> rank)
LPR	40-60%	23.6%	81.7%	23.9%	NA	58.2%
MHML	30-45%	13%	13.9%	4.2%	18.2	NA
MLA	30-45%	11.1%	33.5%	20%	20%	15.5%
NAE	40%	16.7%	34.6%	10%	20.2%	32.2%
VAW	25-35%	28.8%	25%	24.5%	54.2%	15%

Source: Various Human Development Report and HDR 2019

Here

ASE= Proportion of Female with minimum secondary education.

GII = Gender Inequality Index

LPR= female labour participation rate

MHML =Female participation at Middle and Higher Managerial levels

MLA= Female participation in MLA seats

NAE = Female Participation in Non-Agricultural Employment

VAW - Domestic violence against women

The above table clearly shows that gender inequality is much lower in developed countries than in developing countries, which is an indicator of women's empowerment. However, a thorough examination of the data reveals the true situation of women in developed countries, revealing that even there; women are not equal to men.

In developing countries the female labour participation rate is 40-60% while that of men is 60-80%. Women's participation in parliamentary seats and middle and higher managerial positions is only 30-45%, which shows that men dominate the policy-making and decision-making levels. However, in developed countries the status of women in education and other matters is equivalent.

Gender inequality is a worldwide problem. There is only a degree of difference in inequality between developed and developing countries. Gender inequality is higher in developing countries.

Comparing India with other neighboring nations, it is clear that the situation is very pathetic on almost all indicators and variables as compared to other neighboring nations except Pakistan.

A major reason behind this is that female labour participation rate is higher in other neighboring countries, such as 58.2% in Bhutan, 81.7% in Nepal, which is 25 and 4 times respectively compared to 23.6% in India. That means most of the women are working here.

The second big reason is that most of the women in these countries are engaged in non-agricultural work. In Nepal, 34.6% women and in Bhutan, 32.2% women are employed in non-agricultural work, while in India it is only 16.7%, which is low compared to other countries.

It is clear from the data of Bangladesh that female literacy, female labor participation rate, female participation in parliamentary seats, female participation in non-agricultural work are comparatively better than India. Despite this, it is an interesting fact that domestic violence against women is 54.2% in Bangladesh which is twice as much as India's 28.8%. That is, domestic violence against women is not directly related to women empowerment. It has many social and psychological factors and dimensions.

A woman becomes empowered when she is financially capable. When the opposite happens, the gender inequality index increases. It is almost double in India as compared to developed countries. Out of total 165 countries, India is ranked 122nd, while Bhutan (99th) and Nepal (115th) are in better position than India.

Economic empowerment of women ensures women empowerment by strengthening their position in the family. In poor families, women are required to work. When women engage in economic activities to run the family, dependence on their family increases. Due to equal opportunities in rich families, women participate in economic activities. But in middle class families where women are not involved in any economic activity and are completely dependent on men from the economic point of view, their condition is pathetic. To ensure empowerment, in poor families, women are required to work.

Digital education and technology can really make a difference and allow rural women to play a major role in the advancement of our country. The digital divide is disproportionately affecting young rural girls and women. They are unable to take advantage of contemporary innovations that could enhance their lives.

Across the globe, women are 21% less likely than men to be online; in the least developed nations, this difference is only 50%. Their inability to fully engage in the digital economy is causing billions of dollars in annual GDP losses for the global community. Infrastructure alone isn't enough to bridge the digital divide. We must also ensure digital products are relevant and affordable for women.<sup>5</sup>

### **Suggestions for Women Empowerment**

- **Increasing Women's Participation at Political and Managerial Level**

Gender inequality is a global problem. Even in developed countries, men dominate.

Participation of women should be ensured at the political (policy making) and managerial (decision making) levels. For this, they should be given reservation in legislature, parliament etc. so that through its 'leakage effect' it is possible to improve the situation downstream. If women take active part in policy-making and decisions, then gender equality is actually possible, this is a symbol of women empowerment.

