

# A Study of Women's Empowerment in Indian Society

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## ABSTRACT

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*Women Empowerment has become a highly debated social issue not only in India but also around the Globe. Is the woman's voice heard or it continues to be neglected despite all the civilization advancement?*

*The most famous saying said by the Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is "To awaken the people, it is the women who must be awakened. Once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves". In India, to empower the women, first it needs to kill all the demons killing women's rights and values in the society such as dowry system, illiteracy, sexual harassment, inequality, female infanticide, domestic violence against women, rape, prostitution, illegal trafficking and other issues. Gender discrimination in the nation brings cultural, social, economic and educational differences which push country back. The most effective remedy to kill such devils is making women empowered by ensuring the Right to Equality mentioned in the Constitution of India.*

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## 1. Introduction

The term **empowerment** refers to measures designed to increase the degree of autonomy and self-determination in people and in communities in order to enable them to represent their interests in a responsible and self-determined way, acting on their own authority. It is the process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's rights. Empowerment as action refers both to the process of self-empowerment and to professional support of people, which enables them to overcome their sense of powerlessness and lack of influence, and to recognize and use their resources.

The abilities of women in making decisions, education, and profession have been largely suppressed since ages, considering them inferior to men. The situation is worst in underdeveloped and developing nations where women in a family are not allowed to take financial decisions or decide on matters regarding their own education.

As India is progressive to become world's fastest growing economy in near future, it must also focus on 'Women Empowerment'. We must understand that women empowerment is a process which hopes to bring gender equality and a balanced economy. Indian women had been President, Prime ministers, civil servants, doctors, lawyers etc, but still a good majority of them needs help and support. Support to be educated, to do what they want to do, to travel safe, to work safe and to be independent; making their own decisions.

## 2. Research Methodology

The present study is based on only secondary data. This secondary data has been collected from the different related websites, reputed journals, periodicals, magazines, newspapers also.

## 3. Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study is

- (1) to know about empowerment;

- (2) to highlights on women's empowerment in Indian society;

- (3) to analysis about women's empowerment: as yesterday & today.

## 4. About Women

A **woman** is a female human being. The word *woman* is usually reserved for an adult; *girl* is the usual term for a female child or adolescent. The plural *women* is also sometimes used for female humans, regardless of age, as in phrases such as "women's rights".

### What is Empowerment?

The term "Women Empowerment" refers to empowering women with education, employment, decision making, and better health in view of an equal and just society. Women Empowerment is a process to make the women financially independent, educated and progressive, enjoying a good social status. Women since ages have been struggling to be socially and professionally recognized as equivalent to men. There are many incidents in a woman's personal and professional life, where her abilities are undermined against that of a man's; having an adverse effect on her over all personality and hampering her growth.

The term empowerment originates from American community psychology and is associated with the social scientist Julian Rappaport (1981). However, the roots of empowerment theory extend further into history and are linked to Marxist sociological theory. These sociological ideas have continued to be developed and refined through Neo-Marxist Theory (also known as Critical Theory).

**Empowerment** refers to the delegation of some authority and responsibility to employees and involving them in the decision-making process, not in mere job activities, but rather at all the levels of management.

In other words, empowerment implies freedom, power, authority, motivation and encouragement given to the employees to take decisions related to a specific organizational task. It is also called as **Participative Management**, as

employees are involved in the decision making. The purpose of empowerment is to facilitate decision-making at lower levels of the organization where the employees can offer a unique idea and suggestion about the problem being faced by the organization at a certain level.

**5. About Women Empowerment**

Women's empowerment is the process in which women elaborate and recreate what it is that they can be, do, and accomplish in a circumstance that they previously were denied. Empowerment can be defined in many ways, however, when talking about women's empowerment, empowerment means accepting and allowing people (women) who are on the outside of the decision-making process into it.



\*Figure:1-Image of Women's Empowerment

“This puts a strong emphasis on participation in political structures and formal decision-making and, in the economic sphere, on the ability to obtain an income that enables participation in economic decision-making.” Empowerment is the process that creates power in individuals over their own lives, society, and in their communities. People are empowered when they are able to access the opportunities available to them without limitations and restrictions such as in education, profession and lifestyle. Feeling entitled to make your own decisions creates a sense of empowerment. Empowerment includes the action of raising the status of women through education, raising awareness, literacy, and training. Women's empowerment is all about equipping and allowing women to make life-determining decisions through the different problems in society.

**6. Importance of Women's Empowerment in Society**

Entire nations, businesses, communities and groups can benefit from the implementation of programs and policies that adopt the notion of women empowerment. Empowerment of women is a necessity for the very development of a society, since it enhances both the quality and the quantity of human resources available for development. Empowerment is one of the main procedural concerns when addressing human rights and development.

