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## Women empowerment in India-challenges and remedies

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### Abstract

This paper attempts to analyze the status of women empowerment in India and highlights the challenges and remedies in its relation.

Today, the empowerment of women has become one of the most important concerns of the 21st century, but practically women empowerment is still an illusion of reality.

Women empowerment refers to the increase in the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender and economic strength of individuals and communities of women, and building up of a society 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. The review reveals that women of India are relatively disempowered and they enjoy a somewhat lower than status men, in spite of many efforts undertaken by the Government.

Masculinity tends to be associated with dominance, aggressiveness and leadership while femininity with compassion, serviceability, tenderness, flexibility, and relationship orientation.

In today's world women need to have positive characters like that of men eg. Assertiveness, leadership along with their own positive characteristics, similarly men need to have positive characteristics like that women along with their positive characteristics as that of perseverance, flexibility to march forward in this developing world.

The review concludes by an observation that the access to education, employment, and change in social structure and the mind set of men folk at large are only the evolving factors to women empowerment.

**Keywords:** Women Empowerment, economic strength, male dominated structure, positive characteristics

### Introduction

#### Definition

Women Empowerment refers to the creation of an environment for women where they can make decisions of their own for their personal benefits as well as for the society.

#### Objectives of the Study

1. To understand Women Empowerment.
2. To review the history of Status of Women in India.
3. To study the current scenario of women empowerment.
4. To understand the need of women empowerment
5. To review the literature on Women Empowerment.
6. To identify the Challenges in the Path of Women Empowerment.
7. To offer useful Remedies in the light of Findings.

#### Research Methodology

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

#### Historical Background of Position of Women in India

The position enjoyed by women in the Rig-Vedic period deteriorated in the later Vedic civilization. Women were denied the right to education, widow remarriage, right to inheritance and ownership of property. Many social evils like child marriage and dowry system surfaced and started to engulf women. During Gupta period, the status of women immensely deteriorated.

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During the British Raj, many social reformers such as Raja Rammohun Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Jyotirao Phule started agitations for the empowerment of women. Their efforts led to the abolition of many social evils. Later, stalwarts like Mahatma Gandhi and Pt. Nehru advocated women rights. As a result of their concentrated efforts, the status of women in social, economic and political life began to elevate in the Indian society.

### Current Scenario on Women Empowerment

Based on the ideas championed by our founding fathers for women empowerment, many social, economic and political provisions were incorporated in the Indian Constitution. Women in India now participate in areas such as education, sports, politics, media, art and culture, service sector and science and technology. But due to the deep-rooted patriarchal mentality in the Indian society, women are still victimized, humiliated, tortured and exploited and discriminated.

Times of India October 26, 2016. 'India has substantially improved its rank in the Global Gender Gap index-moving from 108th to 87th position within a year, according to a report released by the World Economic Forum (WEF)

Literacy rate of India 2013 - 74.04. The Male literacy rate is 82.14% and Female literacy rate is 65.46% according to Census 2011 (according to India facts on March 17, 2013).

### Need of Women Empowerment

To help them lead their lives with dignity and freedom and self-esteem.

- To act as capable citizens to make the country achieve enhanced Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth.
- To get fair and equitable access to resources of the country.
- To remove injustice and gender bias and inequalities.
- To let them enjoy security and protection in life

To provide them a safe working environment and protect them from exploitation and harassment and to provide legal protection.

### Review of Literature

Dr. Shaily Bhashanjaly (2002) [4], talks about the need to empower women. Women's contribution in both organized and unorganized sectors of the economy go unnoticed by the family

Dutta (2002) [5], women are still considered inferior 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. They want their girl-child to work and earn rather than go to school. Poverty is the main reason behind this.

Traditions and customs. Institutions of joint family system and marriage most often are biased in favour of men than women. Discriminations of women based on gender, education, class, religion, abound in the society. (R. Arunachalam: 2002) [2]

Kishor and Gupta (2004) [10] revealed that average women in India were disempowered relative to men, and there had been little change in her empowerment over time.

