



## A Study on Issues and Challenges of Women Empowerment in India

Anita, anitasaro74@gmail.com

**Abstract:** Women's empowerment and economic development are closely related: in one direction, development alone can play a major role in driving down inequality between men and women; in the other direction, empowering women may benefit development. Does this imply that pushing just one of these two levers would set a virtuous circle in motion? This paper reviews the literature on both sides of the empowerment-development nexus, and argues that the inter-relationships are probably too weak to be self-sustaining, and that continuous policy commitment to equality for its own sake may be needed to bring about equality between men and women.

ISSN 2454-308X



**Key Words:** Women Empowerment, Education, Health, Socio-Economic Status, Crimes against women, Policy implications.

**Introduction:** Women empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender or economic strength of individuals and communities of women. Women's empowerment in India is heavily dependent on many different variables that include geographical location (urban / rural) educational status social status (caste and class) and age. Policies on Women's empowerment exist at the national, state and local (Panchayat) levels in many sectors, including health, education, economic opportunities, and gender based violence and political participation. However there are significant gap between policy advancements and actual practice at the community level. Empowerment of women is essentially the process of upliftment of economic, social and political status of women, the traditionally underprivileged ones, in the society. It is the process of guarding them against all forms of violence. Women empowerment involves the building up of a society, a political environment, wherein women can breathe without the fear of oppression, exploitation, apprehension, discrimination and the general feeling of persecution which goes with being a woman in a traditionally male dominated structure. Women constitute almost 50% of the world's population but India has shown disproportionate sex ratio whereby female's population has been comparatively lower than males. As far as their social status is concerned, they are not treated as equal to men in all the places. In the Western societies, the women have got equal right and status with men in all walks of life. But gender disabilities and discriminations are found in India even today. The paradoxical situation has such that she was sometimes concerned as Goddess and at other times merely as slave.

### Present Situation of Women-

**New Delhi:** Being equal to their male counterparts is still a far cry for Indian women. Not only are they marginal as public figures average Indian women can hardly call the shots at home or outside. In 2018, women occupied only 8 out of 74 ministerial positions in the union council of ministers. There were only 2 women judges out of 26 judges in the Supreme Court and there were only 54 women judges out of 634 judges in various high courts.

**Shocking Facts:** According to 2018, UNDP report on Human Development Indicators, all south Asian Countries except Afghanistan, were ranked better for women than India It predicts: an Indian girl child aged 1-5 years is 75% more likely to die than the boy child. A woman is raped once in every 20 min and 10% of all crimes are reported. Women form 48% of India's Population, only 29% of the National workforce; only 26% women have access to formal credit.

**Why Need of Women Empowerment:** Reflecting into the "Vedas Purana" of Indian culture, women are being worshiped such as LAXMI MAA, goddess of wealth; SARSWATI MAA, for wisdom; DURGA MAA for



power. The status of women in India particularly in rural areas needs to address the issue of empowering women. About 66% of the female population in rural area is unutilized. This is mainly due to existing social customs. In agriculture and Animal care the women contribute 90% of the total workforce. Women constitute almost half of the population, perform nearly 2/3 of its work hours, receive 1/10th of the world's income and own less than 1/ 100th the world property. Among the world's 900 million illiterate people, women outnumber men two to one. 70% of people living in poverty are women. Lower sex ratio i.e. 933, the existing studies show that the women are relatively less healthy than men though belong to same class. They constitute less than 1/7th of the administrators and managers in developing countries. Only 10% seats in World Parliament and 6% in National Cabinet are held by women.

**Hindrances of Women Empowerment:** The main Problems that were faced by women in past days and still today up to some extent:

- Gender discrimination
- Lack of Education
- Female Infanticide
- Financial Constraints
- Family Responsibility
- Low Mobility
- Low ability to bear Risk
- Low need for achievement
- Absence of ambition for the achievement
- Social status
- Dowry
- Marriage in same caste and child marriage (still existing) Atrocities on Women (Raped, Kicked, Killed, Subdued, humiliated almost daily.)

