



Women Empowerment In India: A Review Of Obstacles

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Abstract: The act of providing women with the authority and autonomy to make choices about their own lives, as well as providing them with the essential skills and competencies to ensure their appropriate place in society, is one definition of the concept of women's empowerment. It is estimated that women make up around fifty percent of India's total population. In light of this, the total advancement of our country is contingent upon the empowerment of this large population, which continues to be subjected to a number of limits and stigmas imposed by society. In light of these conditions, it is not conceivable to say that our country would accomplish progress in the future without empowering fifty percent of its population. The purpose of this study is to investigate the concept of women's empowerment in India as well as the problems that are related with it.

Keywords: Women Empowerment and Development

INTRODUCTION

India is well known for its many faiths, sophisticated culture, rich cultural heritage, and unique geographic features. Although the Indian people had always called their country "Bharat-Mata," they were unaware of its deep meaning. Every Indian's mother figure, known as Bharat-Mata, is someone we must always look out for and take care of. "Have women truly attained strength?" is the question that emerges under the umbrella of women's empowerment. Has the protracted conflict ended? In order to increase public awareness of women's true rights and their importance to the advancement of the country, the government has created and implemented a number of initiatives, such as Mother's Day and International Women's Day. Women have played an equally significant role in human progress as males have. In actuality, a country's total success may be determined by looking at the position, employment, and job that women conduct in society. A nation's social, economic, or political advancement will stall if women do not participate in national affairs. Women make up half of mankind and even two thirds of the labor force worldwide. She controls less than tenth of the world's resources and makes up just one-third of the entire revenue. This demonstrates the appalling state of women's economic situation, which is especially true in a nation like India. Of the 1027.10

million people living in India, 495.73 million are women. Consequently, women make up about half of the population, do two thirds of the labor, and produce half of the food that the nation consumes. They own 10% of the nation's wealth and get one-third of its compensation (Reddy et al., 1994).

Concept of Empowerment

In order to allow individuals and communities to act (again) on their own authority and responsibly represent their interests, policies and programs aimed at enhancing individual and community autonomy and self-determination are referred to as empowerment. Empowerment encompasses both the act of empowering oneself and receiving expert guidance to help others overcome feelings of helplessness and influence so they may finally identify and take use of their opportunities and resources. According to Surekharao and Rajamanamma (1999), empowerment is a multifaceted process that aims to help women or groups of women fulfill their full potential in all areas of life. More autonomy in decision-making to allow individuals to manage their life more effectively or to have more control over the external factors influencing them, more access to information and resources, and freedom from shocks imposed on them by tradition, belief, and practice are all part of it. In general, justice and development are supposed to provide the conditions for different segments of the populace in a nation to become more powerful and to elevate their position, particularly for women. Women's organizations are the source of empowerment as they aim to increase their own self-reliance. They are entitled to make their own decisions in life. They also want access to resources and to be in charge.

Increasing a woman's or a group of women's spiritual, political, social, educational, gender, or economic power is known as women empowerment. In India, a wide range of factors, such as age, social standing (caste and class), educational attainment, and geographic location (urban vs. rural), significantly influence women's empowerment. At the federal, state, and municipal (Panchayat) levels, policies are in place to support women's empowerment in a variety of areas, including as health, education, employment prospects, gender-based violence, and political engagement. But there is still a big difference between what is really done at the community level and the progress of policies. The process of improving the economic, social, and political standing of historically impoverished women in society is known as "empowerment of women." It's the process of protecting them against any kind of aggression. Women's empowerment means creating a political and social climate in which they may live freely from the oppression, exploitation, fear, prejudice, and overall sense of persecution that comes with being a woman in a system that has historically been controlled by males. Women make up around half of the world's population, however India has a disproportionately low percentage of women compared to men in terms of population. They are not always placed on an equal footing with males in terms of social prestige. Women in Western nations have the same rights and status as males in all spheres of life. However, prejudice and impairments related to gender still exist in India. She was worried as a goddess at times and just as a slave at others due to the contradictory circumstances.

Literature Review

Duflo E. (2011) *Women's Empowerment and Economic Development*, National Bureau of Economic Research, Cambridge. The research posits that the connections between Empowerment and Development are likely insufficient to maintain themselves, and that ongoing governmental dedication to equality may be necessary to achieve parity between genders.