According to the Approach Paper of the 11th Five Year Plan, (India Planning Commission, 2006), gender bias is deeply ingrained in our society and is reflected in indicators like sex ratio, literacy level of boys and girls, maternal mortality rates (MMR) etc.

(G.O.I., 2005-06) collected information on large number of indicators of women empowerment such as relative earnings of wives over their husbands' control over the use of these earnings, participation in household decision making, freedom of movement, gender role attitude, freedom from domestic violence, etc.

Azad (2008) [3], found out that almost everywhere women have been dominated by the males. Though the Constitution of India pledges equality of status, still women are being subjected to deprivation, humiliation and brutality.

Prof. Dastgir Alam, (Alam, 2008) [1] in his paper Women in Labor Market an Aspect of Social Justice, has stated that women have always got a lesser share in labour force participation rate (LFPR).

Mishra and Nayak (2010) [8] in their work emphasized how education plays a central role in women empowerment; as a matter of fact the other two components— health and income - are dependent on educational development.

Gulshan Kaur: 2010) [6] The study revealed that Panchayats and Women s Panchayat leaders can play an important role in ending violence against women, in rebuilding the social values and in eradication of social evils.

Nageswara Rao (2011) [9] in his article states that development of entrepreneurship is very essential for the empowerment of rural women. and that there should be better schemes, developmental programs and opportunities for the female folk to enter into more entrepreneurial ventures.

### Challenges

**Education:** Where education is concerned, the gap between women and men is severe. The gender bias is higher in education, and specialized professional trainings which hit women very hard in employment and attaining top leadership in any field.

**Poverty:** 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 is an important factor in gauging the empowerment of women in a country.

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

**Mortality 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 small but significant manners e.g. sharing burden of housework, childcare and menial works by so called division of work.

**Perspective:** Boys are preferred over girls; hence, female infanticide is a common practice in India. The ordeal that an Indian girl faces at birth is only the beginning of a lifelong struggle to be seen and heard.

**Economic Backwardness:** Women constitute only 29% of the workforce but forms majority of the destitute in the country.

**Implementation Gaps:** Through all these years, the attention is only on developing and devising new schemes, policies and programs and have paid less attention to the proper monitoring system and implementation short-sightedness.

**Loopholes in The Legal Structure:** Although there are a number of laws to protect women against all sorts of violence yet there has been the significant increase in the episodes of rapes, extortions, acid, attacks etc. This is due to delay in legal procedures and the presence of several loopholes in the functioning of a judicial system.

**Replacing Patriarchy With Parity:** A strong patriarchate society with deep- rooted socio-cultural values continues to affect women's empowerment. The need of the hour is an egalitarian society, where there is no place for superiority.

**Political Will:** Women should have access to resources, rights, and entitlements. They should be given decision-making powers and due position in governance.  
Bridging implementation gaps: monitor the programs devised and implemented for the welfare of the women.

#### Remedies

- Changes in women's mobility and social interaction.
- Changes in women's labour patterns.
- Changes in women's access 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.
- Changing the mentality towards the word women,
- Encouraging women to develop in their fields they are good at and make a career.
- Giving due publicity about the programmes run for women in different regions.
- Providing infrastructure for proper implementation of various schemes.
- Setting up of separate cells at various levels to monitor empowerment programs.

#### Conclusion

The need of the hour is - Empowering women to participate fully in economic social, political life across all sectors and to build stronger families, society and nation to achieve internationally agreed goals for development and sustainability, and thereby improving the quality of life for women, men, families, and communities. It has widely been admitted that improving the status of women in the male dominated society may solve several problems, such as meeting the basic needs of family, overall social advancement and adding quality resources that may bridge the gap between dimensions of socio-cultural existence. When women move forward the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves".

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