- **Ensuring Women's Education up to Minimum Secondary Level**

- In order for women to be economically empowered, it is essential to increase women's participation in non-agricultural activities. This is possible only when women are educated at least up to secondary level. With this, they will get more opportunities to get employment in non-agricultural sectors, they will be more self-reliant and also more empowered. It is known that 56% women in India are actively participating in 'MGNREGA', one of the largest employment schemes in the world. Rural women have become empowered by getting employment. Leaving aside MGNREGA, education increases the employment options available to women to benefit from other available employment schemes. Only an educated woman will be a strong woman.

- Education makes women aware of their rights and duties. To promote school education, efforts need to be made keeping in mind the demand and supply side. It is the responsibility of every parent to provide (minimum) education to their daughters up to secondary education. Efforts should be made to create employment by linking education with vocational education courses. Efforts will have to be made to promote women's education in higher education also. For this, there is a need to take important decisions and their effective implementation in the new education policy. According to Nobel laureate in economics in the year 2019, Prof. Abhijit Banerjee, incentive based policy can be successful in promoting education in developing countries.

- **Reservation in Employment should be Gender Based**

To empower women in a real sense, it is necessary that there should be about fifty percent women reservation in employment. This will increase the female labor participation rate, as a result gender discrimination and gender inequality will reduce in every sector. Although initially the quality of work may have to be compromised, with time it gradually improves. For example, in Rajasthan, we can directly see the impact of 33 percent women's reservation in Panchayati Raj institutions and urban bodies, which has now increased to fifty percent.

Earlier, women elected to Panchayats used to wear veils. 'Sarpanch Pati' was dominant. Now the circumstances are changing, they are now speaking openly and taking decisions, the concept of 'Sarpanch Pati' has almost ended.

- **Wholistic Holistic Approach**

Adopt a holistic concept - biologically the way of thinking of men and women is different. Man thinks horizontally (broadly) and woman thinks vertically (deeply).

We must think broadly and deeply (vertically and horizontally) for any work or policy to be successful and to make the policy effective. It can be only when both men and women contribute together at every point, only then the WHOLISTIC (whole) and HOLYSIC (sacred) concept will be realized.

In the entire concept, decisions will be taken after thinking from a vertical and horizontal perspective and in the sacred concept, that God's creation woman will be respected and her contribution will be there, there will be no gender inequality, then such development will be complete as well as sacred.

- **Survival of the Fittest**

We have to understand the relevance of Darwin's theory even today. Darwin's principle of survival of the fittest states that there should be the fittest species in the universe. The existence of women in present times and their capabilities proves their necessity in the universe. Hence inequality between men and women has to be ended. Gender discrimination or inequality is an act against nature.

- **There should be a Positive Change in the Male Mentality**

Men have considered women either goddesses or nothing. Even today women are yearning for human status. Positive change in male mentality is the need of the hour. This will reduce abuse of women, domestic violence, harassment at workplace, crime etc. By getting the goodwill and cooperation of men, women of all classes and regions will be able to take active participation in various sectors of the economy. Along with economic independence, they are able to enjoy being a human being.

The mode of production changes when women play an active role in the economy. Earlier only one resource (men) was used extensively, now production will be done using both male and female human resources. This situation is beneficial for both men and women.

Therefore, economic empowerment is the cornerstone of women empowerment. To ensure this, increasing women's participation at the political, managerial and administrative levels, making gender-based reservation in employment, adopting a holistic and sacred concept, encouraging women's education, positive change in male mentality is the urgent need of the present time.

**References**

1. Paul A. Samuelson and William D. Nordhaus. Economics. (1948), 20th Edition 2019, McGraw-Hill publication.
2. 12th Five Year Plan (2012–17)
3. Human Development Report
4. Alsop, Ruth and Nina Henson. Measuring empowerment in practice: structuring analysis and framing indicators. Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2005. 122p, working paper no. 3510
5. The Times of India: Digital learning paradox and women empowerment February 28, 2023.