Sethuraman K. (2008) investigates the impact of women's empowerment and domestic violence on child growth and undernutrition in a tribal and rural community in South India. This study article examines the correlation between Women's Empowerment and Domestic Violence, as well as the impact of maternal nutritional status on the nutritional status and development of children aged 6 to 24 months in a rural and tribal community during a six-month period. This research is a longitudinal observational study conducted in rural Karnataka. India included indigenous and rural populations.

In his 1997 analysis, Giriyappa examined the relationship between women's empowerment, levels of discrimination, and the effectiveness of decision-making by women in various rural enterprises. He found that female-headed households were successful in making decisions regarding work mobility, schooling, healthcare, asset creation, employment generation, and social participation, particularly in households with low social status. Women who were earning members had widespread informal empowerment, yet their judgments were often discriminated against by males to varying degrees.

In her study on employment pattern and empowerment of rural women in Kolar district, Jyothi (1998) found that the majority of women had a medium level of empowerment (58), while a smaller number of women (8) had a high level of empowerment. The remaining 54 women had a low level of empowerment.

Saradha (2001) observed that the level of product empowerment of women in self-help groups varied, with a high percentage of 35.80% and a low percentage of 35.00%. It suggested that although the women may have psychological empowerment, their actual degree of empowerment was low. Possible factors contributing to this situation include the presence of a patriarchal society, which views women as a weaker group, and the limited managerial skills, decision-making authority, reduced workload, limited access to information and resources, and limited critical awareness among rural women. These limitations can be attributed to the lack of exposure to mainstream media, low levels of education, and lack of recognition.

H. Subrahmanyam (2011) contrasts the current state of women's education in India with its past state. The author emphasized the significant improvement in the total enrollment of female pupils in schools. Empowerment refers to the act of granting legal power or permission to take action. It is the process of obtaining certain tasks or actions performed by women.

M. Bhavani Sankara Rao (2011) has emphasized that the health of women who are members of self-help groups (SHGs) has significantly improved. It is evident that female members of the group engage in discussions on the health issues of other members and their children, and they also inform them about different government programs that are specifically designed for their benefit.

Doepke and Tertilt (2011) *Does the promotion of female empowerment contribute to the advancement of economic development?* This paper presents an empirical analysis that indicates that when women have access to money, it has a positive impact on the well-being of their children. This research constructed a set of non-

cooperative family bargaining models in order to comprehend the specific obstacles that might lead to the observed empirical correlation.

Therefore, it can be reasonably concluded that most of the women who were reviewed fell into the categories of low or medium levels of empowerment. It suggested that despite their statistical empowerment, their actual degree of empowerment was rather low.

Objectives of the Study

To explore the topic of women empowerment.

To examine the obstacles faced in promoting gender equality and empowering women in India.

Women Empowerment

The concept of women's empowerment may be viewed in a straightforward manner as the act of granting women the authority to make decisions about their own lives or instilling such capabilities in them in order to enable them to locate their appropriate position within society. The United Nations identifies the following five components as the primary components of women's empowerment:

- Creating a feeling of self-worth in women
- Protecting women's rights to make their own decisions and to express their preferences
- The entitlement of women to have access to equal opportunities and access to a wide variety of resources
- The right of women to have the ability to manage and control their own lives, both within and outside the house
- Women's capacity to make a contribution to the establishment of a social and economic order that is more equitable.

As a result, women's empowerment is nothing more than the acknowledgment of the fundamental human rights of women and the establishment of an atmosphere in which they are regarded on an equal footing with men.

Types of Women Empowerments

Social Empowerment of Women: Gender equality advocacy is a vital component of social empowerment of women. A society where men and women have equal access to opportunities, results, rights, and duties in all areas of life is implied by gender equality.

Empowering women via education entails giving them the information, abilities, and self-assurance needed to fully engage in the process of growth. It entails educating women about their rights and giving them the self-assurance to assert them.

Economic and Occupational Empowerment: This refers to improving the material quality of life for women via the ownership and management of sustainable businesses. It entails increasing their contribution to human resources and decreasing financial reliance on their male counterparts.

Legal Women Empowerment: It advocates for the establishment of a strong legal framework that promotes women's empowerment. It entails filling in the blanks between what the law requires and what really takes place.

Political women's empowerment refers to the presence of a political structure that supports women's involvement and authority in political governance and decision-making.