**Need for Women Empowerment-**

- Decision Making
- Power Freedom of Movement
- Access to Education
- Access to Employment
- Exposure to Media
- Domestic Violence

**Ways to Empower Women:**

- Changes in women's mobility and social interaction
- Changes in women's labour patterns
- Changes in women's access to and control over resources
- Changes in women's control over Decision making
- Providing education Self employment and Self help group
- Providing minimum needs like Nutrition, Health, Sanitation,
- Housing Other than this society should change the mentality towards the word women
- Encouraging women to develop in their fields they are good at and make a career

**Government Schemes for Women Empowerment:** The Government programmes for women development began as early as 1954 in India but the actual participation began only in 1974. At present, the Government of



India has over 34 schemes for women operated by different department and ministries. Some of these are as follows;

1. Rastria Mahila Kosh (RMK) 1992-1993
2. Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY) October,1993.
3. Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY) 1995.
4. Women Entrepreneur Development programme given top priority in 1997-98.
5. Mahila Samakhya being implemented in about 9000 villages
6. Swayasjdha.
7. Swa Shakti Group.
8. Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women(STEP).
9. Swalamban.
10. Crèches/ Day care centre for the children of working and ailing mother.
11. Hostels for working women.
12. Swadhar

**Status of Women Empowerment:** The status of Women Empowerment cannot be visualized with single dimension rather multidimensional assessment in terms of various components of women's life and their status would bring a clear conception. So, this paper tries to give a basic idea about the condition and status of women in terms of employment, education, health and social status. Before going to elaborate separately let us have a quick view of the overall status of women in terms of gender gap index prepared by World Economic Forum in 2018.

**Reasons for the Empowerment of Women:** Today we have noticed different Acts and Schemes of the central Government as well as state Government to empower the women of India. But in India women are discriminated and marginalized at every level of the society whether it is social participation, political participation, economic participation, access to education, and also reproductive healthcare. Women are found to be economically very poor all over the India. A few women are engaged in services and other activities. So, they need economic power to stand on their own legs on par with men. Other hand, it has been observed that women are found to be less literate than men. According to 2001 census, rate of literacy among men in India is found to be 76% whereas it is only 54% among women. Thus, increasing education among women is of very important in empowering them. It has also noticed that some of women are too weak to work. They consume less food but work more. Therefore, from the health point of view, women folk who are to be weaker are to be made stronger. Another problem is that workplace harassment of women. There are so many cases of rape, kidnapping of girl, dowry harassment, and so on. For these reasons, they require empowerment of all kinds in order to protect themselves and to secure their purity and dignity. To sum up, women empowerment can not be possible unless women come with and help to self-empower themselves. There is a need to formulate reducing feminized poverty, promoting education of women, and prevention and elimination of violence against women.

**Challenges:** There are several constraints that check the process of women empowerment in India. Social norms and family structure in developing countries like India, manifests and perpetuate the subordinate status of women. One of the norms is the continuing preference for a son over the birth of a girl child which in present in almost all societies and communities. The society is more biased in favor of male child in respect of education, nutrition and other opportunities. The root cause of this type of attitude lies in the belief that male child inherits the clan in India with an exception of Meghalaya. Women often internalize the traditional concept of their role as natural thus inflicting an injustice upon them. Poverty is the reality of life for the vast majority women in India. It is the factor that poses challenge in realizing women's empowerment.



There are several challenges that are plaguing the issues of women's right in India. Targeting these issues will directly benefit the empowerment of women in India.

**Education:** While the country has grown from leaps and bounds since independence where education is concerned. The gap between women and men is severe. While 82.14% of adult men are educated, only 65.46% of adult women are known to be literate in India. The gender bias is in higher education, specialized professional trainings which hit women very hard in employment and attaining top leadership in any field.

**Poverty:** Poverty is considered the greatest threat to peace in the world, and eradication of poverty should be a national goal as important as the eradication of illiteracy. Due to this, women are exploited as domestic helps.

