

# Women Empowerment in India - A Study

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## INTRODUCTION:

Women empowerment means emancipation of women from the vicious grips of social, economical, political, caste and gender-based discrimination. It means granting women the freedom to make life choices. Women empowerment does not mean 'deifying women' rather it means replacing patriarchy with parity. Women empowerment has become the buzzword today with women working alongside men in all spheres. They profess an independent outlook, whether they are living inside their home or working outside. They are increasingly gaining control over their lives and taking their own decisions with regard to their education, career, profession and lifestyle. With steady increase in the number of working women, they have gained financial independence, which has given them confidence to lead their own lives and build their own identity. They are successfully taking up diverse professions to prove that they are second to none in any respect. But while doing so, women also take care to strike a balance between their commitment to their profession as well as their home and family. They are playing multiple roles of a mother, daughter, sister, wife and a working professional with remarkable harmony and ease. With equal opportunities to work, they are functioning with a spirit of team work to render all possible co-operation to their male

counterparts in meeting the deadlines and targets set in their respective professions.

Women empowerment is not limited to urban, working women but women in even remote towns and villages are now increasingly making their voices heard loud and clear in society. They are no longer willing to play a second fiddle to their male counterparts. Educated or not, they are asserting their social and political rights and making their presence felt, regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds. While it is true that women, by and large, do not face discrimination in society today, unfortunately, many of them face exploitation and harassment which can be of diverse types: emotional, physical, mental and sexual. They are often subjected to rape, abuse and other forms of physical and intellectual violence. Women empowerment, in the truest sense, will be achieved only when there is attitudinal change in society with regard to womenfolk, treating them with proper respect, dignity, fairness and equality. The rural areas of the country are, by and large, steeped in a feudal and medieval outlook, refusing to grant women equal say in the matters of their education, marriage, dress-code, profession and social interactions. Let us hope, women empowerment spreads to progressive as well as backward areas of our vast country.

## **ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE SOCIETY:**

- The modern women are inclined towards the social issues and trying hard to improve the social status of women at large.
- Increased awareness and education have inspired women to come out of the four walls of the home.
- Many women actively supported and participated in the nationalist movement and secured prominent positions and offices in administration and public life in free India.
- Traditionally Indian women exist because of the family and for the family.
- Just like their man counterpart, women are also fond of attending social functions and value her social life quite a lot.
- Previously, men-folk used to discourage women from leaving their households for attending social functions. Now the spread of education, especially that of women, and with that, the changing social attitudes of educated women have changed the order.
- The modern woman has started caring for her health, figure, cultural needs, and interests, academic pursuits, social intercourse, religious activities recreational needs, etc.

### **Role of women as a wife:**

- Woman as a wife enjoyed a status ideally almost equally to that of her

husband and performed both social as well as biological functions.

- Even today, the Indian girls are still brought up on models portraying selflessness, self-denial, and sacrifice.
- The desire for mutual affection and love is beginning to appear in their conception of their relationship with their husbands.
- The husband-wife relationship has become more equalitarian in character and much more companionable. More freedom of choice in marriage is thus an accompaniment to the change in the form of the family.

### **Role of women in politics:**

- Education of women has not only helped them to become aware of the political problems, but they are gradually becoming active participants in the political life.
- Some are enrolling themselves as members of political parties, attending party meetings, conventions, and carrying out political programs.
- Some women are attaining the influential political stature of their own and have become instrumental in shaping the public opinion for the betterment of women's conditions in society.

### **Role of women in socio-economic activities:**

- The woman in modern times is entering into certain new fields that were

unknown to the woman's sphere of role-sets. These are the woman's participation in economic, political, and social life.

- The modern woman keenly desires to enter into a work career because of the pressing economic needs of the family.
- In middle-class families, much emphasis given to the maintenance of high standard of living. To fulfill the economic requirements of the family and to achieve the higher standard of living the woman participates in economic activities.

### **Role of women in marriage:**

- Most women, even the educated, regard marriage as a matter of parental choice.
- Many young girls of the middle and upper classes educated to (or "intending to") marriage rather than to careers.
- Many girls enter into careers apparently not because they want them, but because there is nothing else to be done until their parents find them husbands.

### **Role of women at Universal on his equality:**

Women's equality regarding education, employment, and power is still an individual rather than a universal achievement. The majority of our women are still content to accept an inferior status. It is by, and largely because, although legally women have equal rights with men, there are not enough jobs for women and working women not adequately protected from exploitation.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE:**

**Prof. Dastgir Alam, (Alam, 2008)** in his paper Women in Labor Market an Aspect of Social Justice, has stated that women have always got a lesser share in labor force participation rate (LFPR). He has described the concept of social justice as a sense of participation in all spheres of human activities, social, economic and political, in the mind of masses. Women's share in LFPR can be an important indicator that may provide a sound economic base and confidence to be economically independent which helps in establishing a just society. But the study says that the situation of women is not so good. Male dominance prevailing in the labor market creates segmentations of women in the lowest paying jobs. Women have got lesser share in LFPR in both rural as well as urban markets. From the education point of view also the situation is not good. Illiterate women have always dominated the labor market. The percentage change in age specific usual status of labor force participation rate reveals those women are sometimes losers and sometimes achievers. Overall their share in the LFPR has declined more than the males and that is a matter of great concern. Lastly, **Prof. Alam** has raised the question that, how can we expect a prosperous and affluent society if women suffer from many disadvantages in comparison to men with respect to LFPRs?