Need of Women Empowerment

Since women make up about half of the population in India, the complete growth of our nation rests on the empowerment of these women, who are still subject to several societal taboos. In these circumstances, it is impossible to claim that our nation will advance without empowering its 50% of the people. In order for our nation to become developed, women must first be empowered via the efforts of men, the government, legislation, and other women. The historical male dominance and gender inequality in Indian society gave rise to the demand for women's empowerment. For a variety of causes, society and family members repress women. Male family members and community members in India and other nations have attacked them with various forms of violence and discriminatory actions. Egregious and antiquated behaviors against women in society that date back thousands of years have evolved into sophisticated conventions and traditions. Although it is customary in India to worship a variety of female goddesses, including honoring women who are mothers, sisters, daughters, wives, and other female relatives or friends, this does not imply that our nation can develop simply by showing respect or deference to women. The other half of our nation's people needs to be empowered in all spheres of life.

India is renowned for demonstrating "unity in diversity," since members of many religious groups coexist in the nation. Every religion has a particular space for women, which serves as a thick veil that keeps people's eyes closed and perpetuates many bad behaviors (both physical and psychological) against women that have existed for years. Customs such as sati pratha, the nagar vadhu system, the dowry system, female infanticide, sexual assault, domestic abuse, parda pratha, child labor, child marriage, devadashi pratha, and other discriminatory behaviors were prevalent in Indian culture. The patriarchal social structure and male superiority mindset are the root causes of all these bad behaviors. Women's empowerment is the right weapon to treat women with the respect and dignity they deserve.

Problems and Concerns Facing Indian Women

The empowerment of women in India is hindered by a number of factors. In developing nations like India, social conventions and family structures demonstrate and maintain women's subservient position. The persistent tendency in practically all nations and groups to have a boy over a female kid is one of the norms. When it comes to possibilities for school, nutrition, and other areas, the culture is more prejudiced in favor of male children. This kind of thinking stems from the widespread assumption that, across India save for Meghalaya, male children inherit the clan. Women are often subjected to injustices because they embrace the old belief that their roles are natural. For the great majority of Indian women, poverty is their everyday existence. It is an additional aspect that makes achieving women's empowerment difficult. Women in Indian society often confront a variety of concerns and problems. A few of the issues are listed and explained below:

a) Abortion on a selective basis and the killing of female infants

Abortion of a female baby is conducted in the womb of the mother following the fetal sex determination and sex selective abortion by the medical experts. This practice has been the most popular procedure in India for many years.

b) Assaults of a sexual nature

The term refers to the sexual exploitation of a female child by members of the family, neighbors, acquaintances, or relatives in a variety of settings, including the house, streets, public areas, transportation, workplaces, and other locations.

c. Destroying the bride and the dowry

It is yet another challenge that women who come from families of lower- or middle-class backgrounds often experience during or after their marriage. Parents of boys want a significant amount of money from the family of the bride in order to become wealthy all at once. When the bride's dowry demand is not met, the groom's family would undertake the ritual of burning the bride. According to records from the Indian National Crime Bureau, there were around 6787 incidents of dowry-related deaths that were filed in India in the year 2005.

d. Disparity in education

The level of women education is less than men still in the modern age. Female illiteracy is higher in the rural areas. Where over 63% or more women remain unlettered.

e. Domestic violence

It is like endemic and widespread disease affects almost 70% of Indian women according to the women and child development official. It is performed by the husband, relative or other family member.

f. Child Marriages

Early marriage of the girls by their parents in order to be escaped from dowry. It is highly practiced in the rural India.

g. Inadequate Nutrition

Inadequate nutrition in the childhood affects women in their later life especially women belonging to the lower middle class and poor families.

h. Low status in the family

It is the abuse or violence against women.

i. Women are considered as inferior to men

So, they are not allowed to join military services.

j. Status of widows

Widows are considered as worthless in the Indian society. They are treated poorly and forced to wear white clothes.

In the past, women faced challenges such as child marriage, the practice of sati, the tradition of pardah, limitations on widow remarriage, exploitation of widows, and the devadasi system. Nevertheless, the majority of the conventional problems have progressively vanished from society, only to be replaced by new emerging difficulties. Despite possessing self-confidence, uniqueness, self-respect, personality, ability, aptitude, and efficiency that surpasses that of males, women nonetheless encounter several challenges. Despite being granted equal rights and opportunities under the Constitution of India, they continue to encounter challenges in their everyday lives.

Multiple obstacles are now afflicting the concerns of women's rights in India. Addressing these concerns would directly contribute to the advancement of women's empowerment in India.