**Health and Safety:** The health and safety concerns of women are paramount for the wellbeing of a country and are an important factor in gauging the empowerment of women in a country. However there are alarming concerns where maternal healthcare is concerned.

**Professional Inequality:** This inequality is practiced in employment and promotions. Women face countless handicaps in male customized and dominated environs in Government Offices and Private enterprises.

**Morality and Inequality:** Due to gender bias in health and nutrition there is unusually high mortality rate in women reducing their population further especially in Asia, Africa and china.

**Household Inequality:** Household relations show gender bias in infinitesimally small but significant manners all across the globe, more so, in India e.g. sharing burden of housework, childcare and menial works by so called division of work.

**Conclusion:** Thus, the attainment in the field of income / employment and in educational front, the scenario of women empowerment seems to be comparatively poor. The need of the hour is to identify those loopholes or limitations which are observing the realization of empowerment of women and this initiative must be started from the women folk itself as well as more importantly policy initiative taken by the state and society. Let us take the oath that we want an egalitarian society where everybody whether men or women get the equal opportunity to express and uplift one's well being and well being of the society as whole. Women's empowerment is not a Northern concept women all over the world, including countries in South, have been challenging and changing gender inequalities since the beginning of the history. These struggles have also been supported by many men who have been outraged at injustice against women. Women represent half the world's population and gender inequality exists in every nation on the planet. Until women are given the same opportunities that men are, entire societies will be destined to perform below their true potentials. The greatest need of the hour is change of social attitude to women. "When women move forward the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves". It is essential as their thought and their value systems lead the development of a good family, good society and ultimately a good nation. The best way of empowerment is perhaps through inducting women in the mainstream of development. Women empowerment will be real and effective only when they are endowed income and property so that they may stand on their feet and build up their identity in the society. The Empowerment of Women has become one of the most important concerns of 21st century not only at national level but also at the international level. Government initiatives alone would not be sufficient to achieve this goal. Society must take initiative to create a climate in which there is no gender discrimination and women have full opportunities of self decision making and participating in social, political and economic life of the country with a sense of equality.

**Reference:**

[1]. Duflo E. (2011) Women's Empowerment and Economic Development, National Bureau of Economic Research, Cambridge.



- [2]. India: Women's Empowerment - IFAD / OE, 2000. The Republic of India; TamilNadu Women's Development Project : Completion Evaluation, Report 340 – IN Rome, April.
- [3]. Baruah B. (2013) Role of Electronic Media in Empowering Rural.
- [4]. Goswami, L. (2013). Education for Women Empowerment. ABHIBYAKTI: Annual Journal, 1, 17-18. [5]. Baruah, B. (2013). Role of Electronic Media in Empowering Rural Women Education of N.E. India. ABHIBYAKTI: Annual Journal, 1, 23-26.
- [6]. Kadam, R. N. (2012). Empowerment of Women in India- An Attempt to Fill the Gender Gap. International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications, 2(6), 11-13.
- [7]. Nagaraja, B. (2013). Empowerment of Women in India: A Critical Analysis. Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSRJHSS), 9(2), 45-52 [WWW page]. URL [http: www.iosrjournals.Org/empowerment.html](http://www.iosrjournals.Org/empowerment.html).
- [8]. Deshpande, S., and Sethi, S., (2010). Role and Position of Women Empowerment in Indian Society. International Referred Research Journal, 1(17), 10-12.
- [9]. Kishor, S. and Gupta, K. (2009), Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in India, NATIONAL FAMILY HEALTH SURVEY (NFHS-3) INDIA, 2005-06, International Institute for Population Sciences, Deonar, Mumbai.
- [10]. Suguna, M., (2011). Education and Women Empowerment in India. ZENITH: International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, 1(8), 19-21.
- [11]. Dr. Dasarati Bhuyan “ Empowerment of Indian Women: A challenge of 21st Century” Orissa Review, 2006
- [12]. Vinze, Medha Dubashi (1987) “Women Empowerment of Indian : A Socio Economic study of Delhi” Mittal Publications, Delhi..