Women's empowerment and achieving gender equality is essential for our society to ensure the sustainable development of the country. Many world leaders and scholars have argued that sustainable development is impossible without gender equality and women's empowerment. Sustainable development accepts environmental protection, social and economic development, and without women's empowerment, women wouldn't feel equally important to the process of development as men. It is widely believed that, the full participation of both men and women is critical for development. Only acknowledging men's participation will not be beneficial to sustainable development.



\*Figure:2-Image of Women's Empowerment

In the context of women and development, empowerment must include more choices for women to make on their own. Without gender equality and empowerment, the country could not be just, and social change wouldn't occur. Therefore, scholars agree that women's empowerment plays a huge role in development and is one of the significant contributions of development. Without the equal inclusion of women in development, women would not be able to benefit or contribute to the development of the country.

Women play variety of significant roles in our society from their birth till the end of life. Even after playing her all the roles and all the job timely in efficient manner in the modern society, she is weak because men are still strongest gender of the society. Even after lots of awareness programmes, rules and regulations in the society by the government, her life is more complicated than a man. She has to take care of herself and family members as daughter, granddaughter, sister, daughter-in-law, wife, mother, mother-in-law, grandmother, etc. By following such a big responsibility in the family, they are fully able to come out and do job for bright future of own, family and country.

**7. Role of Women's in Society-Past Scenario**

India is a famous country proving the common proverb like 'unity is diversity', where people of many religious beliefs are in the Indian society. Women have been given a special place in every religion which is working as a big curtain covering the eyes of people and help in the continuation of many ill practices (including physical and mental) against women as a norm since ages. In the ancient Indian society, there was a custom of sati pratha, nagar vadhu system, dowry system, sexual violence, domestic violence, female infanticide, parda pratha, wife burning, sexual harassment at work place, child marriage, child labour, devadashi pratha, etc including other discriminatory practices. All such type of ill practices is because of male superiority complex and patriarchal system of the society.



\*Figure:3-Image of Women Empowerment

The most famous saying said by the Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is “To awaken the people, it is the women who must be

awakened. Once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves". In India, to empower the women, first it needs to kill all the demons killing women's rights and values in the society such as dowry system, illiteracy, sexual harassment, inequality, female infanticide, domestic violence against women, rape, prostitution, illegal trafficking and other issues. Gender discrimination in the nation brings cultural, social, economic and educational differences which push country back. The most effective remedy to kill such devils is making women empowered by ensuring the Right to Equality mentioned in the Constitution of India.

Giving priority to the gender equality facilitates women empowerment all over the country. To get the high level goal of women empowerment, it should be promoted from the childhood in each and every family. It needs women to be strong physically, mentally and socially. Since the better education can be started at home from childhood, the upliftment of women needs healthy family to bring a holistic development of the nation. Still in many backward areas, there is a trend of early marriage and childbirth because of the poverty, insecurity and illiteracy of the parents. In order to empower women, various steps have been taken by the government to prevent violence, social separation, gender discrimination and abuse against women.

#### 8. Role of Women's in Society-Present Scenario

If we compare the current status of women than the ancient time, we can say that really the condition is improving gradually. Women are being professional, bread-earners for their families and an independently thinking individual of the country even after only being responsible for many responsibilities of the life. Traditional Indian women have started proving themselves more skilled and competent in many professions than men. And, day by day the situation is improving fast by breaking all the barriers of the way.

The Indian government also has played great role in the women empowerment by implementing various rules and regulations. The ancient time trends such as female foeticide, dowry deaths, early child marriage, domestic abuse, child labour, sexual harassment, etc have been banned by the government which has really improved the women status in the society. A woman plays variety of great roles in everyone's life in various forms by being involved in various relationships.

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From her birth till her end of life, she plays various roles as a daughter, sister, wife, mother and other relationships. However, her main roles are as a wife and mother.

### Woman empowerment



\*Figure:4-Image of Women Empowerment

The status of women in urban societies is better however in various rural societies it is still worse because of lack of proper education and education system. A woman give birth to a baby and considered to be only responsible for her baby regarding care, education, job, etc for whole life. She never demands anything in return of her roles instead she performs her roles politely all through the life without any argue.

In the recent years, various constitutional and legal rights have been implemented by the government of India in order to eliminate ill practices and gender discrimination against women. However, in order to solve such a big issue, the continuous effort of everyone including women is required. Modern society is being more aware about the women rights which results in the increasing number of several self-help groups, NGOs, etc working in this direction. Women are being more open minded and breaking the societal barriers in order to achieve their rights in all dimensions even after crimes are going side by side.

#### 9. Conclusion

In order to really bring women empowerment in the Indian society, it needs to understand and eliminate the main cause of the ill practices against women which are patriarchal and male dominated system of the society. It needs to be open-minded and change the old mind set against women together with the constitutional and other legal provisions.