**Dr. B. Suguna (2002)** throws light on strategies for empowerment of rural women. According to her, empowerment is a phenomenon of the nineties and is defined as 'giving power to' creating power within and enabling. The author has categorized the concept into three broad categories, economic empowerment, social empowerment and political empowerment. The author emphasizes on social

empowerment of women. This includes equal treatment, equal respect, equal opportunity, equal recognition and equal status. She further says that, empowerment of women is, therefore, the process of controlling power and strengthening of their vitality. She says that, even though rural women constitute 75 percent of the total female population of the country, they are poor and ignorant as compared to the urban women. Rural women need to be trained and organized so that they are empowered. The study has found that in spite of all government efforts, some basic problems like illiteracy, limited skills, restricted mobility and lack of autonomous status still remain to be tackled.

**Dutta (2002)**, mentions about both, the achievement and failures of the government while trying to improve conditions of women in India. As per his study, women are still considered and programmes fail to achieve the best results. Problems like poverty, illiteracy, poor health, unemployment, malnutrition are still blighting the lives of millions of women in India. Women cannot be provided proper education because of the general attitude of the poor parents. They want their girl-child to work and earn rather than go to school. Poverty is the main reason behind this.

**P. Subba Rao, B. Siva Rama Krishna and T.V. Ramana (2011)** in their paper highlighted the transformation of rural women through SHGs and public initiatives. They said that the self- help movement has brought a tremendous change in the socio-economic conditions of poor rural women. It introduced the concept of thrift and saving. They described the empowerment

as a process aimed at changing the nature and direction of systematic forces, which marginalized women and disadvantaged and poorer sections of the society. The SHG movement has made enormous contribution in the empowerment of the rural women because

of which they can improve their status both economically and socially. This paper also talked about the origin and working of the women SHGs in Andhra Pradesh and initiatives taken by the Central and State Governments towards the empowerment of women. SHGs have led to an expansion in the economic spaces of members. The economic advancement of women leads to their empowerment; improves their standard of living and self-esteem. But the use of loans taken from the banks under the bank linkage programme, only for unproductive purposes like household consumption, consequently leads to them falling into the debt trap. So, this should be corrected by providing huge amount of credit to the groups so that interested women can undertake small business pursuits. Despite some defects in the delivery mechanism, empowerment of poor women through SHGs has been a successful experience. Some policy measures suggested are relaxation in bank rules for SHGs, so that borrowing becomes easy, arrangement of sufficient revolving funds by 53 Government to fulfill the needs of the poorer sections, policy makers should see that the MFIs function without any defects and deliver micro-credit at affordable rate. Lastly, it is the responsibility of the people to respond, reactproactively and give cooperation to make the government schemes workable.

**P. Usha and S. Pulla Rao (2011)** have studied the Role of SHGs in Meeting Credit, Needs of the Poor Women in Srikakulam district. On the basis of his study they say that members of the SHGs are capable of saving and repaying the loans they have taken from the group fund and bank linkages. The concept of SHG has got significant success in empowering poor women. These institutions have developed a credit delivery model that helps to attain the objectives of economic planning namely economic and social development of women and eventually women empowerment. SHGs and bank linkage programme aims at banking with those who were considered not bankable so far. The study shows that a major proportion of group credit was used for unproductive yet necessary household consumption expenditure. In the absence of SHGs poor women had to rely on non-institutional sources. So the SHG movement is successful to a great extent in relieving the poor women from the grip of money lenders. Proper repayment of group credit enables the group to have bank linkage. The members are insisting more on prompt payment of interest than on the principal amount. The data shows that poor women not only have saving potential but are also credit worthy if organized into groups. Poor rural women, who cannot dream of access to institutional credit, have become credit worthy by enrolling as members in the SHGs and thus an alternate development paradigm has emerged.

**Chitratlapudi and Yanaki Ramadu (2011)** have studied the regional spread of SHGs and how the mainly for the purpose of pooling resources, gathering

information, offering mutual support, services and tackling common problems and through this starting the empowerment of their members. But the study shows that the concept of SHG has not spread uniformly over all the states in India. It is mainly spread in southern and eastern states and the rest of the country has minimum presence of SHGs. The status of illiterate women in the household and society can be the main reason behind it. The southern and eastern regions have the largest number of active SHGs with Bank Linkages and they have been generating more savings per SHG. So, mostly these SHGs are getting more loans from all the banking institutions and are able to repay the loan amount.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

1. To know the need of Women Empowerment in India.
2. To assess the Awareness of Women Empowerment in India.
3. To analyze the Factors influencing the Economic Empowerment of Women.
4. To study the Government Schemes For Women Empowerment.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY :**

This paper is basically descriptive and analytical in nature. In this paper an attempt has been taken to analyze the women empowerment in India. The data used in it is purely from secondary sources according to the need of this study.

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