Education:

While the country has experienced significant growth in education since independence, there remains a severe gender gap between women and men. According to the data, it has been found that 82.14% of adult men in India have received education, whereas the literacy rate among adult women is reported to be 65.46%. Gender bias is prevalent in higher education and specialized professional trainings, which disproportionately affect women in terms of employment opportunities and their ability to attain top leadership positions in any field.

Poverty:

Since poverty is seen as the biggest danger to global peace, eliminating it should be a top priority for the country, right up there with eliminating illiteracy. Women are thus taken advantage of as domestic helpers.

Health and Safety:

Women's health and safety issues are critical to a nation's welfare and play a significant role in measuring the level of women's empowerment within that nation. But when it comes to maternity healthcare, there are concerning worries.

Professional Inequality:

This disparity is seen in hiring and promotion practices. In environments where males are custom-made and dominant, such as government offices and private businesses, women confront several obstacles.

Morality and Inequality:

Women's death rates are very high due to gender bias in nutrition and health, which is rapidly depleting the female population, particularly in Asia, Africa, and China.

Household Inequality:

Gender bias is present in household relationships everywhere in the world, but it is more noticeable in India. For example, the division of labor in India refers to the sharing of childcare, housekeeping, and other menial tasks.

Way to Achieve Women Empowerment

- Changes in women's mobility and social interaction.
- Providing Education that builds a self-image and self confidence among them & develops their ability to think.

- Changes in women's control over resources, decision making.
- Promoting self-employment through credits & training.
- Providing minimum needs like, nutrition, health, sanitation, lean, housing.
- Also, the society should change the mentality of word women and encouraging women to develop herself.

Women may realize their full potential and abilities in all areas of life via the multifaceted process of empowerment. The first step towards a woman becoming empowered is understanding of her own rights and talents, as well as how her gender and other sociocultural and political factors impact her. Fighting discrimination at all levels and the many kinds of patriarchal dominance requires political empowerment, economic growth, and social advancement of women. In actuality, achieving the triple aims of social justice, growth, and equality depends heavily on the empowerment of women. And political engagement is required for it.

Major Steps Taken for Women Empowerment

Provisions made under the Indian Constitution include the following: Article 14 of the Indian Constitution guarantees equality before the law to all Indian women; Article 39(d) guarantees equal pay for equal work, protecting women's economic rights; and Article 42, which permits the state to make provisions for securing fair and humane working conditions and maternity leave for women.

Laws like as the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 prohibit asking for, accepting, or paying dowries. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act of 2005 makes it easier to defend the rights of women who are victims of domestic abuse by outlawing the asking for or providing of dowries, which carries a fine in addition to possible jail time. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Work Place Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013 works to ensure that women have a safe and supportive work environment free from sexual harassment. Violations of this Act are punished by fines and/or imprisonment.

Panchayati Raj Institutions

As per the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, all the local elected bodies reserve one-third of their seats for women. Such a provision was made to increase the effective participation of women in politics.

Women's Reservation Bill

A bill that would allocate 33% of all seats in the Lok Sabha and all State Legislative Assemblies to women is currently pending in India. The status of women in politics would significantly improve if this bill is approved.

Various Government Policies and Schemes

For the purpose of empowering women, the Indian government implements a number of social programs and laws at both the state and federal levels. Major initiatives and programs include the National Mission for Empowerment of Women (2010), Sabla Scheme (2010), Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP-2003), Swayam Siddha (2001), and Swadhar (1995). The goal of all these laws and initiatives is to empower women of all ages in the social, economic, and educational spheres.

Conclusion

Thus, it seems that there hasn't been much progress made in terms of education, employment, and income for women's empowerment. Finding the holes or boundaries that prevent women from achieving women's empowerment is now necessary. Initiating this attempt should come from women themselves, as well as from governmental and societal policy initiatives. Let's commit to establishing an egalitarian society in which men and women have equal access to means of self-expression and opportunity to enhance both their individual and societal well-being. In order to promote overall national growth, women's progression and the initiation of advanced education at a young age within the boundaries of the home need a strong family environment. The prevalence of early marriage and childbirth in many developing nations may be linked to the parents' lack of education, instability, and poverty. Therefore, the government must put in place a number of policies to prevent violence, social exclusion, gender prejudice, and abuse of women in order to improve women's agency. In India, the empowerment of women has become a top focus. To achieve this goal, relying just on government actions is insufficient. In order to guarantee that women have unhindered opportunities for independent decision-making and active participation in the social, political, and economic domains of the country, with a true sense of parity, society must deliberately cultivate an atmosphere free from gender prejudice.

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